

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ralph Etienne-Cummings

PERSON

Etienne-Cummings, Ralph

**Alternative Names:** Ralph Etienne-Cummings;

**Life Dates:** August 20, 1967-

**Place of Birth:** Mahe, Seychelles

**Residence:** Washington, District of Columbia

**Work:** Baltimore, Maryland

**Occupations:** Electrical Engineer; Computer Scientist

## Biographical Note

Electrical engineer, computer scientist and engineering professor Ralph Etienne-Cummings was born in August 20, 1967 in Mahe, Seychelles to Marguerita Etienne and Eddie Micock. His mother later married Herman Cummings, who formally adopted him. Etienne-Cummings first showed his aptitude for engineering when he fixed the reception on his short wave radio in order to listen to a soccer match. After attending a British boarding school, he moved to the United States with his family. Etienne-Cummings received his B.S. degree in physics from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1988. He went on to receive his M.S. in electrical engineering and his Ph.D. in electrical engineering from the University of Pennsylvania in 1990 and 1994, respectively.

Shortly after receiving his Ph.D., Etienne-Cummings took a position as an assistant professor at Southern Illinois University. In 1998, he moved to Maryland where he began teaching as an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University. From 2002 to 2004, Etienne-Cummings taught at the University of Maryland, College Park as an associate professor while also holding the position of director at the Institute of Neuromorphic Engineering. In January 2004, he was appointed Associate Director for Education and Outreach of the ERC on Computer Integrated Surgical Systems and Technology at Johns Hopkins University. In 2005, Etienne-Cummings received a secondary appointment in computer science at Johns Hopkins University and in 2008, he became a professor of electrical and computer engineering. While at Johns Hopkins University, Etienne-Cummings sponsored a number of diversity and mentoring programs including serving as co-chair of the Diversity Committee and mentor of the school's Robotics Club. In addition to teaching, Etienne-Cummings served as a

consultant engineer for several technology firms including Nova Sensors, Inc., Innovative Wireless Technologies, Singular Computing, Panasonic N. American & Corporation, Avago Technologies, Micron Technologies and others. His research interests include systems and algorithms for biologically inspired and low-power processing, biomorphic robots, applied neuroscience, neural prosthetics, and computer integrated surgical systems and technologies. He holds seven patents and has mentored over thirty-five students at the graduate level.

Etienne-Cummings has served as a visiting scientist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and as a visiting African scholar at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. He received the National Science Foundation's CAREER Award in 1996 and the Young Investigators Program Award from the Office of Naval Research in 2000. In 2006, Science Spectrum awarded him its Trailblazer Award for Top Minorities in Science and in 2007, Etienne-Cummings was named a Kavli Frontiers in Science Fellow by the National Academies of Science. He has also won best paper awards in high impact technical Journals and Conferences. In 2012, he was elected Fellow of the IEEE for contribution in "Neuromorphic Sensory-Motor Circuits and Systems". He is married to Shatima Etienne-Cummings, a patent attorney.

Ralph Etienne-Cummings was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 28, 2012.

## Related Entries

**Lincoln University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**University of Pennsylvania** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Seychelles College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Anse Etoile School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**St. Augustine's College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**H.S. Diploma**

**Southern Illinois University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1995 to ?]

**Assistant Professor**

**University of Maryland, College Park** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 200201 to 2003]

**Associate Professor**

**Johns Hopkins University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 200401 to 2009]

**Associate Director for Education and Outreach of the ERC on Computer Integrated Surgical Systems and Technology**

**University of Cape Town** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1976 to ?]

**Visiting African Scholar**

**Johns Hopkins University** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 199807 to 200207]

**Assistant Professor**

**Institute of Neuromorphic Engineering** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1979 to ?]

**Director**

**University of Maryland, College Park** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 200407 to ?]

**Adjunct Associate Professor**

**Johns Hopkins University** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 200807 to ?]

**Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering**

**Johns Hopkins University Robotics Club** [MEMBEROf]

[from 2009 to ?]

**Mentor**

**Johns Hopkins University Robotics Club** [MEMBEROf]

[from 201009 to ?]

**Member**