

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Clayborne Carson

PERSON

**Carson, Clayborne, 1944-**

**Alternative Names:** Clayborne Carson;

**Life Dates:** June 15, 1944-

**Place of Birth:** Buffalo, New York, USA

**Residence:** Palo Alto, California

**Work:** Stanford, California

**Occupations:** African American History Professor

## Biographical Note

African American history professor Clayborne Carson was born on June 15, 1944 in Buffalo, New York to parents Clayborne Carson and Louise (Lee) Carson. He grew up near Los Alamos, New Mexico. Carson attended the University of California, Los Angeles where he studied history and graduated with his B.A. degree in 1967, his M.A. degree in 1971, and his Ph.D. degree in 1975.

Prior to academia, Carson worked as a laboratory assistant at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, an editor for Audience Studies, Inc., a staff writer for the Los Angeles Free Press, and a computer programmer in the Survey Research Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. He joined the faculty of the history department at UCLA as an acting assistant professor in 1971, before being hired as assistant professor at Stanford University in 1974. Carson was promoted to associate professor at Stanford University in 1981. In 1985, Coretta Scott King requested that Carson become senior editor of an ongoing multi-volume project, The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.. Carson was promoted to professor of American history in 1991, and became founding director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute in 2005. Carson's academic appointments outside Stanford University include teaching and lecturing in Great Britain, France, China, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania; as well as visiting professorships at the American University, the University of California at Berkeley, and Emory University.

Carson contributions include works of fiction and non-fiction, documentaries, and other creative productions. His most notable scholarship includes, The

Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1998) and In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960's (1981). He served as senior advisor for the Public Broadcasting System's (PBS) fourteen-part documentary series "Eyes on the Prize"; and as historical advisor for the motion pictures "Freedom on My Mind" (1995), "Chicano!" (1996), and "Blacks and Jews" (1997). Carson, along with Roma Design Group, created the winning proposal in an international competition to design a national memorial for King in Washington, D.C.; and he authored "Passages of Martin Luther King" (1993), a docudrama.

As a member of professional organizations, Carson has been considerably active throughout his career. Those affiliations include: the American Historical Association (AHA), the Organization of American Historians (OAH), the Social Science History Association (SSHA), the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASAALH), and the Southern Historical Association. In 1995, Carson received the OAH Frederick Jackson Turner Award for, In Struggle: . In addition, he served as an Andrew Mellon Fellow at Stanford University, the Center for the Study of Civil Rights and Race Relations at Duke University, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University.

Carson lives with his wife, Susan Ann Carson, who until her retirement was the managing editor of the King Papers Project, in Palo Alto, California. They have two children: Malcolm Carson, an attorney; and Temera Carson, a social worker.

Clayborne Carson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 7, 2013.

## Related Entries

**Carson, Clayborne** [CHILDOf]  
Father

**Lee Carson, Louise** [CHILDOf]  
Mother

**Carson, Eddie Greene** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Paternal Grandfather

**Clayborn, Bessie May** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Paternal Grandmother

**Carson, Michael** [SIBLINGOf]  
Sibling

**Carson, Gail** [SIBLINGOf]  
Sibling

**Carson, Christopher** [SIBLINGOf]  
Sibling

**Carson, Mark** [SIBLINGOf]  
Sibling

**Carson, Stephen** [SIBLINGOf]

**Sibling**

**Carson, David Malcolm** [PARENTOF]

**Child**

**Carson, Temera** [PARENTOF]

**Child**

**University of California, Los Angeles** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**University of California, Los Angeles** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**M.A.**

**University of California, Los Angeles** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Los Alamos National Laboratory** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1962 to 1964]

**Laboratory Assistant**

**Audience Studies, Inc.** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1965 to 1966]

**Editor**

**Los Angeles Free Press** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1966 to ?]

**Staff Writer**

**University of California, Los Angeles Survey Research Center** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1968 to 1971]

**Computer Programmer**

**University of California, Los Angeles** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1971 to 1974]

**Acting Assistant Professor**

**Stanford University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1974 to 1981]

**Assistant Professor**

**Stanford University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1981 to 1990]

**Associate Professor**

**University of California, Berkeley** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1982 to 1983]

**Visiting Associate Professor**

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project, Stanford University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1985 to ?]

**Editor and Director**

**American University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1990 to 1990]

**Landmarks Scholar in History**

**Stanford University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1990 to ?]

**Professor**

**Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1993 to 1994]

**Fellow**

**Emory University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1996 to 1997]

**Distinguished Professor**

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 2005 to ?]

**Founding Director**

**L'Ecole des hautes etudes en sciences sociales** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 2007 to 2007]

**Visiting Professor**

**Morehouse College** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 2008 to 2009]

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Distinguished Professor**

**Morehouse College** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 2008 to 2009]

**Executive Director**

**American Historical Association** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Association for Documentary Editing** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)**  
[MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Organization of American Historians** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Society of American Historians** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Southern Historical Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Writers Guild of America** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**