

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lonnie Bunch

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bunch, Lonnie G.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch,
Dates:	February 23, 2023, June 9, 2022, November 30, 2022 and September 5, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003, 2022 and 2023
Physical Description:	23 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (11:00:03).
Abstract:	Museum director and historian Lonnie Bunch (1952 -) was appointed as the fourteenth Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in 2019. From 2005 to 2019, he served as the founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Bunch also served as president of the Chicago Historical Society and founding curator of the California African American Museum. Bunch was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 23, 2023, June 9, 2022, November 30, 2022 and September 5, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois and Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_212
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Museum director and historian Lonnie G. Bunch was born November 18, 1952 in Newark, New Jersey to Montrose Boone Bunch and Lonnie Bunch, Sr. After graduating from Belleville High School in 1970, Bunch enrolled in Howard University and later transferred to American University in Washington, D.C, where he earned his B.A. degree in 1974, his M.A. degree in 1976, and his Ph.D. in 1978 in American and African American history.

While working on his doctorate, Bunch served as an adjunct lecturer at American University. After receiving his Ph.D., he was hired as an education specialist at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. He then took a position with the University of Massachusetts, Amherst as an assistant professor of American and African American history from 1979 until 1981, when he taught history at the Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn. In 1983, Bunch was appointed the founding curator of the California African American Museum in Los Angeles, where he remained until 1989. From there, Bunch went on to serve as an adjunct professor of museum studies at George Washington University and as the associate director for curatorial affairs at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, a position he retained until 2000. In 2001, Bunch was named the president of the Chicago Historical Society. In 2005, Bunch was appointed as the founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., which opened in 2016. In 2019, Bunch was named the fourteenth Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

Bunch has published numerous books and magazine articles on topics ranging from African American history to cultural experiences in Japan. In 2019, he published his memoir *A Fool's Errand: Creating the National Museum of African American History and Culture in the Age of Bush, Obama, and Trump*.

Bunch has served as a trustee of the American Association of Museums and the Council of the American Association of State & Local History and as a member of the American Antiquarian Society. Bunch was appointed to the Commission for the Preservation of the White House by President George W. Bush in 2002 and reappointed by President Barack Obama in 2010.

Bunch was named one of the 100 most influential museum professionals of the twentieth century by the American Association of Museums in 2005. In 2019, Bunch received the Freedom Medal from the Roosevelt Institute, the W.E.B. Du Bois Medal from the Hutchins Center at Harvard University, and the National Equal Justice Award from the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund. In 2021, Bunch received the Tony Horwitz Prize from the Society of American Historians and France's highest award, The Legion of Honor.

Bunch and his wife, Maria Marable-Bunch, live in Washington, D.C. They have two daughters.

Lonnie G. Bunch was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 5, 2003, June 9, 2022, and November 30, 2022.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lonnie Bunch was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on February 23, 2023, June 9, 2022, November 30, 2022 and September 5, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois and Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 23 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Museum director and historian Lonnie Bunch (1952 -) was appointed as the fourteenth Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in 2019. From 2005 to 2019, he served as the founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Bunch also served as president of the Chicago Historical Society and founding curator of the California African American Museum.

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:

Bunch, Lonnie G.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bunch, Lonnie G.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Smithsonian Institution

Occupations:

Museum Director

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Lonnie Bunch, February 23, 2023, June 9, 2022, November 30, 2022 and September 5, 2003. 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 Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_001, TRT: 0:30:33 ?

Lonnie Bunch details his early years and his parents' backgrounds. He discusses the difficulties his father faced as a chemist who couldn't find employment in his chosen profession. Bunch also describes how his grandfather had to attend dental school twice because the state of New Jersey refused to accept the credentials of Howard University Dental School because it was a black college.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_002, TRT: 0:31:13 ?

Lonnie Bunch remembers his hardworking grandparents and parents and their lives in Belleville, New Jersey. Bunch describes life in a predominantly Italian neighborhood where his grandfather built their home in late 1918-1919. Bunch often felt alienated and found himself engaged in fisticuffs over insults and racial slights.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_003, TRT: 0:30:34 ?

Lonnie Bunch shares all of the exhilaration, bewilderment and fear of beginning college at Howard University. After a secondary school experience of being one of a handful of black students, Bunch took to Howard like a fish to water. As part of the more leftist element on campus, Bunch joined the Black Panther Party and was part of several demonstrations and protests. He was also an eyewitness to the changing black aesthetic and embracing of black features and natural hairstyles.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_004, TRT: 0:29:32 ?

Lonnie Bunch shares experiences from his undergraduate career at Howard and American Universities. He also details his intensive study of 19th century black history, focusing on 1830-1861. Bunch remembers studying with noted scholars like John Hope Franklin and Ben Quarles. Bunch also discusses the disciplines of American history and African American studies.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_005, TRT: 0:29:46 ?

Lonnie Bunch details his life with the Smithsonian Institution and his scholarly and personal growth while there. After being tapped to head the new California African American Museum, Bunch and his new wife headed west to begin a new chapter in their lives. Bunch was initially apprehensive because Western American black history was not his area of concentration. However, he created a new path by focusing on his strengths in scholarship and planning, and the new museum opened to acclaim in 1984.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_006, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Lonnie Bunch details his career successes at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles as its founding director. After six years, he was asked to rejoin the Smithsonian Institution. Bunch discusses the first Smithsonian

exhibit mounted outside the United States in Japan.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_007, TRT: 0:31:16 ?

Lonnie Bunch details his professional career at the Smithsonian Institution and at the Chicago Historical Society. He speaks of his disappointment at the dearth of people of color involved in museums and non profit cultural organizations. Bunch also discusses several of his triumphs at the Smithsonian with the first exhibition mounted outside the United States and the first exhibit on U.S. presidents.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_008, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Lonnie Bunch offers his thoughts and philosophy on the state of black America, as it relates to representation in cultural institutions and the world in general. He worries about class divisions and the lack of opportunity for those caught in the lower classes. The segment closes with several photos of Bunch and his family.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_001_009, TRT: 0:11:18 ?

Lonnie Bunch describes photos documenting moments in his professional career, and those of his family and their travels.

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_002_010, TRT: 10:30:02 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_002_011, TRT: 11:28:45 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_002_012, TRT: 12:27:11 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_002_013, TRT: 13:30:05 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_002_014, TRT: 14:35:57 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_003_015, TRT: 15:30:15 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_003_016, TRT: 16:30:46 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_003_017, TRT: 17:30:29 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_003_018, TRT: 18:32:05 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_003_019, TRT: 19:20:30 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_004_020, TRT: 20:31:34 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_004_021, TRT: 21:28:30 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_004_022, TRT: 22:28:55 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Lonnie Bunch, Section A2003_212_004_023, TRT: 23:19:52 ?