

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Camellia Moses Okpodu

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Okpodu, Camellia Moses, 1964-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Camellia Moses Okpodu,
Dates:	June 20, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:54:35).
Abstract:	Molecular biologist and plant biochemist Camellia Moses Okpodu (1964 -) former chair of the Norfolk State University Biology Department, was the first Marshall Rauch Distinguished Professor at Elizabeth City University and the second director of the Norfolk State University's Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence. Okpodu was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 20, 2013, in Norfolk, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_151
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Research director and STEM educator Camellia Moses Okpodu was born on January 24, 1964 in Portsmouth, Virginia. Okpodu was the fourth of five children born to Frank Moses, a retired U.S. Navy veteran, and Luerevia Fullwood Moses. She graduated from West Brunswick High School in 1982, and then enrolled at North Carolina State University where she received her B.S. degree in biochemistry in 1987, and her Ph.D. degree in plant physiology and biochemistry

in 1994. Upon graduation, Okpodu was awarded a postdoctoral research fellowship in plant molecular biology at the Virginia Institute of Technology. She also received certificates in Documentation and Record Keeping from the BioPharma Institute Program, in Forensic DNA Databases and Courtroom Consideration from the National Institute of Justice via the Forensics Training Network, and in Hazardous Communication from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

In 1996, Okpodu joined the faculty at Hampton University as an assistant professor in the department of biology. While there, she served as program director and principal investigator for Project O.A.K. from 1992 to 2002, and as chair of the department of biology from 1999 to 2000. In 2002, Okpodu left Hampton and joined the faculty at Elizabeth City State University where she was appointed to an endowed professorship and served for one year as the chair of the biology department. She then moved to Norfolk State University in 2003 where she was named professor and chair of the biology department. She also served as the director of the National Institutes of Health Extramural Research Office, director of the Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence, and as director of the Group for Microgravity and Environmental Biology (formerly, the Center of Microgravity and Environmental Biology).

Okpodu is a member of the Sigma Xi, Beta Kappa Chi, and the American Society of Plant Biology. Okpodu served as a reviewer for the *Journal of Applied Phycology*, and has published her research in the *Journal of Plant Physiology* and the *Journal of Plant Science*. Her academic and professional awards include the Gordon Research Conference Travel Award, the Intelligence Community Faculty Scholar Award, and both the Award of Recognition and the Special Recognition of Merit Award from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. In addition, she served as a National Institutes of Health Genome Fellow in 2006, an Extramural Research Associate Fellow in 2006, and as an American Council on Education Fellow in 2007.

Camellia Moses Okpodu was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 20, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Camellia Moses Okpodu was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 20, 2013, in Norfolk, Virginia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Molecular biologist and plant biochemist

Camellia Moses Okpodu (1964 -) former chair of the Norfolk State University Biology Department, was the first Marshall Rauch Distinguished Professor at Elizabeth City University and the second director of the Norfolk State University's Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence.

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:

Okpodu, Camellia Moses, 1964-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Okpodu, Camellia Moses, 1964---Interviews

African American microbiologists--Interviews.

African American biochemists--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Norfolk State University

Norfolk State University

Occupations:

Molecular Biologist

Plant Biochemist

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 Camellia Moses Okpodu, June 20, 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 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 Camellia Moses Okpodu, Section A2013_151_001_001, TRT: 1:28:30 2013/06/20

Camellia Okpodu slates her interview and lists her favorites. Okpodu was born in Portsmouth, Virginia on January 24th, 1964. Her mother, Luerevia Elizabeth Fullwood, was born July 23rd, 1930 in Southport, North Carolina. Her mother's side of the family can be traced back to 1840, where one of her ancestors traveled to Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, during the Civil War to obtain his freedom. They then became farmers in the area.

Okpodu has done scientific research on the Emancipation Oak, the oak where President Abraham Lincoln gave the Emancipation Proclamation. Her mother had polio as a child and lost the use of the left side of her body. She attended the Apex School of Beauty in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her father was the oldest of seven and became an officer in the Navy after studying at Clafin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

African American families.

African American mothers--North Carolina.

Slavery--North Carolina.

Poliomyelitis.

African American fathers.

United States. Navy.

Video Oral History Interview with Camellia Moses Okpodu, Section A2013_151_001_002, TRT: 2:29:13 2013/06/20

Camellia Okpodu talks about her parents, who met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania around 1953. Her mother, Luerevia Elizabeth Fullwood, integrated an elementary school by enrolling Okpodu's brothers in the white school. Her father, Frank C. Moses, was an officer in the Navy and Okpodu believes he was moved to Virginia by the military as a social experiment in an effort to be progressive. She describes her likeness to her parents. Okpodu has two older brothers, Donald and Durwin, an older sister, Linda, and a younger sister Madeline who they call Lisa. Because of her mother's polio and her father's Navy career Okpodu was raised by her uncle and aunt in Holden Beach, North Carolina. During the third grade Okpodu entered a leaf collection in a 4-H competition and received a blue ribbon. She describes the sights, sounds and smells of her childhood and describes her extracurricular activities during school.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

African American families.

Childhood--North Carolina.

Aunts--Family relationships.

Uncles--Family relationships.

4-H clubs.

Video Oral History Interview with Camellia Moses Okpodu, Section A2013_151_001_003, TRT: 3:30:42 2013/06/20

Camellia Okpodu talks about her uncle and aunt, who were teachers and activists who succeeded in incorporating North Myrtle Beach in South Carolina. She describes the college counseling she received and why she chose to attend North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1983. Her boyfriend in high school died after graduating and Okpodu decided to stay close to family. To help pay for books Okpodu was a pageant queen, at one point winning Miss Brunswick County. Okpodu met her ex-husband, Samuel Okpodu, at North Carolina State University, and they married in 1985. She graduated with a degree in biochemistry in 1987 and after having her daughter Samilia Okpodu decided to go to North Carolina State University for graduate school. Because she had many graduate credits already Okpodu was able to bypass the master's degrees and work on her doctoral education instead. She also mentions her academic mentors.

Aunts--Family relationships.

Uncles--Family relationships.

North Carolina State University.

Death.

Beauty contests.

Marriage.

Biochemistry.

Video Oral History Interview with Camellia Moses Okpodu, Section A2013_151_001_004, TRT: 4:31:30 2013/06/20

Camellia Okpodu talks about her mentors Arlene Maclin, Esther Terry, Roseanne Runte and Douglas Depriest. Okpodu's doctoral dissertation was on characterizing phosphatidylinositol kinase enzymes from carrot cells as well as showing proof of concept for the Bio-Nebulizer, which is used to remove nuclei from cells. She received her Ph.D. degree from North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina in 1994. While still writing her

dissertation in 1992 she became a postdoctoral fellow at Virginia Polytechnic and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia, where she examined antioxidant enzymes and oxidative stress in plant development. In 1996 she became a professor at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. She talks about her projects there and her research on plant development in microgravity. In 1999 Okpodu was on the Oprah Show and had an essay published in Sylvia Rimm's 'How Jane Won.' She also published a manual on plant physiology in 2000.

Mentoring in science.

Biochemistry.

Enzyme activation.

Cytology.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Hampton University (Va.).

Reduced gravity environments.

Oprah Winfrey show (Television program).

Video Oral History Interview with Camellia Moses Okpodu, Section A2013_151_001_005, TRT: 5:28:18 2013/06/20

Camellia Okpodu describes how she came to be a professor at Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia. In 2001 she took a position at Elizabeth City State University. After a year she decided to become a professor at Norfolk State University due to the illness of one of her daughters. At Norfolk State University Okpodu heads the Group for Microgravity and Environmental Biology.

Okpodu explains her fascination with photosynthesis and her work with undergraduate research on the cultures of intelligence communities. She became the director of the National Institute of Health Extramural Research Office in 2007, training faculty to write grant proposals. Okpodu talks about genetically modified food and the Dozoretz National Institute for Mathematics and Applied Sciences program at Norfolk State University.

Norfolk State University (Va.)--Dozoretz National Institute for Mathematics and Applied Sciences.

Elizabeth City State University.

Reduced gravity environments.

Photosynthesis.

Microbiology.

Video Oral History Interview with Camellia Moses Okpodu, Section
A2013_151_001_006, TRT: 6:26:22 2013/06/20

Camellia Okpodu describes the Dozoretz National Institute for Mathematics and Applied Sciences Program at Norfolk State University, Norfolk, Virginia. In 2009 Okpodu became the director of Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence. Okpodu reflects on her career and her legacy. She also discusses the challenges of being a parent and her concerns for the next generation. Okpodu talks about her three daughters, Samilia, Elizabeth, and Koren. To conclude the interview Okpodu shares how she would like to be remembered and describes her photographs.

Norfolk State University (Va.)--Dozoretz National Institute for Mathematics and Applied Sciences.

African American families.

Reminiscing.

Photographs.