

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with James N. Eaton, Sr.

Overview of the Collection

- Repository:** The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
- Creator:** Eaton, James N.
- Title:** The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with James N. Eaton, Sr.,
- Dates:** April 20, 2002
- Bulk Dates:** 2002
- Physical Description:** 4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:36:16).
- Abstract:** Curator and african american studies professor James N. Eaton, Sr. (1930 - 2004) founded the Black Archives Research Center in Tallahassee, Florida. Also, Eaton worked his way up from instructor to the chairman of the Department of History, Geography, and African American Studies at Florida A&M University. He was named Florida A&M Teacher of the Year twenty-five times from 1958-1996, and is the recipient of the CASE Professor of the Year Award. Eaton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 20, 2002, in Tallahassee, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
- Identification:** A2002_052
- Language:** The interview and records are in English.
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Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

James N. Eaton, founder of the Black Archives Research Center, was born on September 14, 1930, in Richmond, Virginia. Eaton attended Fisk University, receiving his B.A. in 1952, and his M.A. in 1959. He received his L.H.D. from Florida Memorial College in 1997.

From 1953 until 1955, Eaton worked as an instructor of history at Miles College in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1957, he took a position as assistant principal at the Hanover School for Boys. In 1958, he left the Hanover School for an instructor's job at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida. While at Florida A&M, Eaton worked his way up from instructor to the chairman of the Department of History, Geography, and African American Studies. Eaton also worked simultaneously as an adjunct professor of History at Florida State University from 1970 until 1980. In 1975, Eaton founded the Black Archives Research Center and Museum. The museum, housed in the Carnegie Library on the campus of Florida A&M University, opened in 1977. Through the archives, Eaton works to collect, preserve, and display primary source information relating to the experiences and contributions of African Americans. The museum's holdings include over 500,000 documents and hundreds of artifacts. Besides his position as curator of the Black Archives, Eaton is a prolific lecturer. He travels the country speaking on black culture and exhibiting historical materials. Eaton is the founder and a charter member of Friends of the Black Archive, a charter member of the Florida History Advisory Board, and the recipient of the USDA Special Medallion for dedicated research on the 1890 land grant colleges. He was named Florida A&M Teacher of the Year twenty-five times from 1958-1996, and is the recipient of the CASE Professor of the Year Award. He and his wife, Leathe, have five children and lived in Tallahassee, Florida. Eaton passed away on October 26, 2004.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with James N. Eaton, Sr. was conducted by Samuel Adams on April 20, 2002, in Tallahassee, Florida, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Curator and African American studies professor James N. Eaton, Sr. (1930 - 2004) founded the Black Archives Research Center in Tallahassee, Florida. Also, Eaton worked his way up from instructor to the chairman of the Department of History, Geography, and African American Studies at Florida A&M University. He was named Florida A&M Teacher of the Year twenty-five times from 1958-1996, and is the recipient of the CASE Professor of the Year Award.

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:

Eaton, James N.

Adams, Samuel (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Eaton, James N.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

Occupations:

Curator

African American Studies Professor

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 James N. Eaton, Sr., April 20, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual

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 James N. Eaton, Sr., Section
A2002_052_001_001, TRT: 0:30:32 2002/04/20

Museum founder and curator James Eaton describes his family background and shares some of his earliest memories growing up in Richmond, Virginia. He describes the complicated race and class relations that came the privilege of his grandmother being a domestic servant with a powerful white family. Eaton also recalls racial issues in some of his favorite childhood movies.

Video Oral History Interview with James N. Eaton, Sr., Section
A2002_052_001_002, TRT: 0:28:37 2002/04/20

Museum founder and curator James Eaton has a detailed discussion about race relations between blacks and whites, using his personal experiences to illustrate this complex relationship. Eaton shares some his worst experiences with whites and some of his best experiences, including a discussion about his mentor, a white professor at Fisk University. Eaton recounts his schooling, from elementary school, to Fisk University, through his graduate studies at Duke University.

Video Oral History Interview with James N. Eaton, Sr., Section
A2002_052_001_003, TRT: 0:29:21 2002/04/20

Museum founder and curator James Eaton recalls his undergraduate years at Fisk University, where he describe race relations on campus, and cites what influenced him to study history. After an overview of his employment as a

police officer and as a teacher at a juvenile home, Eaton describes his appointment to the faculty of Florida A&M University. Eaton explains why he decided to stop teaching and found the Black Archives Research Center and Museum, and has a detailed discussion on the archive's purpose and early years.

Video Oral History Interview with James N. Eaton, Sr., Section A2002_052_001_004, TRT: 0:07:46 2002/04/20

Museum founder and curator James Eaton discusses the significance of black history, and explains why he believes more blacks need to be aware of it. He also considers his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.