

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jemadari Kamara

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Kamara, Jemadari
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara,
Dates:	October 10, 2012 and September 11, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007 and 2012
Physical Description:	10 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:06:35).
Abstract:	African american studies professor and education administrator Jemadari Kamara (1948 -) is the founding director of the Center for African, Caribbean and Community Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston. His publications include State of the Race – Creating Our 21st Century (co-editor and contributor, 2004) and Socially Responsible Investment and Economic Development (editor, 1987). Kamara was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 10, 2012 and September 11, 2007, in Boston, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_254
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator Jemadari Omowale Kamara was born William Cyrus Swan, II on November 25, 1948, in Detroit, Michigan to Elizabeth and Edward McCallan Swan. Kamara graduated from Western Reserve Academy boarding school in 1967, and received his B.A. degree in political science, sociology, and African Studies from Tufts University in 1972. He later obtained his Ph.D. degree in technological and environmental planning from the University of Michigan in 1983. Kamara also attended Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

In the early 1970s, Kamara was hired in a faculty position at Brandeis University in Boston, Massachusetts, where he remained until 1975. In 1980, he served for two years as the director of the William Monroe Trotter House at the University of Michigan. Kamara then became assistant professor and chairman of the African and Afro-American Studies Department at the University of Michigan Flint, where he remained until 1988. From 1985 to 1987, he served as a Fulbright Scholar at the Universite Nationale du Benin in West Africa; and, in 1988, as the Development Consultant for the Societe Africaine de Technologie Approprie et Developpement (S.A.T.A.D) in Cotonou, Benin.

Kamara returned to the United States in 1988 and was hired as dean of the College of Public and Community Service at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He served as chairman of the University's Africana Studies Department from 1996 to 2001; and then again in 2007, 2008 and 2011. In 1999, Kamara became the founding director of the Center for African, Caribbean and Community Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston; and, from 2001 to 2002, was a Senior Fulbright Professor at the Universite Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis, Senegal.

In the 1990s, Kamara helped to found and continues to coordinate the Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. / Amilcar Cabral Commemorative Program. Also, he collaborated in developing the Community Action Information Network (CAIN), which assisted community-based organizations in applying technology and data-based information to community-defined purposes for development. In addition, Kamara serves as an international coordinator for the Youth Education and Sports (YES) with Africa Program, which has served nearly 3,000 African youth.

Among Kamara's numerous publications include *State of the Race – Creating Our 21st Century* (co-editor and contributor, 2004), which won the Charshee McIntyre Award and was named the African Heritage Studies Association's Outstanding Book of the Year. He was also editor of *Socially Responsible Investment and Economic Development* (1987).

Kamara served as a senior advisor to the Boston Pan-African Forum, Treasurer of the West African Research Association and on the board of directors of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century. He is the father of two children.

Jemadari Kamara was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 11, 2007 and October 10, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jemadari Kamara was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 10, 2012 and September 11, 2007, in Boston, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 10 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. African american studies professor and education administrator Jemadari Kamara (1948 -) is the founding director of the Center for African, Caribbean and Community Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston. His publications include *State of the Race – Creating Our 21st Century* (co-editor and contributor, 2004) and *Socially Responsible Investment and Economic Development* (editor, 1987).

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:

- Kamara, Jemadari
- Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
- Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

- African Americans--Interviews
- Kamara, Jemadari--Interviews

Deans (Education)--Interviews

African American educators--Interviews

African American college teachers--Interviews

College department heads--Interviews

Organizations:

- HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)
- The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

- African American Studies Professor
- Education Administrator

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 Jemadari Kamara, October 10, 2012 and September 11, 2007. 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 Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_001_001, TRT: 0:29:06 ?

Jemadari Kamara was born William Cyrus Swan II on November 25, 1948 in Detroit, Michigan. His mother, Elizabeth Mae Stokes Swan, was born on May 18, 1910 in Cleveland, Ohio. Her father, John Thomas Stokes, Sr., was a chauffeur and her mother, Lillian Stokes, was a homemaker. Her grandmother, Mary Hannah Stokes, was half Native American. Kamara's maternal family came from Kentucky by way of Cleveland, Ohio. Kamara's mother graduated from Cleveland Heights High School and Howard University in Washington, D.C. before enrolling at Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti, Michigan to study physical education, where she met Kamara's father. Kamara's father, Edward McCallan Swan, Sr., was born on March 26, 1910 in Detroit, Michigan to William Cyrus Swan and Natalie Perinchief Swan. William Swan was born in Bermuda and graduated from the University of Michigan Law School in Ann Arbor in the 1890s. He then was married in Bermuda and they returned to Detroit, Michigan to practice law until his death in 1913.

Deans (Education)--Interviews.

African American educators--Interviews.

African American college teachers--Interviews.

College department heads--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_001_002, TRT: 0:30:02 ?

Jemadari Kamara describes his father's family history and reflects on how his grandfather, William Cyrus Swan, was able to enroll at the University of Michigan Law School in Ann Arbor without attending an University in Bermuda. Kamara's paternal grandparents died when his father, Edward McCallan Swan, Sr., and uncle were young, and they both attended Northwestern High School in Detroit, Michigan. Kamara's father worked as Director of Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) and as Executive

Secretary of the NAACP in Detroit in the 1940s. He later became manager of The Carlton Plaza in Detroit's Paradise Valley and Director of Community Relations at Wrigley's Supermarkets, the first black executive in the company. Kamara was raised in the Northwestern neighborhood of Detroit until he was around eight years old and his family moved to the affluent Boston-Edison neighborhood. He attended St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church and later Grace Episcopal Church, where he met HistoryMaker Kenneth Reeves.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_001_003, TRT: 0:30:19
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Jemadari Kamara attended Marr Elementary School, Brady Elementary School, Durfee Junior High School, and Central High School in Detroit, Michigan. Kamara recalls his early exposure to Africa through the media, and seeing the slides of a trip that his parents' friend, Dr. Alvin Loving, had taken to the University of Nigeria at Nsukka with Nnamdi Azikiwe. He also recalls hearing Tom Mboya speak in the early 1960s at Rackham College in Detroit. In 1963, Kamara enrolled in boarding school at Western Reserve Academy in Hudson, Ohio on his brother's suggestion for more preparation than he was receiving at Central High School. Due to the school's increased difficulty, Kamara was forced to repeat his first year of high school. Kamara reflects on the challenge of meeting the school's higher academic standards and of adapting to the school's patrician white environment.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_001_004, TRT: 0:31:15
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Jemadari Kamara attended Western Reserve Academy in Hudson, Ohio from 1963 until 1967, during the Civil Rights Movement. In 1966, Kamara joined the Upward Bound program in Twinsburg Heights, Ohio, where he counseled junior high school students and witnessed the treatment of African American families near the General Motors plant. Kamara was also active in football, basketball, wrestling, and track. His mentors at Western Reserve included his English teacher, Mr. Roberts, and his wrestling coach, Mr. James Gramentine. Kamara participated in the debate team, and won every oratorical contest after his first semester. During his final contest, Kamara decided not to recite Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech because of the town's conservative judges, and recited the poem "Babi Yar" instead. In 1967, Kamara graduated and enrolled at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, where he played soccer and joined the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_001_005, TRT: 0:28:12
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Jemadari Kamara attended Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. He became involved with the African American community in Boston, Massachusetts and worked in the State House with black State Representative Reverend Michael Haynes in 1969. Kamara reflects on the segregation in Boston and the racial dynamics between African Americans, Africans, and West Indians in the city. In 1968, Kamara was exposed to literature of the Negritude movement in his French courses. After his father died on January 1, 1969, Kamara decided to create an interdisciplinary undergraduate major in African Studies through Tufts' Experimental College, which allowed him to travel to Africa to study at Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone and University of Zambia in Lusaka, Zambia. In the fall of 1969, Kamara flew to Freetown, and over the course of a year, he traveled mostly by land from Dakar, Senegal to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He recalls his experience in Freetown as well as in Kinshasa, Congo and Kisangani, Congo.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_002_006, TRT: 6:31:38
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Jemadari Kamara recalls his experience in the cities of Kinshasa and Kisangani in the Congo in 1970 during his year-long study-abroad trip to Africa. He also visited the village in Isiro, Congo and drove through the Ituri Rainforest where the Mbuti pygmies live. In 1970, Kamara returned to Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts to write his undergraduate thesis on his experiences. He graduated in 1971, and began studying for a political science master's degree. In 1962, he began teaching at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts and attended the National Black Political Assembly in Gary Indiana with the Congress of Afrikan People (CAP). Kamara was campaign manager for Bill Owens' campaigns for State Representative and State Senator. He reflects on the CAP and its members, including Amiri Baracka and the Black Unitarian Universalist Caucus. Kamara enrolled at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1975 and worked on Ron Daniels' campaign for Mayor of Youngstown, Ohio in 1977.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_002_007, TRT: 7:29:16
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Jemadari Kamara changed his named from William Cyrus Swan II in the early 1970s after he became involved with the Black Humanist Fellowship and the Congress of Afrikan People. In 1975, he enrolled at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Kamara's dissertation was on the closing of the Youngstown Iron Sheet and Tube Company factory in Youngstown, Ohio, and he received his Ph.D. degree in 1983. In 1977, Kamara travelled to China with the Council of Independent Black Institutions. Kamara reflects on what he learned in China, which had been opened to the United States only five years previously. Kamara also recalls teaching at the University of Michigan Center for African and Afro American Studies with Ali Mazrui and HistoryMaker Niara Sudarkasa. In 1983, he became Assistant Professor at the University Michigan at Flint, Michigan and Chairman of the African/Afro-American Studies Department. From 1985 until 1987, he received a Fulbright Fellowship to teach at the Universite Nationale du Benin.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_002_008, TRT: 8:29:41
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Jemadari Kamara received a Fulbright Fellowship to teach at the Universite Nationale du Benin from 1985 until 1987. In 1988, he began teaching at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, Massachusetts. Kamra reflects on his marriage to Makeda Millett Kamara in 1977, the births of their two children, and her studies as a midwife. At the University of Massachusetts, Kamara was an administrator in the College of Public and Community Services. In 1993, he became a professor in the Africana Studies Department, and later he founded the Center for African, Caribbean, and Community Development as the community service arm of the department. With the Community Action Information Network (CAIN), Kamara used university resources to help the black communities in Boston. Kamara talks about some his work, including his writings, his work with renewable energy in Cape Verde, and the Martin Luther King Jr./Amilcar Cabral Commemorative Program. He reflects on community outreach and the challenges faced by Africana Studies.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_002_009, TRT: 9:31:12
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Jemadari Kamara reflects on the black communities in Boston, Massachusetts, including the large Caribbean and African populations and the establishment of

the Boston Pan-African Forum. He describes teaching a course on the Civil Rights Movement at University of Massachusetts in Boston to a class of entirely Chinese students and how that course has helped him to rethink concepts like integration and assimilation. Kamara talks about the decline of African American men in his classes, and about the importance of encouraging African American men to continue their education through college. In the 1990s, Kamara established the Youth Education and Sports (YES) Program to develop leadership skills in West Africa. In 2001, he received his second Fulbright Fellowship to teach at the Université Gaston Berger at Saint-Louis, Senegal. He talks about his “State of the Race” anthology and his organizational involvement in Boston, Massachusetts.

Video Oral History Interview with Jemadari Kamara, Section A2007_254_002_010, TRT: 10:35:54
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Jemadari Kamara reflects on the role that the Institute of the Black World 21st Century has had on his career and on the importance of quantitative analysis. He reflects upon his lack of regrets, his hopes and concerns for the African American community, his family and legacy. He ends the interview by narrating his photographs.