

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Bernard Harris

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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>	Harris, Bernard A.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Bernard Harris,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 6, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 MOV HD video files (1:27:44).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Astronaut and medical scientist Dr. Bernard Harris (1956 - ) is best known for being the first African American to walk in space. Harris was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 6, 2013, in Houston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_034
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Astronaut, physician, clinical scientist, and management executive Bernard A. Harris, Jr. was born on June 26, 1956 in Temple, Texas to Bernard A. Harris, Sr. and Gussie Emanuel Harris. During his youth, Harris lived on the Navajo reservations of Arizona and New Mexico, where his mother found employment as a teacher. At the age of thirteen, Harris watched the first landing on the moon, inspiring him to become an astronaut. His family returned to Texas shortly afterwards, and Harris graduated from Sam Houston High School in San Antonio, Texas in 1974. In 1978, Harris received his B.S. degree in biology from the University of Sam Houston; and, in 1982, he earned his M.D. degree from the Texas Tech University Health Science Center of Medicine. Harris also graduated from the University of Houston Clear Lake in 2001 with his M.B.A. degree in management.

Upon completing his residency in internal medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, Harris pursued research opportunities at Ames Research Center in Moffett Field, California, and later the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center. After his first application to the NASA Astronaut Corps. was declined, Harris reapplied and was invited to join the elite training group in 1990. Following the completion of intensive training, Harris was given his first assignment as a mission specialist of the Space Shuttle Columbia in the spring of 1993, just a few months after the birth of his daughter, Brooke Alexandria. Two years later, Harris returned to space and made history as the first African American to walk in space, where he and crew member Michael Foale tested the temperature resilience of their spacesuits and activities in support of the construction of the International Space Station. Following his career in astronautics, Harris became an entrepreneur. In 1996, he was appointed as the vice president of Spacehab, Inc. where he worked on the commercializing space flight. Harris became CEO and Managing Director of Vesalius Ventures in 2002.

Harris has received much recognition for his work as astronaut, physician, entrepreneur, and as a community developer. In addition to becoming a fellow of the American College of Physicians, he is also the winner of The Challenger Award from the Ronald E. McNair Foundation, and recipient of the prestigious Horatio Alger Award. In 2006, The Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr. Middle School was named in his honor. In 2007, Harris established the

ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp and the Dream Tour, two STEM programs to encourage minority students to pursue an interest in the sciences.

Bernard Harris was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 6, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Bernard Harris was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 6, 2013, in Houston, Texas, and was recorded on 3 MOV HD video files. Astronaut and medical scientist Dr. Bernard Harris (1956 - ) is best known for being the first African American to walk in space.

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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:

Harris, Bernard A.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Harris, Bernard A.--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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National Aeronautics and Space Administration

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Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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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. Bernard Harris, February 6, 2013. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 7/29/2013 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, February 6, 2013**

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Bernard Harris, Section A2013\_034\_001\_001, TRT:  
1:29:07 2013/02/06

Dr. Bernard Harris, who was the first African American to walk in space, describes his family background. Harris' mother, Gussie Lee Burgess, was born in 1932 in Oakwood, Texas. She was raised by her mother, grandmother, and her aunt, who served as role models during her upbringing. Gussie Burgess attended Prairie View A&M University to study home economics, and then became a teacher. Harris' father, Bernard A. Harris, Sr., was born in Philadelphia in the early 1930s. He dropped out of the inner-city school system in high school, and enlisted in the U.S. Army. Harris' parents met while his father was stationed in Fort Hood, Texas. They married in the early 1950s, and moved to Houston a few years later. After his parents' divorce in 1962, Harris, his sister, Gillette, and his brother, Dennis, moved to Greasewood, Arizona, where his mother took a job as a teacher on the Navajo reservation.

African American families--United States.

African American parents--Employment.

Children of divorced parents.

Indian reservations--Arizona--Education.

African Americans--Relations with Indians.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Bernard Harris, Section A2013\_034\_001\_002, TRT:  
2:27:50 2013/02/06

When Dr. Bernard Harris was seven years old, he moved to Greasewood, Arizona, with his siblings and his mother, who began working as a teacher on the Navajo reservation. Harris and his brother began elementary school in Greasewood, and were exposed to a multi-cultural upbringing on the reservation. Four years later, his family moved to another part of the reservation, in Tohatchi, New Mexico. Harris attended junior high school in Tohatchi, where he became interested in biology and chemistry. Harris also began to become engaged by America's space program in the 1960s, and describes his budding interest in aeronautics. He also describes his childhood memories of his great grandmother's farm in Texas.

Childhood--United States, Southwestern.

African Americans--Relations with Indians.

Multiculturalism--Social aspects--United States.

Astronautics--United States.

Family farms--Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Bernard Harris, Section A2013\_034\_001\_003, TRT:  
3:30:47 2013/02/06

Dr. Bernard Harris and his family moved from Greasewood, Arizona to Tohatchi, New Mexico in the late 1960s, where his mother was a teacher on the Navajo reservation. During his time in junior high school in Tohatchi, Harris became interested in playing the saxophone, and soon discovered a life-long talent in music. By the age of sixteen, Harris' family had relocated to San Antonio, Texas, where he attended Sam Houston High School, and played in a band called 'The Purple Haze'. As a teenager, Harris was deeply inspired by the U.S. space program, particularly the 1969 moon landing. Harris attended the University of Houston in 1974, majoring in biology on the pre-medical tract. His medical mentor, Dr. Frank Bryant, his university professors, Ms. Kaminski and Professor Johnson, and American astronauts, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, inspired his ambitions to become a medical doctor, an entrepreneur and

an astronaut, respectively.

Moving, Household.

Space flight to the moon.

Students, Premedical--minority--Texas.

University of Houston--Faculty.

Mentoring in education.