

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Darnell Eugene Diggs

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Diggs, Darnell Eugene, 1970-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Darnell Eugene Diggs,
Dates:	February 25, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:47:40).
Abstract:	Physicist Darnell Eugene Diggs (1970 -) worked at the United States Air Force Research Laboratory, on the United States Air Force's development of new optoelectronic devices. Diggs was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 25, 2008, in Dayton, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_028
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Research physicist Darnell Eugene Diggs was born on May 20, 1970, in Tuskegee, Alabama to Janie Mae Davenport Diggs and John Diggs. Diggs and his twin sister were the youngest in a family of fifteen children. Diggs attended Pike County Elementary School and Pike County High School, where he was registered in advanced placement classes and played the trumpet in the school marching band.

Diggs followed in his family's tradition by enrolling at Alabama A&M University in Normal, Alabama. While a freshman, he majored in business management and

sang in the university choir. Diggs changed his major to physics at the end of his sophomore year after performing well in a physical science class and graduated with his B.S. degree in physics in 1988. Inspired by members of the National Conference of Black Physics Students and the Society of Physics Students where he served as president, Diggs remained at Alabama A&M University where he earned his M.S. degree in physics in 1997. After internships at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama, Diggs earned his Ph.D. degree in physics in 2001. Diggs was hired by the United States Air Force Research Laboratory as a research physicist in 2002; there, he worked to improve polymer-based electro-optic modulators that provide critical advantages over devices made from other materials. Through his work, Diggs collaborated with Tyndall Air Force Base, Georgia Tech Research Institute, the Army Strategic Missile Command, the University of Dayton, and Alabama A&M University.

In 2004, Diggs received the Black Engineer of the Year Award in the category of Promising Scientist in Government. *Science Spectrum Magazine* named Diggs one of the 50 Most Important Blacks in Research Science in 2004, and a Top Minority in Science in 2005. The World Year of Physics 2005 also recognized Diggs as one of five Distinguished African American Physicists. In 2006, Diggs was invited to speak at the U.S. Air Force & Taiwan Nanoscience Initiative held in Taipei, Taiwan. In 2007, he became president of the Dayton Alumni Extension for the National Society of Black Engineers. Diggs also served as an ordained Elder in the Church of God in Christ.

Darnell Eugene Diggs was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 25, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Darnell Eugene Diggs was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 25, 2008, in Dayton, Ohio, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Physicist Darnell Eugene Diggs (1970 -) worked at the United States Air Force Research Laboratory, on the United States Air Force's development of new optoelectronic devices.

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:

Diggs, Darnell Eugene, 1970-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Diggs, Darnell Eugene, 1970---Interviews

African American physicists--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Physicist

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 Darnell Eugene Diggs, February 25, 2008. 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

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 Darnell Eugene Diggs, Section A2008_028_001_001, TRT: 0:27:30 2008/02/25

Darnell Diggs talks about his family background. His mother, Janie Mae Davenport Diggs was born on April 26, 1931 in Pike County, Alabama to U.L. Davenport and Lela Davenport. His father, John Henry Diggs was born July, 13 1928 also in Pike County, but Diggs does not know his paternal grandparents. Diggs' parents and grandparents stressed that life for them was difficult and they often felt the burden of being uneducated. Diggs went to Pike County Elementary School in 1975, and grew up on a farm in Brundidge, Alabama where he would often play outside with his cousins and read encyclopedias for fun.

African American families--Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Darnell Eugene Diggs, Section A2008_028_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 2008/02/25

Darnell Diggs talks briefly about his experience at Pike County High School where he participated in the band and served as a cadet in the ROTC program. Diggs graduated high school in 1988 and continued his studies, in business and later physics at Alabama A&M University in Huntsville, Alabama. Despite a rocky start in physics, Diggs improved his grades and met prominent physicists such as Shirley Ann Jackson and Sylvester James Gates. Diggs also worked at the space camp in Huntsville where

he taught young children about astronauts' lives in space.
National Conference of Black Physics Students.
Alabama A & M University--Physics Department.
African American high school students.
Mentoring in education--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Darnell Eugene Diggs, Section
A2008_028_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 2008/02/25

Darnell Diggs earned his B.S. degree from Alabama A&M University and chose to continue his graduate studies at the same institution. His Ph.D. thesis involved the sensing of harmful biological and chemical agents. He received his Ph.D in 2001 and then went on to work at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio where he studied the properties of organic materials and their use in optical communications applications. Diggs comments on some of his awards and honors and his desire to motivate youth.

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (Ohio)--History.
Alabama A & M University--Physics Department.

Video Oral History Interview with Darnell Eugene Diggs, Section
A2008_028_001_004, TRT: 0:22:40 2008/02/25

Darnell Diggs talks about the interplay between science and religion. He does not have a problem with searching for scientific answers, but he dislikes when scientists claim to be God, or when they are adamant that God does not exist. Diggs was involved in organizations such as the National Society of Black Physicists, the National Society of Black Engineers, and the Optical Society of America. In his short career, Diggs says that his legacy consists of his educational outreach, and that he would like to be remembered as someone who made a contribution to society. Diggs is also involved in the Church of God in Christ, the nation's largest African American Pentecostal Church.

African American physicists.
Science and religion.
National Society of Black Physicists.
Optical Society of America.