

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Stanton

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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>	Stanton, Robert George, 1940-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 11, 2004 and July 27, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	14 Betacame SP videocassettes (6:16:39).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Federal government official Robert Stanton (1940 - ) is the first African American to serve as director of the National Park Service. Stanton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 11, 2004 and July 27, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_110
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Robert George Stanton was born on September 22, 1940 in Forth Worth, Texas. His mother was a short order cook and his father was a hay contractor. He grew up in Mosier Valley, one of the oldest African American communities in Texas, settled by free slaves. He graduated from I.M. Terrell High School in Forth Worth in 1959. He earned his bachelor's of science degree from Huston-Tillotson College in Austin in 1963. The summer of his junior year in college he began his career with the National Park Service. Borrowing \$250, he bought a train ticket to Wyoming and a park ranger's uniform and worked as a seasonal ranger at Grand Teton National Park. Stanton, along with several other African Americans, was recruited by then Interior Secretary, Stewart Udall who traveled to predominately Black college campuses recruiting students.

In 1963, Stanton began his graduate studies at Boston University and went back to Huston-Tillotson to work as the director of public relations and alumni affairs from 1964 until 1966. That year, he took a full time job with the Park Service as a personnel management and public information specialist in the Washington, D.C. headquarters office. In 1969, he became a management assistant and in 1970, he was appointed superintendent of Virgin Islands National Park in St. Thomas. In 1974, Stanton became deputy regional director of the Southeast Region of the National Park Service in Atlanta and in 1976 he returned to Washington, D.C. as assistant director of park operations. In 1978, Stanton was named deputy regional director of the National Capital Region, where he remained until 1986. In 1987, he returned to headquarters as associate director for operations, and in 1988, he became the first African American to serve as director of the National Park Service. Stanton's nomination for the post by former President Clinton was the first that had to be approved by the U.S. Senate...he was confirmed unanimously. He retired from that position in 2003.

Stanton currently works as an adjunct professor at Texas A&M teaching courses on conservation. He has also taught at Yale University and been the recipient of numerous awards for his civic work and environmental stewardship.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Stanton was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on August 11, 2004 and July 27, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 14 Betacame SP videocassettes. Federal government official Robert Stanton (1940 - ) is the first African American to serve as director of the National Park Service.

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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:

Stanton, Robert George, 1940-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Stanton, Robert George, 1940---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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United States. National Park Service

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## Occupations:

Federal Government Official

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Federal Government Official

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|PoliticalMakers

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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 Robert Stanton, August 11, 2004 and July 27, 2004. 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 Robert Stanton, Section A2004\_110\_002\_001, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Robert Stanton was born on September 22, 1940 in Fort Worth, Texas. His mother, Bethel Lee Blackburn Stanton, was born in 1906 in Tarrant County, Texas. Stanton's maternal ancestors were among the founders of rural Mosier

Valley, Texas, the first community founded by emancipated slaves in Texas. Stanton's father, Alvin Herbert Stanton, was born in Dallas County, Texas and was a hay baler and farmer. Stanton was the youngest of four siblings and attended Mosier Valley School through the eighth grade with many of his cousins, nieces and nephews. During his time at the school, African American parents and the NAACP successfully forced the school board, which had allowed to school to deteriorate, to build a new school. Stanton was bused to segregated I.M. Terrell High School in Fort Worth, Texas and aspired to attend college. His family attended St. John Missionary Baptist Church and he enjoyed fishing, swimming and other outdoor activities as a child. His older brother was killed, in 1951, in the Korean War.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section A2004\_110\_002\_002, TRT: 0:31:06 ?

Robert Stanton attended Huston-Tillotson College in Austin, Texas where he participated in sit-in demonstrations. In 1962, he was selected by his college president and the Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, to be a National Park Ranger in Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming over the summer. After graduating in 1963, he was offered a position in public relations at his alma mater, which also funded his graduate studies at Boston University. He returned to the Parks Service in 1966, working in personnel management and public information; in 1969, he was assigned to the National Capital Region as a management assistant. In 1970, he became the first black National Park superintendent overseeing the Virgin Islands National Park. He was later promoted to Deputy Regional Director of the Southeast Region, then Assistant Director of the National Park Service, and in 1978, Deputy Regional Director of the National Capital Region where he worked with HistoryMaker Dorothy Height to plan the Black Family Reunion.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section A2004\_110\_002\_003, TRT: 0:30:48 ?

Robert Stanton was promoted to Associate Director of Operation for the National Park Service (NPS) in 1987 and Regional Director of the National Capital Region in 1988. As Regional Director, he worked closely with First Lady Hillary Clinton and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. In 1997, after undergoing a Senate confirmation hearing, Stanton was appointed Director of NPS by President Bill Clinton. Soon after being appointed, Stanton underwent congressional oversight hearings regarding NPS's expenses. During his tenure, Congress approved nine new parks, including national historic sites at Little Rock Central High School and Tuskegee Institute, and doubled federal lands highway funds. He started the Public Lands Corps and the Natural Resources Challenge, and expanded and the Parks Classroom Program. Stanton talks about African American's engagement with NPS, how NPS preserves black history, challenges facing NPS and parks he has yet to visit. Grand Teton National Park holds special value for Stanton.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section A2004\_110\_002\_004, TRT: 0:26:23 ?

Robert Stanton was invited in 2001 to teach at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, alongside co-instructor Dr. Robin W. Winks. Stanton's course, National Parks: Lessons in Diversity, Environmental Quality, and Justice, covered National Park Service history and the preservation of biological and cultural diversity. In 2002, Stanton was appointed ambassador by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and attended its World Park Congress alongside six former students. He consults for the Natural Resources Council of America and serves on eight non-profit boards as well as two for-profit boards. At the time of the interview, Stanton planned to serve as a visiting professor at Texas A & M University in

College Station, Texas. Stanton reflects on how he would like to be remembered, his life and his legacy. He concludes by narrating his photographs.

- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:54 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_001E, TRT: 0:29:54 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:22 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_002E, TRT: 0:30:22 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:31 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_003E, TRT: 0:30:31 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_004, TRT: 0:25:21 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_004E, TRT: 0:25:21 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_005, TRT: 0:12:38 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Robert Stanton, Section B2004\_110\_001\_005E, TRT: 0:12:38 ?