

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Demetrius Venable

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Venable, Demetrius, 1947-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Venable,
Dates:	June 14, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:34:43).
Abstract:	Physicist and physics professor Demetrius Venable (1947 -) was instrumental in the founding of the doctorate program in physics at Hampton University. He was also influential in establishing the atmospheric physics research at the Howard University Beltsville Research Campus and the Raman Lidar Program. Venable was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 14, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_133
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Physicist and physics professor Demetrius D. Venable was born on October 11, 1947 in Powhatan, Virginia to Josephine Viola Bell Venable and James Bernard Venable. He attended Pocahontas High School where Venable's father, who was his high school math teacher, helped spark Venable's interest in math and science. He received his B.S. degree in physics from Virginia State College in 1970. Continuing with his studies, he earned his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in physics from American University in 1972 and 1974, respectively.

Upon completion of his Ph.D. program, Venable was hired by IBM-East Fishkill where he studied semi-conductor measurement technology as a senior associate engineer. After two years with the company, Venable returned to academia at Saint Paul's College as an assistant professor of physics and director of the Cooperative Physics Program. In 1978, he joined the faculty of Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) as an assistant professor of physics. One of Venable's major accomplishments at Hampton was his instrumental role in founding the doctorate program in physics. He held numerous positions at Hampton, ultimately becoming executive vice president and provost in 1994. When he moved to Howard University in 1995, he was named the chairman of the department of physics and astronomy, a post that he held until 2007. During his tenure at Howard University, Venable helped create the interdisciplinary doctorate program in atmospheric sciences. He also was instrumental in establishing atmospheric physics research at the Howard University Beltsville Research Campus and the Raman Lidar Program. With a specialty in optical physics, Venable has studied water vapor mixing ratios and atmospheric dynamics to further his group's goal of weather and climate predictability.

Throughout his career, Venable has received numerous recognitions including the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's Distinguished Public Service Medal and the White House Initiative Science and Technology Advisory Committee's Faculty Award for Excellence in Science and Technology. Venable served as chairman of the American Institute of Physics' Advisory Committee on Education from 1998 to 2001 and he is a charter fellow

of the National Society of Black Physicists. He has served on various boards and committees at the state and national levels including on the U. S. Department of Energy's Fusion Energy Advisory Committee, The American Association of Physics Teachers, The Virginia Academy of Science, The Southeastern Universities Research Association, The Virginia Aerospace Business Roundtable and The National Physical Sciences Consortium. Venable is married Geri Turner. They have raised two children, Juanita and Jessica.

Demetrius Venable was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 14, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Demetrius Venable was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 14, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Physicist and physics professor Demetrius Venable (1947 -) was instrumental in the founding of the doctorate program in physics at Hampton University. He was also influential in establishing the atmospheric physics research at the Howard University Beltsville Research Campus and the Raman Lidar Program.

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:

Venable, Demetrius, 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Venable, Demetrius, 1947- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Howard University

Occupations:

Physicist

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 Demetrius Venable, June 14, 2012. 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 Demetrius Venable, Section A2012_133_001_001, TRT: 1:30:16 ?

Demetrius Venable describes his family background. Venable was born in Powhatan, Virginia in 1947, where his mother, Viola Bell, was also born in 1921. Several generations of her family settled in Powhatan, and worked in construction. Viola Bell completed high school, but never attended college. She spent her life caring for her family and others in the neighborhood. Venable's father, James Venable, was born in New York City in 1913. After his father's death, he moved to Powhatan to be raised by his paternal aunt and uncle. James Venable completed schooling in Norfolk and Richmond, Virginia. He began college at Virginia Union University before enlisting in World War II. After returning from the war, he continued his education at Virginia State University, Petersburg, where he obtained his bachelor's and master's degrees. James Venable spent his career as a teacher in the Powhatan school system.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

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Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Venable, Section A2012_133_001_002, TRT: 2:29:59 ?

Demetrius Venable describes growing up in Powhatan, Virginia. After serving in World War II, Venable's father, James Venable, began teaching at Pocahontas High School in Powhatan. He also obtained his B.S. and M.S. degrees as a part-time student at Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia. Venable has two older sisters, Yvonne Charles and Xochela James. From 1954 to 1966, he attended Pocahontas Elementary School and Pocahontas High School, the school system for African American students in Powhatan. Venable attributes his interest in science and mathematics to his father, who was his math teacher in high school. Venable's family was deeply committed to church and also participated in the Civil Rights Movement. The schools in Powhatan were integrated when Venable was in ninth grade.

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Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Venable, Section A2012_133_001_003, TRT: 3:29:04 ?

Demetrius Venable graduated from Pocohontas High School in 1966, a few years after the desegregation of the school system in Powhatan, Virginia. His father, James Venable, became the first principal at a fully-integrated school in Powhatan County. As a young boy, Venable attended summer bible school classes at St. Frances de Sales Girls School and St. Emma Military Academy in Belmead, Virginia. In 1966, Venable began his bachelor's degree at Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia, where he was mentored by Dr. Ruben

McDaniel and Dr. James Davenport. Venable chose to major in physics because it allowed him to learn about his two favorite subjects, mathematics and science. After earning his B.S. degree in physics in 1970, Venable began working toward his Ph.D. in physics at American University in Washington, D.C.

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Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Venable, Section A2012_133_001_004, TRT: 4:30:33 ?

Demetrius Venable pursued his Ph.D. degree at American University, under the mentorship of Dr. Richard Kay in the area of atomic, molecular and optical physics (AMO). Venable's dissertation research focused on multi-photon transitions. In 1974, Venable joined IBM in East Fishkill, New York, and worked on noncontact optical measurements in monitoring the properties of semi-conductors. In 1976, Venable joined St. Paul's College in Virginia, where he taught physics. During his summers at St. Paul, Venable researched optics and lasers at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas and NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia. In 1978, Venable joined Hampton University as an assistant professor and helped establish a graduate program in physics and a dual-degree engineering program. He also created a separate department for physics and engineering, and collaborated with the present-day Jefferson Laboratory. Venable was promoted to full professorship in the late 1980s.

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Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Venable, Section A2012_133_001_005, TRT: 5:34:51 ?

Venable spent seventeen years at Hampton University, where he worked with the university president, Bill Harvey, to establish the university's first Ph.D. program. From 1972 to 1995, he served as chairman of the physics and engineering sciences department, dean of the graduate school, vice president for research, and executive vice president and provost. In 1995, Venable joined Howard University as chairman of the physics department. Venable's research focuses on using LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) to study atmospheric changes. Venable believes that his legacy lies in his contribution toward the establishment of the Ph.D. program in physics at Hampton University and the Howard University Program in Atmospheric Sciences (HUPAS). He hopes to be remembered as a researcher and an educator. Venable and his wife live in Powhatan, Virginia, and have two daughters.

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