Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers ® Video Oral History with Georgia Mae Dunston

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Dunston, Georgia M.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Mae Dunston,
Dates:	May 4, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:52:38).
Abstract:	Geneticist Georgia Mae Dunston (1944 -) is professor in the Department of Microbiology at Howard University and the founding director of the National Human Genome Center. Dunston was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 4, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_088
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Geneticist Georgia Mae Dunston was born in Norfolk, Virginia on August 4, 1944 to a working class family. As a child, Dunston developed an interest in the biology of race and decided to continue her study of biology after graduating from high school. She earned her B.S. degree in biology from Norfolk State University in 1965 and her M.S. degree in biology from Tuskegee University in 1967. Dunston went on to study at the University of Michigan, finishing her Ph.D. degree in human genetics in 1972. She then accepted a position at Howard University Medical Center as an assistant professor which she held from 1972 to 1978.

From 1975 to 1976, Dunston completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the National Cancer Institute where she studied tumor immunology. She later served as a scientist there in an immunodiagnosis lab that was partly funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). At Howard, Dunston was appointed director of the human immunogenetics laboratory in 1985. At this time, she focused her research on diseases that are common in the black community as well as genes and immune reactions that are unique to African American populations. From 1991 to 1994, Dunston served as associate director of the Division of Basic Sciences at Howard University Cancer Center. She was promoted to full professor in the Department of Microbiology at Howard in 1993 and became chair of the department in 1998. Inspired by the Human Genome Project, begun in 1990, Dunston focused her attention on the genetic heritage of the African American population. Dunston's work in human genetics and diversity resulted in her founding the National Human Genome Center at Howard in 2001.

Dunston is the recipient of several awards including the Howard University College of Medicine Outstanding Research Award, NAACP Science Achievement Award and the Howard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Graduate Faculty Member Award. She has been a member of the National Advisory Council for the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Sigma Xi and the National Academy of Sciences Review Committee on Human Genome Diversity Project. Georgia Mae Dunston lives in Washington, D.C.

Georgia Dunston was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 5, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Georgia Mae Dunston was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 4, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Geneticist Georgia Mae Dunston (1944 -) is professor in the Department of Microbiology at Howard University and the founding director of the National Human Genome Center.

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:

Dunston, Georgia M.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Dunston, Georgia M.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Howard University.

Occupations:

Geneticist

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 Georgia Mae Dunston, May 4, 2012. 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).

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 Georgia Mae Dunston, Section A2012_088_001_001, TRT: 1:30:04 2012/05/04

Georgia Mae Dunston describes her family background. Her mother, Rosa Anna Barton, was born in 1923 in Princess Anne County, Virginia. Dunston describes her mother's unwavering devotion to caring for her family. Dunston's father, Ulyses Grant Dunston, was born in 1923 in Moyock, North Carolina. Dunston talks about her father's large family, and his Native American ancestry. She describes her father as being intelligent, sociable and business savvy. Dunston also recalls how a near-death experience influenced her father's religious enlightenment, and discusses the early development of her family's involvement in the Baptist Church.

African American families.

African Americans--Relations with Indians.

Near-death experiences.

African American fathers--Religious life.

Baptists, Black.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Mae Dunston, Section A2012_088_001_002, TRT: 2:30:09 2012/05/04

Georgia Mae Dunston was raised in Norfolk, Virginia as the youngest of four children. She talks about how her parents, Rosa Anna Barton and Ulyses Grant Dunston, met and migrated to Norfolk, and then describes their personalities. Dunston recalls how her deaf and mute sister, Shirley Maxine, rescued her from almost being trampled by a violent horse in Norfolk. She describes the

important role that church played in her life as a child, and talks about her family's involvement in First Baptist Church in Berkley, Virginia. Dunston attended Abraham Lincoln Elementary School where she became interested in biology. Dunston also talks about her growing curiosity about the diversity amongst people, which led to her interest in biology.

Childhood and youth--Norfolk (Va.).

Children with disabilities--Family relationships--United States.

Children--Religious life.

First Baptist Church (Berkley, Va.).

Biology--Study and teaching (Elementary).

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Mae Dunston, Section A2012_088_001_003, TRT: 3:29:22 2012/05/04

Georgia Mae Dunston attended Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, Ruffner Junior High School and Booker T. Washington High School in Norfolk, Virginia. She talks about her growing interest in biology as well as her awareness of the social perceptions of skin complexion and beauty. Dunston also talks about her memories of the Norfolk 17 incident in 1957. In 1961, Dunston was accepted into Norfolk State University on a full state-funded scholarship, and as such, was the first person in her family to attend college. She describes her experience at Norfolk State, and talks about her friends and mentors there.

African Americans--Color--Social aspects.

School integration--Virginia--Norfolk--History--20th century.

Norfolk State University (Va.).

African American college students--Scholarships, fellowships, etc.

Mentoring in education--Virginia.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Mae Dunston, Section A2012_088_001_004, TRT: 4:28:59 2012/05/04

Georgia Mae Dunston attended Norfolk State University, where she earned her B.S. degree in biology in 1965.

Dunston describes her experience at Norfolk State, where she was influenced by her biology professors, particularly Dr. Louis Austin. Following Dunston's futile attempts at gainful employment in the biological sciences, she was encouraged by Dr. Austin to pursue graduate studies at Tuskegee University. Dunston received a George Washington Carver Research Fellowship to a two-year M.S. degree program in biology at Tuskegee, where she was introduced to the field of genetics. She describes her academic and personal experiences at Tuskegee University, and talks about her decision to attend the University of Michigan to pursue doctoral studies in human genetics from 1967 to 1972. Dunston also discusses her research experience at Tuskegee University, and comments upon the significance of George Washington Carver.

Biology--Vocational guidance.

Tuskegee University. Carver Research Foundation.

African American college students--Scholarships, fellowships, etc.

Genetics, Human.

Carver, George Washington,--1864?-1943.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Mae Dunston, Section A2012_088_001_005, TRT: 5:29:43 2012/05/04

From 1967 to 1972, Georgia Mae Dunston pursued a Ph.D. degree in human genetics at the University of Michigan, where she focused on the study of a human blood-group variant that was first observed in a native South American population. Dunston describes her experience as the only African American in the Department of Human Genetics, and her relationship with her thesis advisor. She also discusses race and genetics, and the social stereotypes that influenced the study of human genetics in the 1960s and 1970s. Upon completing the requirements of her doctoral degree, Dunston moved to Washington, D.C. as an assistant professor of microbiology at Howard University, where she was also able to pursue postdoctoral research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

University of Michigan. Department of Human Genetics.

Thesis (PhD).

Teacher-student relationships--Michigan.

Human genetics--Social aspects.

National Institutes of Health (U.S.).

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Mae Dunston, Section A2012_088_001_006, TRT: 6:32:10 2012/05/04

After earning her Ph.D. in genetics in 1972, Georgia Mae Dunston accepted an assistant professorship of microbiology at Howard University. As a result of her mentor, Dr. Willie Turner's influence, Dunston received a joint postdoctoral appointment at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), where she focused on tumor immunology, under the tutelage of Dr. Ronald Herberman. Dunston describes her experience as a co-investigator on her first NIH R01 grant, and talks about her partnership with the renowned surgeon, Dr. LaSalle Leffall. Dunston was involved in the establishment of Howard's doctoral program in microbiology in the 1970s, and talks about the successes of its inaugural class of graduates, including HistoryMaker Agnes Day. In 1985, Dunston helped establish the Human Immunogenetics Laboratory at Howard, and served as its director for ten years. Dunston also talks about African American geneticists, the genetics program at Howard University, and her research in the field of immunogenetics.

African American microbiologists.

Mentoring in science--United States.

National Cancer Institute (U.S.).

Tumors--Immunological aspects.

Howard University. Human Immunogenetics Laboratory.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Mae Dunston, Section A2012_088_001_007, TRT: 7:30:03 2012/05/04

Georgia Mae Dunston served as the director of the Human Immunogenetics Laboratory at Howard University for ten years, and describes its role in providing research and clinical services. In 1995, Dunston received a fellowship for the Visiting Investigator Program at the National Cancer Institute, to conduct research on the Human Genome Project (HGP). Dunston describes her interaction

with the head of the HGP, Francis Collins, and how Howard University became involved with the project. In 1997, Howard University received support from the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) with major funding from the NIH Office of Research on Minority Health, in order to become the coordinating center for the African American Hereditary Prostate Cancer (AAHPC) study network. Dunston describes her experience with this project, and discusses the involvement of the prominent African American geneticist, Rick Kittles. She also describes the factors that affect gene expression and regulation.

Howard University. Human Immunogenetics Laboratory.

Human Genome Project.

National Human Genome Research Institute (U.S.).

National Institutes of Health (U.S.). Office of Research on Minority Health.

African American geneticists.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Mae Dunston, Section A2012_088_001_008, TRT: 8:22:08 2012/05/04

Georgia Mae Dunston reflects upon her career's legacy, and her work in the area of human genetics. Dunston also talks about her family choices, her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and shares how she would like to be remembered. In this final section of the interview, Dunston emphasizes the power of the information revealed in the human genome, and describes the genetic basis for human diversity.

Human genome--Social aspects.

Human genetics--Variation.

Biodiversity.