

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Samuel DuBois Cook

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Cook, Samuel DuBois, 1928-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook,
Dates:	December 8, 2005 and June 20, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:05:20).
Abstract:	Political science professor and university president Samuel DuBois Cook (1928 - 2017) was the president of Dillard University, and the first African American professor at Duke University. Cook was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 8, 2005 and June 20, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_139
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Retired Dillard University president and the first African American professor at Duke University, Samuel DuBois Cook, was born on November 21, 1928, in Griffin, Georgia. Cook's parents were Mary Beatrice Daniel Cook and the Reverend M.E. Cook, a Baptist minister who instilled a passion for education in all of his children; this upbringing had a deep impact on Cook. Cook was given his middle name in honor of former Morehouse College president Dr. Charles DuBois Hubert. Cook attended Griffin Vocational High School and graduated from there in 1944; he went on to earn an A.B. degree in history from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, where he met and was mentored by Dr. Benjamin Mays. Cook then attended Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, where he earned his M.A. degree in political science and his Ph.D. in 1954.

Cook started his professional career as a teacher after a short stint in the U.S. Army; he taught political science at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1955. Cook then moved to Atlanta University where he began teaching in 1956, and became politically active. Cook worked on black voter registration and served as youth director of the NAACP of Georgia. During his career, Cook taught at other colleges and universities including the University of Illinois, University of California – Los Angeles, and Duke University, where he became the University's first African American professor. Cook was also the first African American to hold a regular faculty appointment at a predominantly white university in the South. In 1974, Cook was chosen as president of Dillard University; he filled this role for twenty-two years, retiring in 1997. Cook was credited with beginning the modernization of Dillard University's infrastructure.

In 1993, Dillard University honored Cook by naming the school's new fine arts and communication center after him. That same year, Cook was elected by Duke University's Board of Trustee as a Trustee Emeritus. Duke University again honored Cook with the establishment of the Samuel DuBois Cook Society 1997; the society aims to celebrate and support African American students at the university through programming and scholarships. In 2006, Duke University established a postdoctoral fellowship in Cook's name to support social scientists that study

issues related to race, ethnicity, and gender. In 2015, Duke dedicated the Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity in his honor. Though retired, Cook remained a visiting scholar and lecturer at universities around the United States.

Cook passed away on May 30, 2017 at the age of 88.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Samuel DuBois Cook was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 8, 2005 and June 20, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Political science professor and university president Samuel DuBois Cook (1928 - 2017) was the president of Dillard University, and the first African American professor at Duke 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:

Cook, Samuel DuBois, 1928-2017

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Jackson, Adrian (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Cook, Samuel DuBois, 1928-2017--Interviews

African American scholars--Interviews

African American educators--Interviews

African American college presidents--Interviews

African American college teachers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Dillard University

Occupations:

Political Science Professor

University President

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Samuel DuBois Cook, December 8, 2005 and June 20, 2005. 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 Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_001_001, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook was born November 21, 1928 in Griffin, Georgia on to Mary Daniel Cook and Emanuel Cook. His mother was born in Talbot County, Georgia in the 1890s and earned her teaching certificate from Fort Valley High & Industrial School. His father was also born in Talbot County, where African American families were terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan. After attending Central City College in Macon, Georgia, he followed in the family tradition and became a Baptist minister. His brothers also became ministers while working in Alabama's steel mills. Cook was named after his father's friend and dean of Morehouse School of Religion in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Charles DuBois Hubert, and Cook's father encouraged his son to prioritize education. Cook remembers a lecture about the sin of dancing given by the Baptist minister W. F. Paschal to Morehouse College students as well as when his mentor, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, was fired from his post as minister of Shiloh Baptist Church because he danced with a young lady.

African American scholars--Interviews.

African American educators--Interviews.

African American college presidents--Interviews.

African American college teachers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_001_002, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook was raised with his five siblings in Griffin, Georgia. Strict Baptist Christianity greatly influenced life, and Cook's father ministered to four churches each weekend, returning by train every Monday morning. As a child, Cook befriended two white boys, but was admonished and sent home when a white girl joined them to play. In an attempt to shield his children from racism, Cooks' father forbade them from working for white people. Cook resented this missed opportunity to earn money by caddying at a local golf course, but obeyed his father, and even refused when a police officer asked Cook to mow his lawn. Cook attended Cabin Creek School while A. Z. Kelsey was principal and Marie Kelsey was a teacher. Their son, George Kelsey, later became a famous theologian. Despite textbooks' racist rendering of black history, Cook's teacher, Penrose Park, tried to teach history more accurately. Cook attended Cabin Creek School until third grade, when it closed due to lack of funds.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook attended Cabin Creek School in Griffin, Georgia under Principal A. Z. Kelsey. In 1937, the school closed and Cook transferred to Spring Hill School in Griffin, run by Cora Lee Nimmons. Because his father could not pay the tuition, Cook and his siblings transferred to a county school taught by George Mosby, who encouraged them. Cook excelled in the county school and skipped a grade when he entered Griffin Vocational High School. In preparation for college, he took Latin classes after school, and became one of three men in his class to matriculate. Cook hoped to attend his brother's alma mater, Morehouse College in Atlanta, in part because the president, Dr. Charles D. Hubert, was his father's friend. Cook befriended Morehouse students when he worked with them on tobacco farms in Connecticut during the summers, where he met his mentor, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, as well as Dr. B. R. Brazeal and Otis W. Smith. Cook wrote the introduction to Dr. Mays' autobiography and delivered Mays' eulogy.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook attended Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, where he befriended Bob Johnson, HistoryMaker Lerone Bennett and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. When Cook was elected student body president as a sophomore, he gave a moving speech to avert his impeachment. After studying history at Morehouse under Arthur C. Banks Jr., Melvin D. Kennedy and Thomas J. Curry, he enrolled in graduate school at The Ohio State University in Cleveland, Ohio. Cook earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in political science under David Spitz and Louis Nemzer. He wrote his dissertation on the ethics of democracy. Cook was awarded his Ph.D. during his tour with the U.S. Army in 1954, the year that school integration was mandated by the Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka decision. Jobs for black academics were limited; Marshall College in Huntington, West Virginia revoked Cook's job offer due to his race. During Cook's time at Ohio State, there was only one black professor, John A. Davis, who had a one-year appointment.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_001_005, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook taught political science at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana from 1955, alongside professors Rodney Higgins, Frank Yerby and Lucius and Twiley W. Barker. HistoryMakers Thomas N. Todd and The Honorable James Joseph were undergraduates at the time. Cook returned to Atlanta, Georgia in 1956 to teach at Atlanta University, where HistoryMaker Marian Wright Edelman was a promising student of his. He worked with the NAACP and talked about politics with Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. and Donald Hallowell. Cook stayed in contact with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as they shared similar backgrounds and academic interests. He taught his American government class with particular optimism after the Civil Rights Act was signed in 1964. Despite segregationist Dixiecrats, Cook never failed to vote as a Democrat. Cook reflects on the importance of legal action and demonstrations in a social movement and argues that the Civil Rights Movement was largely spontaneous.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_002_006, TRT: 0:29:19 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook specialized in political philosophy and taught SNCC leader Lonnie C. King, Jr. at Atlanta University, where W.E.B. DuBois left a legacy of studying the color line. Cook fought for civil rights alongside students, professors and community members, including businessmen Jesse Hill, Jr. and

T.M. Alexander, as well as ministers Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. and Dr. William Holmes Borders. Howard Zinn, Margaret Long, and Pat Waters contributed. While presenting at the Southern Political Science Association, Cook met John H. Hallowell, who later invited him to Duke University in Durham, North Carolina as a visiting professor. Cook was well-received by the students and faculty, who were excited about the school's first black professor. In 1966, after his first semester of teaching, Cook was offered a full tenured professorship, making him one of the first black professors to be hired by a white southern university. Cook also talks about the relationship between racism and religion in the South.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_002_007, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook admired President Lyndon Baines Johnson, who was an advocate for civil rights. He initially supported Johnson's involvement in the Vietnam War, but later sided with his friend, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who opposed the war. Cook was a professor of political theory at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina when King was assassinated. When Leslie W. Dunbar called him about the shooting, Cook anticipated that Dr. King would not survive. He recalls feeling extremely bitter until a two-week vigil held on Duke's campus gave him hope. During his eight years at Duke, Cook served on the Board of Trustees, and the Samuel DuBois Cook Society was created in his honor. In 1974, he was invited to be president of Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Cook declined the offer multiple times, but was inspired to accept when, upon visiting the campus, he was reminded of his teacher and mentor, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays. As president, he modeled his punctuality and work ethic after Dr. Mays.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_002_008, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook emulated the leadership of his mentor, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, while serving as president of Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. With HistoryMaker Charles Teamer, Sr. as Cook's vice president of fiscal affairs, Dillard flourished financially and academically during Cook's tenure. He taught such exceptional students as HistoryMaker Marian Wright Edelman, William Nelson and Dwayne Thomas. Upon his retirement in 1997, Cook continued to produce scholarship, began writing a book on Dr. Mays, and was appointed chair of the Joseph E. Lowery Institute for Justice and Human Rights at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia. His greatest regret is leaving numerous projects unfinished. Cook hopes that African Americans will take full advantage of their opportunities and someday achieve true equality. Cook describes his legacy as one of concern for others. He and his wife, Sylvia Cook, had two children. At the time of the interview, Cook's family resided in Atlanta, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel DuBois Cook, Section A2005_139_002_009, TRT: 0:07:10 ?

Samuel DuBois Cook struggled to pay tuition at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia after his father, Emanuel Cook, passed away in 1947. Cook's mentor Dr. Benjamin E. Mays helped him to obtain additional financial aid. He worked as a waiter and a teaching assistant and served in the U.S. Army to support himself through graduate school, earning his M.A. and Ph.D from The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. He befriended such great thinkers as Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., HistoryMaker Reverend Gardner Taylor, and theologian Howard Thurman. Cook hopes to be remembered as someone

with integrity, decency and honor, who knew the value of hard work.