

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Freeman Hrabowski

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hrabowski, Freeman A.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Hrabowski,
Dates:	July 21, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:44:30).
Abstract:	University president Freeman Hrabowski (1950 -) was the president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where he created scholarship and programs to encourage young African Americans to pursue math and science. Hrabowski was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 21, 2003, in Baltimore, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_163
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Paving the way for African Americans of the future, Freeman Hrabowski III was born in Birmingham, Alabama, on August 13, 1950. After graduating from high school at the age of sixteen, Hrabowski went on to attend the Hampton Institute and spent a year studying at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. After earning his B.A. in mathematics in 1970, Hrabowski attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, earning an M.A. in 1971 and a Ph.D. in higher education administration in 1975.

Growing up in racially divisive Birmingham, Hrabowski was involved at an early age in the civil rights movement. He participated in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s children's crusade and was arrested. He also knew one of the young girls killed in the Birmingham church bombing of 1963. Hrabowski also noted that many of his classmates did not excel the way he did with mathematics, and by the time he entered the University of Illinois he was the only black student in his classes. Curious and inspired, Hrabowski established a tutoring center for African Americans in high school and college math and science courses.

After earning his Ph.D., Hrabowski remained at the University of Illinois for a year as an assistant professor and the assistant dean of student services. From there, he was hired by Alabama A&M University as the associate dean of graduate studies and an associate professor of statistics. In 1977, Hrabowski took a position at Coppin State College in Maryland as a professor of math and dean of arts and sciences. By 1981, he had been named vice president for academic affairs, where he remained another six years. Hrabowski went to the nearby University of Maryland, Baltimore County, in 1987 as vice provost, and he remains there today as president.

Under Hrabowski's leadership, the Meyerhoff Scholarship was established, originally to help African American males that already excelled in math and science do even better. Today, the program is open to all who excel in these areas, and Hrabowski has plans to increase the program and expand his school even more.

A true leader, Hrabowski is involved in a number of organizations, serving on the boards of groups such as the American Association of Colleges & Universities, the Baltimore Community Foundation and McCormick & Company. He has also co-written two books and numerous articles for journals. Hrabowski has received the Council on Chemical Research Diversity Award and the Outstanding Science Educator Award from Eli Lilly & Company, among many others. He and his wife, Jacqueline, have one son.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Freeman Hrabowski was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 21, 2003, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. University president Freeman Hrabowski (1950 -) was the president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where he created scholarship and programs to encourage young African Americans to

pursue math and science.

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:

Hrabowski, Freeman A.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Hrabowski, Freeman A. --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

University of Maryland Baltimore County

Occupations:

University President

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 Freeman Hrabowski, July 21, 2003. 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 (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 Freeman Hrabowski, Section A2003_163_001_001, TRT: 0:29:15 2003/07/21

Freeman Hrabowski was born on August 13, 1950 in Birmingham, Alabama to Freeman and Maggie Geeter Hrabowski. His great great grandfather was a slavemaster of Polish descent. Hrabowski's grandfather, Freeman Hrabowski was the first boy in the Hrabowski family born after Emancipation. Hrabowski's maternal cousin, Ola Scroggins, taught literature at Jackson State University and married Nick Aaron Ford. Scroggins inspired Hrabowski's mother to attend college. Hrabowski's parents were the first in their families to go to college. Educated as teachers, Hrabowski's parents each worked three jobs simultaneously to support the family. Hrabowski's father was a laborer on the railroad and at the Stockham Valves & Fittings Steel Mill in Birmingham. He also assisted his illiterate white supervisors and wrote for a magazine. Hrabowski's mother was a schoolteacher who also taught GED classes and sold insurance. She worked to equalize teacher salaries. Hrabowski was raised in Birmingham's Titusville neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Hrabowski, Section

A2003_163_001_002, TRT: 0:29:45 2003/07/21

Freeman Hrabowski describes divisions he saw as a child in the African American community that were governed by class and race. When his mother, Maggie Geeter Hrabowski, was a young girl, she decided to become a teacher in order to help children love to read. She would later become a math specialist in the 1960s. As a child, Hrabowski's parents often hosted the elderly in their home. Reading by age three and in first grade by age four, Hrabowski was snuck into Shields Elementary in Birmingham, Alabama by his mother because the school's director thought Hrabowski was too young. He talks about racism in Alabama as well as his determination to participate in the Birmingham Children's Crusade in 1963. Although his parents were initially opposed, they eventually relented, and Hrabowski became one of thousands of Birmingham school children trained by leaders like HistoryMaker Reverend James Bevel and arrested in the demonstration. Hrabowski also describes his experience of integrated education in Massachusetts.

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Hrabowski, Section
A2003_163_001_003, TRT: 0:29:15 2003/07/21

Freeman Hrabowski describes his experience at the Hampton Institute and his teachers there, like Geraldine Darden and Jerome Holland. In 1969, Hrabowski and his girlfriend, Jacquelyn Coleman studied abroad in Egypt at American University in Cairo. She later became his wife. Hrabowski talks about his experiences in Egypt where he met Shirley Graham Du Bois. After graduating from Hampton with a bachelor's degree in 1970, Hrabowski entered a master's program in mathematics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. At the end of his first semester, his father was diagnosed with brain cancer. Hrabowski reflects on the impact of his father's illness. He continued with his studies and graduated with a Ph.D. at the age of twenty-four. Hrabowski talks about his career in academic administration and his efforts to produce black graduates in the math and sciences at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). He also talks about HistoryMaker Samuel Massie, his books, and the Choice Program at UMBC.

Freeman Hrabowski is the co-author of “Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males” and “Overcoming the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Young Women.” He describes the distinction between the two books and his desire to catalyze the success of African American students. He also talks about the problematic portrayal of African Americans in the media, his philosophy of education, and his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Throughout his career, Hrabowski has been honored with many awards including Marylander of the Year and the McGraw Prize in Education. He is also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. Hrabowski closes by reflecting upon his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.