

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Camay Calloway Murphy

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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>	Murphy, Camay Calloway
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Camay Calloway Murphy,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 21, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:50:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Nonprofit chief executive and education administrator Camay Calloway Murphy (1927 - ) is active in promoting jazz music education and is the daughter of Cab Calloway. In 1999, Murphy was appointed as commissioner of Baltimore City Public Schools' Board of Education. Murphy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 21, 2003, in Baltimore, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_225
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

In her career as an educator, Camay Murphy has worked tirelessly to bring arts into the lives of youth. The daughter of legendary jazz musician Cab Calloway, Murphy was born on January 15, 1927, in New York City. While she was raised in New York City, she would spend her summers in Baltimore with her family.

After earning a B.A. from New York University in 1950, Murphy was hired as a teacher at Burgundy Farm County Day School in Alexandria, Virginia. She later

spent two years as headmaster at the Mayflower School in Ikenne, Nigeria, before returning to teach in Arlington, Virginia, in 1963. In 1968, Murphy became a supervisor of Arlington Public Schools, a post she held for a decade. From 1978 to 1993, she was the principal at Ashlawn Elementary School. Under her leadership, the school was recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School for its outstanding standardized achievement scores, jazz program and renowned arts program.

Murphy then moved to Baltimore, the summer home of her youth, in 1994 to work as a cultural development consultant at Coppin State College. It was there that she founded the Cab Calloway Jazz Institute and Museum, paying tribute to her famous father while also promoting music education. Murphy's commitment to cultural arts led her to become the chairperson of Baltimore's Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center. She also serves as vice chairperson of the Baltimore Jazz Heritage Foundation and is a member of several other musical, artistic and cultural organizations in the city. In 1999, Murphy was appointed as commissioner of Baltimore City Public Schools' Board of Education. In her capacity as an administrator, Murphy has worked to improve resources and training for teachers in the arts. For her efforts to support arts education, Murphy has received numerous awards and honors.

Murphy resides in Baltimore. She and her husband have two sons.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Camay Calloway Murphy was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 21, 2003, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit chief executive and education administrator Camay Calloway Murphy (1927 - ) is active in promoting jazz music education and is the daughter of Cab Calloway. In 1999, Murphy was appointed as commissioner of Baltimore City Public Schools' Board of Education.

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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:

Murphy, Camay Calloway

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Murphy, Camay Calloway--Interviews

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African American educators--Interviews

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Museum directors--Maryland--Baltimore--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:**

Education Administrator

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Nonprofit Chief Executive

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

EducationMakers|CivicMakers

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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 Camay Calloway Murphy, September 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).

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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 Camay Calloway Murphy, Section A2003\_225\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:30 2003/09/20

Camay Calloway Murphy was born on January 15, 1927 in New York City. Her mother, Zelma Proctor, was raised in Baltimore, Maryland and is descended from freemen. Murphy describes her mother as genteel. Her father, the musician Cabell “Cab” Calloway, was born in Rochester, New York, and moved to Baltimore where he met Murphy’s mother at Frederick Douglass High School. Calloway’s father was a lawyer and in the real estate business. Calloway entered show business in Chicago, Illinois when he was living with his sister, Blanche Calloway, a singer and bandleader. In Chicago, Calloway teamed up with the Missourians band; the group eventually became the in-house band at the Cotton Club, in Harlem, when Duke Ellington left to tour Europe. Murphy’s parents were teenagers when she was born and never married. She was raised in New York City but spent her summers in Baltimore. She recalls visiting her aunt, Bernice Calloway, and explains the low regard that Bernice, and many other African Americans, had for show business.

African American educators--Interviews.

Museum directors--Maryland--Baltimore--Interviews.

African American school administrators--Maryland--  
Baltimore--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Camay Calloway Murphy, Section  
A2003\_225\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:50 2003/09/20

Camay Calloway Murphy was raised in New York, New York on 149th Street, a neighborhood of African Americans and European immigrants. She remembers playing in the city parks, spending Saturdays at the movie theater, learning numbers from childhood games and loving to read. Murphy was placed in the gifted programs at P.S. 146 Elementary School and Edward W. Stitt Junior High School I.S. 164. Although she excelled at English, her algebra score kept her from entering Hunter College High School; instead she attended Morris High School. Murphy stayed with her aunt Jenny Proctor, who was a devout Catholic, when her mother returned to Baltimore, Maryland following her divorce. Murphy saw her father, Cab Calloway, when he played shows in New York City. She remembers standing backstage and visiting chorus girl's dressing rooms. She also became good friends with the daughters of her father's bandmate, Hilton Jefferson. As a teenager, Murphy enjoyed going to house parties and attending dances at the Savoy Ballroom.

Video Oral History Interview with Camay Calloway Murphy, Section  
A2003\_225\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:10 2003/09/20

Camay Calloway Murphy remembers meeting Paul Robeson, as a high school student; he encouraged her to become a teacher. She entered Hunter College in New York City after graduating from high school, but left Hunter to live with her father, Cab Calloway, and stepmother, Zulme "Nuffie" MacNeal, in Hollywood, California where she met Dorothy Dandridge and Bill Robinson. Calloway and Murphy stopped speaking after Murphy threw a party in his house on Long Island. The two later reconciled due to the intervention of Lena Horne. In 1950, Murphy earned a degree in elementary education from New York University. At NYU, she lived in Judson House and took a class with folk singer Charity Bailey. After graduating from NYU, Murphy moved to Washington, D.C. Her former NYU instructor, progressive education advocate Tillie Pine, connected her to the

headmistress of Burgundy Farm Country Day in Alexandria, Virginia which was known for its delayed reading curriculum. Murphy was the school's first African American teacher.

Video Oral History Interview with Camay Calloway Murphy, Section A2003\_225\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:40 2003/09/20

Camay Calloway Murphy taught at Burgundy Farm Country Day School for ten years where she worked with Agnes Sailor. The school's curriculum was based on the pedagogy of Jean Piaget and the Montessori Method. Murphy served as the headmistress of the Mayflower School in Ikenne, Nigeria for two years during the height of the American Civil Rights Movement. The school's founder, Tai Solarin, was imprisoned during the Biafran War. Murphy began teaching kindergarten in Arlington, Virginia's public schools in the mid-1960s. She eventually became the principal of Ashlawn Elementary School from 1978 to 1993. She was invited to serve on the board of the Eubie Blake Cultural Center in Baltimore, Maryland after she complained about how her father, Cab Calloway, was honored by Baltimore's African American Festival. Through her involvement with the Center she met her second husband, HistoryMaker John Murphy. She describes how the 1980 film, 'The Blues Brothers,' helped revive her father's career.

Video Oral History Interview with Camay Calloway Murphy, Section A2003\_225\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:50 2003/09/20

Camay Calloway Murphy was appointed to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners in 1999. She describes the challenges facing the Baltimore Public School system, her hopes for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered. Murphy reflects upon her legacy and concludes by narrating her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Camay Calloway Murphy, Section A2003\_225\_001\_006, TRT: 0:19:00 2003/09/20

Camay Calloway Murphy narrates her photographs.