

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Daniel Akins

PERSON

Akins, Daniel , 1941-

**Alternative Names:** Akins, Daniel , 1941-

**Life Dates:** July 8, 1941-

**Place of Birth:** Miami, Florida

**Residence:**

**Occupations:** Research Chemist; Chemistry Professor

## Biographical Note

Physical chemist and chemistry professor Daniel Akins was born on July 8, 1941, in Miami, Florida, and graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in 1960. Akins earned his B.S. degree in chemistry from Howard University in 1963 where he was inducted into Sigma Xi honor society. He received his Ph.D. degree in physical chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1968 under the mentorship of Professor C. Bradley Moore.

After finishing his graduate education, Akins worked at Florida State University as both a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Molecular Biophysics and visiting assistant chemistry professor. In 1970, he became an assistant professor in the chemistry department at the University of South Florida and was promoted to associate professor in 1975. Between 1977 and 1979, Akins served as a visiting program director of the physical chemistry subsection of the dynamics program at the National Science Foundation (NSF). After a brief period as a senior scientist with the Polaroid Corporation, he began his career at The City College of New York as a professor of chemistry in 1981. In 1988, Akins founded and served as director of what would become in 2000 the CUNY Center for Analysis of Structures and Interfaces (CASI), which has the goal of training minority

scientists in high-level scientific research. Eleven years after establishment of CASI, he was awarded an NSF Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) grant. In 2008, Akins became the principal investigator for a \$5 million NSF grant to establish a center for nanostructure applications known as CENSES (Center for Exploitation of Nanostructures in Sensors and Energy Systems). Throughout his career, he has published more than 130 research papers in leading scientific journals. His principal research focuses on the development of new nanomaterials for use in molecular photonic devices (MPDs), chemical sensors and fuel cells.

Akins is a member of several professional organizations, including the American Chemical Society, the Society for Applied Spectroscopy, and NOBCCChE (National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers). Throughout his career, Akins has shown a continued commitment to increasing diversity in the sciences and has mentored many doctoral students. For his work, Daniel has been recognized many times, including being named a Sigma Xi Distinguished Lecturer and receiving the CCNY Faculty Service Award. In 2000, Akins received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM) from President Bill Clinton. Daniel Akins lives in Teaneck, New Jersey with his wife Sondra Akins. They have two children, Dana, a mechanical engineer, and Meredith, an actress and dancer.

Daniel Akins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 14, 2012.

## Related Entries

**Smith, Clement** [GRANDCHILD OF]  
**Maternal Grandfather**

**Simons (Akins) Hawkins, Otea** [GRANDCHILD OF]  
**Paternal Grandmother**

**Gilbert Smith, Merlice** [GRANDCHILD OF]  
**Maternal Grandmother**

**Smith (Akins) Brazil, Clemtina** [CHILD OF]  
**Mother**

**Akins, Donald Lee** [SIBLING OF]  
**Brother**

**Akins-Adeyemi, Dana Lamar** [PARENT OF]  
**Daughter**

**Akins, Daniel Thomas** [CHILD OF]  
**Father**

**Akins, Meredith Ivy** [PARENTOF]

**Daughter**

**Akins, Daniel G.** [GRANDCHILDOF]

**Paternal Grandfather**

**Douglass Primary School** [STUDENTOF]

**Phylis Wheatley Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]

**Booker T. Washington High School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1959]

**Howard University** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1963]

**B.S.**

**University of California, Berkeley** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1968-06]

**Ph.D.**

**Florida State University** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1969-09]

**Postdoctoral Studies**

**The City College of CUNY** [EMPLOYEEOF]

**Chemistry Ph.D. Faculty**

**The University of South Florida** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1969 to 1970]

**Visiting Assistant Professor**

**The Florida State University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1970 to 1974]

**Assistant Professor**

**The University of South Florida** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1974 to 1977]

**Associate Professor**

**National Science Foundation** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1977 to 1979]

**Program Director of Chemical Dynamics**

**Polaroid Corporation** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1979 to 1981]

**Senior Scientist, Research Division**

**The City College of CUNY** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2000 to ?]

**Ph.D. Faculty in Chemistry and Engineering**

**American Chemical Society** [MEMBEROF]

**Member**

**Society for Applied Spectroscopy** [MEMBEROF]

**Member**

**Emerging Researchers National (ERN) Conference** [MEMBEROF]

**Advisory Board**

**School for Professional Studies Governing Council** [MEMBEROF]

**Governing Council**

**Enabling Bioanalytical & Biophysical Technologies (EBT)** [MEMBEROF]

**Member**

**Science Foundation of Arizona's (SFAZ's)** [MEMBEROF]

**Proposal Review Committee**