

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Alfred Msezane

---

## 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>	Msezane, Alfred Z.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Msezane,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 11, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:54:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Physicist Alfred Msezane (1938 - ) , an internationally renowned theoretical physicist, is the director of the Center for Theoretical Studies of Physical Systems (CTSPS) at Clark Atlanta University. Msezane was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 11, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_245
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Research physicist Alfred Z. Msezane was born on December 31, 1938 in South Africa. His father, Albert, was a businessman and his mother, Esther, a housewife. Msezane enrolled in the University of South Africa in 1960, where he studied the shape and behavior of one of the most fundamental particles – the electron. Msezane graduated from the University of South Africa in 1964 with his B.S. degree in physics. Msezane then travelled to Canada to conduct research and study at the University of Saskatchewan in Ontario, Canada, where he received his M.S. degree in physics in 1968. Msezane returned to South Africa for a year to conduct research at the Nuclear Physics Research Unit of Witwaterstrand University. Msezane received his Ph.D. degree in physics from the University of Western Ontario in 1973.

Msezane started his long career as a college professor at the University of New Brunswick in 1973 and became a physics instructor in 1976. Msezane immigrated to United States from Canada to complete his postdoctoral research at the Georgia State University in 1974. From 1978 to 1980, he served as a visiting professor at Louisiana State University. In 1980, Msezane joined the faculty of Morehouse College as an assistant professor of physics. He left Morehouse College in 1983 to become a professor at Atlanta University and served as chair of the physics department from 1986 to 1989. In 1988, Atlanta University merged with Clark University to become Clark Atlanta University, and Msezane remained on as a professor of physics. Msezane is the director of the Center for Theoretical Studies of Physical Systems (CTSPS) at Clark Atlanta University. His research team investigates mathematical physics theory, solid matter, and image processing. Msezane's research on electron interaction with matter and electron configuration within the atom has resulted in over 260 research papers published in scholarly journals.

Msezane is also a member of several professional societies, including the American Physical Society (APS) and the National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP). Msezane was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science degree from the University of Fort Hare (South Africa) in 1998, and is a recipient of the World University Service

Scholarship.

Alfred Msezane works in Atlanta, Georgia.

Alfred Msezane was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 11, 2012.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Alfred Msezane was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 11, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Physicist Alfred Msezane (1938 - ), an internationally renowned theoretical physicist, is the director of the Center for Theoretical Studies of Physical Systems (CTSPS) at Clark Atlanta University.

---

## 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:

Msezane, Alfred Z.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Msezane, Alfred Z.--Interviews

---

# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

Clark Atlanta 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 Alfred Msezane, December 11, 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 Alfred Msezane, Section A2012\_245\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:52 ?

Alfred Msezane was born and raised near Johannesburg, South Africa, and belongs to the Zulu tribe. Msezane's family lived under the circumstances created by European colonization of South Africa. His mother, Esther Msezane, was born in 1921 in neighboring Swaziland. Her family lived as "squatters", or African farm laborers, on land that had been seized from the African natives by the European colonists. Msezane's father, Albert Msezane, was born in 1916 in the town of Piet Retif, South Africa. Although his parents moved to Johannesburg in search of greater opportunities and a life beyond that of farm laborers, as a young boy, Msezane lived on a farm with his grandmother, and worked as a shepherd. Msezane describes his grandmother's strong personality and her knowledge of traditional medicine. He also describes the colonial history of South Africa and the system of apartheid.

Families--South Africa.

Zulu (African people).

Agricultural laborers--South Africa.

Grandmothers--South Africa.

South Africa--Colonization--History.

Apartheid--South Africa--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Msezane, Section A2012\_245\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:33 ?

Alfred Msezane's father, Albert Msezane, was born in 1916 in the town of Piet Retief, South Africa. He belonged to the Zulu tribe, and was raised by his grandmother. Albert Msezane attended school until the second grade, and worked on a farm as a youngster. Msezane's parents met and married in Piet Retief in the 1930s, and then moved to Johannesburg, where they raised Msezane and his brother, Richard. Msezane describes his father's successful business in livestock trading, in their vibrant township of Kwathema, Johannesburg. He also describes the history of the Zulus, the South African liberation efforts, city life in South Africa, and his childhood memories of the farmland of Piet Retief and the gold mines of Johannesburg.

African business enterprises--South Africa.

Livestock--South Africa.

Childhood and youth--South Africa.

Farms--Johannesburg (South Africa).

Gold mines and mining--South Africa--Johannesburg.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Msezane, Section A2012\_245\_001\_003, TRT: 3:28:45 ?

Alfred Msezane attended school in Johannesburg, South Africa. He describes his keen interest and aptitude for mathematics since the days of his early schooling at St. Louis Catholic School. Msezane attended Thlakula School from grades seven to nine, and graduated from InKamana High School in 1959. In 1960, Msezane received a Rotary International Scholarship, and enrolled at the University of Fort Hare for his B.Sc. degree in physics. The enforcement of the apartheid system of racial discrimination refused him the freedom to choose a university that did not accept non-white students. Msezane earned his B.Sc.-Honors degree in physics in 1965. He describes the differences between the South African British education system and the American education system. Following his desire to pursue a doctoral degree in physics, Msezane accepted a World University Scholarship to begin his Ph.D. degree at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

Education--South Africa--Johannesburg.

Mathematical ability in children--South Africa--Johannesburg.

Rotary International--Scholarships.

Physics--study and teaching (Higher)--South Africa.

Apartheid--South Africa--Education.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Msezane, Section A2012\_245\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:16 ?

Alfred Msezane left South Africa in 1965, to attend the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, where he focused on the structure of the deuteron. After completing his M.S. degree in theoretical nuclear physics in 1968, Msezane returned to Johannesburg to begin his doctoral degree in physics at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). Msezane's research was cut short by complications created by the apartheid government, and in 1969, he once again returned to Canada to begin his dissertation on collision theory at the University of Western Ontario. Upon his return to Canada, Msezane married Gail P. Msezane, whom he had met at the University of Saskatchewan. After earning his Ph.D. degree in physics in 1974, Msezane went on to a post-doctoral position with Steve Mason at Georgia State University. From 1976 to 1980, Msezane served on the physics faculty at the University of New Brunswick and later at Louisiana State University.

University of Saskatchewan--Students.

Physics--study and teaching (Higher).

Apartheid--South Africa--Education.

Married students--Canada.

Universities and colleges--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Msezane, Section A2012\_245\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:26 ?

After briefly serving on the physics faculty at Louisiana State University from 1978 to 1980, Alfred Msezane was recruited as an assistant professor of physics at Morehouse College, by its president, Hugh Gloster. During his time at Morehouse College, Msezane managed research grants from the U.S. Department of Energy (DoE) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). In 1982, Msezane was promoted to the position of associate professor, and in 1983, he accepted a full professorship in the Department of Physics at Clark Atlanta University, where he currently serves. During his early years at Clark Atlanta University, Msezane and his collaborator, Carlos Handy, were successful in advancing the university's reputation in research and development through their publication record and conference proceedings. Msezane discusses the importance of formal education, and the need for more African and African American doctoral graduates. He also describes his visits to his home country of South Africa.

Universities and colleges--Faculty.

African American universities and colleges.

Morehouse College--Presidents.

Research grants--United States--Management.

African Americans--Education, Higher--Aims and objectives.

South Africa--Description and travel.

Video Oral History Interview with Alfred Msezane, Section A2012\_245\_001\_006, TRT: 6:29:28 ?

Since his recruitment to Clark Atlanta University in 1983, Alfred Msezane has remained on the physics faculty, and currently serves as a professor of physics and the director of the Center for Theoretical Studies of Physical Systems. Over the course of his career, Msezane has been involved in numerous conference

proceedings and research collaborations, nationally as well as internationally. He was elected as a fellow of the Institute of Physics and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in 2011. Msezane reflects upon his career and his legacy. He also talks about his family, and describes his photographs.

Clark Atlanta University. Department of Physics--Faculty.

Clark Atlanta University. Center for Theoretical Studies of Physical Systems--Directors.

Institute of Physics (Great Britain).

American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Photographs.