

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Troy Duster

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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>	Duster, Troy
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Troy Duster,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 21, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:31:55).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Sociology professor Troy Duster (1936 - ) was the grandson of Ida B. Wells. Duster directed the Institute for the History of the Production of Knowledge at New York University, and was Chancellor's Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. Duster was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 21, 2005, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_268
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Sociology professor and author Troy Duster was born on July 11, 1936, in Chicago, Illinois. The son of Alfreda Duster, a community organizer, he was raised on the south side of Chicago. His extraordinary grandmother, Ida B. Wells, was born a slave in 1862 in Mississippi, months before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. She became an editor and co-owner of *The Free Speech and Headlight*, a local African American newspaper in Memphis, Tennessee, and was among the first generation of writers to invent investigative journalism. She continued her tireless crusade for equal rights for African Americans until her death in 1931. Duster's father died when he was nine, leaving behind his mother, sister, and two older brothers. Becoming editor of his high school newspaper and graduating first in his class, Duster attended Northwestern University where he studied journalism and sociology. Earning his B.S. degree in journalism in 1957, he continued his studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he earned his M.A. degree in sociology in 1959. In 1962, he was awarded his PhD in sociology from Northwestern University.

In 1999, Duster became professor of sociology and director of the Institute for the History of the Production of Knowledge at New York University. He is also the Chancellor's Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has taught since 1970. In 2004, he served a one-year term as president of the American Sociological Association. Duster's research and writing have ranged across a variety of subject areas: the sociology of law, science, deviance, inequality, race and education. In 1970, his first book, *The Legislation of Morality: Drugs, Crime, and Law* became a classic in the drug field.

Duster is co-author of *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society* (2003), which won the Benjamin Hooks Award and was a finalist for the C. Wright Mills Award in 2004. Among his other awards are a Guggenheim Fellowship at the London School of Economics; an honorary Doctor of Letters from Williams College; and the Dubois-Johnson-Frazier Award from the American Sociological Association. With his siblings,

Duster established the Ida B. Wells Foundation, which gives awards to journalists and researchers working in Wells' tradition of writing and speaking out for civil rights, civil liberties and social justice.

Duster lives in New York with his family.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Troy Duster was conducted by Shawn Wilson on December 21, 2005, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Sociology professor Troy Duster (1936 - ) was the grandson of Ida B. Wells. Duster directed the Institute for the History of the Production of Knowledge at New York University, and was Chancellor's Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.

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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:

Duster, Troy

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Duster, Troy--Interviews

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African American sociologists--Interviews

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New York University--Faculty--Interviews

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University of California, Berkeley--Faculty--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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New York University

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## Occupations:

Sociology 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 Troy Duster, December 21, 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 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.

## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Troy Duster, Section A2005\_268\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Troy Duster describes his family background. His mother, Alfreda Marguerita Barnett, was born September 2, 1905 in Chicago, Illinois to prominent post-Reconstruction African American activists Ida B. Wells and Ferdinand Barnett. Wells was born a slave in 1864 in Holly Springs, Mississippi. Her father, carpenter Jim Wells, was the son of the plantation owner, and the family was therefore treated well until the master's death. After the end of Reconstruction, Wells attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and became a journalist in Memphis, Tennessee, where she wrote a scathing editorial about a lynching she witnessed. She moved to Chicago and married Barnett, a publisher and the first African American graduate of Northwestern University School of Law in Evanston, Illinois. Duster's father, Benjamin Duster, was born in 1889 in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was a descendant of Cherokee Indians, and he attended Indiana State University (then Indiana State Normal School) in Terre Haute to become a teacher.

African American sociologists--Interviews.

New York University--Faculty--Interviews.

University of California, Berkeley--Faculty--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Troy Duster, Section A2005\_268\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:56 ?

Troy Duster recalls growing up in Chicago, Illinois during the 1940s and 1950s. He is the youngest of five siblings all born during the Great Depression, and his parents struggled despite privileged backgrounds; his mother, Alfreda Barnett's parents were activist Ida B. Wells and publisher Ferdinand Barnett, who ran for Illinois Attorney General in 1898. Duster grew up in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago's South Side, which he describes as a stable community, but one in which the rules of the street differed from norms of good behavior at school. He describes learning to code switch and his later interest in sociology. At home, his mother enforced strong academic standards, and all five of her children graduated at or near the top of their class at Wendell Phillips Academy High School. Duster also recalls the reaction to Chicagoan Emmett Till's 1955 murder in Missouri and the killers' acquittal, and to the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education verdict.

Video Oral History Interview with Troy Duster, Section A2005\_268\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:59 ?

Troy Duster recounts his college career. After graduating from the all-black Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago, Illinois in 1953, he enrolled in Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois where he was one of only seven African American students. There, he decided to study journalism. Duster describes his mother, Alfreda Barnett's education at the University of Chicago during the 1920s and how she influenced his intellectual development, and he recounts his graduation speech at Phillips. During his senior year at Northwestern, Duster decided to switch to a sociology major after an ethical argument with a journalism professor. Upon receiving his B.A. degree in 1957, Duster was introduced to sociologist Wendell Bell at the University of California - Los Angeles, who offered him a position as a Ph.D. student there. This experience gave him an academic framework for studying race. Duster

describes the state of civil rights activism during the 1950s and how his relationship with his mother developed.