

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Frederick Humphries

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Humphries, Frederick Stephen, 1935-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Frederick Humphries,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 17, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:53:40).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Association chief executive and university president Frederick Humphries (1935 - 2021) was the former president of historically black schools Tennessee State University and Florida A&M University. He also served as president and CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education. Humphries was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 17, 2006, in Tallahassee, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_123
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Frederick Stephen Humphries served as president of two historically black colleges - Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee, between 1974 and 1985, and Florida A&M University (FAMU) in Tallahassee, Florida, between 1985 and 2001. Humphries was born on December 26, 1935, in Apalachicola, Florida, the son of Minnie Henry Humphries and Thornton Humphries, Sr. He received his B.S. degree in chemistry from Florida A & M University in 1957, and his Ph.D. degree in chemistry from the University of Pittsburgh in 1964. Before his university presidencies, Humphries worked as associate professor at FAMU between 1964 and 1966 and then as assistant professor at the University of Minnesota between 1966 and 1967. He then returned to FAMU as professor of chemistry from 1968 to 1974. During the summers of 1967 and 1968, he was the program director of the Thirteen-College Curriculum Program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This program strengthened the faculty and curriculum at the HBCUs, and was headed by Humphries until 1974.

When Humphries became president of Tennessee State University in 1974, there were two public, four-year universities in Nashville - one for blacks and one for whites. Humphries was the first Tennessee State University president to face the challenge of merging the two campuses and academic programs. He became the president of the unitary effort. As president of FAMU, Humphries worked to increase the number of Black students majoring in the sciences and engineering and entering the PhD programs. In 1994, President Bill Clinton appointed Humphries to a White House Advisory Committee on HBCUs. In 1997, *Time* magazine and the *Princeton Review College Guide* named FAMU 'College of the Year'.

Following his tenure as President of FAMU, Humphries became the president and CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), an advocacy organization for the HBCUs. He remained with NAFEO until 2004. FAMU trustees appointed Humphries to a five-year term as Regents Professor at FAMU's College of Law in Orlando, Florida. Also, one of the newest buildings on the FAMU campus is the

Frederick Humphries Science Research Building. There is also a building on the Tennessee State University campus bearing his name.

Humphries was married for forty-six years to the late Antoinette (McTurner) Humphries of Pittsburgh. They raised three children - Frederick Stephens, Jr., Robin Tanya, and Laurence Anthony.

Humphries was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 17, 2006.

Humphries passed away on June 24, 2021.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Frederick Humphries was conducted by Robert Hayden on October 17, 2006, in Tallahassee, Florida, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Association chief executive and university president Frederick Humphries (1935 - 2021) was the former president of historically black schools Tennessee State University and Florida A&M University. He also served as president and CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Humphries, Frederick Stephen, 1935-

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Humphries, Frederick Stephen, 1935---Interviews

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African American college presidents--Tennessee--Nashville--Interviews.

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African American college presidents--Florida--Tallahassee--Interviews.

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African American chemists--Interviews.

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African American executives--Interviews.

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

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## Occupations:

University President

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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## 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 Frederick Humphries, October 17, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding

aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Frederick Humphries, Section A2006\_123\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

Frederick Humphries was born on December 26, 1935 in Apalachicola, Florida. Growing up near the ocean, he developed a love of seafood from an early age, and favored shrimp and oysters. He often walked to the oyster bars near his childhood home to eat oysters on the half shell. While a student at Tallahassee's Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Humphries returned home to eat his Aunt Willa's butterbeans and hot water cornbread, and his mother, Minnie Henry Humphries' pecan pies. In his travels as an adult, Humphries preferred waterfront destinations like Mexico and South Africa. Humphries also describes his career in higher education, including his transitions from researcher to educator, and then from academic administrator to regent professor. Humphries served as president and CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education from 2001 to 2004; and, at the time of the interview, held a regent professorship at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University College of Law.

African American college presidents--Tennessee--Nashville--Interviews.

African American college presidents--Florida--Tallahassee--Interviews.

African American chemists--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Frederick Humphries, Section A2006\_123\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:05 ?

Frederick Humphries was born on December 26, 1935 to Minnie Henry Humphries and Thornton Humphries, Sr. His maternal grandmother, Lavenia Fry, came to Apalachicola, Florida with her family on a boat carrying sugar and cotton down the Chattahoochee River. Her family purchased the land in Apalachicola where Humphries later grew up. His mother graduated from Tallahassee's Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes, and worked in Apalachicola as a domestic. Humphries' father moved to Apalachicola from Mobile, Alabama, where Humphries' paternal grandparents, Lottie Humphries and Charles Humphries, Sr., raised a large family. He worked at a logging mill; met and married Humphries' mother; and had five children. In 1943, Humphries' father died, and Humphries worked cleaning fish to help support his family. He attended Wallace M. Quinn High School, and then Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University on a basketball scholarship. He also describes his siblings' educations and careers.

Video Oral History Interview with Frederick Humphries, Section A2006\_123\_001\_003, TRT:

0:29:40 ?

Frederick Humphries was raised Catholic, and attended the Holy Family School in Apalachicola, Florida from first to ninth grade. There, he was influenced by Sister Clara Marie, who encouraged him to pursue a college education, and instilled him with respect for authority. While Apalachicola's Catholic schools were segregated, African Americans were welcome at the mostly white St. Patrick's Church. Humphries went on to Wallace M. Quinn High School, where his teacher, Charles Watson, encouraged him to study science in college. In 1957, Humphries earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, where he initially played on the basketball team, but left to join the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. After graduation, he reported to Fort Devens in Massachusetts, and was sent to Europe as a radio intercept officer in the U.S. Army. In 1959, Humphries left the U.S. Army to pursue a Ph.D. degree in physical chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh.

Video Oral History Interview with Frederick Humphries, Section A2006\_123\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:05 ?

Frederick Humphries married Antoinette McTurner Humphries in 1960, while studying physical chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1964, he earned a Ph.D. degree, and then served on the faculty of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University for three years. In 1967, he took leave to conduct research with Robert Livingston at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. After a year, he returned to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, and became involved in the Thirteen College Curriculum Program. He later directed the national program at the Educational Development Center in Massachusetts. From 1974, Humphries served as the president of the historically black Tennessee State University. Following the landmark desegregation case of *Geier v. University of Tennessee* in 1979, Tennessee State University subsumed the majority white University of Tennessee at Nashville, and Humphries continued to serve as president. In 1985, he became the president of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

Video Oral History Interview with Frederick Humphries, Section A2006\_123\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Frederick Humphries became the president of his alma mater, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, in 1985. There, he implemented academic programs to augment the quantity and quality of applications to the university. To increase African American student enrollment in science, engineering and mathematics degree programs, Humphries created the Life Gets Better Scholarship program, which matched companies like General Electric with students seeking paid internships. He also designed a Graduate Feeder Program in collaboration with other universities, in order to foster interest in graduate education. Additionally, he created summer programs to provide paid research experiences at laboratories like the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. Humphries concludes this part of the interview by describing the importance of positivity to his successful career as the president of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and Tennessee State University.

Video Oral History Interview with Frederick Humphries, Section A2006\_123\_001\_006, TRT: 0:24:10 ?

Frederick Humphries reflects upon his hopes and concerns for historically black colleges and universities. His plans for the future included implementing new programs to increase the number of African Americans earning degrees in science, engineering and mathematics; and encouraging universities to invest in

students' futures after college. Humphries also reflects upon his life and how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs