

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Evelyn M. Hammonds

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hammonds, Evelyn Maxine
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Evelyn M. Hammonds,
Dates:	December 3, 2004 and January 29, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2004 and 2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:09:34).
Abstract:	History professor Evelyn M. Hammonds (1953 -) was the founding director of the MIT Center for the Study of Diversity in Science and Technology. Hammonds later became the fourth black woman to receive tenure within the faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. Hammonds' major field of research and writing at MIT and Harvard focused on the ways in which science has examined questions about human variation through the concept of race in the United States from the 17th Century to the present. Hammonds was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 3, 2004 and January 29, 2005, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_248
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Professor and science scholar Evelyn M. Hammonds, Ph.D., was born in 1953 in Atlanta, Georgia; her mother was a schoolteacher, and her father was a postal worker. Hammonds grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, where she attended public school. In 1976, Hammonds received two undergraduate degrees – one from Spelman College in physics, and the other in electrical engineering at Georgia Tech. In 1980, Hammonds went on to earn her master's degree in physics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

After Hammonds earned her M.S. degree, she began a five-year career as a software engineer; finding this unchallenging, she decided to return to the academic world. In 1993, Hammonds received a doctorate degree in the history of science from Harvard University; she then was hired by MIT to teach, where she rose to the position of associate professor. While at MIT, Hammonds was the founding director of the MIT Center for the Study of Diversity in Science and Technology. Hammonds returned to Harvard University in 2002 to accept a joint appointment as professor of the history of science and African American Studies; she later became the fourth black woman to receive tenure within the faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. Hammonds's major field of research and writing at MIT and Harvard focused on the ways in which science has examined questions about human variation through the concept of race in the United States from the 17th Century to the present.

Between 2003 and 2004, Hammonds was named a Sigma Xi Distinguished Lecturer by the Scientific Research Society. Hammonds has been a Visiting Scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, and a Fellow in the School of Social Science at the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton University; in 2003, she was appointed to the Board of Trustees of Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Hammonds published articles and books on the history of disease, race and science, African American feminism, African American women and the epidemic of HIV/AIDS, and analysis of gender and race in science and medicine.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Evelyn M. Hammonds was conducted by Robert Hayden on December 3, 2004 and January 29, 2005, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. History professor Evelyn M. Hammonds (1953 -) was the founding director of the MIT Center for the Study of Diversity in Science and Technology. Hammonds later became the fourth black woman to receive tenure within the faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. Hammonds' major field of research and writing at MIT and Harvard focused on the ways in which science has examined questions about human variation through the concept of race in the United States from the 17th Century to the present.

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:

Hammonds, Evelyn Maxine

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hammonds, Evelyn Maxine--Interviews

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews

African American women educators--Interviews

African American scholars--Interviews

African American historians--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Science Educator

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Evelyn M. Hammonds, December 3, 2004 and January 29, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 6/7/2022 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 Evelyn M. Hammonds, Section A2004_248_001_001, TRT: 0:29:20 2004/12/03

Evelyn M. Hammonds was born on January 2, 1953 in Atlanta, Georgia to Evelyn Baker Hammonds and Williams Hammonds, Jr. Her parents grew up in Covington, Georgia. Her mother studied elementary education. She taught at a private nursery school and later at Capitol Avenue School in Atlanta. Her father studied chemistry and mathematics. He aspired to become an engineer but was unable to attend the segregated Georgia Institute of Technology. Hammonds' parents met while attending Morris Brown College in Atlanta after Hammonds' father returned from U.S. military service in World War II. Hammonds' father worked at the post office until his retirement in the early 1980s. Church attendance and Sunday dinners were an important part of Hammonds' family life as a child. Hammonds became interested in history and science as a student at Collier Heights Elementary School in Atlanta. She was a precocious student aided by early exposure to school curricula and science through her parents. Hammonds has a younger sister.

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews.

African American women educators--Interviews.

African American scholars--Interviews.

African American historians--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Evelyn M. Hammonds, Section A2004_248_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 2004/12/03

Evelyn M. Hammonds lived in Collier Heights in Atlanta, Georgia and attended Central Junior High School. She initially went to Charles Lincoln Harper High School, but upon school integration in Atlanta in 1967, Hammonds was transferred to Daniel McLaughlin Therrell High School, where she faced discrimination from students and teachers, before completing her secondary education at Southwest High School. While at Spelman College, she enrolled in a joint engineering program offered with Georgia Institute of Technology. Despite the racism she encountered at Georgia Institute, Hammonds remained and earned her engineering degree. She also worked on Spelman's student newspaper and interned at Bell Labs in New Jersey. She began a doctoral physics program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge but left for the corporate sector after obtaining a master's degree. Five years later, Hammonds returned to academia to pursue her interest in scientific knowledge production in relation to race and gender.

Video Oral History Interview with Evelyn M. Hammonds, Section A2004_248_002_003, TRT: 0:28:43 2005/01/29

Evelyn M. Hammonds began her Ph.D. program in 1985 in the Department of the History of Science at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her dissertation studied how public health practices were shaped around new understandings of bacteria and social conditions in nineteenth-century New

York City. She was influenced by Kenneth R. Manning, Barbara Gutman Rosenkrantz, Everett Mendelsohn and Nathan Huggins. Upon receiving her degree in 1993, Hammonds had already been hired as an assistant professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge. There, she founded and ran the Center for the Study of Diversity in Science, Technology, and Medicine, and presented her project on race and science at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, Germany. In 2002, Hammonds left MIT due to her colleagues' lack of support for her research. She joined Harvard's faculty in the college of arts and sciences, becoming the university's fourth African American woman tenured professor.

Video Oral History Interview with Evelyn M. Hammonds, Section A2004_248_002_004, TRT: 0:29:24 2005/01/29

Evelyn M. Hammonds traveled to Africa for the first time 1998 to participate in a women's conference in Johannesburg, South Africa and was awed by the history of the region. At the time of the interview, Hammonds was writing 'The Logic of Difference: A History of Race in Science and Medicine in the United States, 1850-1990,' which studies the history of scientific understandings of race in the United States to examine how science both influences and is influenced by social debates around racial differences. She hoped to capture how the recent advances in genetics reshaped scientific questions about race. As a member of the Joint Committee on the Status of Women at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she admonished Harvard President Lawrence Summers for his statements about the inferiority of women scientists. She describes her hobbies, gives advice to young African Americans interested in science and technology and explains why the history of science is important.

Video Oral History Interview with Evelyn M. Hammonds, Section A2004_248_002_005, TRT: 0:12:47 2005/01/29

Evelyn M. Hammonds was a part of the African American feminist group which published a statement in The New York Times supporting Anita Hill in the wake of Clarence Thomas' U.S. Supreme Court confirmation hearings. As part of her political work, she has published on the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its impact on African American women. In this part of the interview, Hammonds reflects upon her life, her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and how she would like to be remembered.