

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Campbell, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Campbell, George, Jr.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Campbell, Jr.,
Dates:	May 17, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:27:22).
Abstract:	Physicist George Campbell, Jr. (1945 -) was President of Cooper Union, one of the nation's oldest institutions of higher learning. In 1977, Campbell earned a Ph.D. in theoretical physics and then worked for Bell Laboratories for twelve years. Later Dr. Campbell became president and CEO of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering. Campbell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 17, 2001, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_009
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

College president, nonprofit chief executive and physicist Dr. George Campbell, Jr. was born on December 2, 1945 in Richmond, Virginia to Lillian and George Campbell. Campbell graduated with his B.S. degree in physics in 1968 from Drexel University, where he was a Guggenheim Scholar. Campbell went on to study at Syracuse University, where he received his Ph.D. degree in theoretical physics and began working in academic positions at Syracuse University and later at Nkumbi International College in Zambia. Here, he taught physics and conducted research.

Soon thereafter, Campbell left to take a position at AT&T Bell Laboratories, where he would stay for the next twelve years, occupying various research and design and management positions. During his time at Bell Labs, Campbell helped develop the third generation of telecommunication satellites and served as a United States delegate to the International Telecommunications Union. After his tenure at Bell Labs, Campbell became president and CEO of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME), a nonprofit organization designed to open doors of opportunity for young people interested in the field of engineering. Under Campbell's leadership, NACME's public funding nearly tripled and the organization was recognized with a U.S. Presidential Award for Excellence. In July 2000, Oxford University Press published "Access Denied: Race, Ethnicity and Scientific Enterprise," which Dr. Campbell co-edited.

On July 1, 2000, Campbell returned to academia when he became the first African American president of Cooper Union, a private university in New York City.

The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Campbell and his wife, Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell, the Dean of New York University's Tisch School of Arts, raised three sons, the eldest of whom, Garikai, is a professor of

Mathematics and Acting Dean of Students at Swarthmore College.

George Campbell Jr. was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 17, 2001.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with George Campbell, Jr. was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on May 17, 2001, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Physicist George Campbell, Jr. (1945 -) was President of Cooper Union, one of the nation's oldest institutions of higher learning. In 1977, Campbell earned a Ph.D. in theoretical physics and then worked for Bell Laboratories for twelve years. Later Dr. Campbell became president and CEO of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering.

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:

Campbell, George, Jr.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Campbell, George, Jr. --Interviews

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews.

African American physicists--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Physicist

University President

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers|ScienceMakers

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 George Campbell, Jr., May 17, 2001. 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 George Campbell, Jr., Section A2001_009_001_001, TRT: 0:30:31 ?

George Campbell describes his family background beginning with his mother; Lillian Britt Campbell, who spent much of her childhood living in New York City. He acknowledges the work ethic of his maternal grandparents and points out that he was the family's first grandchild. He explains that his grandfather's ancestry includes White, African American and Cherokee. Campbell then describes his father; remembers his parent's relationship and eventual divorce. Campbell recalls his childhood and playing on his grandparent's farm in Virginia. As a child, Campbell lived with his mother and brother, Robert Campbell. He also talks about the schools he attended as a youth, including Central High School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

African American families.

African American farmers--Virginia.

Divorced parents--United States.

Childhood--United States.

Central High School (Philadelphia, Pa.).

Video Oral History Interview with George Campbell, Jr., Section A2001_009_001_002, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

George Campbell discusses the characteristics of his mother and how she worked to raise two sons on her own in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He then recalls how the values of his church and family shaped his moral values as a child. Campbell attended Central High School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He describes his acceptance into the school, Bell Laboratories presenting new technologies to school students, and the social atmosphere of the school's racially mixed student population. Campbell touches upon his interest in art, and then discusses how he attended college on a limited budget. He began his studies at Drexel University in 1963 with financial assistance of a Guggenheim scholarship. He also discusses the work opportunities available to him during college.

Single-parent families--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Central High School (Philadelphia, Pa.).

Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Drexel University.

African American college students--Employment.

Video Oral History Interview with George Campbell, Jr., Section A2001_009_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

George Campbell shares how he met his wife, Mary Schmidt Campbell, when he was fifteen years-old. He describes how they dated in college and dealt with cultural clashes because she was from a middle class family. Campbell also recalls the relationship he had with Mary's father, Harvey Schmidt, who was a civil rights lawyer. Campbell married after graduating from Drexel University and was drafted into the Vietnam War. However, he received a status of conscientious objector. Subsequently, Campbell was stationed in Zambia in 1969 to teach physics before attending graduate school. He remembers his time in Zambia and the South African refugees he taught there. He also remarks on

the differences and similarities between Zambian and American culture. Campbell's first son was born in Zambia. Campbell speaks about his return home to America and the first time his family met his son.

African Americans--Courtship.

Schmidt, Harvey N.

Conscientious objectors--United States.

Physics--Study and teaching.

Zambia--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with George Campbell, Jr., Section A2001_009_001_004, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

George Campbell attended Syracuse University, along with his wife, where he studied high energy theoretical physics. After he and his wife earned their Ph.Ds. in 1977, Campbell accepted a job at Bell Laboratories and his wife accepted a position as the director of the Studio Museum in Harlem. He describes his work at Bell Labs, where he studied magnetospheric physics relating to the telecommunication satellites the company was developing at the time. By 1984, Campbell was the head of an international research and development operation. Campbell speaks about his experience as an African American employee at Bell Labs. Campbell and his colleagues established the Black Technical Managers Group at Bell Labs in the 1980s, which provided a forum for black managers to hold meeting and organize trips for professional development.

Syracuse University.

Physics--Study and teaching.

Bell Telephone Laboratories.

African Americans--Industrial management.

Video Oral History Interview with George Campbell, Jr., Section A2001_009_001_005, TRT: 0:29:22 ?

George Campbell continues to discuss his experience at Bell Laboratories. He explains that each employee was required to present their work in front of a panel to exhibit their personal contributions to the company. Campbell left Bell Labs to become the president of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME) in 1990. He talks about NACME's mission pertaining to education outreach and academic scholarship. Campbell recalls restructuring NACME's Engineering Vanguard Program in order to provide fewer students with the kind of infrastructure necessary to their success. Campbell then outlines the curriculum and recruitment process of the NACME Engineering Vanguard Program, as well as some of the program's success stories.

Bell Telephone Laboratories.

National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (U.S.).

Minorities--Education--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with George Campbell, Jr., Section A2001_009_001_006, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

George Campbell speaks about how the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering operated. He explains how he organized conferences-- inviting leading researchers in education, psychology, and the social sciences, from around the country-- to help improve access to education for minority students. Campbell left NACME in 2000 to work at Cooper Union College in New York City. He details his strategies for attracting top students to the college and for increasing needed funding sources to provide students with a free education.

Campbell describes his family; his children range in age from ten to thirty-two and he also has several grandchildren. He speaks about his hopes for the African American community, which he believes can achieve equality through education.

National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (U.S.).

Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art.

African American college administrators.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with George Campbell, Jr., Section A2001_009_001_007, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

George Campbell discusses his legacy and talks more about his employment at Bell Laboratories. He concludes the interview by sharing his wish for Cooper Union College to continue providing students with a superb secondary education.

Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art.