

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

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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>	Slaughter, John Brooks, 1934-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Slaughter,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 28, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:05:42).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Electrical engineer and education administrator John Slaughter (1934 - ) was the first African American to direct the National Science Foundation and developed computer algorithms for system optimization and discrete signal processing. Slaughter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 28, 2012, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_205
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Electrical engineer and academic administrator John Brooks Slaughter was born in Topeka, Kansas, on March 16, 1934. His father, Reuben Brooks Slaughter, was hard-working and held a variety of jobs to support his family; and, his mother, Dora Reeves Slaughter, was a homemaker. Slaughter graduated from Topeka High School in 1951 and enrolled at Washburn University, but transferred after two years to attend Kansas State University. There, he earned his B.S. degree in electrical engineering in 1956. Slaughter went on to receive his Ph.D. in engineering from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1961, and his Ph.D. in engineering sciences from the University of California, San Diego in 1971.

Slaughter joined the U.S. Navy Electronics Laboratory in San Diego in 1960. In 1975, he became Director of the Applied Physics Laboratory of the University of Washington; and, in 1977, Slaughter was appointed Assistant Director for Astronomics, Atmospherics, Earth and Ocean Sciences at the National Science Foundation. From 1979 to 1980, Slaughter was Provost and Academic Vice President at Washington State University. There, he served as the director of the National Science Foundation in Washington D.C. for two years. Between 1982 and 1988, Slaughter was the Chancellor of the University of Maryland, College Park, where he made major advances in recruitment and retention of African-American students and faculty. Slaughter then was elected President of Occidental College in Los Angeles from 1988 through July 1999. In August 1999, he assumed the position of Melbo Professor of Leadership in Education at the University of Southern California. In June 2000, Slaughter was named President and CEO of The National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, Inc.

Slaughter holds honorary degrees from more than 25 institutions of higher education. He was also a recipient of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Award in 1997, and UCLA's Medal of Excellence in 1989. Slaughter was honored with the first U.S. Black Engineer of the Year award in 1987, and received the Arthur M. Bueche Award from the National Academy of Engineering in 2004, where he is also a fellow. Slaughter is married to Dr. Ida Bernice Slaughter, an educational consultant and former school administrator. They have two children: a son, Dr.

John Brooks Slaughter, Jr., DVM, and a daughter, Ms. Jacqueline Michelle Slaughter.

John Brooks Slaughter was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 28, 2012.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John Slaughter was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 28, 2012, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Electrical engineer and education administrator John Slaughter (1934 - ) was the first African American to direct the National Science Foundation and developed computer algorithms for system optimization and discrete signal processing.

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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:

Slaughter, John Brooks, 1934-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Slaughter, John Brooks, 1934- --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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University of Southern California, Los Angeles

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## Occupations:

Electrical Engineer

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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 John Slaughter, November 28, 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).

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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 Slaughter, Section A2012\_205\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:23 ?

John Slaughter was born in Topeka, Kansas on March 16, 1934. His mother, Dora Reeves, was born in Topeka, Kansas in 1897. Her parents migrated to Kansas from Tennessee during the period called the Great Migration. Slaughter's father, Reuben Brooks Slaughter, was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 1895. He worked as a coal miner until he was injured in an accident that resulted in severe burns and loss of vision in one eye. He later worked as a custodian and as a used furniture salesman. Reuben Slaughter married Dora Reeves in 1933. The couple adopted one child and had three more of their own.

African Americans--Migrations--History--20th century.

African American fathers--Employment.

African American coal miners--Wounds and injuries.

African American families--Southern States.

Video Oral History Interview with John Slaughter, Section A2012\_205\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:44 ?

John Slaughter was raised in Topeka, Kansas. His childhood neighborhood was located near the famous Tennessee Town. Though his neighborhood was segregated, Slaughter had a number of white friends. He attended segregated Buchanan Elementary School. Initially, English was his favorite subject, but he later became interested in math and science. Slaughter then attended Roosevelt Junior High School. Throughout his early education, Slaughter was mentored by a number of great teachers, including Ms. Althea McBrier, Mr. Burla Ross, and Mr. Howard Anderson. Slaughter grew up in an important period in the Civil Rights Movement. Though his parents were not directly involved, his cousin, Lucinda Todd was heavily involved with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). During his youth, Slaughter demonstrated his talent for fixing electronics, which led to his interest in engineering.

Childhood and youth--Kansas--Topeka.

Segregation--Kansas.

Todd, Lucinda, 1903-1996

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--People--Kansas.

Engineering--Vocational guidance.

Video Oral History Interview with John Slaughter, Section A2012\_205\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:43 ?

John Slaughter graduated from Topeka High School in 1951. Upon graduation, Slaughter wanted to attend the Kansas State University to study engineering. However, he did not have all of the necessary math and science prerequisites. Instead, Slaughter enrolled in Washburn University to take additional math and science courses. During this time, Slaughter also took a number of liberal arts courses. These courses had a profound impact on Slaughter, causing him to become a lifelong proponent of liberal arts education. While at Washburn University, Slaughter was influenced by Ms. Helen Deel and Mr. Marcoux. After attending Washburn University for two years, he transferred to Kansas State University. During this time, the Supreme Court in 1954 declared segregation of schools illegal in the Brown vs. the Board of Education case. Upon graduation from Kansas State University, Slaughter began working at General Dynamics in San Diego, California.

African American college students--Kansas.

Education, Humanistic--United States.

Mentoring in education--Kansas.

Topeka (Kan.).--Board of Education--Trials, litigation, etc.--History.

Segregation in education--Law and legislation--United States--History.

Video Oral History Interview with John Slaughter, Section A2012\_205\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:03 ?

John Slaughter began working at General Dynamics in San Diego, California as an entry level engineer in 1956. He initially worked in the aircraft company, but later moved to the missile division. In 1960, Slaughter began working at the U.S. Navy Electronics Laboratory. During this time, Slaughter was also working on obtaining his M.S. in engineering which he secured in 1961. In 1971, Slaughter completed his Ph.D. degree from University of California, San Diego. In 1975, Slaughter joined the faculty at the University of Washington as the Director of the Applied Physics department. In this role, Slaughter's research focused on acoustics for missiles and fish migration. Slaughter was then approached by the National Science Foundation, and served as the Assistant Director for Astronomic, Atmospherics, Earth and Ocean Sciences. Slaughter directed the activities on Antarctica, and even had the opportunity to visit the South Pole.

General Dynamics Corporation--Employees.

African American engineers--Employment.

Engineering--Study and teaching (Higher)--United States.

University of Washington. Department of Physics--Faculty.

National Science Foundation (U.S.). Directorate for Astronomical, Atmospheric, Earth, and Ocean Sciences. Division of Polar Programs.

Video Oral History Interview with John Slaughter, Section A2012\_205\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:25 ?

John Slaughter worked as a director of the National Science Foundation from 1980 to 1982. During this time, Slaughter worked to restore federal funding to science education programs. In 1982, Slaughter became Chancellor of the University of Maryland. He worked to increase diversity and strengthen the institution academically. It was during Slaughter's tenure that the Len Bias tragedy occurred. This presented a major challenge for him as the president of the university. Slaughter was then recruited to serve as president of Occidental College. In this role, Slaughter worked to build relationships with the City of Los Angeles and increase diversity.

National Science Foundation (U.S.)--Appropriations and expenditures.

Federal aid to education--United States.

Universities and colleges--Administration--United States.

Bias, Len, 1963-1986.

Education, Higher--Aims and objectives--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with John Slaughter, Section A2012\_205\_001\_006, TRT: 6:27:57 ?

John Slaughter led Occidental College for one year. During his time there, he constructed new buildings and expanded and diversified the faculty. Occidental College has had some very prestigious students, including President Barack Obama. Slaughter also served as the President and CEO of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, which works to increase the number of minorities in engineering. In 2009, Slaughter joined the faculty of the University of Southern California, where he teaches courses that discuss the relationship between science and ethics, and globalism. Slaughter hopes for improvements in the quality of education, increased educational achievement, and stronger families within the African American community. He feels that his legacy is his lifetime of commitment to excellence and equity. Slaughter would like to be remembered as someone that cared about people and helped them to live happy and fulfilling lives.

Occidental College--Presidents.

Occidental College--Alumni and alumnae.

National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (U.S.).

University of Southern California--Faculty.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Social aspects.

Video Oral History Interview with John Slaughter, Section A2012\_205\_001\_007, TRT: 7:09:27 ?

John Slaughter describes his photos.

Photographs.