

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Clifford Houston

PERSON

Houston, Clifford W., 1949-

**Alternative Names:** Clifford Houston;

**Life Dates:** December 3, 1949-

**Place of Birth:** Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**Work:** Galveston, TX

**Occupations:** Microbiologist

## Biographical Note

Microbiologist Clifford Wayne Houston was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on December 3, 1949. Houston attended Oklahoma State University where he earned his B.S. degree in microbiology and chemistry in 1972, and his M.S. degree in biology in 1974. He went on to receive his Ph.D. degree in microbiology and immunology from the University of Oklahoma in 1979. Upon completion, Houston was awarded a James W. McLaughlin postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB).

Houston began at UTMB in 1981 as an assistant professor. He was then promoted to associate professor with tenure in 1987, and became Full Professor and Associate Vice President for Educational Outreach in 1991. As a researcher at UTMB, Houston focused on the role that bacterial toxins play in the pathogenesis of disease. His findings have been published in academic journals such as the Journal of Bacteriology, the Journal of Clinical Microbiology and the Journal of Infectious Diseases. As an administrator, Houston participated in the management development program at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University in 1994. In 1997, Houston was named the Herman Barnett Distinguished Professor of Microbiology and Immunology. He also served as deputy associate administrator for education in the Office of Education at NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. from 2003 to 2005. At NASA, he provided day-to-day oversight and guidance for three primary divisions: elementary and secondary education, higher education and informal education.

Houston has been active in many professional organizations, including serving as chair of the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students Steering & Planning Committee, and chair of the American Society for Microbiology Education Board. He also sat on the National Institutes of General Medical Sciences External Advisory Council. In 2011, Houston was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services to the National Advisory Board for Bio-security.

Throughout his career, Houston has received numerous honors and awards. He received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring in 2000. Houston was elected to the American Academy of Microbiology in 1997; and, in 2006, he became the first African American elected as president of the American Society for Microbiology – the world's largest professional

biological research organization. Houston also continued to devote the time to mentoring and youth outreach. He established many educational programs and activities in the Galveston, Texas community as well as across the country to enhance the interest of young students in mathematics and science.

Clifford W. Houston was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on January 31, 2013.

## Related Entries

**Oklahoma State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**Oklahoma State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.A.**

**University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center**  
[STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Oklahoma State University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1972 to 1975]

**Research Technician, Department of  
Biochemistry**

**Langston University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1973 to 1973]

**Laboratory Instructor, Department of Chemistry**

**University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1978 to ?]

**Teaching Assistant, Department of Microbiology  
and Immunology**

**University of Texas Medical Branch** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1946 to 1953]

**Lecturer**

**University of Texas Medical Branch** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1981 to ?]

**Fellow**

**University of Texas Medical Branch** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1978 to ?]

**Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology**

**University of Texas Medical Branch** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1987 to 1991]

**Associate Professor**

**University of Texas Medical Branch** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1962 to ?]

**Assistant Vice President for Multicultural Affairs**

**University of Texas Medical Branch** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1978 to ?]

**Professor, Department of Microbiology &  
Immunology**

**University of Texas Medical Branch** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1992 to ?]

**Vice President for Educational Outreach**

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
(NASA)** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2003 to ?]

**Deputy Associate Administrator for Education  
Program**

**American Society for Microbiology** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2006 to ?]

**President**