

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable James Gadsden

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gadsden, James, 1948-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden,
Dates:	March 11, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:01:44).
Abstract:	Foreign ambassador The Honorable James Gadsden (1948 -) former U.S. Ambassador to Iceland, served as Diplomat-In-Residence and Lecturer in Public and International Affairs at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and Senior Counselor for International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation in Princeton, N.J. Gadsden was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 11, 2013, in Princeton, New Jersey. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_070
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

United States Ambassador (retired) James I. Gadsden was born on March 12, 1948 in Charleston, South Carolina. His father, James David Gadsden, was a janitor; his mother, Hazel Gaines Gadsden, a maid and housewife. After receiving his B.A. degree cum laude in economics from Harvard University in 1970, Gadsden enrolled in Stanford University and graduated from there in 1972 with his M.A. degree in East Asian Studies. Following graduation, he was awarded a mid-career fellowship from 1984 to 1985 at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs to study economics.

Gadsden's career with the U.S. Department of State began in 1972 as a political officer. He was then assigned to the U.S. Trade Center in Taipei in 1974 as a market research officer supporting U.S. export promotion programs. He continued promoting U.S. exports as a commercial officer at the U.S. Embassy in Budapest, Hungary until 1979. In 1980, he became a staff assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs. From 1981 to 1997, Gadsden served as the European Communities desk officer at the State Department, economic and political officer at the U.S. Mission to the European Communities in Brussels, Counselor for Economic Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, and Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Budapest. Returning to the United States in 1997, Gadsden was named Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, and then served as Special Negotiator for Agricultural Biotechnology in 2001.

After being nominated by President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Gadsden was sworn in as U.S. Ambassador to Iceland on October 24, 2002. In that position, he directed the implementation of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. government operations in Iceland. Returning to the United States in 2005, Gadsden was appointed as Deputy Commandant and International Affairs Advisor at the National War College in Washington, D.C. until he retired in 2007. After retirement, he was recalled to serve as

Senior Advisor for European Affairs at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York. In 2008, he became Diplomat-In-Residence and Lecturer in Public and International Affairs at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He is currently Senior Counselor for International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation in Princeton, New Jersey.

Gadsden is married to Sally Freeman Gadsden. They have two adult sons.

James I. Gadsden was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 11, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable James Gadsden was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 11, 2013, in Princeton, New Jersey, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Foreign ambassador The Honorable James Gadsden (1948 -) former U.S. Ambassador to Iceland, served as Diplomat-In-Residence and Lecturer in Public and International Affairs at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and Senior Counselor for International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation in Princeton, N.J.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

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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.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Gadsden, James, 1948-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Gadsden, James, 1948- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Department of State United States. Dept. of Foreign Affairs Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs

Occupations:

Foreign Ambassador

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 The Honorable James Gadsden, March 11, 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).

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 The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_001, TRT: 1:30:38 ?

James Gadsden describes his family background. His mother, Hazel Gaines Gadsden, was born September 26, 1923 in Summerville, South Carolina, just outside Charleston, to Elizabeth Gaines and Daniel Gaines. She worked as a domestic servant and a maid in a dress shop in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, where she performed accounting work her employers were unable to do. Gadsden was very close with his maternal grandmother, but did not know his maternal grandfather. Gadsden's father, James David Gadsden, was born December 23, 1923 in Charleston to Charlotte Morgan, and grew up on the impoverished east side of the city. Gadsden does not know much about his father's background, but knows he served in France during World War II and felt, like Gadsden that was treated better in France than in the segregated United States. Gadsden reflects on his resemblance to his reserved mother and his studious, open, and loving father.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_002, TRT: 2:28:16 ?

The Honorable James Gadsden talks about growing up in Charleston, South Carolina in the 1950s, where his earliest memories are of Morris Street Baptist Church, his cousin's Ford Model T car, and his grandmother dropping him off for kindergarten at Ried House of Christian Service. He grew up in an integrated neighborhood without electricity until 1953 where race relations were cordial, though blacks and whites mostly kept separate company. Gadsden attended Simonton Elementary School, Beuist Elementary School, and Courtney Elementary School, before returning to Simonton. He remembers reading the 'Weekly Reader' in Mrs. Capers' fourth-grade class, where he also started writing to pen pals around the world. At home, he read Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia and listened to radio programs with his family. In 1962, he entered Charles A. Brown High School in Charleston, where HistoryMaker James Clyburn was his world history teacher.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_003, TRT: 3:29:25 ?

James Gadsden was involved in the Civil Rights Movement in Charleston, South Carolina, led by state NAACP Chair J. Arthur Brown. Gadsden attended Charles A. Brown High School in Charleston from 1962 to 1964, where he was part of the Corsairs, a high-achieving student group led by his history teacher, HistoryMaker James Clyburn. After conflicts with some teachers, Gadsden transferred to Elisabeth Irwin High School in New York City, New York that was operated by Little Red Schoolhouse, Incorporated (LRSI). In 1964, Gadsden attended an intensive summer program at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, which prepared him for the rigor of his new school. From 1964 to 1966, he studied advanced English and French literature and travelled around the Northeastern United States.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_004, TRT: 4:28:31 ?

James Gadsden talks about his undergraduate studies at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Before graduating from Elisabeth Irwin High School (LRSI) in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1966, Gadsden was advised by his guidance counselor to apply to Harvard University. He was accepted and chose to major in economics. He talks about those he admired: Adam Clayton Powell, Stokely Carmichael, HistoryMaker Dionne Warwick, and Professor Ernest R. May. While studying at Harvard, Gadsden opted against Eurocentricism and began studying Chinese. After receiving his B.S. degree in economics in 1970, Gadsden entered a graduate program in Chinese studies at Stanford University in Stanford, California, where he took the U.S. Foreign Service examination. In 1972, President Richard Nixon made his highly-publicized trip to China, which opened up American diplomatic opportunities in East Asia.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_005, TRT: 5:28:38 ?

James Gadsden recounts his career in the U.S. Foreign Service during the 1970s. Gadsden received his M.A. degree in Chinese Studies at Stanford University in Stanford, California in 1972. He was then recruited by the deputy director of the Office of Regional Affairs at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of East Asian Affairs, and was offered a post in Taichung, Taiwan in 1973. However, he took ill and was unable to accept the job. He then moved to Taipei, Taiwan in 1974 to take a job at the U.S. Trade Center. Before leaving the United States, he married Sally Freeman Gadsden, whom he had met earlier in Youngstown, Ohio in 1970. He worked in Taipei until 1978, when he transferred to the U.S. Embassy in Budapest, Hungary. Gadsden describes working in Communist Hungary, as well as his wife's work as an unofficial host at the Embassy.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_006, TRT: 6:28:14 ?

James Gadsden describes his U.S. Foreign Service career in the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1979, he returned to Washington, D.C. to work for the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Economics and Business Affairs, where he was a staff assistant until 1981. Gadsden reflects on the treatment he received at the U.S. State Department, never feeling that he was mistreated because of his race. In 1981, he accepted the position of European Community (EC) desk officer, which he held until 1984. In 1985, he transferred to Brussels, Belgium, where he was the Economic and Political Officer in the U.S. mission to the EC. In 1989, Gadsden moved to the U.S. Embassy in Paris, France, where he was the Counselor for Economic Affairs. He held this post during Operation Desert Storm and the international campaign against South African apartheid efforts in which the French took a leading role. In 1994, he returned to Budapest, Hungary, to facilitate the Hungarian transition out of Communism.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_007, TRT: 7:28:35 ?

James Gadsden talks about the end of his U.S. diplomatic career. After serving a second time in the U.S. Embassy to Hungary, he was offered the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs in 1997. In 2001, he became the U.S. Department of State's Special Negotiator for Agricultural Biotechnology, helping to persuade European governments to adopt science-based policy approaches to genetically modified foods. In 2002, Gadsden was appointed the U.S. Ambassador to Iceland, a post he held until 2005. During this time, he negotiated with the Icelanders to reduce the presence of American military forces, and witnessed efforts by the Icelandic government to build a more multicultural society. Gadsden reflects on the honor and privilege of

serving as a U.S. Ambassador.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_008,
TRT: 8:28:18 ?

James Gadsden talks about his career after his ambassadorship. After returning from Iceland in 2005, he became a faculty advisor, and then Deputy Commandant, of the National War College in Washington, D.C., where he met U.S. Air Force General Marné Peterson and Secretary of State and HistoryMaker Colin Powell. Gadsden retired in 2007, but was called back from retirement for three months in 2007 to work in the U.S. mission to the United Nations in New York, New York. In 2008, he began teaching at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey. He also worked with the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation to increase interest in the Foreign Service among underrepresented youth. Gadsden concludes by reflecting upon his role as a mentor to young Foreign Service Officers and on his hopes and concerns for the black community.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable James Gadsden, Section A2013_070_001_009,
TRT: 9:11:09 ?

James Gadsden concludes his interview. He first talks about his two sons, ages thirty-two and twenty-eight. His eldest son graduated from Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, and is interested in a career in international business and marketing; his oldest son, who graduated from Elmira College in Elmira, New York, is a talented stage actor, musician, and dancer. Reflecting upon his life, Gadsden wants to be remembered for having inspired young people to broaden their horizons. He then narrates photographs spanning his four-decade career.