

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Keith L. Black

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Black, Keith, 1957-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Keith L. Black,
Dates:	April 21, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:01:56).
Abstract:	Neurosurgeon Dr. Keith L. Black (1957 -) is a medical prodigy. In the tenth grade, young Black performed 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. He has been head of the brain tumor program at UCLA, and is now the Director of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and head of the neurosurgery department at UC Irvine. Black was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 21, 2004, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_045
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

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.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Keith L. Black was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on April 21, 2004, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Neurosurgeon Dr. Keith L. Black (1957 -) is a medical prodigy. In the tenth grade, young Black performed 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. He has been head of the brain tumor program at UCLA, and is now the Director of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and head of the neurosurgery department at UC Irvine.

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:

Black, Keith, 1957-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Black, Keith, 1957---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Neurosurgeon

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. Keith L. Black, April 21, 2004. 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. Keith L. Black, Section A2004_045_001_001, TRT: 0:30:30
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World-renowned neurosurgeon Keith Black talks about his family's background and the influence both of his parents had on him. As he discusses his childhood it becomes clear that Dr. Black has been interested in and practicing medicine and science from nearly as far back as he can remember. He recalls his early educational experiences and talks about how he dealt with having his father as his principal and mother as a teacher.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Keith L. Black, Section A2004_045_001_002, TRT: 0:30:40
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Neurosurgeon Dr. Keith Black talks about his brother and father's involvement in race issues, which ultimately led to the family's departure from Auburn, Alabama. Once in Ohio, Black was able to become fully involved in biological science and research as he became a presence at Case Western Reserve University while still in high school. Before long, Black was able to conduct his own research and ended up publishing his first medical paper at the age of seventeen. Keith Black explains how he decided upon attending the University of Michigan's Interflex medical program.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Keith L. Black, Section A2004_045_001_003, TRT: 0:29:20
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Neurosurgeon Keith Black explains the University of Michigan's Interflex six-year program. Black goes on to discuss his areas of interest within the field of medicine. He talks about his relationship with his mentor Otelio Randall and how he decided upon his medical specialization, neuroscience. Dr. Keith Black narrates photos in which he appears with Bill Cosby, Sidney Poitier, Quincy Jones, Oprah Winfrey and his daughter Teal.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Keith L. Black, Section A2004_045_001_004, TRT: 0:29:40
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Neurosurgeon Keith Black details his interests in the study of consciousness. He talks about various research he's done, in particular his findings on strokes and how brain damage can be minimized. Getting away from medicine, Black shares some of his hobbies and passions. Dr. Keith Black lists his internship options and discusses his reasoning for staying at the University of Michigan.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Keith L. Black, Section A2004_045_001_005, TRT: 0:30:30
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Neurosurgeon Keith Black describes his residency at University of Michigan and then discusses his position at the UCLA Medical Center. Black details his involvement in brain tumor research and discusses how cancer fights the body and ways it can be slowed or potentially stopped. Keith Black explains his passion for focusing his abilities towards brain tumor research.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Keith L. Black, Section A2004_045_001_006, TRT: 0:31:16
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Keith Black discusses a brain tumor treatment technique that he's pioneered. He then talks about what he'd like to accomplish in his professional and personal life in the years to come. Black explains how spirituality plays a part in his scientific beliefs. He then considers his legacy. Dr. Keith Black narrates photos of himself with family members and celebrities.