

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michael Blakey

PERSON

**Blakey, Michael, 1953-**

**Alternative Names:** Michael Blakey;

**Life Dates:** February 23, 1953-

**Place of Birth:** Washington, District of Columbia,  
USA

**Work:** Williamsburg, VA

**Occupations:** Biological Anthropologist

## Biographical Note

Biological anthropologist and research director Michael L. Blakey was born on February 23, 1953 in Washington, D.C. Blakey received his B.A. degree in anthropology from Howard University in 1978. He continued his studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and earned his M.A. degree in 1980. Blakey travelled to England to do research on the biology of contemporary Londoners at the University of London and Oxford University. In 1985,

Blakey received his Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Upon graduation, Blakey began teaching at Howard University where he was the curator of the William Montague Cobb Human Skeletal Collection, one of the largest systematic collections of documented human skeletons in the world. He has held visiting positions at a variety of institutions, including Spelman College, Universita Di Roma, the Smithsonian Institutions, Columbia University, and Brown University. From 1991 to 1994, Blakey served as the director of the African Burial Ground Project in New York City, one of the most important archaeological finds in the United States during the 20th century. He co-edited a report on the work he did there, *The New York African Burial Ground: Unearthing the African Presence in Colonial New York, Vol. 1; Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground*, which was published by Howard University Press in 2009. Following the conclusion of the African Burial Ground Project, Blakey was named a professor of American Studies and College of William and Mary. In 2003, Blakey was appointed as the director and the National Endowment for the Humanities Professor of Anthropology at the College of William and Mary Institute of Historical Biology.

Blakey has served on many boards of the American Anthropological Association and published more than forty articles on the history and philosophy of science, paleopathology, historical demography, medical psychophysiology, and racism. His work can be found in journals such as *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, *American Anthropologist*, *International Journal of Anthropology*, and *Critique of Anthropology*. Blakey received an Honorary Doctorate of science degree in 1995 from York College of the City University of New York.

Blakey lives and works in Washington D.C. with his wife, Cecelie Counts Blakey, and their son, Tariq

Blakey.

Biological anthropologist and research director  
Michael L. Blakey was interviewed by The  
HistoryMakers on February 27, 2013.

## Related Entries

**Jefferson Middle School Academy** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Calvin Coolidge Senior High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Howard University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**University of Massachusetts Amherst** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.A.**

**University of Massachusetts Amherst** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Howard University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1982 to 2001]

**Professor of Anthropology/Curator**

**National Museum of Natural History** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1986 to 1995]

**Research Assistant in Physical Anthropology**

**Spelman College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1989 to 1989]

**Visiting Associate Professor**

**Universita di Roma** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1990 to 1990]

**Visiting Associate Professor**

**Columbia University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1997 to 1997]

**Visiting Distinguished Professor**

**Brown University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1999 to 1999]

**Visiting Professor**

**College of William and Mary** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2001 to ?]

**NEH Professor and Director**

**Archaeological Society of Maryland** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1984 to 1985]

**Member**

**Coolidge High School Black Student Union** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2017 to ?]

**Head**

**American Anthropological Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**American Association of Physical Anthropologists**  
[MEMBEROF]  
[from 1990 to 1992]

**Member**

**Association of Black Anthropologists** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1996 to 1998]

**President**

