

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reginald Van Lee

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Van Lee, Reggie, 1957-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Van Lee,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 14, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:49:18).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Management consultant Reginald Van Lee (1958 - ) is an executive vice president at Booz Allen Hamilton. Van Lee was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 14, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_149
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Management consultant Reginald Van Lee was born on May 8, 1958 in Houston, Texas to Tommie Lee and Eva Elnora Jefferson Lee. Van Lee received his B.S. degree in engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1979; and, in 1980, he earned his M.S. degree in civil engineering from MIT. Upon graduation, Van Lee was hired by Exxon Production Research Company as a research engineer. In 1982, he entered the M.B.A. program at Harvard Business School, and he interned at Booz Allen Hamilton during the summer of 1983. In 1984, after graduating with his M.B.A. degree in business administration, Van Lee was hired at Booz Allen Hamilton.

In 1993, Van Lee was promoted to partner at the Booz Allen Hamilton; and in 2003, he was promoted to senior partner. Van Lee leads Booz Allen Hamilton's health and not-for-profit businesses, where he has helped numerous private and public health organizations and not-for-profit organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity and the American Cancer Society. As an industry expert on strategy implementation, Van Lee has contributed a number of articles on the topic. His articles have appeared in *The Journal of Business Strategy* and *Business Horizons*. Van Lee also co-authored the book, *Megacommunities: How Leaders of Government, Business, and Non-Profits Can Tackle Today's Global Challenges Together*. He has appeared on ABC-TV's "World News This Morning" and CNBC, and co-led the Urban Enterprise Initiative with the William Jefferson Clinton Foundation, where he focused on driving enhanced competitiveness for small businesses in Harlem. Van Lee is also a founding member of the Clinton Global Initiative.

Van Lee's many recognitions include the 2008 Black Engineer of the Year Award and New York University's C. Walter Nichols Award for community service. He was also chosen as one of the 2009 Washington Minority Business Leaders by the *Washington Business Journal*. Van Lee served as chairman emeritus of the board of the Evidence Dance Company, trustee of the Studio Museum in Harlem, and chairman of the Washington Performing Arts Society. In 2008, he was appointed by President Barack Obama to the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

Reginald Van Lee was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 14, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reginald Van Lee was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 14, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Management consultant Reginald Van Lee (1958 - ) is an executive vice president at Booz Allen Hamilton.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

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

### Persons:

Van Lee, Reggie, 1957-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Van Lee, Reggie, 1957- --Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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## The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Booz, Allen & Hamilton

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### Occupations:

Management Consultant

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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## 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 Reginald Van Lee, September 14, 2012. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Van Lee, Section A2012\_149\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:15  
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Reginald Van Lee was born on May 8, 1957 in Houston, Texas to Eva Jefferson Lee and Tommie Lee. His maternal great-grandmother, Susan Jefferson, was

born in Louisiana in 1862. In 1899, her family purchased land in Wharton, Texas, where Lee's mother was born in 1923. Van Lee's paternal great-grandparents were farmers in Waelder, Texas, where Van Lee's father was born in 1924 to Annie Harris Lee, a minister, and Hilda Lee, an entrepreneur. Van Lee's maternal and paternal grandparents both relocated to Houston when his parents were children. They attended Phillis Wheatley High School together, and married soon afterwards. Following his father's service in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II, they bought a home in the Reedswood section of Houston, where they raised Lee and his four older sisters, Carolyn Ann Conner, Eva Elnora Watkins, Tommye Jean Szafarz and Anita Lee. Lee enrolled at James R. Reynolds Elementary School in 1962, and was active at the Blueridge United Methodist Church with his family.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Van Lee, Section A2012\_149\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:55  
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Reginald Van Lee sang in the choir at the Blueridge United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, where his family belonged to the congregation. In 1969, he enrolled at majority-black Crispus Attucks Junior High School. During the seventh grade, he won the junior high school division of the Science and Engineering Fair of Houston. After the implementation of a busing initiative, he completed the eighth and ninth grades at Carter G. Woodson Junior High School, which was also predominantly black. He attended Evan E. Worthing High School, where he became junior class president and senior class yearbook editor. He also became the first black student to win overall at the Science and Engineering Fair of Houston. His family encouraged him to achieve academically; and, in 1975, Van Lee graduated from high school with a perfect grade point average. He matriculated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he had aspired to attend since junior high school.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Van Lee, Section A2012\_149\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:26  
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Reginald Van Lee entered the civil engineering program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1975. Although he was unprepared for the advanced math and physics courses, he enjoyed learning and ultimately excelled in his coursework. He was impressed by professors John M. Biggs and Wesley Harris, as well as administrators Mary Hope, Clarence G. Williams and John Turner. The small black community at MIT was close knit, and included the Black Student Union, the Office of Minority Education and a residential community. Van Lee joined the MIT Gospel Choir, and eventually became its director. In 1980, he graduated with a bachelor's degree and master's degree in civil engineering. His thesis, 'Behavior of Grouted Pile Connections,' was funded by the Exxon Mobil Corporation, which patented his innovations and hired him as a research engineer. In this role, Lee travelled to Japan, Norway and England, before enrolling at the Harvard Business School in 1982.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Van Lee, Section A2012\_149\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:35  
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Reginald Van Lee enrolled at the Harvard Business School in 1982. He joined the African American Student Union, and met art collector Pamela Joyner, investment banker Raymond McGuire, banking executive Deborah C. Wright, publishing executive Desirée Rogers and finance executive Wanda Felton. He also studied under business ethicist Barbara Toffler. Lee accepted a summer internship at Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., where he was mentored by Joseph

Nemec, Jr. Upon earning his M.B.A. degree in 1984, he joined the firm's office in New York City. He worked in various divisions, including telecommunications, electronics and media, before becoming the head of the office. In 1993, Van Lee became the first African American managing partner of Booz Allen Hamilton Inc. In 2001, his team analyzed the cost to rebuild New York City after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Through this project, Van Lee met former President Bill Clinton and became involved with the Harlem Small Business Initiative.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Van Lee, Section A2012\_149\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:25 ?

Reginald Van Lee began working on the Harlem Small Business Initiative in 2002. He used the management services of Booz Allen Hamilton Inc. to help small businesses survive gentrification in Harlem. The program was implemented across the United States as the Urban Enterprise Initiative. In 2008, Van Lee was named Black Engineer of the Year by US Black Engineer and Information Technology magazine. He co-authored 'Megacommunities: How Leaders of Government, Business and Non-Profits can Tackle Today's Global Challenges Together,' which included interviews with President Bill Clinton, Time Warner CEO Richard Parsons and American Express CEO Kenneth Chennault. Van Lee served as a board member and donor to numerous arts and cultural organizations, where he became acquainted with dancer Arthur Mitchell, magazine editor Susan Taylor and museum directors Thelma Golden and Lonnie Bunch. In 2009, Van Lee joined President Barack Obama's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. He married Corey McCathern in 2011.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Van Lee, Section A2012\_149\_001\_006, TRT: 6:20:42 ?

Reginald Van Lee talks about his sexual identity. He also describes how he would like to be remembered, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.