

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Clifford Houston

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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>	Houston, Clifford, 1949-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Clifford Houston,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 31, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:19:36).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Microbiologist Clifford Houston (1949 - ) , the first African American elected as president of the American Society for Microbiology, is the Herman Barnett Distinguished Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at University of Texas Medical Branch. Houston was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 31, 2013, in Galveston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_030
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Microbiologist Clifford Wayne Houston was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on December 3, 1949. Houston attended Oklahoma State University where he earned his B.S. degree in microbiology and chemistry in 1972, and his M.S. degree in biology in 1974. He went on to receive his Ph.D. degree in microbiology and immunology from the University of Oklahoma in 1979. Upon completion, Houston was awarded a James W. McLaughlin postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB).

Houston began at UTMB in 1981 as an assistant professor. He was then promoted to associate professor with tenure in 1987, and became Full Professor and Associate Vice President for Educational Outreach in 1991. As a researcher at UTMB, Houston focused on the role that bacterial toxins play in the pathogenesis of disease. His findings have been published in academic journals such as the *Journal of Bacteriology*, the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* and the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*. As an administrator, Houston participated in the management development program at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University in 1994. In 1997, Houston was named the Herman Barnett Distinguished Professor of Microbiology and Immunology. He also served as deputy associate administrator for education in the Office of Education at NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. from 2003 to 2005. At NASA, he provided day-to-day oversight and guidance for three primary divisions: elementary and secondary education, higher education and informal education.

Houston has been active in many professional organizations, including serving as chair of the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students Steering & Planning Committee, and chair of the American Society for Microbiology Education Board. He also sat on the National Institutes of General Medical Sciences External Advisory Council. In 2011, Houston was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services to the National Advisory Board for Bio-security.

Throughout his career, Houston has received numerous honors and awards. He received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring in 2000. Houston was elected to the American Academy of Microbiology in 1997; and, in 2006, he became the first African American elected as president of the American Society for Microbiology – the world’s largest professional biological research organization. Houston also continued to devote the time to mentoring and youth outreach. He established many educational programs and activities in the Galveston, Texas community as well as across the country to enhance the interest of young students in mathematics and science.

Clifford W. Houston was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 31, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Clifford Houston was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 31, 2013, in Galveston, Texas, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Microbiologist Clifford Houston (1949 - ), the first African American elected as president of the American Society for Microbiology, is the Herman Barnett Distinguished Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at University of Texas Medical Branch.

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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:

Houston, Clifford, 1949-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Houston, Clifford, 1949- --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 Texas Medical Branch

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## Occupations:

Microbiologist

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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 Clifford Houston, January 31, 2013. 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 Clifford Houston, Section A2013\_030\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:53 ?

Clifford Houston describes his family background. His mother, Mae Francis Hanley, was born in January of 1928 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She graduated from Booker T. Washington High School and worked as a physical therapist's aide and domestic. Houston's father, Edgar Houston, was born in April of 1926 in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He attended school up to the eighth grade until he dropped out and moved to Oklahoma City and worked at the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company. Houston talks about his parents' personalities and siblings, shares his earliest childhood memory, and talks about his childhood home.

African American families--Oklahoma.

African American parents--Education--Oklahoma.

African American parents--Employment.

Childhood--Oklahoma.

Video Oral History Interview with Clifford Houston, Section A2013\_030\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:32 ?

Clifford Houston grew up in various communities of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He talks about the demographics of his hometown, as well as his most memorable teachers and experiences in school. Houston attended Gordon Oaks Elementary School, John F. Kennedy Junior High School, and Northeast High School. His favorite subjects in school were math and, especially, science. By the sixth grade, Houston transformed his basement into a makeshift research laboratory equipped with insect farms and laboratory rats and where he conducted experiments. The experiments became more sophisticated as he got older. Although Houston was captivated by science from an early age, he did not meet a scientific role model until he entered college at Oklahoma State University.

Oklahoma City (Okla.)--Social conditions--20th century.

Oklahoma City (Okla.)--Demographic aspects.

Education--Oklahoma City (Okla.).

Science--Study and teaching--Oklahoma.

Scientific recreations.

Video Oral History Interview with Clifford Houston, Section A2013\_030\_001\_003, TRT: 3:32:22 ?

Clifford Houston attended John F. Kennedy Junior High School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. While there, Houston consulted with one of his teachers for his independent experiment on the effects of adrenal gland removal on the behavior of lab rats. He presented this project at the city's science fair and became the first African American to win first prize at the science fair. Houston describes his findings from the experiment and talks about his other scientific interests. He attended Frederick Douglass High School for one year before his parents moved and he transferred to Northeast High School. During the summer breaks, Houston participated in research programs, which motivated him to become a mentor. After graduating from high school in 1968, Houston began his studies at Oklahoma State University.

Oklahoma State University.

Mentoring in science--Oklahoma.

Animal--Experiments.

Science fairs--Oklahoma.

African American high school students--Oklahoma.

Video Oral History Interview with Clifford Houston, Section A2013\_030\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:59 ?

Clifford Houston received his B.S. degree in microbiology and chemistry from Oklahoma State University in 1972. He continued his studies at Oklahoma State for his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in biology and microbiology/immunology, respectively. In 1973, Houston worked for one year as a laboratory instructor in Langston University's chemistry department. While at Oklahoma State, he served as a research technician in the biochemistry department under the guidance of his master's advisor, Earl Mitchell. For his doctoral research, Houston studied Group A streptococci and *Aeromonas hydrophila* and their effects on health. After receiving his Ph.D. degree in 1979, Houston became the first African American to be awarded a James W. McLaughlin post-doctoral fellowship from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas. He served in that position for two years before joining the faculty.

Oklahoma State University--Students.

Mitchell, Earl D. (Earl Douglass).

University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston--Scholarships, fellowships, etc.

University of Texas--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with Clifford Houston, Section A2013\_030\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:44 ?

Clifford Houston was appointed as deputy associate administrator for education in the Office of Education and the Office of Technology at NASA. There, he oversaw elementary and secondary education, higher education, informal education, and the technology and products office. After the Space Shuttle Columbia Disaster of 2003, Houston advised NASA on the long-term microbiological effects of space travel. In 2006, Houston became the first African American to be elected as president of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM). Houston talks about his professional activities with the ASM, deficiencies with U.S. education and his careers' transition from research into an administrator.

United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Office of Education.

Columbia (Spacecraft)--Accidents.

American Society for Microbiology--Presidents.

Education--United States.

Career changes.

Video Oral History Interview with Clifford Houston, Section A2013\_030\_001\_006, TRT: 6:31:08 ?

Clifford Houston was appointed as associate vice president of educational outreach at the University of Texas Medical Branch in 1991. He oversaw a range of educational, research and development programs for students and teachers, including a virtual laboratory and the T-STEM Center. In 2000, Houston was awarded for his mentorship efforts and administrative accomplishments with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring. Houston talks about his interests in the field of microbiology, shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects on his legacy.

University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston--Administration.

Mentoring in education--Texas.

Mentoring--Awards--United States.

Microbiology--Research.

African American universities and colleges--Evaluation.

Video Oral History Interview with Clifford Houston, Section A2013\_030\_001\_007, TRT: 7:18:58 ?

Clifford Houston reflects on how he would like to be remembered and describes his photos.

Photographs.