

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with James Johnson, Jr.

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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>	Johnson, James H., 1947-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with James Johnson, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 15, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:14:13).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil engineer and education administrator James Johnson, Jr. (1947 - ) is the former dean of Howard University's College of Engineering, Architecture, and Computer Sciences, and the first African American chair of the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT). Johnson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 15, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_139
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil engineer and education administrator James H. Johnson, Jr. was born on May 27, 1947 to parents, James and Arline in Annapolis, Maryland. He earned his B.S. degree in civil engineering from Howard University. He then attended the University of Illinois, where he received his M.S. degree in sanitary engineering in 1970. Johnson worked as a consultant and as an engineer at Engineering Science before continuing his education at the University of Delaware. He received his Ph.D. degree in civil and environmental engineering in 1982.

Following the completion of his graduate studies, Johnson was offered a position on the faculty of his alma mater, Howard University. Johnson's research focused on the treatment of hazardous compounds, contaminated soil including explosive waste, and environmental policy. He became chair of the Howard University Department of Civil Engineering in 1982. From 1989 until 2002, Johnson served as associate director of the Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic Hazardous Substance Research Center. In 1996, he was appointed dean of Howard University's College of Engineering, Architecture, and Computer Sciences and in 2005 he was named the Samuel P. Massie Professor of Civil Engineering. Four years later, Johnson became professor emeritus of civil engineering at Howard University. In 2010, he was appointed chair of the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT) by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson. Johnson was the first African American to chair this independent committee for the Agency. He has also served as chair of the U.S. EPA's Board of Scientific Counselors. In 2012, Johnson was appointed director of EPA's National Center for Environmental Research (NCER) within the Office of Research and Development. Johnson has co-edited two books, contributed to three more, and he has published over 60 academic papers.

Johnson is a diplomate of the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and in 2005, he received the National Society of Black Engineers Lifetime Achievement Award in Academia. He has also been recognized with the 2008 Water Environment Federation Gordon Maskew Fair Distinguished Educator Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award by National Society of Black Engineers (DC Chapter) in 2009. He is a member of the Water Environment Federation, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Society for Engineering Education, the Association of Environmental Engineers and Science Professors and the American Academy of Environmental Engineers.

James H. Johnson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 15, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with James Johnson, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 15, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civil engineer and education administrator James Johnson, Jr. (1947 - ) is the former dean of Howard University's College of Engineering, Architecture, and Computer Sciences, and the first African American chair of the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT).

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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:

Johnson, James H., 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Howard University

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Howard University

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## **Occupations:**

Civil Engineer

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Education Administrator

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ScienceMakers|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 James Johnson, Jr.,

## 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 James Johnson, Jr., Section A2012\_139\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:47 2012/07/15

James Johnson talks about his family background. Johnson was born in 1947, in Annapolis, Maryland. His mother, Arline Julie Kess Johnson, was born in Annapolis, Maryland. After raising her family, Johnson's mother earned a practical nursing license and worked at the Navy Hospital. Johnson's father, James Henry Johnson, Sr., was also born in Annapolis, Maryland. After finishing his GED and the required coursework, James Johnson, Sr. became a licensed mortician and funeral director. Johnson remembers growing up in Annapolis, Maryland, which was historically segregated. Though segregated, Annapolis had a thriving African American community. Johnson's home sits on a piece of land acquired by his great-great-great grandfather, James Colbert, who was a farmer. Johnson has determined that his ancestors lived in the Annapolis, Maryland area since the 1700s.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

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Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with James Johnson, Jr., Section  
A2012\_139\_001\_002, TRT: 2:30:54 2012/07/15

James Johnson talks about growing up in Annapolis, Maryland. Johnson attended Staten Elementary School, where his favorite teachers were Cecilia B. Greene and Rachel Brown. These teachers were very caring and took a special interest in him. As a boy, Johnson enjoyed playing football and basketball, and was very active with the Boy Scouts. During his middle school years, Johnson met his lifelong friend, Kirson Herbert. Johnson attended Wiley H. Bates High School, and it was there that he developed an interest in civil engineering. In 1965, Johnson enrolled in Howard University to study civil engineering. That year, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered a speech at Howard University, which was very inspiring to Johnson. While at Howard University, Johnson was mentored by Dr. Walter T. Daniels, Dr. Man Mohan Varma, and Dr. Raymond Jones. Johnson graduated with his B.S. degree in civil engineering and works as an environmental engineer.

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Video Oral History Interview with James Johnson, Jr., Section  
A2012\_139\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:52 2012/07/15

James Johnson graduated from Howard University with his B.S. degree in civil engineering in 1969. Upon graduation, Johnson attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and graduated with his M.S. degree in Sanitary Engineering. In 1970, Johnson became an engineer at Engineering Science. Johnson then returned to Howard University to teach. During this time, Johnson

earned his Ph.D. from the University of Delaware, graduating in 1982. Johnson served as chair of the Department of Civil Engineering and dean of the School of Engineering at Howard. Under Johnson's leadership, Howard participated in the Environmental Protection Agency's Hazardous Substance Research Center for eleven years. During this time, Johnson worked with Walt Weber, Perry McCarty, and Herb Ward, who were leaders in the field of environmental engineering.

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Video Oral History Interview with James Johnson, Jr., Section A2012\_139\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:35 2012/07/15

James Johnson talks about his work at Howard University to secure major gifts for the university, including a \$1,000,000 gift from alumnus James Silcock. Johnson also partnered with Black and Veatch, to form a leadership institute featuring renowned speakers like Bill Gates, General Lester Lyles, and General Colin Powell. Johnson also describes his research on treating water contaminated with both radiological and hazardous waste. He served as an Environmental Health and Safety consultant to the University of California's Office of the President. In this position, he met Nobel Prize winner Steven Chu. While at Howard University, Johnson was honored as the Samuel P. Massey Professor of Civil Engineering. After serving as Dean for fourteen years, Johnson was named Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering.

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Video Oral History Interview with James Johnson, Jr., Section A2012\_139\_001\_005, TRT: 5:15:05 2012/07/15

James Johnson talks about his career and his legacy. He is happy with all that he has accomplished and continues to help others by his example, by his service, and through the advice that he gives. Because he has lived so unselfishly, he believes that his parents and grandparents would be proud of him and all that he has achieved. As an environmental engineer, Johnson recognizes the importance of sustainability and feels that this will take a more prominent role in the future. Johnson currently lives with his wife in Annapolis, Maryland, and enjoys spending time with his brother and his extended family. He would like to be remembered as someone that truly cared for other people and someone that gave more than he received.

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