



# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Krishna Foster

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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>	Krishna Foster
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Krishna Foster,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 28, 2011
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2011
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacam SP videocassettes (3:03:36).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Chemist and chemistry professor Krishna Foster (1970 - ) is known for her work in studying the effects of sunlight on pollutants at the air-water interface. She is currently an associate professor at the California State University, Los Angeles. Foster was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 28, 2011, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2011_031
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Chemist and chemistry professor Krishna L. Foster was born on January 7, 1970 in Culver City, California to parents Warren Foster and Frances Smith Foster. Her father, a sales representative for International Business Machines (IBM), and her mother, a professor of English and women's studies, encouraged Foster and her brother to excel in school. Foster graduated from Helix High School in La Mesa, California in 1988, and she received a NASA Fellowship through the Women in Science and Engineering Program. After earning her B.S. degree in chemistry from Spelman College in 1992, and graduating magna cum laude, Foster decided that she wanted to study environmental chemistry. She continued her education at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where she earned her Ph.D. degree in physical chemistry in 1998. Her final dissertation was entitled, "Laboratory studies on the Interaction of Hydrogen Halides with Ice Films."

Foster became a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Irvine in 1998. In this position, she used mass-spectrometry to examine to what extent sea-salt particles impact the oxidizing capacity of the lower-atmosphere. In 2000, she accepted a position as an assistant professor at California State University, Los Angeles. She received a promotion in 2006 to become an associate professor with tenure. Her work at California State University, Los Angeles, has focused on the effects of sunlight on pollutants at the air-water interface. Her lab has also worked to develop techniques in studying reduced phosphorous oxyanions in natural waters. This study might prove useful in determining how phosphorous, an essential element in all organisms, might have been initially incorporated into living cells in ancient earth.

Foster has served as a mentor to twenty-six high school, undergraduate, and graduate students in providing and guiding research opportunities. Alumni of her lab group have found success in both academia and industry. In 2007, she was honored with the Distinguished Women Award at California State University, Los Angeles.

Foster is married to Kwasi Connor, an environmental biologist at the University of Southern California.

Krishna L. Foster was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 28, 2011.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Krishna Foster was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 28, 2011, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 7 Betacam SP videocassettes. Chemist and chemistry professor Krishna Foster (1970 - ) is known for her work in studying the effects of sunlight on pollutants at the air-water interface. She is currently an associate professor at the California State University, Los Angeles.

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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:

Foster Connor, Krishna Lynne

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Foster Connor, Krishna Lynne--Interviews

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## African American chemists--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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California State University, Los Angeles

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### **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ScienceMakers

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EducationMakers

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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 Krishna Foster, April 28, 2011. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

#### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/15/2011 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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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, April 28, 2011**

Video Oral History Interview with Krishna Foster, Section A2011\_031\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:03  
2011/04/28

Krishna Foster discusses her family's background. Her mother, Frances Smith Foster, was born in Dayton, Ohio to Quentin Theodore Smith and Mabel Smith, and she studied literature at Miami University in Ohio. Foster's father, Warren Reed Foster, was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and he studied applied chemistry at Miami University in Ohio. After her parents married, they moved to California where her father was in the military, serving in Vietnam. Foster grew up with one younger brother named Warren Quentin Foster and a Mexican student named Rosa Maria Ramirez.

African American families--Ohio

African American families--California

African American veterans

Miami University (Oxford, Ohio)

Vietnam War, 1961-1975--African Americans

Video Oral History Interview with Krishna Foster, Section A2011\_031\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:08  
2011/04/28

Krishna Foster describes her childhood in La Mesa, California. She enjoyed building forts, looking at bugs, riding her bike and performing in plays. Foster attended a Montessori school day camp where her creativity was allowed to be free. At Maryland Avenue Elementary School, Foster had both good and bad teachers; even though it was an integrated school, Foster did not experience any problems socially. In fifth grade, she spent the year in Atlanta, Georgia at an all-black school, and was excluded for being the new girl; this was during the Atlanta child murders in the early 1980s. Foster explains she was named Krishna after the Hindu deity of the same name.

Montessori method of education--United States

African American children--Education—Equal opportunities

African American youth--Crimes against--Georgia--Atlanta

Names, Personal

Krishna (Hindu deity)

Serial murders--Georgia--Atlanta.

Video Oral History Interview with Krishna Foster, Section A2011\_031\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:52  
2011/04/28

Krishna Foster talks about her junior high and high school experiences. Her favorite class initially was English, but when it became time to choose a college, Foster decided to pursue a Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) discipline. She chose Spelman College because an all women's historically black college provided her with the supportive environment that she needed to counter the insecurities of being a high achieving, middle class, African American woman who was different from her high school classmates. Foster entered Spelman in 1988 and studied African heritage and culture as part of an African sisterhood called Ossett. She was an engineering major initially, but switched to chemistry during her junior year, where she had to take many classes at Morehouse College, the all-male counterpart to Spelman. The president of Spelman at the time was Johnnetta B. Cole, who helped to secure a \$20 million endowment for the college.

African Americans--Education (Higher)

Spelman College

Cole, Johnnetta B.

African Americans in chemistry

Women in chemistry

Video Oral History Interview with Krishna Foster, Section A2011\_031\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:40  
2011/04/28

Krishna Foster mentions her advisor at Spelman College, Etta Faulkner, who encouraged her to work hard and play hard. She chose to conduct her graduate studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder in 1992, because it was among the top schools in ozone chemistry. After a brief moment of uncertainty, Foster decided to continue and earn her Ph.D., for which her dissertation thesis examined the molecular interactions of gasses with the surface of the ozone layer. After earning her Ph.D. in physical chemistry in 1998, Foster went on to do post doctoral study, with the California State system, in the laboratory of Barbara Finlayson-Pitts. During that time, she had the opportunity to study ozone chemistry in the arctic, an experience which taught Foster to be a good planner, but also to think on her feet.

University of Colorado, Boulder

Atmospheric chemistry

Ozone chemistry

Video Oral History Interview with Krishna Foster, Section A2011\_031\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:33  
2011/04/28

Krishna Foster recaps her work in the arctic which related to the depletion of surface level ozone and how the molecules behaved in the dark as opposed to at sunrise. In 2000, Foster joined the faculty at California State University, Los Angeles because she wanted to stay where her husband's job was. She also wanted to work with undergraduates who were at the beginning of their academic careers. At Cal State L.A., Foster published her first paper with a student co-author, which proved to be one of the highlights of her career. The paper examined methods for looking for reduced phosphorus oxyanions in aqueous solutions which mimicked geo-thermal waters.

Ozone layer depletion

California State University, Los Angeles--Faculty

Water--Analysis

Arsenic compounds--Analysis

Geothermal resources--Research--Methodology

Video Oral History Interview with Krishna Foster, Section A2011\_031\_001\_006, TRT: 6:30:21  
2011/04/28

Krishna Foster talks about her promotions and activities at California State University, Los Angeles. In 2006, she was promoted to associate professor, and she won the Distinguished Woman's Award in 2007. She worked on the American Chemical Society's "Project SEED" and is also a member of the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBChCE). Among her career milestones are her 2004 publication, 'Detection of Hypophosphite, Phosphite, and Orthophosphate in Natural Geothermal Water by Ion Chromatography.' Foster gives advice to budding scientists, projects her own hopes and desires for the future of her career, and expresses her concerns for the African American community. She ends by talking about her husband, Kwasi Malik Conner, and her children Camilla and Julian.

California State University, Los Angeles--Faculty

American Chemical Society

African Americans in chemistry

Geothermal resources--Research--Methodology

Chemistry--Vocational guidance

Video Oral History Interview with Krishna Foster, Section A2011\_031\_001\_007, TRT: 7:05:59  
2011/04/28

Krishna Foster responds to the last question about how she would like to be remembered. She says that she would like to be known as somebody who contributed and somebody who cared; contributed in regards to her science, in terms of leaving something behind that scientists in the future will use widely. She also wants to contribute to the improvement of minority education in science. For example, she would like academics to learn how to teach minority students effectively, and to successfully mentor students through undergraduate to doctoral study, and on to meaningful careers in science.

Science--Study and teaching--United States

African Americans--Education (Higher)