

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Al-Tony Gilmore

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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>	Gilmore, Al-Tony
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Al-Tony Gilmore,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 21, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:45:24).
<b>Abstract:</b>	National education executive Al-Tony Gilmore (1946 - ), former professor of history and director of the University of Maryland, College Park Afro-American Studies Program, served as historian and Archivist Emeritus of the National Education Association. Gilmore was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 21, 2003, in Bethesda, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_275
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

National education executive Al-Tony Gilmore was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Gilmore attended North Carolina Central University on an athletic scholarship to run track under coach Dr. Leroy T. Walker. He earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees in American history in 1968 and 1969, and received his Ph.D in U.S. History with honors from the University of Toledo in 1972. While there he led a successful Black Student Union protest resulting in increased recruitment of Black graduate students and faculty, which he coordinated.

Gilmore served as a History Professor at Howard University and the University of Maryland, College Park, where, as a noted scholar of Black sports history, he developed the first college course examining the intersection of sports and society. In 1982, he was selected as Chief Consultant for the National Afro-American Museum of Ohio, and has served as consultant for the National Endowment for the Humanities, the California State General Assembly, and the U.S. National Archives, among others. He has also served as a Visiting Scholar of History at The George Washington University, and is a Distinguished Historian Emeritus of the National Education Association (NEA). During his tenure at NEA, Gilmore served as Senior Program Officer, Manager, and Director of the NEA Archives. He developed the video "Honoring Our Legacy of Inclusion: The Merger of the NEA and the American Teachers Association."

Gilmore's scholarship includes his books, *Bad Nigger: The National Impact of Jack Johnson*; *Revisiting the Slave Community*; *All the People: NEA's Legacy of Inclusion and Its Minority Presidents*; *The Biographical Directory of the Presidents and Executive Directors of the NEA and ATA*; and *A More Perfect Union*. He also wrote the introductory essay to *The Negro in Sports* by Edwin Bancroft Henderson. His numerous articles and reviews have appeared in *The New Republic*, *Huffington Post*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and in anthologies and scholarly journals. He has contributed to PBS's *African American Lives*, *Unforgiveable Blackness*, and the Canadian History Channel's documentary on Jack Johnson.

He has served the Association for the Study of African American Life and History as a Program Chair, a member of its Executive Council, on the board of its journal, and is a Life Member. He has served on the Program Committee of the American Historical Association. Gilmore has also provided commentary for C-Span, and regularly for Sirius Radio's "Urban Views." For Barack Obama's Presidential Inauguration in 2009, Gilmore was selected as the historian to accompany the famed Tuskegee Airmen to the Inauguration platform. At his alma mater, North Carolina Central University, he established the Al-Tony Gilmore Endowed Scholarship Fund, and a Conference Room on campus was named in his honor. Dr. Gilmore lives in Bethesda, Maryland with his wife Beryl, a retired federal administrative judge. He has amassed one of the largest personal collections of vintage African American memorabilia. They are the parents of twins, Genevieve, a Human Resources Specialist, and Jack, an attorney.

Al-Tony Gilmore was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 21, 2003.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Al-Tony Gilmore was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 21, 2003, in Bethesda, Maryland, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. National education executive Al-Tony Gilmore (1946 - ), former professor of history and director of the University of Maryland, College Park Afro-American Studies Program, served as historian and Archivist Emeritus of the National Education Association.

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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:

Gilmore, Al-Tony

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Gilmore, Al-Tony--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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National Education Association of the United States.

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## Occupations:

Federal Education Administrator

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History Professor

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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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 Al-Tony Gilmore, November 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 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 Al-Tony Gilmore, Section A2003\_275\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:21  
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Al-Tony Gilmore was born on June 29, 1946 in Spartanburg, South Carolina to Margaret Gilmore and David Cureton. His mother was born on November 8, 1925 in Spartanburg to Willie Atchison and Curtis Atchison, and her grandparents were slaves named Wallace and Grace Woodruff. Gilmore's father was born in Union, South Carolina around 1918 and attended Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina with LeRoy T. Walker. Gilmore recalls Spartanburg's deeply entrenched segregation and the close-knit and lasting community that developed among the African Americans who lived near his mother on B Street or attended Stephen Grove A.M.E. Zion Church. Gilmore was raised by his single-mother, but his father was well-respected throughout the community as a football coach at Carver High School and later as a school principal. Gilmore earned a scholarship to attend North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina with the help of his father's friendship with their coach LeRoy T. Walker.

Video Oral History Interview with Al-Tony Gilmore, Section A2003\_275\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:40  
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Al-Tony Gilmore grew up in the segregated city of Spartanburg, South Carolina, where he witnessed the success of black professionals in the area and attended the segregated Cumming Street Elementary School, Cumming Street Junior High School, and Carver High School. During summers, Gilmore and his family would visit his grandparents in Youngstown, Ohio. This provided Gilmore with the opportunity to see integrated city life and a stark contrast to the opportunities that education would present. Gilmore reflects on how his experiences taught him to value people for who they are rather than what they do, and to recognize the difference between native intelligence and academic learning. Gilmore was on the basketball, football, and track teams in high school. When he graduated in 1964, every member of Gilmore's class went on to college.

Video Oral History Interview with Al-Tony Gilmore, Section A2003\_275\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:10  
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Al-Tony Gilmore competed in football, basketball, and track while attending Carver High School in Spartanburg, South Carolina where he also became a troublemaker. He remembers one of his math teachers, Bobby Leach, who told his aunt that he was not suitable for college and later Leach was a student of Gilmore's at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Gilmore enrolled at North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina in 1964, where he continued to compete in track and studied history. At track meets, Gilmore met athletes like Norman Tate, Edwin Roberts, Elvin Bethea, Leon Coleman, and HistoryMaker Bob Beamon. Gilmore reflects on the caliber of his history professors, including Earl E. Thorpe, Helen G. Edmonds, Joseph Taylor, Arnold Taylor, Caulbert Jones, and James Brewer. Gilmore received his B.A. degree in 1968 and his M.A. degree in 1969. In 1970, he married Beryl S. Gilmore, a law

student whose great-grandparents founded the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Al-Tony Gilmore, Section A2003\_275\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:20  
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Al-Tony Gilmore received his B.A. degree in 1968 and his M.A. degree in 1969, both from North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina. In 1969, he enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the University of Toledo in Ohio, where W. Gene Holland introduced him to HistoryMaker John Hope Franklin. In May of 1970, Gilmore and his friend Roosevelt Cox shut down one of the school buildings to protest the school's lack of response to the shootings at Jackson State University. After taking his written exams and writing a dissertation on Jack Johnson, Gilmore received his Ph.D in 1972 and accepted a faculty position at Howard University in Washington, D.C. At Howard, Gilmore knew HistoryMakers John Hope Franklin and Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker. After the publication of his first book, "Bad Nigger: The National Impact of Jack Johnson," Gilmore began writing book reviews of black scholarly writing for the Washington Post, where he met HistoryMakers Dorothy Gilliam and Jackie Trescott.

Video Oral History Interview with Al-Tony Gilmore, Section A2003\_275\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:00  
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Al-Tony Gilmore taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C. from 1972 until around 1976, and his students included Gerald Gill, Gerald Early, George Reed, and HistoryMaker Bernice Johnson Reagon. While at Howard, Gilmore met J. Rupert Picott and became a member of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. He later became a member of the board of directors and an editor of the Journal of Negro History. Gilmore reflects on the prominent black scholars that taught at Howard University and those who left to pursue positions at predominately white colleges, such as Kenneth Clark, Abe Harris, and HistoryMaker John Hope Franklin. From around 1976 until 1982, Gilmore was director of the African-American Studies Program and an associate professor at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland. In 1986, Gilmore began working for the National Education Association. He reflects on the differences between the NEA and academia, and on the scarcity of African Americans in the social sciences.

Video Oral History Interview with Al-Tony Gilmore, Section A2003\_275\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:30  
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Al-Tony Gilmore describes the Association for the Study of African American Life and History and the difficulty trained historians have staying relevant compared to fields like political science. He reflects on the importance of historically black colleges and universities and on the changes in their reputations over time. Gilmore describes his concerns for the African American community, including urban terrorism and a widening achievement gap between middle class and poor African Americans. He also shares his concerns about rap music and school vouchers.

Video Oral History Interview with Al-Tony Gilmore, Section A2003\_275\_001\_007, TRT: 0:29:22  
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Al-Tony Gilmore describes the differences between trained African American historians, popular historians, and self-made historians, including their different approaches to the study of history and their different appeal to the public. Gilmore reflects on how few people will read a work of academic history compared to an article in the black press, and compares the reception of his book on Jack Johnson to an article HistoryMaker Lerone Bennett wrote about Jack

Johnson for Ebony magazine. Gilmore also talks about HistoryMaker John Hope Franklin, John Henrik Clarke, J.A. Rogers, Carter G. Woodson, Charles Wesley, Benjamin Quarles, Rayford Logan, John Blassingame, Jonathan Scott Holloway, and Karl Evanzz. Gilmore reflects on his legacy as a teacher and as manager and senior program officer for the Leadership, Training and Development Programs at the National Education Association. He also reflects upon his regrets, his collection of black posters, and his connection to the past.

Video Oral History Interview with Al-Tony Gilmore, Section A2003\_275\_001\_008, TRT: 0:16:01  
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Al-Tony Gilmore talks about how he would like to be remembered and narrates his photographs.