

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Oliver McGee, III

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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>	McGee, Oliver, 1957-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Oliver McGee, III,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 11, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:41:54).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil engineer and engineering professor Oliver McGee, III (1957 - 2020) was the former chair of the Civil & Environmental Engineering & Geodetic Science Department at The Ohio State University. McGee was also a full professor of mechanical engineering in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Howard University. McGee was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 11, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_235
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil engineer and academic administrator, Oliver G. McGee III, graduated from the The Ohio State University (OSU) in 1981 with his B.S. degree in civil engineering. McGee went on to earn advanced degrees from the University of Arizona, receiving his M.S. degree in civil engineering and his Ph.D. degree in engineering mechanics and aerospace engineering in 1983 and 1988, respectively. He was a graduate teaching associate in the department of civil engineering and engineering mechanics, while attending the University of Arizona. From 1986 to 1988, McGee worked as a senior research associate at OSU. In 2004, McGee earned his M.B.A. degree in business administration and finance from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. In 1997, McGee was appointed senior policy analyst in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) in the Executive Office of the U.S. President. In 1988, McGee began teaching at OSU as an assistant professor of civil engineering and engineering mechanics. In 1992, McGee became the first African American faculty to be promoted to associate professor with tenure in the century and a quarter year history of OSU's engineering college. He then became, in 1992, associate professor of civil and aerospace engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology. Along the way, he served in a number of visiting professorships at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), including the first opening class of MIT's Martin Luther King Jr. Visiting Professors. Later, McGee was promoted to full professor and chair of the Department of Civil Engineering & Geodetic Science in 2001, becoming the first African-American full professor and chair in the 150-year history of OSU's engineering college. Between 1999 and 2001 McGee served as the U.S. deputy assistant secretary of transportation for technology policy at the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and special assistant to the President at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Howard University hired McGee as the school's very first vice president for research and compliance in 2007. Under his leadership, the new office raised the profile of the Howard principal investigator, launched the first-ever research communications documents Research at The Capstone, and constructed a new central management for research facility at Howard University's C. B. Powell Building, adjacent to the school's Louis B. Stokes Science Library. For his research and education initiatives, McGee has been

awarded grants totaling more than \$8 million. In 2007, he founded the Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm, Partnership Possibilities for America. The firm's concepts on education, economics, and politics are covered in a number of McGee's many books and publications. In 2012, he submitted three books for publication, including *Bridging the Black Research Gap*, available online through Amazon Create Space and Revilo Group Publishing, L.L.C. McGee has authored more than 50 articles appearing in academic journals such as, *ASME Journal of Turbomachinery*, *ASME Journal of Fluids Engineering*, *ASME Journal of Applied Mechanics*, *International Journal for Numerical Methods in Engineering*, *International Journal of Solids and Structures*, *ASCE Journal of Engineering Mechanics*, and *Civil Engineering Systems*. For his contributions, McGee has been honored by numerous organizations, including the American Council on Education (ACE), American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), National Science Foundation (NSF), and National Aeronautics & Space Administration (NASA). Oliver G. McGee III was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 11, 2012.

McGee passed away on June 7, 2020.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Oliver McGee, III was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 11, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civil engineer and engineering professor Oliver McGee, III (1957 - 2020) was the former chair of the Civil & Environmental Engineering & Geodetic Science Department at The Ohio State University. McGee was also a full professor of mechanical engineering in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Howard University.

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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:

McGee, Oliver, 1957-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

McGee, Oliver, 1957- --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:

Civil Engineer

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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 Oliver McGee, III, September 11, 2012. 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 Oliver McGee, III, Section A2012\_235\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:24  
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Oliver McGee talks about his family background. His maternal grandfather, Gene Arnold, was an artist and migrated from Macon, Georgia to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he supported his family by selling his artwork and operating a small business. McGee's sister, Brenda, is also a talented artist, particularly with drawing human figures. His mother, Jean Steal Arnold, was born in February of 1938. She grew up in Georgia before moving to Ohio as a teenager. Although she did not pursue any higher education after graduating from Cincinnati Hughes High School, she later worked in higher education administration at the University of Cincinnati. McGee's paternal great-grandfather is a descendant of Sitting Bull, a Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux tribal chief. His father, Oliver George McGee, Jr., was born in November of 1936 in Cincinnati. He attended Cincinnati Woodward High School, which was among the first public schools established in the U.S.

African American artists.

African American families--Ohio--Cincinnati.

African Americans--Relations with Indians.

Sitting Bull, 1831-1890--Family.

Cincinnati. Woodward high school.

Video Oral History Interview with Oliver McGee, III, Section A2012\_235\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:27  
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Oliver McGee talks about his memories of growing up in Cincinnati, Ohio. He talks about his siblings and his likeness to his mother, who he considers to have had the most significant influence on his life. With just a high school diploma, she started as a secretary and rose through the ranks of higher education administration towards a tenure-track position at the University of Cincinnati. McGee talks about his admiration of her career accomplishments, as well as that of his father, who was honored as the first black fireman in Cincinnati during his early childhood. McGee attended North Avondale Elementary School, where he realized his aptitude for math. He talks about his favorite teachers there, his academic performance, and how he overcame his struggles with reading. McGee also talks about his interest in classical music, the culture in Cincinnati, and how race relations in Cincinnati strained his parents' relationship.

Childhood and youth--Ohio--Cincinnati.

African American mothers--Family relationships.

African American fire fighters--Ohio--Cincinnati.

Mathematical ability in children--United States.

Race Relations--Ohio.

Video Oral History Interview with Oliver McGee, III, Section A2012\_235\_001\_003, TRT: 3:28:11  
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Oliver McGee's parents divorced when he was thirteen years old. He talks about their relationship issues, witnessing domestic violence, and his decision to live with his mother, who succeeded as a great disciplinarian and role model for him. His parents' divorce also taught him the importance of perseverance. By the time McGee entered Woodward High School, McGee's reading skills and academic performance improved. He talks about his geometry teacher, Anna Davis, his captivation with learning Euclidean geometry, and the importance of having a strong foundation in geometry and trigonometry for adequate preparation for higher math subjects, such as calculus. McGee served as his class vice president and was a member of the school band. He played the cello during the wintertime and was a drum major during football season, which he continued through college, where he worked behind Dwight Hudson at Ohio State University.

Children of divorced parents--Ohio.

Family violence--Ohio.

Geometry--Study and teaching (Secondary)--Ohio.

African American high school students--Ohio.

Marching bands--Ohio.

Video Oral History Interview with Oliver McGee, III, Section A2012\_235\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:45  
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Oliver McGee graduated from Woodward High School in the top ten percent of his class in 1975. He talks about his job at McDonalds and reflects on his self-reliance during high school and his concerns about education policy in the United States. After seeing the Ohio State University marching band on television, McGee sought to attend in hopes of becoming drum major. Initially determined to major in music, he was later recruited by his mentor to study engineering. He also joined the band, where he served as a drum major understudy to Dwight Hudson, the first African American drum major in Ohio State History, before becoming the second African American drum major in his senior year. McGee received his B.S. degree in civil engineering in 1981 and went on to attend the University of Arizona. He talks about his experiences at Ohio State, meeting Dr. Julian Manly Earls, and his professors and mentors while at the University of Arizona.

McDonald's Corporation--Employees--Ohio.

Education and state--United States.

Ohio State University--Drum majors.

Civil engineering--Study and teaching (Higher)--Ohio.

Earls, Julian Manly, 1942

Video Oral History Interview with Oliver McGee, III, Section A2012\_235\_001\_005, TRT: 5:31:39  
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Oliver McGee's doctoral dissertation at the University of Arizona, titled "A Three Dimensional Elasticity Based Solution For Free Vibrations Of Simultaneously Skewed And Twisted Cantilever Parallelepipeds," focused on vibrational problems in elastic bodies. In 1988, he received his Ph.D. degree in engineering mechanics and aerospace engineering. That year there were 3,000 Ph.D.'s awarded, according to the National Science Foundation; McGee was one of the nine African American's to earn a Ph.D. that year. During the latter part of his doctoral studies, in 1986, he served as a senior research associate at The Ohio State University. He was appointed as assistant professor in the department of civil engineering in 1988, establishing himself as the youngest professor in the department. In 1992, McGee was appointed as an associate professor at the

Georgia Institute of Technology. He talks about his professional awards his mentors, and his appointment to the White House Fellows Program.

University of Arizona--Doctoral students.

Engineering--Study and teaching (Higher)--United States.

Ohio State University. Department of Engineering--Faculty.

Federal government--Study and teaching (Internship)--United States.

Universities and colleges--United States--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with Oliver McGee, III, Section A2012\_235\_001\_006, TRT: 6:29:16  
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Oliver McGee served as a Senior Policy Advisor in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy in 1997. Concurrently, he studied thermal fluid physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which resulted in a paper, titled "Air Mechanical Feedback Control of Axial Compression Stall," and him working with his mentee, Keith Coleman, on a paper titled "Aeromechanical Control of High Speed Axial Compressor Stall." In 1999, McGee served as the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary to Rodney E. Slater in the Department of Transportation for Technology Policy. He talks about his mentors, such as Bob Nash and Chuck Vest, and their influence on his career at the White House. McGee's emerging interest in public policy and business compelled him to pursue further professional development at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, where he received a certificate of professional development in 2001, and the University of Chicago, where he received his M.B.A. degree in 2004.

United States. Office of Science and Technology Policy--Officials and employees.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology--Students.

Mentoring in Science--Massachusetts--Cambridge.

United States. Department of Transportation. Office of the Secretary--Officials and employees.

Public policy--Vocational guidance.

Video Oral History Interview with Oliver McGee, III, Section A2012\_235\_001\_007, TRT: 7:29:08  
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Oliver McGee received his M.B.A. degree in business administration and finance from the University of Chicago in 2004. He then served as senior vice president for academic affairs of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), where he became involved with philanthropic initiatives. In 2007, McGee was appointed as the vice president for research and compliance at Howard University by Patrick Swygert. In 2012, he received the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship at the University of California, Los Angeles, which he hopes will prepare him to become president of a university in the future. McGee talks about his legacy, his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and his friends and family. He also talks about his books, which include "Jumping the Aisle," "Bridging the Black Research Gap," and "Transforming the Ivory Tower."

United Negro College Fund--Administration.

African American universities and colleges--Finance.

Howard University--Employees.

ACE Fellows Program.

African American authors--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Oliver McGee, III, Section A2012\_235\_001\_008, TRT: 8:15:04  
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Oliver McGee talks about how he would like to be remembered and describes his photos.

Photographs.