

**This interview with  
SISTER SLEDGE  
was conducted by the Library of Congress  
on June 2, 2017.**



*Sister Sledge*

**Library of Congress: How was the song “We Are Family” first presented to you to record?**

Debbie Sledge: Although we had been performing internationally for a number of years, we were presented as new artists by then president of Cotillion Records Henry Allen. Nile and Bernard were two up and coming producers who set out to prove themselves in the industry. Sister Sledge was one of their first projects. As Nile Rogers put it, “After meeting Sister Sledge the song practically wrote itself.” When we heard it for the first time we all agreed!

Kim Sledge: Our first reaction to hearing “We Are Family” was mixed. We were frustrated that we couldn't hear it in advance. We were trained to always go to a recording session fully rehearsed and prepared to be ready to record quickly. Perfection was important to us because of the discipline and standard for excellence set by our Grandmother Viola Beatrix Hairston, an opera singer, and our first teacher. After recording however, we understood their strategy; they wanted the nuances and excitement of spontaneity. The song actually became a “party” in the studio!

**LOC: How was the vocal arrangement of the song worked out among the sisters?**

Kim Sledge: They showed us exactly how they wanted it. We took the ideas and made them our own. We had been performing for many years. So we were able to assist each other and get the best out of what we were given

Kathy Sledge: The producers had a very regimented formula in the way they worked. We trusted each other as artists and producers, and worked very hard to deliver exactly what they wanted. The rest is history!

**LOC: I was surprised that in many of the contemporary writings about the song it is referred to as “disco” (not that there's anything wrong with that). Did you think of it as disco then? Do you now?**

Kim Sledge: Because we had been singing dance music throughout our earliest career days, we continued to sing dance music. It just happened to be called “Disco” for a short time. What a great time, however, of unity in music throughout the “Disco” era uniting cultures, ages, groups of all socioeconomic statuses. That's the “wonder” of great music!

**LOC: Have you been surprised by the staying power of the recording and its adoption by so many groups i.e. biological families, sports teams, the LGBT community?**

Kim Sledge: I am in no way surprised at the staying power of “We Are Family.” Our precious sister, Joni, put it so perfectly when she said, "It's a worldwide mantra." “We Are Family” gives everyone an opportunity to lock arms with their brother or sister regardless of our differences. Through song we're able to celebrate our similarities, and are encouraged to give, share, and receive love. We are particularly grateful for having been chosen to sing/carry this banner of love through the annals of music history! It's the very song that unites as one forever!!!

Kathy Sledge: “We Are Family” always had something very special...something that felt very special. We never doubted that it could be a huge record.