

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Shawna Nesbitt

---

## 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>	Nesbitt, Shawna
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Shawna Nesbitt,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 13, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:19:40).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Cardiovascular physician and medical scientist Dr. Shawna Nesbitt (1963 - ) has done research on African Americans with hypertension and renal disease. She has worked as an instructor, lecturer and assistant professor at the the University of Michigan and the the University of Texas at Southwestern Medical Center. Nesbitt was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 13, 2008, in Dallas, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_047
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Cardiovascular physician and medical scientist Dr. Shawna Nesbitt was born on November 10, 1963 in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. Nesbitt attended Quigley Catholic High School in Baden, Pennsylvania where she graduated in 1981. She went on to be the first black student to complete the three year pre-med program at Gannon University and go to Hahnemann School of Medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was the first black to enter the Hahnemann program, where she earned her M.D. degree in 1988. During Nesbitt's residency in internal medicine at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh, Nesbitt was inspired by Dr. James Ferraro to follow her passion for research in the area of hypertension. In 1991, she became a fellow at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan and worked on several clinical trials with her colleague Dr. Kenneth Jamerson, notably the Tecumseh Blood Pressure Study, the "Losartan Interventions for Endpoints in Hypertension Study" ("LIFE" Study), and the "African American Study of Kidney Disease and Hypertension Study" ("ASKD" Study). She went to work as an investigator for various firms, performing research on African Americans with hypertension and renal disease. She met her husband, Thomas Nesbitt, in 1992 and they married in 1995.

Nesbitt moved to Dallas, Texas in 2001 after she completed her M.S. degree in clinical research design to work at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. As an associate professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, she worked on several projects such as the Reynolds Foundation's "Dallas Heart Study" on the "Trial of Preventing Hypertension" or " TROPHY" study funded by the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca . The TROPHY study successfully showed her team's hypothesis was correct and the results were published in the 'New England Journal.' She initiated the trial of preventing hypertension in patients with high blood pressure. In addition, she worked as a manuscript reviewer for the American Journal of Hypertension and the Journal of Ethnicity and Disease.

Nesbitt has received medical licensure in the states of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Texas. She has been honored

by the American Heart Association for her work on cardiovascular epidemiology and high blood pressure. Nesbitt has served on several boards and panels including the American College of Physicians, the American Heart Association, the American Society of Hypertension, the Association of Black Cardiologists, the National Medical Association, the International Society of Hypertension in Blacks, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Dr. Shawna Nesbitt was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 13, 2008.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Shawna Nesbitt was conducted by Denise Gines on March 13, 2008, in Dallas, Texas, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Cardiovascular physician and medical scientist Dr. Shawna Nesbitt (1963 - ) has done research on African Americans with hypertension and renal disease. She has worked as an instructor, lecturer and assistant professor at the the University of Michigan and the the University of Texas at Southwestern Medical Center.

---

## 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:

Nesbitt, Shawna

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Nesbitt, Shawna--Interviews

---

African American physicians--Interviews.

---

African American scientists--Interviews.

---

African American educators--Interviews.

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## HistoryMakersmreg; Category:

MedicalMakers

---

ScienceMakers

---

## 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. Shawna Nesbitt, March 13, 2008. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 10/10/2011 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, March 13, 2008**

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Shawna Nesbitt, Section A2008\_047\_001\_001, TRT: 0:27:50 2008/03/13

Shawna Nesbitt was born on November 10, 1963 in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. Her mother, Yvonne Sarvis Smith, was always extremely nurturing and worked as an administrative assistant in the city offices. Her mother's family migrated from North Carolina to Pennsylvania. Her father, Townsend Smith Jr., was born in South Carolina and moved to Pennsylvania in the 1950s after serving in the Navy to work in the steel mills and later as a police officer. Both her parents graduated from high school, her mother went to business school for secretarial work and her father eventually got an associates and a bachelor's degree. Aliquippa neighborhoods were segregated by class and race. Most of Nesbitt's neighbors worked at the Jones and Laughlin Steel Company mill. There were several race riots in the late 1960s and Nesbitt's parents decided to send her and her siblings to private school for safety.

African American neighborhoods--Pennsylvania--Aliquippa.

African American children--Pennsylvania--Aliquippa.

African American mothers--Pennsylvania.

African American fathers--Pennsylvania.

African American families--Pennsylvania--Aliquippa.

African American police--Pennsylvania.

African American parents--Pennsylvania.

African Americans--Pennsylvania--Social conditions.

Race riots--Pennsylvania.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Shawna Nesbitt, Section A2008\_047\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:30 2008/03/13

Shawna Nesbitt has two brothers and one sister. The riots in the Aliquippa public schools led Nesbitt's parents to send their children to a private Catholic school, Mount Gallitzin Academy, in nearby Baden, Pennsylvania. One of only ten black students, Nesbitt initially felt inferior to the white students who spoke proper English. During the third grade, a boy called her the "N" word, her teacher, Sister Stella, stopped the class and explained its meaning and why it was unacceptable. Nesbitt felt supported and really started to enjoy learning. She wanted to be a doctor around age ten. Though she was the best speller on the spelling bee team, she was not chosen to compete in the National Spelling Bee due to racism. Church was a huge part of her life and helped her develop her morals and faith. She attended Quigley Catholic High School and bridged the gap between her white and black friends.

African American families--Pennsylvania--Aliquippa.

African American Catholics--Pennsylvania.

African American students--Pennsylvania.

African American children--Pennsylvania--Baden.

Racism in education--Pennsylvania--Baden.

African American high school students--Pennsylvania.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Pennsylvania--Baden.  
Catholic schools--Pennsylvania.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Shawna Nesbitt, Section A2008\_047\_001\_003, TRT:  
0:30:20 2008/03/13

Shawna Nesbitt talks about her time at Quigley Catholic High School in Baden, Pennsylvania, where she was a class officer and majorette for three out of her four years. She was also on the pep squad and yearbook committee. Her chemistry teacher was excellent and prepared her well for college chemistry. Nesbitt's father helped her get a scholarship to Ohio State for biomedical engineering. At the last minute she decided to go to Gannon University. She was the first black student to complete the pre-med program and matriculate to medical school in three years. In 1984, Nesbitt went to Hahnemann School of Medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was the first black to enter the program at Hahnemann. Nesbitt experienced some racism but she had a lot of support from her fellow minority students.

African American college students--Pennsylvania--Erie--Social conditions.  
Gannon University--Students.

African American high school students--Pennsylvania.

Catholic schools--Pennsylvania.

Racism in education.

Hahnemann Medical College of Philadelphia--Students.

African American educators.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Pennsylvania--Erie.

Medical students.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Shawna Nesbitt, Section A2008\_047\_001\_004, TRT:  
0:29:50 2008/03/13

Shawna Nesbitt became an internal medicine resident at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1988. Here, she was guided by nephrologist Dr. James Ferraro who specialized in hypertension. Dr. Ferraro inspired her to follow her passion of researching hypertension. She became a hypertension fellow at the University of Michigan in 1991. Her mentor, Dr. Stevo Julius, invited her to stay on as a lecturer after her fellowship ended. Here, Nesbitt worked on several clinical trials with Dr. Julius and her colleague Dr. Kenneth Jamerson, notably the Tecumseh Blood Pressure Study, the LIFE Study, and the ASKD Study. She met her husband, Thomas Nesbitt, in 1992 and they married in 1995. They tragically lost their first daughter but their second daughter, Joy, was born in 1998. Nesbitt and Dr. Jamerson learned that they had to gain the trust of the black community before people would participate in their AKSD trials.

Allegheny General Hospital (Pittsburgh, Pa.).

African American educators.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Michigan--Ann Arbor.

University of Michigan--Students.

Ferraro, James W.

Julius, Stevo.

Hypertension--Research.

African Americans--Medical care.

Medicine.

African American scientists.

Medical students.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Shawna Nesbitt, Section A2008\_047\_001\_005, TRT: 0:23:10 2008/03/13

Shawna Nesbitt talks about working on the “Trial of Preventing Hypertension” or TROPHY study with Dr. Stevo Julius. The TROPHY study successfully showed their hypothesis was correct and the results were published in the “New England Journal.” Since Dr. Julius was retiring and she was looking for greater career mobility, Nesbitt moved to Dallas, Texas in 2001. At the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, she worked on several projects such as the Reynolds Foundation's “Dallas Heart Study.” Nesbitt has been a member and officer of the International Society of Hypertension in Blacks (ISHIB). She has also served on advisory panels for the ISHIB, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and the National Institutes of Health. She wants African Americans to understand why and how they need to change their habits for better health. Nesbitt hopes she has helped people have a better sense of health and themselves.

African American families--Texas--Dallas.

African Americans--Medical care.

African Americans--Health and hygiene.

Medicine.

Hypertension--Research.

National Institute of Health.

Science--Study and teaching--United States.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.