

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Isiah M. Warner

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Warner, Isiah M., 1946-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Isiah M. Warner,
Dates:	November 5, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:29:10).
Abstract:	Chemistry professor and research chemist Isiah M. Warner (1946 -) is the first African American vice-chancellor for strategic initiatives at Louisiana State University. He has published over 230 chemistry research articles. Warner was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 5, 2004, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_227
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Chemistry professor and research chemist, Isiah M. Warner was born in DeQuincy, Louisiana, on July 20, 1946 to Humphrey and Erma Warner. He developed an interest in science and mathematics early on and conducted his first experiment by drinking kerosene to see why it created light. Warner graduated as valedictorian of his class from Bunkie, Louisiana's Carver High School in 1964. Warner's interest in chemistry was ignited after participating in a summer program at Southern University in Baton Rouge during high school. He went on to earn his B.S. degree in chemistry in 1968 from the same institution, and went to work as a technician for Battelle Northwest, a private company in the state of Washington that contracted with the Atomic Energy Commission. Warner earned his Ph.D. degree in analytical chemistry from the University of Washington in 1977.

From 1977 to 1982, Warner served as assistant professor of chemistry at Texas A&M University. He was the first African American on the chemistry faculty there. After five years, he achieved tenure and was promoted to associate professor. While at Texas A&M, he researched fluorescent spectroscopy. Warner then joined the faculty at Emory University where he was promoted to full professor in 1986. He served as the Samuel Candler Dobbs professor of chemistry from 1987 until 1992. During the 1988-89 academic year, Warner went on leave to the National Science Foundation where he served as program officer for analytical and surface chemistry. In 1992, Warner joined the faculty at Louisiana State University as the Philip W. West Professor of analytical and environmental chemistry and was promoted to chair of the chemistry department, vice-chancellor for strategic initiatives, and Boyd professor. At LSU, Warner focused his research on chiral drugs and natural drug derivatives.

Throughout his career, Warner published over 230 articles in revered journals, has given hundreds of presentations, and is the holder of five patents. In addition to his own speaking and publishing activities, Warner has chaired over thirty doctoral theses and mentored many students. Warner's awards included the CASE Louisiana Teacher of the Year Award in 2000; the 2000 LSU Distinguished Faculty Award; and the 1997 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring from President Clinton.

Isiah M. Warner and his wife, Della Blount Warner have three children, Isiah, Jr., Edward and Chideha.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Isiah M. Warner was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 5, 2004, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Chemistry professor and research chemist Isiah M. Warner (1946 -) is the first African American vice-chancellor for strategic initiatives at Louisiana State University. He has published over 230 chemistry research articles.

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:

Warner, Isiah M., 1946-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Warner, Isiah M., 1946---Interviews

African American scientists--United States.

African American chemists--United States.

African American chemists--Interviews.

Chemistry--Study and teaching (Higher).

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge, La.)

Occupations:

Research Chemist

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 Isiah M. Warner, November 5, 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).

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 Isiah M. Warner, Section A2004_227_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Isiah Warner was born in 1946 in DeQuincy, Louisiana. His mother, Erma St. Romain, was a cook and a housekeeper and his father, Humphrey Warner, worked as a longshoreman and a painter. When he was two years old, his parents divorced and he and his mother moved to Bunkie, Louisiana where he was raised mostly by his Creole-speaking grandmother. Warner drank kerosene when he was two years old and his mother rushed him to the hospital to have his stomach pumped. He describes this as his first chemistry experiment. He attended Carver Elementary School and Carver High School and picked cotton in the summer to earn money for school expenses. Warner and his brother were altar boys at St. Christopher's Catholic Church, where the priest, Father Pago gave a silver dollar to the brother who performed the best in school.

Slaves--Southern States--Social conditions.

Herbalists--Africa.

Creole dialects--Louisiana.

Catholic Church--Louisiana--Bunkie.

Housing projects, Government--Louisiana--Bunkie.

Video Oral History Interview with Isiah M. Warner, Section A2004_227_001_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Isiah Warner started off with poor performance at Carver High School, but the principal, Prince Albert Frazier, and teachers like Ms. Wickcliffe, were invested in his success and his grades improved. Warner enjoyed playing the baritone saxophone in Mr. Green's music class. He also loved math and science and took chemistry in his sophomore year. Although there was no laboratory, Warner was impressed by the faculty at Carver. He graduated valedictorian and attended a chemistry institute that summer before being admitted to Southern University in 1964. Although Louisiana State University was integrated that same year, Warner believed he made the right choice attending Southern because the faculty nurtured him. Warner visited his high school chemistry teacher [Ms. Blount] where he was introduced to her daughter, Della, who later became his wife. After graduating from Southern University, Warner was hired for a "national need" position at Battelle Northwest.

African American teachers and the community--Louisiana--1960-1970.

Segregation in education--Louisiana--Bunkie.

Segregation in higher education --Louisiana--1960-1970.

Draft--United States--1960-1970.

Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge, La.).

Video Oral History Interview with Isiah M. Warner, Section A2004_227_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Isiah Warner and his wife Della moved to Kennewick, Washington, where they were the only black family in their neighborhood. After five years of working as a technician at Battelle Northwest, Warner questioned his interest in chemistry and took an aptitude test that confirmed that he should remain in the field. He decided to pursue a Ph.D. in analytical chemistry at the University of Washington and completed his degree in 1977. While at the University of

Washington, he learned that he enjoyed teaching. He was recruited by Arthur Martell, Chair of the Chemistry Department at Texas A&M University and achieved early tenure within five years. In 1982, he taught at Emory University in Atlanta and remained there for ten years until 1992, when he continued his teaching and research at Louisiana State University. Warner describes the research in both florescent spectroscopy and chirality that was conducted during his teaching career.

Universities and colleges--United States--Faculty.

College teachers--Professional relationships--United States.

Chemistry--Research.

Texas A & M University. Dept. of Chemistry.

Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge, La.). Dept. of Chemistry.

Emory University.