

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bacon, Gloria Jackson, 1937-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon,
Dates:	July 10, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:54:23).
Abstract:	Medical director and physician Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon (1937 -) dedicated her life to providing health services to the underprivileged housing project Altgeld Gardens. Dr. Bacon founded the Clinic in Altgeld, which reduced the infant mortality rate in Altgeld Gardens from 50.2 per thousand to 9.2 per thousand. Bacon was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 10, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_129
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon has made a career out of caring for the health and welfare of those less fortunate. Bacon was born on September 21, 1937, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Her father, Henry Johnson, was a postal clerk and her mother, Vina V. Johnson, was a schoolteacher.

Bacon earned a B.S. from Xavier University in New Orleans in 1958. She moved to Chicago to attend medical school, attending the University of Illinois School of Medicine, graduating in 1962. Bacon did not intend to stay in Chicago for an extended period of time. However, the inner-city patients she saw reminded her of the people she knew growing up in Louisiana.

In 1968, Bacon was fired from a publicly supported medical facility at the Altgeld Gardens' Murray Homes on Chicago's South Side for making her views on the need to improve the meager care provided there known. In response, Bacon opened the Clinic in Altgeld, Inc., a not-for-profit agency offering total health care and serving as the primary medical resource for the Altgeld Gardens area. The facility handles 15,000 patients a year. The center was funded out of her personal savings and Medicaid reimbursement until 1991, when it began to receive federal funding. The clinic has greatly improved the health of Altgeld Gardens community residents. When Bacon first opened the clinic, the infant mortality rate was 50.2 per thousand, in 1990 this number was reduced to 9.2 per thousand. In 2001, Bacon retired as medical director of the clinic.

In 1992, Bacon returned to singing. Singing had played an important role in Bacon's early development. She performed in many recitals and concerts throughout her youth and college years, but the demands of practicing medicine took precedence. She has been a featured soloist at Chicago Orchestra Hall, ETA Theater and numerous churches.

Bacon was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 10, 2002.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 10, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Medical director and physician Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon (1937 -) dedicated her life to providing health services to the underprivileged housing project Altgeld Gardens. Dr. Bacon founded the Clinic in Altgeld, which reduced the infant mortality rate in Altgeld Gardens from 50.2 per thousand to 9.2 per thousand.

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:

Bacon, Gloria Jackson, 1937-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bacon, Gloria Jackson, 1937---Interviews

African American women physicians--Interviews

African American women civic leaders--Interviews

African American singers--Interviews

Segregation in education--Louisiana--New Orleans

Discrimination in higher education

Sex discrimination in higher education

Altgeld Gardens (Chicago, Ill.)

Medical centers--Illinois--Chicago

Housing and health--Illinois--Chicago

Medical care--Quality control--Citizen participation

Public health personnel--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Medical Director

Physician

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon, July 10, 2002. 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).

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 Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon, Section A2002_129_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon describes her mother as being a focused woman who was committed to her family. Growing up, Bacon heard stories of her mother's family that revealed a lifestyle reminiscent of slavery in the American South. Before his death, Bacon's father differentiated his family background from that of his wife. His family were business people while Gloria Bacon's maternal side of the family were farmers. Her father's unrealized dreams of medical school manifested themselves in his encouraging his firstborn to pursue the profession. He also instilled the value of education in his children. Bacon describes that her parents met at a Louisiana church and were married for sixty-five years. She describes her siblings: her younger sister and her deceased brother. Dr. Bacon remembers the people, foods and natural beauty of her New Orleans, Louisiana childhood. She describes herself as having been an outspoken young girl determined to be a doctor.

African American women physicians--Interviews.

African American women civic leaders--Interviews.

African American singers--Interviews.

Segregation in education--Louisiana--New Orleans.

Discrimination in higher education.

Sex discrimination in higher education.

Altgeld Gardens (Chicago, Ill.).

Medical centers--Illinois--Chicago.

Housing and health--Illinois--Chicago.

Medical care--Quality control--Citizen participation.

Public health personnel--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon, Section A2002_129_001_002, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon discusses the family pressure she felt to become a doctor. Her mother suggested that rather than pushing her into a field, she was giving her daughter a good starting place in life. Bacon describes being a talkative elementary school student. One teacher punished her by taking her desk away for the remainder of the school year. Bacon had one particularly positive schoolteacher experience: a World War II veteran turned elementary school teacher and she shared a special bond. Bacon describes her school environment; throughout her education, she attended all-black schools. She encountered a few white individuals upon attending Xavier University. Bacon describes being in the running to become valedictorian of her high school. However, her other interests, especially in music, occupied her time; she prided herself in being a well-rounded student. Bacon applied to two New Orleans colleges -- Xavier University and Tulane University -- but was rejected by the latter on discriminatory grounds. While Bacon was too young to be enveloped in the fervor around Brown vs. the Board of Education decision, she suggests that her school experience was very much an example of the segregation that the legislation addressed. Bacon describes herself as having been a well-adjusted and popular college student. She was, however, discriminated against for her dark-toned skin.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon, Section A2002_129_001_003, TRT: 0:28:55 ?

Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon discusses her early academic difficulties at Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana. In addition to her pre-medicine coursework, Bacon was deeply involved in the performing arts. She abandoned her singing after committing her life to medicine; Bacon did not sing for twenty-five years. She did, however, balance her medical curriculum with her talent for sewing. She describes that sewing presented one more opportunity for a black person living in a hostile white environment. Bacon discusses her keys to college success -- having a close friend and applying her Latin language training to medical terminology. Bacon describes some gender discrimination issues that presented themselves in her undergraduate career, but maintains that Howard University's medical school was racially diverse and welcoming to women. Bacon describes that after two years at Howard, she transferred to the University of Illinois at Chicago's medical school and lived in Chicago with her husband. She compares the two medical schools she attended and concludes that each had its benefits. She planned to return to New Orleans after medical school, but stayed in Chicago for the rest of her career.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon, Section A2002_129_001_004, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon describes a chilling Illinois winter she experienced following her transfer from the medical school at Washington D.C.'s Howard University to the medical school of The University of Illinois at Chicago. Bacon describes her first pregnancy, while a medical student at Howard. She describes her career path following graduation from medical school, beginning with her experience at a hectic West Side "Medicaid mill." She then transferred to another medical facility in the area of Altgeld Gardens, a Chicago housing project. Faced with new interests and questions, Bacon returned to graduate school to pursue studies in the social sciences. Dr. Bacon was then compelled to open a clinic that would successfully service the people of Altgeld Gardens. The clinic was financed by Bacon's own resources and Medicaid fees. Bacon describes the insular Altgeld community that led her to initiate the medical facility. She considers the role of Chicago politics in influencing her entrepreneurial endeavor.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon, Section A2002_129_001_005, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon describes the volume of patients that she received at The Clinic in Altgeld, a medical facility that serviced a population neglected by the healthcare system of Cook County, Illinois. She reveals that she asked for little outside help in the clinic's early years; many were reluctant to work in the name of the people of the Altgeld Gardens housing project. She asserts that health is not limited to biological well being; socioeconomic factors play a large role in the healthiness of an individual. Dr. Bacon uses her own life as a testament to the importance of self-reliance amongst black people. She maintains that black people must play a greater role in the institutions of their communities. Dr. Bacon chronicles her career, beginning with an early post at a large Chicago hospital. She describes the closing of that hospital as devastating, but admits that she did not carry away lessons from the closing. Her own clinic experienced many of the same trials, many of them financial. Dr. Bacon then discusses her election to the University of Illinois's Board of Trustees, a position with responsibilities that she performs with energy.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon, Section A2002_129_001_006, TRT: 0:29:18 ?

Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon describes her love for black people; she is continually struck by the strength and ability of black people despite the injustices committed against them. She suggests, though, that black people often don't recognize their potential, which has been repeatedly proven by extraordinarily successful black figures. Bacon describes that the medical industry is plagued by elitism. Resources are allocated in such a way that there is a gap in the quality of medical service administered. She recommends pursuit of the medical profession to those who are willing to make sacrifices and commit to the work. The doctor and part-time performer discusses her lifelong appreciation for the arts. She plans to make more significant inroads into the entertainment industry in the next five years. Dr. Bacon welcomes the responsibilities that she, having been given much, has to return. Her legacy involves a deep commitment to black people and more generally, those affected by injustices. Bacon shows and describes photographs from the various stages of her life.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon, Section A2002_129_GLORIA_JACKSON_BACON_06_MED_001, TRT: 1:00:00

This tape contains footage of an event at Holy Name Church featuring Gloria Jackson Bacon. There is some interview footage as well as a musical performance. The footage was shot for SCTN Telecommunications. The tape was placed in her archive box in the media folder.