

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. John Cashin

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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>	Cashin, John L. (John Logan), 1928-2011
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John Cashin,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 24, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:12:35).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights activist Dr. John Cashin (1928 - 2011 ) helped found the National Democratic Party of Alabama, and led a delegation to the Democratic National Convention in 1968. Cashin also served as Chief of Dental Services for U.S. Army soldiers stationed in France in the 1950s. Cashin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 24, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_158
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist Dr. John Logan Cashin, Jr. was born on April 16, 1928 in Huntsville, Alabama to Grace Brandon Cashin, a school principal, and Dr. John Logan Cashin, Sr., a dentist. He and his older brother, Herschel, who were always in the same year at school, were co-valedictorians of their Alabama A&M High School graduating class. He spent two years at Fisk University and then attended Tennessee State University, both located in Nashville, Tennessee. Cashin then received his D.D.S. degree from Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee in 1952.

Immediately after Cashin graduated from medical school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he was made a first lieutenant and Chief of Dental Services for soldiers stationed near Fountainebleau, France. While in France, Cashin became familiar with a number of African American expatriates, including writer Richard Wright and Ollie Stewart, from the "Chicago Defender."

After two years in the U.S. Army, Cashin returned to the United States, where he became active in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1967, he helped found the National Democratic Party of Alabama (NDPA) and was elected as the organization's first party chairman. He led a delegation to the Democratic National Convention in 1968, challenging the representative nature of the regular delegation and its loyalty to the national Democratic Party.

Cashin ran for Mayor of Huntsville, and in 1970, he was the NDPA's candidate for governor, where he ran against George Wallace. He received more than sixteen-percent of the votes in that election. Between 1968 and 1974, the NDPA facilitated the election of more than a hundred African Americans to public office in Alabama. In 1974, the Alabama Democratic Party surrendered and integrated their ballot.

Cashin passed away on March 23, 2011 at age 82.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. John Cashin was conducted by Denise Gines on April 24, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist Dr. John Cashin (1928 - 2011 ) helped found the National Democratic Party of Alabama, and led a delegation to the Democratic National Convention in 1968. Cashin also served as Chief of Dental Services for U.S. Army soldiers stationed in France in the 1950s.

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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:

Cashin, John L. (John Logan), 1928-2011

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Cashin, John L. (John Logan), 1928-2011 --Interviews

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African American dentists--Interviews.

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African American political activists--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:

Civil Rights Activist

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 Dr. John Cashin, April 24, 2007. 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 Dr. John Cashin, Section A2007\_158\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?  
Dr. John Cashin was born on April 16, 1928 in Huntsville, Alabama to Grace

Brandon Cashin and John Cashin, Sr. During Reconstruction, his paternal grandfather, Herschel V. Cashin, moved to Huntsville from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and became Alabama's first African American lawyer. He helped educate and distribute land to the freedmen, and wrote a book about the uncredited victory of the all-black 10th Cavalry Regiment at the Battle of San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War. Cashin's maternal grandparents, Idella Brandon and Claude Brandon, lived in Brandontown, a section of Huntsville named for their extended family. His maternal grandfather worked as a general contractor, and later opened Brandon's Grocery in Huntville's black business district. Cashin's mother attended Fisk University, where she was a Jubilee Singer; and went on to become a teacher. As a boy, Cashin befriended the future civil rights leader Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, who also grew up in Huntsville.

African American families--Alabama.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

Alabama A & M University.

Fisk University.

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania.

Grandparents.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John Cashin, Section A2007\_158\_001\_002, TRT: 0:27:40 ?

Dr. John Cashin's paternal great-great-grandfather, John Cashin, migrated from Ireland to Augusta, Georgia. His son married a mixed race woman; and their son, Cashin's paternal grandfather Herschel V. Cashin, became a lawyer. Cashin's father, John Cashin, Sr., trained as a dentist at Meharry Medical College; and, from a young age, Cashin was encouraged to pursue a career in dentistry as well. Cashin was raised in the Grove, an African American community in Huntsville, Alabama. He began kindergarten at three years old, and was taught to read using a Ouija board. In the third grade, Cashin entered William Hooper Councill High School, and became the academic rival of his older brother, Herschel B. Cashin. He had a few white friends until reaching the age of twelve years old, when one of their fathers told Cashin to begin addressing his white friends as mister. Cashin went on to attend the Alabama A and M High School in Normal, Alabama, where he lived in the dormitories and joined the National Honors Society.

African Americans--Education (Elementary).

African Americans--Education (Secondary).

Race relations--Alabama--Huntsville.

African Americans--Alabama--Huntsville--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John Cashin, Section A2007\_158\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Dr. John Cashin grew up in Huntsville, Alabama, where he played the trumpet and sang in the choir of the Lakeside United Methodist Church. He learned about institutional racism through his relatives' recollections of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, which stifled the progress of Reconstruction. Cashin also experienced racism firsthand at the segregated YMCA, which was Huntsville's only vendor of specialty model airplane supplies. He enlisted the help of a white friend to purchase components for a model, and was harassed by an adult while picking them up. At Alabama A and M High School in Normal, Alabama, Cashin was valedictorian of his class and the town's first African American Eagle Scout. He matriculated at Fisk University, where his paternal aunt led the English department and his uncle sat on the board of trustees. Cashin left Fisk University after being caught serving alcohol in his dormitory, and was admitted

to the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College on a music scholarship.

YMCA of the USA.

African American churches--Alabama--Huntsville.

African American universities and colleges.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

African American college students--Conduct of life.

African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Fisk University.

Tennessee State University.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

African Americans--Education (Secondary).

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John Cashin, Section A2007\_158\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Dr. John Cashin pledged in 1942 to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity at Fisk University. After transferring to the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College, he took classes at both schools, including a course with future Fisk University President James Lawson; and received tutoring from his fraternity brother, Robert A. Ellis, Jr. Due to his strong grades, Cashin was admitted to Meharry Medical College following his junior year, and was guaranteed an undergraduate degree on the condition that he complete his first year of dental school at the top of his class. When Cashin graduated from Meharry Medical College in 1952, he held the highest grade point average for all four years. Cashin went on to be commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army, where he served as the chief of dental services for eleven thousand people. He was stationed in Fontainebleau, France, where he met American expatriates like journalist Ollie Stewart.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

World War, 1939-1945.

African American dentists.

Dentistry--Study and teaching--Tennessee.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

Meharry Medical College.

Wright, Richard, 1908-1960.

Stewart, Ollie Anderson, 1906-1977.

Chicago defender.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John Cashin, Section A2007\_158\_001\_005, TRT: 0:17:15 ?

Dr. John Cashin served as a captain in the U.S. Army during the 1950s. While deployed to France, he befriended author Richard Wright and other American expatriates. He also experienced life without segregation, and became determined to protest for civil rights upon returning to Huntsville, Alabama. He declined the opportunity to serve as a captain in Japan, preferring to be discharged to the United States. Cashin met his wife, Joan Cashin, in France, where she was celebrating her graduation from Fisk University. She supported his plan to join the Civil Rights Movement; and, in 1957, the couple married in Birmingham, Alabama. Cashin recalls a neighbor's warning about the danger of becoming involved in the movement; and the bravery of his paternal grandfather, Herschel V. Cashin, who passed as white to spy on meetings of Ku Klux Klan in Reconstruction-era Alabama.

African Americans--Alabama--Social conditions.

African Americans--Civil rights--Alabama.

Civil rights movements.

African American couples--Alabama.