

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Alvin Kennedy

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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>	Kennedy, Alvin, 1955-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Alvin Kennedy,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 15, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:24:38).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Chemistry professor and chemist Alvin Kennedy (1955 - ) is chair of the chemistry department at Morgan State University. During his career, he worked at Dow Chemical Company where he received three polymer-related patents. Kennedy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 15, 2010, in Baltimore, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_067
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Chemist and chemistry professor Alvin P. Kennedy was born on June 1, 1955, to Helen Augusta Kennedy and Amos Paul Kennedy. He grew up in Grambling, Louisiana, where he attended Grambling Laboratory School and later Grambling High School. Kennedy attended Grambling State University during which time he participated in several research internships, graduating with his B.S. degree in chemistry in 1978. He pursued graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley with funding from an AT&T Bell Labs fellowship. His graduate research focused on the development of chemical lasers and the kinetics associated with

spontaneous reactions. Kennedy received his Ph.D. degree in physical chemistry in 1985.

After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, Kennedy was hired at Dow Chemical Company as a senior research chemist in central research, where he developed new polymer systems for microelectronic applications. He also produced sixteen internal publications and was promoted to project leader in central research at Dow in 1989. In 1991, Kennedy was appointed assistant professor of chemistry at North Carolina A&T State University, and in 1996, he was promoted to associate professor. He also received a NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration)/ASEE (American Society for Engineering Education) Research Fellowship at the Marshall Space Flight Center in 1997. In 2000, Kennedy joined the faculty at Morgan State University as associate professor of chemistry and chair of the chemistry department. Kennedy has been a tenured professor at Morgan State University since 2002.

Kennedy received several patents throughout his career including two patents on laminates of polymers in 1993 and 1995. In 1998, he patented the *Resin transfer molding process for composites*. Kennedy has been the recipient of several honors including his 1998 appearance in *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* and his 2008 *Henry McBay Outstanding Teacher of the Year* award from the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers. He is married to Sharon Kennedy and has three children from a previous marriage.

Alvin Kennedy was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 15, 2010.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Alvin Kennedy was conducted by James Stith on July 15, 2010, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Chemistry professor and chemist Alvin Kennedy (1955 - ) is chair of the chemistry department at Morgan State University. During his career, he worked at Dow Chemical Company where he received three polymer-related patents.

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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:

Kennedy, Alvin, 1955-

Stith, James (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Kennedy, Alvin, 1955---Interviews

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African American chemists--Interviews.

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African American scientists--Interviews.

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African American college professors--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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Morgan State University

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Morgan State University

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## **Occupations:**

Chemistry Professor

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Chemist

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

EducationMakers|ScienceMakers

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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 Alvin Kennedy, July 15, 2010. 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 (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 Alvin Kennedy, Section A2010\_067\_001\_001, TRT: 0:27:12

Alvin Kennedy discusses his family background and his parents' educational and professional backgrounds. Kennedy's mother, Helen Augusta Kennedy, was born on November 5, 1935 in Shreveport, Louisiana. After completing her advanced degrees, she went on to teach at Grambling State University and the University of North Carolina A&T. Kennedy's father, Amos Paul Kennedy, was born on September 7, 1925, in Rocky Mount, Louisiana. His father served in the Army Medical Corps in Korea and also taught at Grambling State University. Kennedy's parents had four other children: Arlander Paul Kennedy, Gloria Marie Kennedy, Amos Kennedy Jr., and Alan Paul Kennedy.

African American families--United States--20th century.  
Discrimination in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Alvin Kennedy, Section  
A2010\_067\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:07

Alvin Kennedy describes growing up in Grambling, Louisiana, where his parents taught at Grambling State University, and his education. Kennedy's childhood schools were considered excellent because they were akin to laboratory schools connected to the university. During his fifth grade year, Kennedy developed an interest in science, due largely to the influence of his teacher Mrs. Turner. Kennedy describes coaching his high school basketball team as a student and his undergraduate experience at Grambling State University. While at Grambling State, Kennedy held various internships and participated in research projects, including the Brookhaven Semester Program his father had developed. Grambling State University.

Segregation in education--Louisiana--Grambling.

African Americans--Education--Louisiana--Grambling.

Basketball--Coaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Alvin Kennedy, Section  
A2010\_067\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:15

Alvin Kennedy continues discussing his undergraduate education at Grambling State University. The university president at Kennedy's time of attendance was Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones, who was responsible for transitioning Grambling State from a college to a university. Kennedy also discusses the influence of religion in his family, and how that affected his views on science. Though his father was a Sunday school teacher and his family attended church regularly, Kennedy has never believed the dogma associated with religion. Instead, he recognizes the similarities between science and religion with regards to faith. Kennedy goes on to describe choosing a graduate school, the influence of his internships on his education and the difficulties of his graduate experience at the University of California, Berkeley because of race.

Grambling State University.

Jones, Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1938-.

African Americans--Religion.

Religion and science.

Racial discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Alvin Kennedy, Section  
A2010\_067\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:55

Alvin Kennedy describes his graduate school experience at the University of California, Berkeley, where he researched the development of chemical lasers. During this time, Kennedy married his wife LaToy in 1978 and started his family. They had three children: Arion, Alvin Jr., and Avery. After earning his Ph.D. degree in 1985, Kennedy went to work at Dow Chemical Company, where his research included the development of new thermoset polymers for microelectronic applications. Kennedy won several awards and patents from work done at Dow, leaving in 1991 to go teach at North Carolina A&T State University.

Chemistry--Research.

Chemistry--Patents.

Chemical lasers.

Thermosetting plastics.

Dow Chemical Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Alvin Kennedy, Section  
A2010\_067\_001\_005, TRT: 0:32:09

Alvin Kennedy begins by describing his difficulties obtaining funding from North Carolina A&T State University. However, during 1994 and 1995, Kennedy developed a relationship with the Marshall Space Flight Center, which granted him funding for his program. Kennedy later accepted an offer to join the faculty at Morgan State University, where he instituted undergraduate research programs in order to give students early exposure to research. He is involved with professional organizations such as the American Chemical Society and the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE). Kennedy then discusses his family and long term goals.

George C. Marshall Space Flight Center.

National Organization for Black Chemists and Chemical

Engineers.

Morgan State University.

National Science Foundation (U.S.)--Research grants.

American Chemical Society.

United States. National Aeronautics and Space  
Administration.

African American chemists.

Chemistry--Study and teaching.