

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Catrise L. Austin

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Austin, Catrise, 1970-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Catrise L. Austin,
Dates:	January 6, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:59:30).
Abstract:	Dentist and entrepreneur Dr. Catrise L. Austin (1970 -) was the COO of VIP Smiles, a cosmetic and sports dental practice whose clientele included Missy Elliot, Earl Graves and Toni Braxton. Austin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 6, 2006, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_001
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dentist and entrepreneur Catrise L. Austin was born on May 2, 1970, in Flint, Michigan. She discovered her passion for dentistry at age 15 while visiting the orthodontist for braces. Austin was voted prettiest smile in 1988 at Flint Central High School, where she received her diploma that same year. Austin went on to receive her B.A. degree in psychology from the University of Michigan in 1991 and her Doctorate in dental surgery from the University of Maryland in 1996. Moving to New York in 1996, she completed her advanced dental training at Brooklyn's Lutheran Medical Center.

Working as a dental hygienist motivated Austin to start her own practice which she did in 1998, becoming the Chief Operating Officer of VIP Smiles, a successful New York cosmetic and sports dental practice. The practice boasts an impressive and loyal following, including such entertainment luminaries as Isaac Hayes, Toni Braxton and Missy Elliot. In addition, The Discovery Health Channel, *The Queen Latifah Show*, and *The Ricki Lake Show* have used her services.

Austin has broken gender and racial boundaries and established herself in a field traditionally dominated by men. She is one of the most well-known and highly regarded dentists in the entertainment industry. The *Network Journal* named her one of the 25 Most Influential Black Women in Business in 1999. She holds professional memberships in the American Dental Association, New York County Dental Society, American Association of Women Dentists, American Academy of Cosmetic Dentists, and the Academy of Sports Dentistry. She also holds social memberships in the National Association of Black Female Executives in Music & Entertainment, the Black Sports Agents Association and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

Austin resides in New York City.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Catrise L. Austin was conducted by Shawn Wilson on January 6, 2006, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Dentist and entrepreneur Dr. Catrise L. Austin (1970 -) was the COO of VIP Smiles, a cosmetic and sports dental practice whose clientele included Missy Elliot, Earl Graves and Toni Braxton.

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:

Austin, Catrise, 1970-

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Austin, Catrise, 1970- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Dentist

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. Catrise L. Austin, January 6, 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).

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. Catrise L. Austin, Section A2006_001_001_001, TRT: 0:30:11 ?

Dr. Catrise L. Austin was born on May 2, 1970 in Flint, Michigan. Her maternal great-great-grandmother was half Choctaw Native American from Louisville, Mississippi, where she worked as a cook for a white plantation owner. Austin's maternal great-grandparents and grandparents, who were born in Mississippi, migrated to Detroit, Michigan to find better employment. Austin's paternal grandmother was a nurse. Austin's mother, Michele Austin, was born in Detroit and spent her teenage years in Flint. She had Austin out of wedlock when she

was seventeen years old, disappointing her religious parents. She completed high school in Detroit. In Flint, Austin grew up in a low-income community where she had numerous neighborhood playmates. She remembers attending church and concerts with her mother. At Flint's Dort Elementary School, she enjoyed dancing and aspired to a career in entertainment. She then attended Flint Academy High School, which had a diverse student body and curriculum.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Catrise L. Austin, Section A2006_001_001_002, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Dr. Catrise L. Austin enjoyed learning Spanish, and listening to the musical artist Prince with her friends during her teenage years. In 1985, her sister, Alicia Austin, was born. Austin remembers her dislike of her mother's boyfriend who fathered her sister. At the age of fifteen, she began wearing braces. Seeing how much the braces improved her smile and self-esteem, she began to consider a career in dentistry. Her dentist, Dr. Oscar Wright, encouraged her. As a result, she focused on studying science and math at Flint Central High School. She also worked as a part-time delivery driver for Dort Long Way Pharmacy. After graduating from Flint Central High School in 1988, she received several scholarships to attend the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where she majored in psychology and pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. She describes her family's move from Flushing to Flint's River Village development, and remembers traveling between Michigan and Mississippi during the summer.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Catrise L. Austin, Section A2006_001_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Dr. Catrise L. Austin attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where she pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority after becoming friends with fellow members and seeing the organization's commitment to service. Austin graduated early in December 1991, and took a six-month break before attending the University of Maryland School of Dentistry in Baltimore. As a dental student, Austin lived on campus at Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University and joined the Student National Dental Association. Austin struggled with her dental coursework her first two years, as she did not enter school with a robust science background. Her counselor and her peers encouraged her, and she received financial support from Dr. Oscar Wright, her dentist in Flint. Austin reflects upon how she and her best friend, Darlene Tolbert, were able to escape the cycles of poverty and teenage motherhood that they witnessed growing up. She also talks about her mother's support and her sister, Alicia Austin's, pregnancy.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Catrise L. Austin, Section A2006_001_001_004, TRT: 0:30:34 ?

Dr. Catrise L. Austin completed an extra year of dental residency at Brooklyn's NYU Lutheran Medical Center, after graduating from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry in 1996. After meeting several famous comedians as a regular attendee at the Boston Comedy Club, Austin wanted to establish a dental practice that would cater to stars in the entertainment industry. She worked as a hygienist for a temporary dental agency while struggling to build her practice in New York City. She recalls the support she received from Dr. Arnold Fink, Dr. Karen Gear, and Dr. Albert Thompson, from whom she rented space on 57th Street from 1998 until she moved to her own office in 2001. She describes her friendship with HistoryMaker Isaac Hayes, who supported her career by introducing her to prospective clients. Her clientele includes Toni Braxton, Missy Elliott and Busta Rhymes. Austin concludes the interview by detailing her plans for opening a dental office in Los Angeles and educating others about dental health.