



Smithsonian Institution Archives

African American Contributions to the
Smithsonian Oral History Interviews, 2015-2016

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Smithsonian Institution Archives
Washington, D.C.
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	African American Contributions to the Smithsonian Oral History Interviews
Identifier:	Record Unit 9636
Date:	2015-2016
Extent:	
Creator::	Smithsonian Institution
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9636, African American Contributions to the Smithsonian Oral History Interviews

Use Restriction

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Historical Note

The Smithsonian African American Contributions interviewees include Jeannine Smith Clark, Shireen Dodson, Michael R. Barnes, and Shirley Ann Jackson.

Introduction

The Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA) began its Oral History Program in 1973. The purpose of the program is to supplement the written documentation of the Archives' record and manuscript collections with an Oral History Collection, focusing on the history of the Institution, research by its scholars, and contributions of its staff. Program staff conduct interviews with current and retired Smithsonian staff and others who have made significant contributions to the Institution. There are also reminiscences and interviews recorded by researchers or students on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

To celebrate the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in September of 2016, the Institutional History program of Smithsonian Institution Archives conducted a series of oral history interviews with African Americans who made significant contributions to the Smithsonian over their careers.

Descriptive Entry

These interviews discuss their contributions to the Smithsonian as African American volunteers, employees, and regents, their relationships to the rest of the Smithsonian, notable programs they developed, significant challenges, reminiscences of colleagues, and interaction with the public and staff.

The Smithsonian African American Contributions Oral History Interviews collection is comprised of 6 interview sessions, totaling approximately 7 hours of recordings and c. 340 pages of transcripts. The interviews were conducted in 2015-2017 by intern Olivia Sayah and historian Pamela M. Henson.

Jeannine Smith Clark (1928-2018) was born on October 5, 1928 in Washington, D.C. She received her BA and MA in African Studies from Howard University. She began her work with the Smithsonian in 1968 as a volunteer docent. She chaired the volunteer program of the Smithsonian Women's Committee in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1983 she was appointed to the Board of Regents, where she became the first chairwomen of the Cultural Education Committee in 1986. She was now a Emeritus Regent.

Shireen Dodson (1951-) was born July 2, 1951 in New Jersey and moved to Washington, D.C. in the 1970s. She received her BS from Morgan State University and her juris doctorate from Seton Hall Law School. At the Smithsonian, she worked as the Assistant Director of the Accounting and Financial Services Office, SI Comptroller and with the African American Museum Project from 1980 to 2000. She is now at the United Nations.

Michael R. Barnes (1956-) was born March 4th, 1956 in Washington, D.C. He began his career in 1977 at the Smithsonian in the Duplicating Branch of the Office of Printing and Printing Services. He has been working as a photographer for the Smithsonian since 2000. He is best known for his photography of the building of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, as well as of the Million Man March and the presidential inaugurations of George W. Bush and Barak Obama.

Shirley Ann Jackson (1946-) grew up in Washington, D.C., before attending Massachusetts Institute of Technology for her B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. in theoretical physics and particle physics. After a career at Bell Labs, Rutgers University and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, she was named president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1999. She served on the Smithsonian Board of Regents from 2005 to 2017.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- African Americans
- African Americans -- History
- Interviews
- Museums -- Employees
- Obama, Barack
- Oral history
- Photographers
- Presidents -- United States -- Inauguration
- Volunteer workers in museums
- Women

Types of Materials:

Compact discs
Digital images
Electronic images
Electronic records
Sound recordings
Transcripts

Names:

Barnes, Michael R.
Bell Labs
Bush, George W. (George Walker), 1946-
Clark, Jeannine Smith, 1928-
Dodson, Shireen
Henson, Pamela M., interviewer
Howard University
Jackson, Shirley Ann, 1946-
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Million Man March (1995: Washington, D.C.)
National Museum of African American History and Culture (U.S.)
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rutgers University
Smithsonian Institution -- Employees
Smithsonian Institution. Board of Regents
Smithsonian Institution. Office of Accounting and Financial Services
Smithsonian Institution. Office of Printing and Photographic Services
Smithsonian Institution. Office of the Comptroller
Smithsonian Institution. Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Arts and Humanities.
National African American Museum Project
Smithsonian Women's Committee
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
United States. Department of State

Container Listing

Interviews

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Interviews | Interview 1: November 17, 2015 |
| Interviews | Interview of Jeannine Smith Clark by Olivia Sayah covers her role as a volunteer, docent, member of the Smithsonian Board of Regents, and chair of the Cultural Education Committee in the 1960s through 2015. |
| Interviews | Transcript, pp. 1-17. |
| Interviews | Audio Recording of Interview: Total recording time: 00:57 hours
Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Original Masters: 2 digital audio .wav files• Reference Copies: 2 digital audio .mp3 files |
| Interviews | Interview 2: December 1, 2015 |
| Interviews | Interview of Shireen Dodson by Olivia Sayah covers her role as a financial administrator and with the African American Museum Project at the Smithsonian from 1980 to 2000. |
| Interviews | Transcript, pp. 1-14. |
| Interviews | Audio Recording of Interview: Total recording time: 00:40 hours
Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Original Masters: 1 digital audio .wav file• Reference Copies: 1 digital audio .mp3 file |
| Interviews | Interviews 3-5: June 13, 2016; August 4, 2016; and August 30, 2016 |
| Interviews | Interviews of Michael R. Barnes by Pamela M. Henson covers his career at the Smithsonian since 1977, initially as a printer with the Office of Printing and Photographic Services, transition to digital printing, and career as a Smithsonian photographer, covering people, events, construction and object photography. The third session was videotaped to allow him to talk about specific photographs and projects. |
| Interviews | Transcripts, pp. 1-263. |
| Interviews | Audio and Video Recording of Interview: Total recording time: 05:10 hours
Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Original Masters: 8 digital audio .wav files and 7 digital video AVCHD .mts files• Reference Copies: 8 digital audio .mp3 files and 7 digital video .mov files |

Interviews **Interview 6: January 30, 2017**

Interviews Interview of Shirley Ann Jackson by Pamela M. Henson covers her years on the Smithsonian Board of Regents from 2005 to 2017, including her role as chair of the committee to restructure the Regents in the late 2000s.

Interviews Transcript, pp. 1-53.

Interviews Audio Recording of Interview: Total recording time: 01:56 hours

- Note:
- Original Masters: 3 digital audio .wav file
 - Reference Copies: 3 digital audio .mp3 file
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