

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. James Gavin, III

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gavin, James R., 1945-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. James Gavin, III,
Dates:	August 11, 2003, August 15, 2003 and May 8, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:27:46).
Abstract:	Medical school president, chief executive officer, and healthcare executive Dr. James Gavin, III (1945 -) leads the Morehouse University Medical School. Gavin served as president of the American Diabetes Association and on the editorial board of <i>The American Journal of Physiology</i> . Gavin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 11, 2003, August 15, 2003 and May 8, 2003, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_102
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Researcher and medical school president Dr. James R. Gavin III was born on November 23, 1945, in Mobile, Alabama. Gavin attended Livingstone College, graduating magna cum laude in 1966. From there he attended Emory University in Atlanta, earning a Ph.D. in biochemistry in 1970 and earned his M.D. from Duke University in 1975.

Gavin's impressive career in the healthcare industry began in 1971, when he went to work as a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Public Health Service, a position he held until 1973. Today, he still serves as a reserve officer. After earning his M.D., Gavin worked as a pathologist at Duke University Hospital. The Washington University School of Medicine hired Gavin in 1979, where he served as an associate professor of medicine until 1986. After Washington University, Gavin went to the University of Oklahoma, where he worked on diabetes research. In 1991, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) hired Gavin as its senior scientific officer, and in 2000, he was promoted to the director of HHMI-National Institutes of Health Research Scholars Program. Morehouse College School of Medicine named Gavin its president in 2002.

Gavin is an active member of numerous organizations, having served as president of the American Diabetes Association and on the editorial board of *The American Journal of Physiology*. He is a recipient of the Emory University Medal for Distinguished Achievement, the Banting Medal for Distinguished Service from the American Diabetes Association and the Internist of the Year from the National Medical Association. He currently serves on the board of directors of Baxter International and is outspoken in his support of affirmative action. Gavin and his wife of thirty-two years, Annie, have two sons.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. James Gavin, III was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 11, 2003, August 15, 2003 and May 8, 2003, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Medical school president, chief executive officer, and healthcare executive Dr. James Gavin, III (1945 -) leads the Morehouse University Medical School. Gavin served as president of the American Diabetes Association and on the editorial board of The American Journal of Physiology.

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:

Gavin, James R., 1945-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Gavin, James R., 1945- --Interviews

Medical colleges--Faculty--Interviews

Medical teaching personnel--Interviews

African American college presidents--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Morehouse School of Medicine

American Diabetes Association

Occupations:

Healthcare Executive

Chief Executive Officer

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. James Gavin, III, August 11, 2003, August 15, 2003 and May 8, 2003. 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. James Gavin, III, Section A2003_102_001_001, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Dr. James Gavin was born on November 23, 1945 in Mobile, Alabama to James Gavin, Jr. and Bessie Smoke Gavin. His paternal great grandfather, Seborn Gavin, was enslaved on a plantation in Noxubee, Mississippi and freed during Reconstruction. According to Gavin, his great grandfather was known as an advocate for the local black community and negotiated the first brick school house in the region for black students. Gavin's paternal grandmother, Maggie Gavin, owned a café in Mobile, Alabama. Gavin's maternal grandparents, Cleveland and Nona Smoke, were farmers in Selma, Alabama who moved to Mobile after Gavin's mother was born in 1921. Gavin's mother was a stalwart volunteer at the local hospital. Gavin's father was born in Mississippi in 1919 and moved to Mobile in pursuit of economic opportunity. He became the superintendent of the finishing department of Alabama Drydock and Shipbuilding Company. Gavin's parents met in high school and had seven children. Gavin describes his childhood in Mobile, Alabama.

Medical colleges--Faculty--Interviews.

Medical teaching personnel--Interviews.

African American college presidents--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. James Gavin, III, Section A2003_102_001_002, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

Dr. James Gavin describes his childhood neighborhood in Mobile, Alabama. A precocious child, Gavin learned to read by the age of four and often skipped class in kindergarten to explore the outdoors until he was reprimanded by his parents. He regularly won local oratorical contests for his recitation of Paul Laurence Dunbar poems and developed an early love for the stage. However his father expected him to pursue a conventional career. Gavin attended W. H. Council Traditional School, Dunbar Junior High School, and Central High School in Mobile, Alabama. He remembers nurturing teachers like Ms. Buchanan, Ms. Burton, and Mr. White who instilled self-worth and confidence in their students despite the environment of racial discrimination. Gavin was disciplined in the fourth grade for kissing a girl in class. In high school, he played football and was active at Big Zion A.M.E. Church which inspired him to become a minister. Gavin graduated in 1962 and enrolled at Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. James Gavin, III, Section A2003_102_001_003, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Dr. James Gavin enrolled in Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina in 1962 to become a minister. He later switched his major to chemistry and mathematics. In 1966, Gavin arrived at Emory University in Atlanta Georgia to pursue a Ph.D. degree in biochemistry. The support of the Atlanta University Center and his church helped him endure racial discrimination on campus. In 1968, Gavin co-founded Emory's Black Student Alliance. He remembers inviting Stokely Carmichael to speak at Emory and the campus' reaction to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. He also talks about H. Rap Brown. In 1970, Gavin became a fellow at the NIH before pursuing an M.D. degree at Duke University of Medicine in Durham, North Carolina. A leading

expert in the field of diabetes, Gavin describes the early years of his career at the U.S. Public Health Service, Washington University in St. Louis, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. James Gavin, III, Section A2003_102_001_004, TRT: 0:03:20 ?

Dr. James Gavin became a senior scientific officer at Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, Maryland in 1991 where he managed a large portfolio of accomplished basic and biomedical researchers including Nobel laureates. He describes his philosophy of management as an administrator.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. James Gavin, III, Section A2003_102_002_005, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Dr. James Gavin began working at Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, Maryland in 1991. As a senior administrator, he supervised exciting scientific developments like Stephen T. Warren's discovery of the Fragile X Syndrome. Throughout his career, Gavin has worked to increase opportunities for black medical researchers and students through initiatives like the HHMI-NIH Research Scholars Program, a joint venture between the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the National Institutes of Health. Gavin also talks about affirmative action and socialized medicine. In 2002, he succeeded HistoryMaker Dr. Louis Sullivan as the president of Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia. Gavin describes the challenges that he encountered as the president and why Morehouse Medical School does not benefit from contributions from celebrities like Oprah Winfrey and Denzel Washington to Morehouse College. Gavin believes that fiscal stability is the foremost challenge facing the nation's black medical schools.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. James Gavin, III, Section A2003_102_002_006, TRT: 0:06:00 ?

Dr. James Gavin talks about health concerns like health disparities and the obesity epidemic that have a disproportionate effect on the African American community. He also reflects upon his hopes and concerns for the community. Gavin describes how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. James Gavin, III, Section A2003_102_003_007, TRT: 0:19:11 ?

Dr. James Gavin's personal photographs.