

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Keith L. Black

PERSON

Black, Keith, 1957-

Alternative Names: Dr. Keith L. Black;

Life Dates: September 13, 1957-

Place of Birth: Tuskegee, Alabama, USA

Residence: Los Angeles, California

Work: Los Angeles, California

Occupations: Neurosurgeon

Biographical Note

World-renowned neurosurgeon Dr. Keith Black was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, on September 13, 1957. The younger of two sons born to Robert and Lillian Black, he developed at an early age a passion for science. His parents, noting his interests, encouraged him, and when he was in the third grade, his father brought home a cow's heart for him to dissect. While in eighth grade, the Black family moved to Ohio, and Black began spending time at the labs at Case Western University. In the tenth grade, young Black had developed enough surgical proficiency to perform his first organ transplant, conducted on a dog, and at seventeen, he wrote his first scientific paper on the damage artificial heart valves can do to red blood cells.

After high school, Black enrolled at the University of Michigan, and after only two years of undergraduate study, he was accepted into medical school in 1978. Black earned his M.D. from the University of Michigan in 1981, where he had begun his intense research into the brain and the nature of human consciousness. This search led him down a spiritual path, where he began to study the religions of the world, and ultimately led him to working to cure brain tumors.

By 1987, Black was the head of the Comprehensive Brain Tumor Program at the UCLA Medical Center, where he remained for the next ten years. In 1997, he became the director of the division of neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where he remains today, and in 1998, he became the chairman of the department of neurological surgery as well as a professor at the University of California-Irvine. Over the years, his work has found him publishing hundreds of papers over the years, and he discovered a natural body peptide that helps deliver drugs to the brain to fight tumors.

Black has been instrumental in helping to raise money to fight cancer, and his push has been joined by many notables in Hollywood. Black's crusade against cancer, and his exceptional skill with the scalpel, have led to numerous honors for him, as well, including appearing on the cover of Time Magazine and Newsweek International. Esquire Magazine named him one of the "21 Most Important People of the 21st Century," and in 2001, he was presented with an Essence Award.

Black is also a devoted family man, despite performing 250 to 300 operations a year (the national average for brain surgeons is around 100). He reserves his weekends for spending time with his wife, fellow doctor Carol Bennett, and their children, Keith and Teal.

Related Entries

Boykin Street Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Moreland Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Byron Junior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Michigan [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S.

Shaker Heights High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Shaker Heights Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of California, Los Angeles Medical Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1988 to 1997]

Head of Neuro-Oncology

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1997 to ?]

Director of the Division of Neurosurgery