

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Langford

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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>	Langford, George, 1944-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Langford,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 6, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:40:14).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Cell biologist and academic administrator George Langford (1944 - ) is an expert on cell motility and served as a dean at University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Syracuse University Langford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 6, 2012, in Syracuse, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_165
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Biologist and academic administrator George M. Langford was born on August 26, 1944 in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina to Lillie and Maynard Langford. Langford excelled at math in high school and was fascinated by the shapes and structures found under the microscope. He studied biology at Fayetteville State University earning his B.S. degree in 1966. Despite the lack of laboratory facilities, Langford had good mentors who persuaded him to attend graduate school. He earned his M.S. degree in 1969 and his Ph.D. degree in 1971, both in cell biology from the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). He finished his postdoctoral training in 1973 from the cell biology program at the University of Pennsylvania as a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Fellow.

In 1973, Langford joined the faculty of the University of Massachusetts as a professor of cell biology and conducted research at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts in 1976. He continued his career in academia, teaching at Howard University in 1977 and joining the faculty of University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1979. He was promoted to a full professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1988. Langford's research focused on the nerves of invertebrates as well as cellular motility. He was honored with an appointment to the National Science Foundation (NSF) where he served as director of cell biology from 1988 to 1989. In 1991, Langford joined the faculty of Dartmouth College as the Ernest Everett Just Professor of Natural Sciences and a professor of biological sciences where he remained until 2005. Between 2005 and 2008, Langford was employed at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst as dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and Distinguished Professor of Biology. In 2008, he was engaged by Syracuse University as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Langford holds memberships in many nationally prominent professional societies including the American Society for Cell Biology, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Corporation of the Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole, MA and the Society of Sigma Xi. He served on the National Science Board (NSB) from 1998 to 2004, where he served as chair of the Education and Human Resources Committee and the

Vannevar Bush Award Committee. Langford has been recognized numerous times for his work including the Illinois Institute of Technology Professional Achievement Award and the American Society for Cell Biology Ernest Everett Just Lectureship Award. Langford received an honorary Doctorate from Beloit College in 2003. He is married to Sylvia Langford and they have three children.

George Langford was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 6, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with George Langford was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 6, 2012, in Syracuse, New York, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Cell biologist and academic administrator George Langford (1944 - ) is an expert on cell motility and served as a dean at University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Syracuse University

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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:

Langford, George, 1944-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Langford, George, 1944- --Interviews

African American scientists.

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African American scientists--United States.

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Biology--Research.

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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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Dartmouth College

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## **Occupations:**

Cell Biologist

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ScienceMakers

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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 George Langford, August 6, 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 George Langford, Section A2012\_165\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:45 ?

George Langford describes his family background. Langford's parents, Lillie Virginia Grant Langford and Maynard Langford, were born around 1904 in Potecasi, North Carolina. He describes his parents' upbringing in Potecasi, and his mother's remarkable skills as a farmer and a homemaker. Langford's paternal family was well-known in Potecasi as the family that established the first church, Second Baptist Potecasi Church, and the first school, Potecasi Graded School, in the community. His father attended W.S. Creecy High School. Langford also discusses the demographics of Potecasi, the slave revolt of 1831, and Nathaniel "Nat" Turner, who grew up close to Potecasi.

African American families--North Carolina.

Baptist church buildings--Potecasi (N.C.).

Schools--Potecasi (N.C.).

Southampton Insurrection, 1831.

Turner, Nat, 1800?-1831.

Video Oral History Interview with George Langford, Section A2012\_165\_001\_002, TRT: 2:34:51 ?

George Langford grew up in Potecasi, North Carolina, and describes his childhood memories of growing up on his family's farm. He talks about his father's employment, his physical strength, and his role as a peacemaker during inter-racial conflict in the community. Langford also recalls segregation in Potecasi. He describes his parents' personalities and talks about his siblings. He also talks about his schooling in Potecasi, and describes his childhood interests.

Childhood--Potecasi (N.C.).

Family farms--Potecasi (N.C.).

Fathers--Employment--North Carolina.

African Americans--Segregation--North Carolina.

African American families--North Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with George Langford, Section A2012\_165\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:57 ?

George Langford attended Potecasi Graded School and W.S. Creecy High School in Potecasi, North Carolina, and describes his experience there. He talks about his interest in science and the mentorship that he received in high school. He also describes the drop-out rate while he was in high school. Langford talks about his involvement in Church as a child, and his recollections of the Civil Rights Movement. While in high school, Langford decided to pursue his undergraduate studies at Fayetteville State University in North Carolina.

Schools--Potecasi (N.C.).

Mentoring in science.

High school dropouts--North Carolina.

Communities--Religious aspects--Christianity.

Civil rights movements--United States--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with George Langford, Section A2012\_165\_001\_004, TRT: 4:30:24 ?

After graduating from W.S. Crecy High School in 1962, George Langford attended Fayetteville State University to pursue his B.S. degree in biology. He describes his experience at Fayetteville State, and his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. He also describes how the student government at Fayetteville State University facilitated the integration of Fayetteville in the 1960s. Langford was mentored by Joseph Knuckles and F. Roy Hunter while he was an undergraduate student. After graduating from college in 1966, Langford attended the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago, to pursue his doctoral degree in biology under the tutelage of cell physiologist, William Danforth. He describes his experience in Chicago, where he met his wife, Sylvia Tyler. While at IIT, Langford was also mentored by embryologist, Jean Clark Dan, and the chair of the biology department, Teru Hayashi, who introduced him to the field of cell and molecular biology.

Fayetteville State University. Student Government Association.

School integration--North Carolina--History.

Mentoring in science.

Biology--Study and teaching (Higher)--United States.

Illinois Institute of Technology.

Video Oral History Interview with George Langford, Section A2012\_165\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:06 ?

While pursuing his doctoral degree in biology at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), George Langford recalls the unrest in Chicago following Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination. Langford's dissertation focused on the anaerobic growth of the unicellular protozoa, *Euglena*. He received an NIH fellowship to pursue his postdoctoral research in cell biologist Shinya Inoue's laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied the mechanism of motility in *Pyronympha*. Langford discusses the impact of the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) on his scientific career, his rich scientific experience at the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL), the legacy of Ernest Everett Just, and current racial trends in science. In 1973, Langford joined the University of Massachusetts in Boston as a professor of cell biology. In 1977, he joined the faculty at Howard University, and then in 1979, he joined the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination.

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

Biology--Study and teaching (Higher)--United States.

Biologists--United States--Intellectual life--20th century.

Universities and colleges--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with George Langford, Section A2012\_165\_001\_006, TRT: 6:28:59 ?

From 1979 to 1991, George Langford served as a professor of physiology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He describes the racial climate and segregation at the university and in the community in the 1980s. Langford talks about his experience as the chairman of the Minority Affairs Committee of the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) in 1985, and as the director of the cell biology program at the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1988. In 1991, he was appointed as the Ernest Everett Just Professor of Natural Sciences at Dartmouth College. He describes the liberal arts style of education, and his efforts to increase the retention of African American students in science. In 1992, Langford's research group published their seminal discovery of actin-dependent organelle movement. He talks about his relationship with biologist

Robert D. Allen, his service on the National Science Board, and HistoryMaker, Warren Washington.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Department of Physiology.

Race relations--North Carolina.

American Society for Cell Biology.

Just, Ernest Everett, 1883-1941.

Minorities in science--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with George Langford, Section A2012\_165\_001\_007, TRT: 7:30:40 ?

In 1998, George Langford was nominated by President Clinton to the National Science Board (NSB), and served as the vice-chair for the NSB National Workforce Taskforce Subcommittee from 1999 to 2004. In 2005, Langford was appointed as the dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In 2008, he became the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Syracuse University, where he currently serves his tenure. Langford talks about the collaboration between scientists and humanists at Syracuse University. He also describes his current research on yeast toxins, shares his perspectives on technology and education, reflects upon his career and legacy, and discusses his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Langford and his wife, Sylvia Tyler Langford, have three children.

National Science Board (U.S.)--Officials and employees--Selection and appointment.

Deans (Education)--United States.

Yeast--Research--New York (State).

Educational technology—United States.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with George Langford, Section A2012\_165\_001\_008, TRT: 8:05:32 ?

In this final section of the interview, George Langford talks about his exposure to the liberal arts and humanities while he was on the faculty at Dartmouth College. He also reflects upon how he would like to be remembered.

Dartmouth College.

Education, Humanistic.

Eugenics--History--United States.

Social scientists--United States.