

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Dottin

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Dottin, Robert
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Dottin,
Dates:	April 11, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	7 MOV HD video files (3:13:25).
Abstract:	Biologist Robert Dottin (1941 -) is a full professor at Hunter College of City University of New York where he also was appointed as the program coordinator for the Center for the Study of Gene Structure and Function (Gene Center). Dottin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 11, 2013, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_102
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Biologist and research director Robert Dottin was born in Trinidad in 1941. He graduated from St. Mary's College in 1970 with his B.S. degree in biology. Dottin went on to earn his M.S. degree in medical biophysics in 1972 and his Ph.D. in medical genetics in 1974 from the University of Toronto. Upon graduation, Dottin was awarded the Centennial Fellowship to pursue post-doctoral research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dottin served as a professor at the Johns Hopkins University, and has been a visiting professor at the University of Copenhagen, Pasteur Institute in Paris, Karlova University in Prague and Oxford University. Dottin then became a full professor at Hunter College of the City University of New York. His teaching experience includes courses in bioinformatics, genetics and developmental biology, all of which utilize internet and digital technology to promote interactive learning. In addition, Dottin has developed many strategies that promote the inclusion of under-represented groups in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) research as well as addressing health disparities. Dottin is the founder of the "JustGarciaHill" website – a internet-based community of more than four-thousand minorities in science. Dottin scholarship is published in journals such as the "Journal of Biological Chemistry" and "Ethnicity and Disease".

From 1988 to 1986, Dottin served as the program coordinator for the Center for the Study of Gene Structure and Function (Gene Center) at Hunter College. In 1998, he was appointed as the director of the Gene Center. As director, Dottin increased the productivity, the level of funding, and the diversity of the faculty and staff within the organization. He steered the research at the Gene Center towards a "translational research" agenda and managed equal partnership of the Gene Center in the Clinical and Translational Science Center (CTSC) with the Weill Cornell Medical Center, the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and the Hospital for Special Surgery. He is the principal investigator for the CTSC sub-award to Hunter College, and he is co-principal investigator on T3 Translational Research Network pilot projects to use an interactive videoconferencing platform to prevent chronic diseases, infectious diseases, and environmental toxicity.

Robert Dottin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 28, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Dottin was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 11, 2013, in New York, New York, and was recorded on MOV HD video files. Biologist Robert Dottin (1941 -) is a full professor at Hunter College of City University of New York where he also was appointed as the program coordinator for the Center for the Study of Gene Structure and Function (Gene 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:

Dottin, Robert

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Dottin, Robert--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Hunter College of the City University of New York

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 Robert Dottin, April 11, 2013. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/19/2013 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, April 11, 2013

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Dottin, Section A2013_102_001_001, TRT: 1:28:54
2013/04/11

Robert Dottin describes his family background. Dottin's mother, Lena Decoteau, was born in Grenada in 1912, and moved to Trinidad with her adoptive family when she was very young. Dottin describes his mother's intelligence and her devotion to her family. Dottin's father, William Chelston Dottin, was born in Trinidad in 1914, and traced his ancestry to Barbados. Dottin describes his father's interest in engineering, and his career as a ship

engineer in the Merchant Marines. He also talks about his parents' personalities, his likeness to them, and his siblings. Dottin recalls his mother's influence on him as a child, and describes how she was the first person to introduce him to physics. He also describes his memories of growing up in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and the neighborhoods where his family lived.

Families--West Indies.

Fathers--Employment--Trinidad.

Merchant marine.

Parents--West Indies.

Childhood--Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago).

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Dottin, Section A2013_102_001_002, TRT: 2:30:04
2013/04/11

Robert Dottin was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad, where he spent his childhood. He shares his memories of growing up in Port of Spain, and describes the economy, politics and demographics of Trinidad. Dottin recalls when Trinidad gained its independence from Great Britain in 1961 and the popular literary figures who originated from Trinidad. Dottin attended Tranquility Elementary School, and describes his studies there. He then attended Fatima College and St. Mary's College, two of the premier high schools in Port of Spain. He describes his experience in high school, his interest in science and mathematics, the British system of high school education, and his efforts to teach himself calculus in high school. Dottin also discusses the genetic diversity in Africa, and his work with the Human Heredity and Health in Africa (H3Africa) initiative.

Childhood--Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago).

Trinidad--History.

Education--Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago).

Human genetics--Variation.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Dottin, Section A2013_102_001_003, TRT: 3:29:24
2013/04/11

Robert Dottin recalls Trinidad gaining independence from the British in 1961, and describes the celebrations in Port of Spain. Dottin attended St. Mary's College for his advanced levels (A-level) in physics, chemistry and zoology. He then spent two years working as a junior teacher at Fatima College and a technician in the chemical engineering department at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Dottin received a scholarship to attend the University of Toronto, and describes his initial experience in Canada and his undergraduate studies there. In 1968, Dottin earned his B.S. in biology, graduating at the top on his class, and winning the Silver Medal of the Governor General of Canada. Although he had initially planned to pursue his graduate studies in the United States, Dottin decided to continue his studies with his undergraduate research mentor, Clarence Fuerst. Dottin's master's and Ph.D. degrees were focused on the mechanism of bacteriophage integration.

Trinidad and Tobago--Politics and government.

St. Mary's College (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago).

College students--Employment--Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago).

Scholarships, fellowships, etc.--Canada.

University of Toronto.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Dottin, Section A2013_102_001_004, TRT: 4:29:55

2013/04/11

Robert Dottin pursued his master's and Ph.D. degrees in medical genetics at the University of Toronto. Under the tutelage of virologist, Clarence Fuerst, Dottin studied the mechanism for the regulation of bacteriophage lambda's integration into the E.coli genome. He describes his novel findings on the phage repressor protein, and the scientific community's reactions to his discovery. In 1974, Dottin received a Centennial Scholarship to pursue his postdoctoral training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he studied messenger RNA (mRNA) in the amoeba Dictyostelium discoideum. He then spent a year as a visiting professor in Copenhagen, Denmark before moving to the United States as a faculty member at Johns Hopkins University. Dottin describes his research on signal transduction in Dictyostelium discoideum, which became the focus of his research career. In 1986, Dottin joined the Department of Biological Sciences at Hunter College, New York, as a professor of biology.

University of Toronto--Graduate work.

University of Toronto--Faculty.

Scholarships, fellowships, etc.--Canada.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Universities and colleges--Faculty.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Dottin, Section A2013_102_001_005, TRT: 5:28:36
2013/04/11

In 1986, Robert Dottin joined Hunter College, New York, as a professor of biology, where he began to work at the NIH-funded Center for the Study of Gene Structure (Gene Center). In 1988, Dottin became a program coordinator at the Gene Center, and then became its director in 1998. He describes his experience at the Gene Center, and talks about its scientific advancements over the years. Dottin was involved in the establishment of Just Garcia Hill, a social networking website that aims to recognize the contributions of minority scientists and increase the number of minorities entering science careers. He describes his commitment to science education and minorities in science. He discusses the underlying biases that affect minorities in science and the ongoing efforts to change this trend. Dottin also reflects upon his career's contributions to the fields of bacteriophage genetics and signal transduction.

Hunter College--Faculty.

Hunter College. Center for Study of Gene Structure and Function.

Minorities in science.

Science--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Dottin, Section A2013_102_001_006, TRT: 6:30:02
2013/04/11

During his tenure at Hunter College, Robert Dottin was involved in promoting collaborative science education using videoconferencing tools and cyber classroom initiatives. He describes this work and his involvement with the National Institutes of Health's Human Heredity and Health in Africa (H3Africa) initiative. Dottin discusses his political views and vision for the United States, and shares his perspective on the debate about evolution and climate change. He also talks about his efforts to establish a scientific collaborative network within the City University of New York system and other universities in New York. Dottin describes his hopes for the African American community. He also reflects upon his legacy in research, administration and science education. He then describes his family and talks about his two children.

Science--Educational technology.

Genomics--Research--Congresses--Africa.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Dottin, Section A2013_102_001_007, TRT: 7:16:30
2013/04/11

Robert Dottin talks about how he would like to be remembered. He describes his fondness for football/soccer, particularly for the Chelsea Football Club in Fulham, England, and his interest in jazz music and learning Spanish. He also shares his photographs.

Chelsea Football Club.

Jazz--Instruction and study.

Spanish language--Study and teaching--English speakers.

Photograph collections.