

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Philip Phillips

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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>	Phillips, Philip (Philip W.)
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Philip Phillips,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 7, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:46:57).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Physicist Philip Phillips (1958 - ) Phillips was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 7, 2013, in Champaign, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_098
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Physicist Philip W. Phillips was born in Scarborough, Tobago in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Phillips' family migrated to the United States when he was ten years old. After graduating with his B.A. degree in chemistry and mathematics from Walla Walla College in 1979, Phillips enrolled in the University of Washington where he served as a graduate research assistant in theoretical chemistry and received his Ph.D. degree in theoretical physics in 1982. Upon graduation, Phillips was awarded a Miller Postdoctoral Fellowship to study at the University of California at Berkeley from 1981 to 1984.

Phillips then worked at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology until 1993 when he joined the faculty of the department of physics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In 1998, Phillips was appointed a Beckman Associate in the Center for Advanced Study. After being promoted to full professor and receiving tenure in 2004, Phillips went on to serve as the University Scholar and was named the Bliss Faculty Scholar in the College of Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As a theoretical condensed matter physicist, Phillips studies quantum phase transitions and strongly correlated electrons. In particular, he focused on novel metallic phases in two dimensions and high-temperature superconductivity. Phillips research has been published in academic journals such as *Physics Review Letters* and *Europhysics Letters*. In addition, he authored a graduate-level textbook titled, *Advanced Solid State Physics* (2002).

Phillips served as the American Physical Society (APS) general councilor from 2000 to 2002 and as executive councilor from 2002 to 2004. He also served on the APS Committee on Committees from 2002 to 2004. Phillips was appointed to serve on the nanotechnology panel for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy in 1999. He also served on the "Frontiers of Science" organizing committee of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) from 1998 to 1999. He was honored as the Edward A. Bouchet Lecturer for the APS in 2000. Phillips was elected as a Fellow of the APS in 2002, and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in 2012.

Phillip Phillips was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 7, 2013.

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Philip Phillips was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 7, 2013, in Champaign, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Physicist Philip Phillips (1958 - )

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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:

Phillips, Philip (Philip W.)

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Phillips, Philip (Philip W.)--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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# Occupations:

Physicist

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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 Philip Phillips, June 7, 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 Philip Phillips, Section A2013\_098\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:42 ?

Philip Phillips describes the origin of his name and talks about his family background. Phillips discusses the history of slavery in Tobago and its impact on present life. Phillips tells of how his grandmother, Ellen Daniel, could not marry Philip Francois, the father of her son Bertyl, due to parental disapproval. Instead she married Mr. Daniel, a cocoa farmer, and gave birth to Carmella Daniel, Phillips' mother, in Parlatuvier, Tobago. However, their family life was dysfunctional, and Mr. Daniel often abused Bertyl. After the family moved to the United States, Phillips' mother became a history teacher at a high school in Walla Walla, Washington. Phillips talks about his father, Hollibert Eastwald Phillips, and his lack of relationships with his father's family, who were from

Barbados. He describes his father's education and how his father received his B.A. degree in history from the University of London through a correspondence course.

Affirmative action programs.

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Video Oral History Interview with Philip Phillips, Section A2013\_098\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:03 ?

Philip Phillips describes Tobago and how the country has changed since he left. Phillips' family moved from Tobago to Trinidad and then to Berrien Springs, Michigan, where his father, Hollibert Eastwald Phillips, attended Andrews University in order to obtain a Master's degree. Phillips talks about his father's conversion from the Anglican Church to being a Seventh Day Adventist. Phillips describes the family's move to Boston, Massachusetts where his father attended Boston University for to obtain his Ph.D. degree. He recounts his schooling in Brookline, Massachusetts at the Edward Devotion School and how it differed from schooling in Trinidad, sharing specifically his difficulty with learning New Math. He recalls as a child hearing about the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and learning about black leaders such as Haile Selassie, Ethiopia's regent, and Eric Williams, the prime minister of Trinidad.

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Video Oral History Interview with Philip Phillips, Section A2013\_098\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:17 ?

Philip Phillips reflects on his family's move to Walla Walla, Washington in 1970 and their experiences as one of the few African American families in a white town. Phillips describes how he felt unwelcomed there compared to their previous home in Brookline, Massachusetts. He describes his experience at school and with friends, who were mainly Seventh Day Adventist like his family. Phillips talks about how he did well in math class in high school. Phillips recalls his discussions about philosophy and evolution which conflicted with his Seventh Day Adventist upbringing. Phillips talks about his years at Walla Walla College and when a skateboarding injury prevented him from no longer majoring in math. He describes his move from his parents' house his senior year and his decision to become a theoretical scientist despite his parents' desire for him to become a medical doctor.

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Video Oral History Interview with Philip Phillips, Section A2013\_098\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:34 ?

Philip Phillips talks about the teachers that influenced him at the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington where he attended graduate school in theoretical chemistry. Phillips discusses his doctoral dissertation,

‘Phosphorescence Lifetimes and Small Molecules,’ his lack of interest in research, and his decision to eventually switch fields from theoretical chemistry to physics. He discusses his post-doctoral fellowship at the University of California at Berkeley and his research. Phillips explains the nature of critical phenomena, a characteristic of certain phase transitions. He describes his work on Anderson localization, where he discovered an absence of localization in a one-dimensional system.

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Video Oral History Interview with Philip Phillips, Section A2013\_098\_001\_005, TRT: 5:26:51 ?

Philip Phillips describes his time as a chemistry professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where his research was focused on physics and not chemistry. Phillips describes his firing from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his hiring at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois in 1993. He describes his research on the characteristics of Mottness, a feature of Mott insulators, and superconductors. Phillips describes the importance for a scientist to be able to change their research focus. He also talks about his graduate textbook, ‘Advanced Solid-State Physics,’ that was published in 2002. He discusses the physics program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He also talks about the Pan American Advanced Studies Institute Workshop on Mottness and Quantum Criticality, the first scientific conference in Tobago, which he organized and chaired.

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Video Oral History Interview with Philip Phillips, Section A2013\_098\_001\_006, TRT: 6:22:30 ?

Philip Phillips discusses his role in mentoring graduate students. He describes the conference he organized in Tobago in 2005. Phillips also reflects on the legacy of Edward A. Bouchet, the first African American to receive his Ph.D. degree in physics in the United States. Phillips reflects on his legacy and how he would like to be remembered. Phillips shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community and talks about his wife and son, Angelique and Rusty.

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