

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Ross-Lee, Barbara, 1942-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 25, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:15:17).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator and osteopathic physician Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee (1942 - ) became the first African American female dean of a medical school when she was appointed at Ohio University's College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1993. Ross-Lee was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 25, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_212
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Academic administrator and osteopathic physician Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee was born on June 1, 1942, in Detroit, Michigan, to Fred Ross, Sr. and Ernestine Moten, the oldest of six children. One of her younger sisters is entertainer Diana Ross and two of her brothers also pursued musical careers; one as a successful songwriter for Motown and one as a dancer with Diana Ross' tours. Although Ross-Lee was originally interested in a career in show business, her interests soon turned to medicine. In 1960, Ross-Lee entered Wayne State University, where she studied biology and chemistry. After graduating in 1965, Ross-Lee briefly pursued a teaching career; as a member of the National Teacher Corps, she taught in Detroit Public Schools and earned her M.A. degree from Wayne State University.

In 1969, Ross-Lee's focus returned to medicine, and she entered Michigan State University's new College of Osteopathic Medicine. After graduation she opened a family practice in Detroit in 1973. She left private practice in 1983 and joined the U.S. Navy Reserves as a physician and became a professor at Michigan State University in the Department of Family Practice. Ross-Lee became a consultant on education in the health professions in 1984 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In 1990, Ross-Lee served as a community representative on the Governor of Michigan's Minority Health Advisory Committee. Ross-Lee, already chair of the Department of Family Medicine at Michigan State University, received a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellowship also in 1991, which allowed her to spend a year working as a legislative assistant for health in the office of Senator Bill Bradley. After the fellowship, Ross-Lee returned to Michigan State University as an associate dean for health policy in the College of Osteopathic Medicine.

In 1993, Ross-Lee was named dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine at Ohio University. She became the first African American woman to be dean of a medical school and one of only a handful of female deans in the country. After a notable career in Ohio, Ross-Lee was appointed vice president for health sciences and medical affairs at the New York Institute of Technology in 2001 and one year later, she became dean of the school's

College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Ross-Lee has lectured extensively and written many scholarly articles on osteopathic medicine. She is a strong advocate for the profession and its preservation. Ross-Lee has been active in the American Osteopathic Association, the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, the National Osteopathic Medical Association and the Association for Academic Health Centers. She has been a captain in the U.S. Naval Reserve Medical Corps, and she and her husband, Edmond Beverly, have raised five children, all of whom have pursued professional careers.

Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 25, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 25, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and osteopathic physician Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee (1942 - ) became the first African American female dean of a medical school when she was appointed at Ohio University's College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1993.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Ross-Lee, Barbara, 1942-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Ross-Lee, Barbara, 1942- --Interviews

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African American educators--Interviews.

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African American physicians--Interviews.

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Osteopathic Physician

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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## 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. Barbara Ross-Lee, July 25, 2007. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, Section A2007\_212\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:45 ?

Barbara Ross-Lee was born on June 1, 1942 in Detroit, Michigan. Her father, Fred Earl Ross, was born in West Virginia, and raised in Detroit, Michigan by his cousins when his mother died. Her mother, Ernestine Moten Ross, was born in Union Town, Alabama, the youngest of twelve children. Ross-Lee's maternal grandfather was a Baptist minister for many churches throughout Alabama. Ross-Lee describes her childhood in Detroit, Michigan, and her responsibilities as the oldest of five children. She recalls the sights, smells and sounds of her childhood, which include the sight of crowded housing, the smell of her aunts and uncles in the South, and the sound of music from the radio. Ross-Lee discusses the presence of gospel music in their lives, their leisure activities, and her early education.

African American families--Michigan--Detroit.

African American fathers.

African American grandparents.

African American children--Social life and customs.

African American Baptists.

African American neighborhoods--Michigan--Detroit.

African American churches--Alabama.

African American children--Michigan--Detroit.

Gospel music--Michigan--Detroit.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, Section A2007\_212\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:26 ?

Barbara Ross-Lee discusses her early education and the influence of religion in her family. Ross-Lee attended Balch Elementary School in Detroit, Michigan. She describes the education she received as excellent. She lists her favorite subjects, which included biology and math. Ross-Lee's family attended Scott Methodist Church, and while living and visiting the South, their entire social lives revolved around education and church activities. Ross-Lee describes her family's summer trips to Bessemer, Alabama, and describes the events surrounding her mother's contracting tuberculosis, during which time they lived in Alabama with an aunt. Ross-Lee discusses her adolescent relationship to her sister, Diana Ross, and family struggles and financial hardships during her childhood.

African American children--Education (Elementary)--Michigan--Detroit.

African American mothers.

African American churches--Michigan--Detroit.

African American neighborhoods--Michigan--Detroit.

African American children--Social life and customs.

African American families--Michigan--Detroit.

African American children--Michigan--Detroit.

Family recreation.

African Americans--Religion.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, Section A2007\_212\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Barbara Ross-Lee discusses her family's transition into Detroit's public housing, high school, and educational experience. Ross-Lee's family was forced into public housing around 1957, after her father's employment decreased. Ross-Lee attended Cass Technical High School, where she focused on math and science. Ross-Lee describes the school environment as high competitive and as a student, participated in sports and performing arts. She describes planning for college, which was a challenge due to financial hardship. In 1960, she was admitted to Wayne State University, where earned her B.A. degrees in biology and chemistry. Ross-Lee discusses the challenges of being a pre-medical student, and the difficulties for black and female students pursuing medicine. During Ross-Lee's undergraduate years, her younger sister Diana Ross was beginning her career as a singer. Ross-Lee discusses her sister's growing fame and her parents' reactions to Diana Ross' burgeoning career.

Wayne State University.

African American families--Michigan--Detroit.

Public Housing--Michigan.

African American high school students.

Education, Secondary.

Education, Higher.

African American singers.

Ross, Diana, 1944-.

African Americans--Michigan--Detroit--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, Section A2007\_212\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:32 ?

Barbara Ross-Lee discusses graduating from college and her introduction to osteopathic medicine. Ross-Lee graduated from Wayne State University in 1965 with her B.S. degrees in biology and chemistry, after which she was hired as a medical technician at Martin Place Hospital, an osteopathic hospital in Detroit, Michigan. She discusses meeting her first husband, James Lee, while attending Wayne State University. They married in 1963, and she gave birth to her first child in 1965. She discusses earning her M.A. degree in education, and her path to osteopathic medicine. Nearly two years after working in the lab, she was advised to apply to the newly opened Michigan College of Osteopathic Medicine, which later became a part of the Michigan State University medical school. Ross-Lee defines and explains the differences between conventional and osteopathic medicine and discusses the biases she encountered as a medical student.

African American physicians.

Interpersonal relations.

Osteopathic medicine.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Michigan--Detroit.

Wayne State University.

Osteopathic medicine--History.

Medical students.

Michigan State University.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, Section A2007\_212\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:46 ?

Barbara Ross-Lee discusses the impact of her sister's, Diana Ross, rise to fame. While Ross-Lee was a medical student at Michigan State University, Diana Ross was gaining more notoriety as a performer. Ross-Lee describes being treated more fairly in school once her sister became famous. Ross-Lee talks about career beginnings. After graduating from medical school, she interned at Martin Places Hospital and opened a private practice in 1974 in Detroit, Michigan. She ran the practice until 1983, during which time she joined the U.S. Navy Reserves as a physician. In 1983, Ross-Lee closed her practice to join Michigan State University as chair of the Department of Family Practice. She also discusses her experience in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Fellowship Program, where she worked for Senator Bill Bradley on health care policy.

African American entertainers.

African American singers.

Ross, Diana, 1944-.

Michigan State University--Faculty.

African American physicians.

Bradley, Bill, 1943-.

African Americans--Healthcare.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, Section A2007\_212\_001\_006, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Barbara Ross-Lee discusses her work as an osteopathic medical school administrator for Ohio University, Michigan State University and the New York Institute of Technology. As the Dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine at Ohio University, Ross-Lee was able to create alliances with hospitals statewide, allocate funding for health programs in Appalachia, Ohio, and build a clinical infrastructure to support medical students. She describes osteopathic medical education and her political work in giving the field a voice in federal legislation. As the Dean for Health Policy at Michigan State University, Ross-Lee created the Heritage Fellowship, funded by the American Osteopathic Association. Ross-Lee discusses the challenges of becoming the Dean of Allied Health at the New York Institute of Technology, where she was able to revise the osteopathic medicine curriculum to better train students given the resources available in New York for students of osteopathic medicine.

Obstetrics--Study and teaching.

Ohio University.

Michigan State University--Faculty.

Osteopathic medicine.

African American physicians.

African American educators.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, Section A2007\_212\_001\_007, TRT: 0:11:25 ?

Barbara Ross-Lee discusses the integration of osteopathic medicine and conventional medical facilities. Osteopathic medicine is more widely known and accepted, and thus doctor of osteopathic medicine (D.O.) students have become major competition for residencies at allopathic hospitals. She states that the profession is more widely known and that she has enjoyed her career as an

administrator. Ross-Lee reflects on her hopes for African Americans in the medical field, and discusses her disappointment in the lack of physical health among minority populations in the United States. Ross-Lee talks about the restrictive nature of minority recruiting in medicine, noting that the recruiting effort is geared towards training minorities to treat minorities. She hopes that more minorities will receive the necessary training and opportunities to treat all communities, so that they are able to help treat health issues in their communities without sacrificing the income of treating wider populations.

Osteopathic medicine.

African American physicians.

African American scientists.

African American educators.

School integration.