

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with David Garrison

---

## 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>	Garrison, David, 1975-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with David Garrison,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 15, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:20:17).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Physicist and physics professor David Garrison (1975 - ) is a physicist who began teaching physics at the University of Houston-Clear Lake in 2002, where he is the physics program founder and faculty chair of the department. Garrison was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 15, 2012, in Houston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_199
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Physicist David Garrison was born on October 27, 1975 in Chicago, Illinois to parents Christine and Millard Garrison, Jr. He has two older siblings, Cassandra Guichard and Michael Garrison. He went to grade school in O'Fallon, Missouri, attending Mount Vernon Elementary School, Fort Zumwalt North Middle School, and Fort Zumwalt North High School. While in high school, he was a jazz soloist in the jazz band. Garrison finished secondary school in 1993, after which he began studying at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and played on the varsity football team for three years. He received his B.S. degree in physics from there in 1997. That same year he began a doctoral program in physics at Pennsylvania State University. He received his Ph.D. in physics from Pennsylvania State University in 2002.

During graduate school in 1999, he started Fast Financial Analysis with his future wife Rispba McCray-Garrison. The company provides software programs useful in analyzing money metrics. In 2002, he began working for the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) as a visiting assistant professor. A year later, he became a regular assistant professor and began reorganizing the physical sciences program into an actual physics department. The department now has a B.A. degree in physics, a M.S. degree in physics, a collaborative Ph.D. degree in physics with the University of Houston, and a P.S.M. degree in physics with a sub-plan in technical management. With these degrees programs, Garrison has been able to attract students better qualified to help with his research in numerical relativity, cosmology, computational physics, and plasma physics. In addition to research at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, he has also worked in collaboration on many projects with NASA's Johnson Space Center, including a project for the development of a plasma rocket engine. In 2003, Garrison became the faculty chair of the physics program and began the UHCL Physics and Space Science Guest Lecture Series. He has also served terms on university bodies such as the Planning and Budget Committee, the Faculty Senate, University Council, and the Academic Council.

In 2002, Garrison married Rispba McCray-Garrison on December 28. In 2012, he became an advisory board

member for the Space Center Houston and published *What Every Successful Physics Graduate Student Should Know*. David Garrison was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 15, 2012.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with David Garrison was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 15, 2012, in Houston, Texas, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Physicist and physics professor David Garrison (1975 - ) is a physicist who began teaching physics at the University of Houston-Clear Lake in 2002, where he is the physics program founder and faculty chair of the department.

---

## 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:

Garrison, David, 1975-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Garrison, David, 1975- --Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

University of Houston at Clear Lake City

---

## 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 David Garrison, August 15, 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).

---

## 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 David Garrison, Section A2012\_199\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:35 ?  
David Garrison describes his family background. His mother, Christine

Garrison, was born in January of 1940 near Lexington, Mississippi. After graduating from high school, she and her family moved to Chicago, where she earned her nursing degree. She worked as a practical nurse in nursing homes until she retired. Garrison's father, Millard Garrison, was born in October of 1941 in Chicago Heights, Illinois. His family has ancestry from Madagascar and from the Native American tribes of Cherokee and Chickasaw. Millard Garrison graduated from Bloom High School in Chicago Heights and joined the Army, where he served as a Huey Crew Chief during the Vietnam War. He later worked as an aircraft mechanic. Garrison shares his earliest childhood memory and talks about his childhood homes in Chicago and Missouri.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

African American parents--Employment.

African American nurses.

Racially mixed people--Illinois.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975--African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with David Garrison, Section A2012\_199\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:23 ?

David Garrison attended Mount Vernon Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois before his family moved to Missouri. In Missouri, he attended Mount Hope Elementary School, Fort Zumwalt North Middle School, and Fort Zumwalt North High School. While his favorite subjects were math and science, Garrison found the pacing of his elementary education to be too slow for him. However he maintained his interest in math and science through high school, where the instruction was better and opportunities for advancement were available to him. During his childhood, Garrison struggled with asthma until he got into swimming and playing wind instruments, which helped him learn how to control his breathing and increase his lung capacity. During high school, he played the trombone in Jazz Band and played inside linebacker on the football team.

Childhood and youth--Middle West.

Schools--Illinois--Chicago.

Schools--Missouri.

Asthma in children.

High school student activities--Missouri.

Video Oral History Interview with David Garrison, Section A2012\_199\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:09 ?

David Garrison graduated sixth in his class from Fort Zumwalt North High School in 1993. He then attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he initially found himself intimidated by the rigorous academic environment of MIT. However, Garrison became acclimated to the challenging academic environment, which he appreciated, and graduated with his B.S. degree in physics in 1997. Garrison talks about his experience at MIT, the emerging technologies during his college years, and his decision to attend Pennsylvania State University for his graduate studies.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Student adjustment.

African American college students--Massachusetts--Cambridge.

College choice--United States.

Pennsylvania State University.

Video Oral History Interview with David Garrison, Section A2012\_199\_001\_004, TRT: 4:32:35 ?

David Garrison graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with his B.S. degree in physics in 1997. He then went on to attend Pennsylvania State

University, where he pursued his Ph.D. degree in computational physics. In 2000, Garrison and his wife, Dr. Rispba McCray-Garrison, founded Fast Financial Analysis, which is an online financial planning resource. Garrison talks about his advisors and his experience at Pennsylvania State University. His dissertation, entitled “Testing Binary Black Hole Codes in Strong Field Regimes,” focused on developing tests to analyze the stability of black hole codes. After earning his Ph.D. degree in 2002, Garrison was appointed as a visiting assistant professor of physical sciences at the University of Houston, Clear Lake in Texas. He was promoted to assistant professor of physics in 2003 and founded and developed the UHCL Physics program.

Physicists' spouses.

African American business enterprises.

Doctoral students--Pennsylvania.

Dissertation, Academic--Black holes (Astronomy)--Mathematics.

Universities and colleges--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with David Garrison, Section A2012\_199\_001\_005, TRT: 5:31:59 ?

David Garrison was appointed as faculty chair and assistant professor of physics at the University of Houston, Clear Lake in 2003, where he founded and developed the UHCL physics degree programs. In 2006, he started the UHCL Physics and Space Science Guest Lecture Series, which developed into a successful and profitable event for the university. In 2008, Garrison was promoted to associate professor of physics at UHCL. He talks about his publications in the area of cosmology, as well as his book, “What Every Successful Physics Graduate Student Should Know.” In 2012, Garrison became an advisory board member of the Space Center Houston and the research chair and president of the UHCL faculty senate. Garrison talks about his professional activities at UHCL, his colleagues, and his future career plans.

University of Houston. Department of Physics.

Scientific publications--Cosmology.

Physics--Study and teaching (Higher).

Academic achievement--United States--Handbooks, manuals, etc.

University of Houston--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with David Garrison, Section A2012\_199\_001\_006, TRT: 6:32:48 ?

David Garrison talks about his interest in physics and the problems with STEM, and particularly physics, education. Garrison talks about his hopes and concerns for the African American community, reflects on his career, and talks about his legacy.

Science--Study and teaching (Higher)--United States--Evaluation.

African Americans--Education.

Physics--programmed instruction--Texas--Houston.

African American families--Texas.

University of Houston--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with David Garrison, Section A2012\_199\_001\_007, TRT: 7:14:48 ?

David Garrison talks about how he would like to be remembered and describes his photos.

Photographs.