

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Emory Campbell

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Campbell, Emory S. (Emory Shaw), 1941- |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Emory Campbell, |
| Dates: | January 30, 2007 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2007 |
| Physical Description: | 6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:45:33). |
| Abstract: | Cultural heritage chief executive Emory Campbell (1941 -) was the Director of the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. He led the Gullah Reunion to Sierra Leone in West Africa. Campbell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 30, 2007, in Hilton Head, South Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2007_035 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Cultural heritage chief executive and author Emory Shaw Campbell was born on October 11, 1941 on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. He attended elementary school on Hilton Head Island. Campbell travelled to the nearby city of Bluffton, South Carolina to attend Michael C. Riley High School where he graduated as class valedictorian in 1960. He received his B.A. degree in biology in 1965 from Savannah State College, and in 1971, he earned his M.A. degree from Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts.

Campbell served as the Director of Community Service Education at the Beaufort-Jasper Comprehensive Health Services in Ridgeland, South Carolina for ten years before becoming Director of the Penn Center on St. Helena Island in 1980. The historic Penn Center, which opened in the 1800s to educate freed slaves, serves as a center to preserve the history and heritage of the Island.

During his tenure at the Penn Center, Campbell spearheaded efforts to create a family connection between the Gullah people and the people of Sierra Leone in West Africa. In 1988, he hosted Sierra Leone President Joseph Momoh at the Penn Center for the Gullah reunion and became an Honorary Paramount Chief in 1989 when he led the historic Gullah Reunion to Sierra Leone. A documentary of these two events has been produced for South Carolina Educational Television.

Campbell's work to preserve the Gullah culture has led him to write several publications one of which is "Gullah Cultural Legacies." He also worked on a project to translate the New Testament of the Bible into the Gullah language. In 2005, he received the Carter G. Woodson Memorial for outstanding work. He retired from the Penn Center in 2002 and is the President of Gullah Heritage Consulting Services.

Campbell lives on Hilton Head Island with his wife, Emma. They have two adult children, Ochieng and Ayoka.

Emory Shaw Campbell was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 30, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Emory Campbell was conducted by Denise Gines on January 30, 2007, in Hilton Head, South Carolina, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Cultural heritage chief executive Emory Campbell (1941 -) was the Director of the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. He led the Gullah Reunion to Sierra Leone in West Africa.

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:

Campbell, Emory S. (Emory Shaw), 1941-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Campbell, Emory S. (Emory Shaw), 1941---Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American authors--Interviews.

African American historians--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Penn Center Historic District (Saint Helena Island, S.C.)

Occupations:

Cultural Heritage Collector

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Emory Campbell, January 30, 2007. 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).

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 Emory Campbell, Section A2007_035_001_001, TRT: 0:28:21 ?

Emory Campbell was born on October 11, 1941 on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina to Sarah Williams Campbell and Reginald Campbell. After the Civil War, Campbell's paternal great-great-grandfather, Julius Campbell, purchased land in the Spanish Wells section of Hilton Head Island, and bequeathed it to his descendants, including Campbell's grandfather, Solomon Campbell. Nearby in Savannah, Georgia, Campbell's father worked as a carpenter and river dredger, and became a teacher after developing arthritis. Campbell's maternal family came from St. Helena Island, South Carolina, where his great-grandparents lived in a community of farmers and fishermen. His maternal grandmother, Rosa Brown Williams, taught him to catch fish and shrimp, and his grandfather, Perry Williams, was skilled at weaving fishing nets. Campbell's mother worked as a teacher until marrying his father, after which she resigned to raise their thirteen children, including Campbell, on his paternal family's land near the island's Harbor River.

African American families--South Carolina--Hilton Head Island.

African American parents.

Hilton Head Island (S.C.)--History.

Farm life--South Carolina--Hilton Head Island.

United State--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

African Americans--Land tenure--South Carolina--Hilton Head Island.

Video Oral History Interview with Emory Campbell, Section A2007_035_001_002, TRT: 0:28:27 ?

Emory Campbell grew up in the isolated Spanish Wells community on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. When he was young, the island residents could reach the mainland only via a ferry, which was operated by Charles Simmons, Sr. Campbell's family supported themselves by fishing and growing crops like peas, beans and corn. In addition to farm work, Campbell often played with his twelve siblings, two of whom lived nearby at his grandparents' home. His youngest brother, Benjamin Campbell, became a paraplegic after suffering a head injury at two years old. Campbell began his education at the Spanish Wells School, which was held at the community's praise house. In the sixth grade, Campbell enrolled at Robinson Junior High School on the opposite side of the island from his home. After a bridge was built to the mainland, he attended Michael C. Riley High School in Bluffton, South Carolina, where he faced discrimination for speaking the Gullah language.

African Americans--Education (Elementary)--South Carolina--Hilton Head Island.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--South Carolina--Bluffton.

African American children.

African Americans--South Carolina--Hilton Head Island--Social life and customs.

Farm life--South Carolina--Hilton Head Island.

Video Oral History Interview with Emory Campbell, Section A2007_035_001_003, TRT: 0:28:44 ?

Emory Campbell grew up in the Spanish Wells community on Hilton Head Island, in the Sea Islands of South Carolina. There, he was raised in the Gullah culture. His family ate fish, okra, sweet potatoes and rice, and attended church at the praise house in Spanish Wells, where he was taught the Gullah practices of seeking, dream interpretation and baptism. Later in life, Campbell learned about

the history of the Sea Islands, including the founding of Hilton Head Island's Mitchelville community by freed slaves during the Civil War; and the origin of the Gullah language in West Africa. As a student at Michael C. Riley High School in Bluffton, South Carolina, Campbell was mocked for speaking Gullah by his peers from the mainland. Nevertheless, he excelled in his studies, and was inducted to the school's honor society. Upon graduating as the valedictorian of his class, Campbell enrolled at Savannah's Georgia State College with the help of his mother, Sarah Williams Campbell.

African Americans--Education (Secondary).

Sea Islands Creole dialect.

Gullah cooking.

Gullahs--History.

Gullahs--South Carolina--Hilton Head Island--Religion.

Gullahs--South Carolina--Hilton Head Island--Social life and customs.

African diaspora.

Africa, West--Social life and customs.

Mitchellville (S.C.)--History.

African Americans--Georgia--Atlantic Coast--History.

Turner, Lorenzo Dow.

Mitchel, O. M. (Ormsby MacKnight), 1809-1862.

Video Oral History Interview with Emory Campbell, Section A2007_035_001_004, TRT: 0:28:13 ?

Emory Campbell attended Savannah State College in Savannah, Georgia. There, he majored in chemistry and biology, and was influenced by biology professors Booker T. Griffith and Margaret C. Robinson. Campbell also participated in the Civil Rights Movement. He joined the NAACP, participated in sit-in protests and demonstrated against college president William K. Payne. Upon graduation, Campbell worked briefly at the Sea Pines Plantation to fund his move to Boston, Massachusetts. After searching unsuccessfully for a research position there, Campbell applied for a maintenance job at the Harvard School of Public Health, and was offered a research assistantship instead. During his three-year tenure, Campbell married Emma Campbell, with whom he later had two children, Ochieng Campell and Ayoka Campbell. He worked for a time at Process Research, Inc., but decided to leave the firm after they accepted a project in colonized Southern Rhodesia. Campbell then enrolled at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts.

African American families--Massachusetts--Boston.

Savannah State College (Ga.).

Student protesters--Southern States.

African American college students--Political activity.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Georgia--Savannah.

Tufts University.

Medicine--Research.

Trench fever.

Harvard School of Public Health--Employees.

Environmental engineering--Study and teaching.

African American couples--Massachusetts--Boston.

Employees--Dismissal of--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Emory Campbell, Section A2007_035_001_005, TRT: 0:28:39 ?

Emory Campbell studied environmental engineering at Tufts University. He conducted research in the Mississippi Delta region, where he interviewed farmers to learn about the health effects of pesticides. Campbell then completed his studies while living in Boston, Massachusetts, where he and his family experienced housing discrimination. Upon earning a graduate degree in 1971, Campbell returned to Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, where he was hired as an environmental engineer at Beaufort-Jasper-Hampton Comprehensive Health Services, Inc. with the help of his childhood friend, Thomas Barnwell, who was the company's associate director. He remained there for ten years, working on water sanitation and business cooperative projects. From 1980 to 2002, Campbell served as the executive director of the Penn Center, a Gullah cultural institution on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. He describes the center's history, the Gullah translation of the Bible and the scholarly literature written on the Sea Islands culture.

Tufts University.

Environmental engineering--Study and teaching.

Penn Center Historic District (Saint Helena Island, S.C.).

Gullahs--South Carolina--Saint Helena Island--Social life and customs.

African Americans--South Carolina--Saint Helena Island--Social life and customs.

Sierra Leone--Social life and customs.

Health education--South Carolina.

Rural health services--South Carolina.

Environmental engineering.

Video Oral History Interview with Emory Campbell, Section A2007_035_001_006, TRT: 0:23:09 ?

Emory Campbell served for twenty-two years as the executive director of the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. Following his retirement, he continued his work to preserve the Gullah culture by advocating for policy changes to protect native landowners from rising property taxes, which had increased due to tourism and development in the region. He also sought to strengthen family and community ties, even as many of the original Sea Islanders' descendants left the islands. Campbell talks about the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act of 2006, and reflects upon his life and his advice to future generations. He also describes how he would like to be remembered, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.

Historic sites--United States.

Penn Center Historic District (Saint Helena Island, S.C.).

African American youth.

Cultural property--Protection--Law and legislation.

Gullahs.

Bush, George W. (George Walker), 1946-.

Historic sites--Conservation and restoration--South Carolina.