

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Walter E. Massey

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Massey, Walter E.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey,
Dates:	July 10, 2002 and March 13, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:15:54).
Abstract:	Physicist and academic administrator Walter E. Massey (1938 -) was president of Morehouse College for twelve years before becoming president of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2010. He served as the director of Argonne National Laboratory and the National Science Foundation and was a physics professor at the University of Illinois, Brown University, and the University of Chicago. Massey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 10, 2002 and March 13, 2002, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_023
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

College president and physicist Walter E. Massey was born on April 5, 1938 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He was raised by his step-father, Almar Cleveland Massey, and mother, Essie Nelson Massey. Segregated society made life difficult for him and his family but his parents raised him with the mentality to stay safe, be proud, and deal with discrimination. During the tenth grade at Royal Street High School, Massey was awarded a full scholarship after taking a Ford Foundation exam and he skipped the rest of high school to attend Morehouse College. Under the tutelage of his mentor, Professor Sabinus H. Christensen, he fell in love with physics his first semester and earned his B.S. degree in 1958. Christensen, encouraged him to attend Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri for graduate school. Massey earned his Ph.D. degree in physics at Washington University in 1966.

After graduate school, Massey briefly worked at Argonne National Laboratory before becoming a physics professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He was one of only four or five black professors out of the 3,000-member faculty, and he participated in every black faculty and student association. Massey left Illinois to teach at Brown University where he created the Inner City Teachers of Science program and eventually became dean of the College at Brown. After ten years, Massey left Brown to become the director of Argonne National Laboratory in 1979. Argonne was operated by the University of Chicago where Massey was also a physics professor. After management reform at Argonne, he became the first black vice president for research between 1984 and 1991. Massey was the founding chairman of the University of Chicago Development Corporation and served in that capacity from 1986 to 1991. In 1991, he was appointed as the director of the National Science Foundation, where he served until 1993. Massey was appointed as provost and vice president for academic affairs for the University of California system and its three national laboratories in 1993. Massey returned to Morehouse College, his alma mater, but this time in 1995 as college president. Massey was president at Morehouse until 2007, and in 2010 became president of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Massey has always been committed to expanding opportunities for minorities in science education. He sat on the President's Council of Advisors, Science and Technology (PCAST) under both President George H.W. Bush and President George W. Bush. Massey has been awarded more than twenty honorary doctorates and numerous awards for excellence in teaching. He has been active in several professional organizations, including the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Massey has also been active in a number of civic, cultural, and community organizations. His wife is Shirley Anne Massey, and he has two sons, Keith Barnett Anthony Massey and Eric Eugene Massey.

Walter Massey was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 13, 2002.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Walter E. Massey was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 10, 2002 and March 13, 2002, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Physicist and academic administrator Walter E. Massey (1938 -) was president of Morehouse College for twelve years before becoming president of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2010. He served as the director of Argonne National Laboratory and the National Science Foundation and was a physics professor at the University of Illinois, Brown University, and the University of Chicago.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Massey, Walter E.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Massey, Walter E.--Interviews

African American physicists--Interviews.

African American college administrators--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Physicist

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, July 10, 2002 and March 13, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_001_001, TRT: 0:24:17
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Walter Massey narrates his photographs.

Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.)

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Argonne National Laboratory.

Presidents--American.

Lederman, Leon M.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_001_002, TRT: 0:30:09
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Morehouse College president and physicist, Walter Massey, shares stories from his segregated childhood in Hattiesburgh, Mississippi. Adopted by his stepfather at the age of 4, Massey recalls a fairly idyllic life inside the circumscribed existence of segregated Hattiesbug.

African American families--Mississippi.

Hercules Powder Company.

Hattiesburg (Miss.)

Segregation--Mississippi.

Police brutality.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_001_003, TRT: 0:31:06
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Morehouse College president, Walter Massey, details a trial program sponsored by the Ford Foundation which allowed him to matriculate at Morehouse without graduating from the 12th grade. Shocked by the high level of intellectual achievement, Massey was at first daunted. But he also found his experience highly enriching, with exposure to great ideas, world religions and music.

Mathematical ability in children.

Ford Foundation--Education (Higher)--United States--Endowments.

Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.).

Advanced placement programs (Education)—Examinations.

College students.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_001_004, TRT: 0:29:19
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Morehouse College president and physicist, Walter Massey details his educational career while at Morehouse. He recalls his close friends, who all matriculated as early admits and joined Omega Psi Phi fraternity together. Massey also describes the encouragement from his professors like S.H. Christansen, and President Benjamin Mays, who encouraged him to pursue physics carefully mentored by these academic heavyweights, Massey landed fellowships and teaching positions. But while at Howard University, he saw he

was not receiving a high level of education and left to attend Washington University.

College teachers.

Physics--Study and teaching (Higher).

African American college students--Scholarships, fellowships, etc.

Washington University (Saint Louis, Mo.).

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_001_005, TRT: 0:28:58
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Educator and scientist, Dr. Walter Massey details his early experiences as a faculty member. He describes the rowdy atmosphere at the University of Illinois- Urbana/Champaign during the late 1960s. He recalls a black student body angered by the dearth of black faculty and overwhelmed by a sense of frustration due to their lack of academic preparation. Massey served as student advisor for a time, but even an offer of tenure couldn't keep him at the school. Massey jumped to Brown University for 10 years and was offered the directorship at Argonne National Laboratory.

Mentoring in science.

Doctor of philosophy degree.

Scientific publications.

Argonne National Laboratory.

African American physicists--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_002_006, TRT: 0:29:50
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Educator and physicist, Dr. Walter Massey details his life as head of the Argonne National Laboratory. He recalls the internal and external pressures from other universities, the federal government and the Lab employees. After a round of deep cuts from the Reagan administration, Massey was forced to lay off more than 1000 employees, an experience from which he drew a great deal of praise for his fairness in making the cuts.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_002_007, TRT: 0:30:50
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Educator and physicist Dr. Walter Massey, details his relationship with various federal bodies, including the White House. He recalls his close relationship with George H.W. Bush, despite their different political affiliations. Massey also discusses clashes with Congress of funding for the National Science Foundation, of which he became director in the early 1990s.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_002_008, TRT: 0:31:05
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Educator and physicist, Dr. Walter Massey, details his tenure as director of the National Science Foundation and his jump back to academia as provost in the University of California system. Taking the second in command position, Massey joined at an inopportune time-- Prop 209 ending affirmative action in admissions, huge state cutbacks among other problems, cast a large shadow over him. But just as he was poised to become the president of the UC system, he received word that Morehouse's president resigned amidst scandal.

Video Oral History Interview with Walter E. Massey, Section A2002_023_002_009, TRT: 0:20:20
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Morehouse College president Walter Massey describes the fortuitous set of circumstances which arose and allowed him to pass up the chance to be

president of the huge University of California system and instead return to his alma mater, Morehouse.