

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Warren Morton Washington

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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>	Washington, Warren M.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Warren Morton Washington,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 20, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:48:35).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Atmospheric scientist Warren Morton Washington (1936 - ) developed one of the first atmospheric computer models of the earth's climate, and was elected chairman of the National Science Board in 2002 and 2004. Washington was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 20, 2006, in Boulder, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_080
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Distinguished scientist Warren M. Washington was born on August 28, 1936, in Portland, Oregon. As a high school student, Washington had a keen interest in science; after graduation he went on to earn his B.A. degree in physics and his M.A. degree in meteorology from Oregon State University. After completing his Ph.D. in meteorology at Pennsylvania State University, Washington became a research scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in 1963. While serving in the position of senior scientist at NCAR in 1975, Washington developed one of the first atmospheric computer models of the earth's climate; soon after, he became the head of the organization's Climate Change Research Section in the Climate and Global Dynamics Division. As an expert in atmospheric science, climate research, and computer modeling of the earth's climate, Washington received several presidential appointments. From 1978 to 1984, Washington served on the President's National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere; in 1990, he began serving on the Secretary of Energy's Biological and Environmental Research Advisory Committee; and in 1996, he assumed the chair of the Subcommittee on Global Change. Washington also served on the Modernization Transition Committee and the National Centers for Environment Prediction Advisory Committee of the United States National Weather Service. In April 2000, the United States Secretary of Energy appointed Washington to the Advanced Scientific Computing Advisory Committee. Washington was also appointed to the National Science Board and elected chair of the organization in 2002 and 2004.

Among his many awards and honors, Washington received both the Le Vernier Medal of the Societe Meterologique de France, and the Biological and Environmental Research Program Exceptional Service Award for atmospheric science. Washington's induction into the National Academy of Sciences Portrait Collection of African Americans in Science, Engineering, and Medicine, was announced in 1997. Washington also received the Celebrating Twentieth Century Pioneers in Atmospheric Sciences Award at Howard University, and Reed College in Portland, Oregon, awarded him the Vollum Award for Distinguished Accomplishment in Science and Technology. Washington held memberships in the National Academy of Engineering and the American

Philosophical Society.

In addition to his professional activities, Washington served as a mentor and avid supporter of scholarly programs and outreach organizations that encouraged students to enter the profession of atmospheric sciences.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Warren Morton Washington was conducted by Shawn Wilson on April 20, 2006, in Boulder, Colorado, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Atmospheric scientist Warren Morton Washington (1936 - ) developed one of the first atmospheric computer models of the earth's climate, and was elected chairman of the National Science Board in 2002 and 2004.

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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:

Washington, Warren M.

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Washington, Warren M.--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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## Occupations:

Atmospheric Scientist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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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 Warren Morton Washington, April 20, 2006. 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 Warren Morton Washington, Section A2006\_080\_001\_001,  
TRT: 0:28:33 ?

Warren Washington begins by talking about his family background. His mother,

Dorothy Grace Morton, taught Washington proper English and was a very articulate person. Washington's maternal grandmother, Bessie was from Texas, and his maternal grandfather, Wert, was very religious. Together, they moved to Oregon. Bessie was the first free generation of her family, and Wert came from an upper-middle-class family in Virginia. Washington's father was originally named George Washington, but he did not like that and changed it to Edwin Washington. Edwin was a waiter for the Union Pacific Railroad and had a college degree. Washington's paternal grandfather, George, owned a store in Birmingham, Alabama. Washington's parents met at a dance but his father was often away so they wrote many love letters to each other.

African American families— Portland (Or.)

Family history.

African American parents.

Love-letters.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Morton Washington, Section A2006\_080\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

Warren Washington continues to talk about his family and his childhood. His maternal great grandmother was Isadora Sullavou Balantine. Washington also mentions a cousin he had who went to an all-white academy and then graduated from Harvard. Washington was the third of five siblings including, Edwin, Ronald, Darryl, and Glenn. He remembers going to church on Sundays and singing in the choir. He was also in the Boy Scouts, which was integrated at the time. Washington attended Highland Grade School and Jefferson High School, where he was the vice president of the Junior NAACP. Washington recalls that his mother and his teachers encouraged his interest in science. At Oregon State University, Washington worked at the Good Samaritan hospital.

African American families— Portland (Or.)

African American grandparents.

Student activities.

Science—Study and teaching.

Good Samaritan Hospital & Medical Center (Portland, Or.)

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Morton Washington, Section A2006\_080\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:32 ?

Warren Washington talks about the lack of segregation in Oregon, and that a lot of African Americans had moved there to help during World War II. Washington's uncle, however, fought in the war and said that he was treated poorly in the segregated military. Mr. Wood, a mentor of Washington's, recognized his physics ability, but his counselor told him he should go to business school, not college. At Oregon State University, there weren't a lot of black students, and Washington took difficult physics curriculum. His roommate had never really interacted with a black person before, but they became friends. Washington joined Alpha Phi Alpha after he and a group of peers went to the Oregon State University president to protest segregated Greek life to no avail.

Oregon—Race relations.

African Americans—Segregation.

Mentoring in science.

Physics—education.

Oregon State University.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Morton Washington, Section A2006\_080\_001\_004,

TRT: 0:30:41 ?

Warren Washington talks about his graduate school experience at Penn State University where he earned his Ph.D. Washington's dissertation examined the atmosphere in relation to physics, and he created early computer models for weather forecasting. He was hired at NCAR as a young Ph.D., and though he was the first African American in his position, there was not a lot of racial prejudice. Washington was appointed to the National Science Board by President Bill Clinton for a six-year term and was reappointed before Clinton left office. President Jimmy Carter also appointed Washington to the Committee on Oceans and Atmospheres. Washington recalls that his parents didn't completely understand, but he used to send them clips of his accomplishments. Scientists—United States—Intellectual life—20th century.

Doctoral thesis.

National Center for Atmospheric Research (U.S.)

National Science Board (U.S.)--Officials and employees.

Presidential appointments.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Morton Washington, Section A2006\_080\_001\_005,  
TRT: 0:30:13 ?

Warren Washington comments on the differences between presidents Regan and Carter, and also says that President Bush's Chief of Staff misquoted him in an attempt to make it look like climate change was not a big deal. Washington was working with weather models to simulate real climate conditions and noted that there was significant change happening in terms of global warming, especially in the sub-tropics, which are populated by poor people. Washington explains how disasters like Hurricane Katrina can often be attributed to global warming. As Chair of the National Science Board, Washington attended appropriations hearings, and in one instance he was asked about the idea of sending people to the moon and Mars, but he concluded that it would have a negative effect on the budget.

Presidents—America.

Climate change.

Hurricane Katrina, 2005—Environmental aspects.

National Science Board (U.S.)—Officials and employees.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Morton Washington, Section A2006\_080\_001\_006,  
TRT: 0:19:40 ?

Warren Washington continues to talk about working under different presidents, and at the insistence of Al Gore, Washington's team got faster computers. He then goes on to talk about his mentees at Penn State University. One student said that Washington was the reason she went into science. Among his awards and honors, Washington received the E.B. Lemon Distinguished Alumni Award, the National Academy of Engineering award, an honor at Reed College, and became an honorary member of the American Neurological Society. Washington says that the most rewarding part of his career was working at CNAR and writing a book with Claire Parkinson on the climate system. He also thanks his wife for taking care of him. Washington stepped down as Chair of the National Science Board in 2006.

Gore, Al, 1948-

High performance computing.

Mentoring.

Science—Awards.

Parkinson, Claire L.