

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with John Nathan Hill

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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>	Hill, John Nathan, 1947-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Nathan Hill,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 17, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:24:15).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Investment executive John Nathan Hill (1947 - ) was the first African American to serve as National Operations Director for Discover Card. In 1994, he became President and COO of Morgan Stanley/Discover Bank, and relocated to Scotland to serve as Head of Operations for Morgan Stanley's international consumer banking group. Hill was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 17, 2005, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_068
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

John Nathan Hill was born on November 19, 1947 in Boston, Georgia. His mother was a schoolteacher, his father a farmer and the first African American to own and operate a dry cleaner in Boston. In 1965, Hill earned his high school diploma from Magnolia High School in Thomasville. While a student, he participated in track team, glee club, band, Future Farmers of America and the 4-H club.

Hill excelled academically in his two years of undergraduate studies at Clark College in Atlanta (1965- 1967) and moved on to Mercer School of Pharmacy. While in pharmacy school, he interned at Grady Hospital in Atlanta but was drafted into the United States Army before completing his degree.

From 1969 until 1972, Hill served in Vietnam for the Army Security Agency Signal Corp. After his discharge, he earned his B.S. degree in biology and chemistry from Austin Peay State University in Tennessee in 1973.

In 1972, Hill started his fifteen-year career with Sears & Roebuck Company as a credit management trainee in Nashville. He became the first African American to serve in several management positions at the company including credit field representative in Memphis and credit sales and collections manager in Little Rock, Arkansas. In 1987, Hill left Sears to work as national operations director for Discover Card. He served in a number of management positions at Discover until he became President and COO of Morgan Stanley / Discover Bank in 1994. In 2001, Hill transferred to Scotland and served as head of operations for Morgan Stanley's International Consumer Banking Group, a position he kept until he retired in 2004.

Hill is a member of a number of professional banking and financial organizations including: the Delaware Bankers Association, American Bankers Association, American Bankers Council 2000, and the Advisory Board at the University of Delaware, School of Business.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John Nathan Hill was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on March 17, 2005, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Investment executive John Nathan Hill (1947 - ) was the first African American to serve as National Operations Director for Discover Card. In 1994, he became President and COO of Morgan Stanley/Discover Bank, and relocated to Scotland to serve as Head of Operations for Morgan Stanley's international consumer banking group.

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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:

Hill, John Nathan, 1947-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hill, John Nathan, 1947---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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Morgan Stanley & Co.

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### Occupations:

Bank Executive

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 John Nathan Hill, March 17, 2005. 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 John Nathan Hill, Section A2005\_068\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:00 ?  
John Nathan Hill was born on November 19, 1947 in Boston, Georgia to Blanche Hollis and Napoleon Hill. His mother was born in Dixie, Georgia, on January 25, 1919. After attending Fort Valley State College in Fort Valley,

Georgia, she worked as a school teacher for thirty-five years. Outspoken and a fishing enthusiast, she met Hill's father at a school function. Napoleon Hill was born on September 10, 1918 in Boston. Although he received only a sixth grade education, Hill was an industrious farmer and entrepreneur. The only African American to own a dry cleaning business in town, he also served on the deacon board of the family church, Trinity Missionary Baptist Church. Nathan Hill spent his early childhood living with his paternal grandparents John Hill and Gussie Hill, who were farmers. His maternal grandparents were Nellie Hollis and Eddie Hollis, a church minister. Hill recalls playing games with his cousins and his family's holiday traditions. He also talks about his sister, Katie Irene Hamilton.

Video Oral History Interview with John Nathan Hill, Section A2005\_068\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

John Nathan Hill grew up in Boston, Georgia, where his family owned a small plot of land on Railroad Avenue. He recalls the chickens that his family raised, the trains that ran on the railroad near their home, and his mother's and grandmother's cooking. Hill attended North Boston Elementary School until the eighth grade, where he was encouraged by his teacher, Mrs. Abby Lee Barnes. Hill's family were longtime members of Trinity Missionary Baptist church in Boston; and, as his parents were strict disciplinarians, Hill was an obedient student. While attending Magnolia High School in Thomasville, Georgia, he ran track; joined the glee and chorale clubs; played tenor saxophone in the school and concert bands; and participated in the Future Farmers of America and 4-H programs. He also worked part time at his father's friend's pharmacy, where he became interested in becoming a pharmacist. Upon graduating as valedictorian in 1965, Hill enrolled in the pre-pharmacy program at Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with John Nathan Hill, Section A2005\_068\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

John Nathan Hill attended the pre-pharmacy program at Clark College in Atlanta from 1965 to 1967, where he pledged the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and met his future spouse, Laura Vines. In 1967, he transferred to Mercer School of Pharmacy in Atlanta. While interning at Grady Memorial Hospital's pharmacy and at a community pharmacy, Hill opted to discontinue his pharmacy degree. While on a short break in enrollment, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Hill served as a communications specialist from 1969 to 1972, including a year in Vietnam with the Army Security Agency Signal Corp. After his discharge, he studied biology and chemistry at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee, earning a B.S. degree in 1973. In 1972, Hill began his fifteen-year career with Sears, Roebuck and Co. as a credit management trainee. He represented the company throughout the South and became the first African American to serve in several management positions, before being promoted to the Sears headquarters in Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with John Nathan Hill, Section A2005\_068\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

John Nathan Hill joined Sears, Roebuck and Co. as a credit management trainee in Nashville, Tennessee in 1972, and was eventually promoted to the corporate headquarters in Chicago. In 1986, Hill helped Dean Witter Financial Services Group Inc. launch Sears' Discover credit card. From 1991, he managed the card's merchant operations in Columbus, Ohio. When Dean Witter, Discover and Co. became a publically traded company 1993, Hill left Sears as Dean Witter's national operations director. In 1994, he became president and chief operating officer of Dean Witter's Greenwood Trust Company in Dover, Delaware. Hill and his wife, Laura Vines Hill, relocated in 2001 to Scotland, where he served as head of operations for Morgan Stanley Consumer Banking

Group International until his retirement in 2004. Hill and his wife had two children, Tonya L. GoKita and John Nathan Hill, II. Hill reflects upon African Americans in financial institutions, and how conglomerate corporations like Sears changed during the 1990s and 2000s.

Video Oral History Interview with John Nathan Hill, Section A2005\_068\_001\_005, TRT: 0:22:15 ?

John Nathan Hill and his wife, Laura Vines Hill, relocated to Edinburgh, Scotland from 2001 to 2004 while Hill served as the head of operations for Morgan Stanley Consumer Banking Group International until his retirement. They lived near Edinburgh Castle and travelled extensively in Europe. Hill's life and career were strongly influenced by his family and community. He gives advice to young African Americans pursuing a career in finance and banking. Hill would like to be remembered for his committed and concerted effort to make a difference in the lives of others. Hill concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.