

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Erich Jarvis

PERSON

Jarvis, Erich D., 1965-

Alternative Names: Erich Jarvis;

Life Dates: May 6, 1965-

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Work: New York, NY

Occupations: Neurobiologist

Biographical Note

Neurobiologist Erich D. Jarvis was born on May 6, 1965, in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City to musicians James Jarvis and Sasha Valeria McCall. Growing up in an artistic but poverty-stricken household, Jarvis found an early passion for dance, which led him to the High School of the Performing Arts. He graduated from high school in 1983 and turned down an audition for the African American dance company, Alvin Ailey to attend Hunter College. As an undergraduate, he worked as a Minority Access

to Research Careers (MARC) Fellow and researched protein synthesis genes in bacteria. After obtaining his B.A. degree in mathematics and biology in 1988, Jarvis pursued his Ph.D. degree in molecular neurobiology and animal behavior at The Rockefeller University where he researched vocal learning in songbirds. He received his Ph.D. degree in 1995 and stayed at The Rockefeller University to conduct postdoctoral research.

After completing his postdoctoral research, Jarvis joined the faculty of The Rockefeller University as an adjunct assistant professor and also participated in the Science Outreach Program of New York where he taught laboratory skills to inner city high school students. He left Rockefeller in 1998 to become an assistant professor in the Department of Neurobiology at Duke University. Jarvis also served as an assistant professor in the Department of Cognitive Neuroscience and the Center for Bioinformatics and Computational Biology. In 2005, he led the Avian Brain Nomenclature Consortium, a team of twenty-eight neuroscientists, who proposed a new nomenclature for the bird brain to better reflect a bird's similarities with mammals in cognitive abilities. Jarvis also became a tenured associate professor at Duke in 2005 and in 2008, he was chosen to become an Investigator for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. He has been an invited contributor for several books and has published more than fifty scholarly articles.

Jarvis has been recognized as a young pioneer in his field, and his research and study of songbird neurology has won him many awards including the National Science Foundation Alan T. Waterman Award, the Dominion Award: Strong Men and Women of Excellence: African American Leaders and the National Institute for the Humanities' Director's Pioneer Award in 2005. He has served as the director of the Neuroscience Scholars Program for The Society of Neuroscience, a member of Duke University's Council on Black Affairs and a founding member of

the Black Collective at Duke. Jarvis and his wife, Miriam Rivas, live in Durham, North Carolina and have two children.

Erich Jarvis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 20, 2012.

Related Entries

Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Diploma

Hunter College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.A. Degree

The Rockefeller University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Ph.D.

Hunter College [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1958 to 1971]

Undergraduate Research Associate

Rockefeller University Dr. Fernando Nottebohm Laboratory [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1959 to ?]

Graduate Researcher and Postdoctorate Researcher

Rockefeller University [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1950 to 1980]

Assistant Professor, Adjunct:

Duke University Medical Center Department of Neurobiology [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1963 to 1965]

Assistant Professor

Duke University Center for Cognitive Neuroscience

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1940 to 1943]

Assistant Professor

**Duke University Center for Bioinformatics &
Computational Biology** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1964 to 1984]

Assistant Professor

**Duke University Medical Center Development
Biology Program** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Assistant Professor

**Duke University Medical Center Department of
Neurobiology** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Associate Professor

Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Investigator

Science Outreach Program of NY [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Instructor

Duke University Medical Center [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Director

Society for Neuroscience [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

J.B. Johnston Neuroscience Organization [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Avian Brain Nomenclature Consortium [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Organizer

Duke University President's Council on Black Affairs

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Council Member

Black Collective at Duke (BCD), Duke University

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Founding Member

**Society for Advancement of Chicanos & Native
Americans (SACNAS)** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

International Society for Neuroethology [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**National Science Foundation (NSF) Task Group for
Enhancing Support for Transformative Research**

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Invited Advisor

Duke University Medical Center [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Elected Member

Diversity in Neuroscience Subcommittee (DINS)

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Nominated Member

Westchester Ballet Company [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]