

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Joycelyn Elders

PERSON

Elders, Joycelyn, 1933-

Alternative Names: Dr. Joycelyn Elders;

Life Dates: August 13, 1933-

Place of Birth: Schaal, Arkansas, USA

Residence: Little Rock, AR

Occupations: Medical Doctor; Professor

Biographical Note

Medical doctor and professor Dr. Joycelyn Elders was born on August 14, 1933 in Schaal, Arkansas to Curtis Jones and Haller Reed Jones. Elders attended Howard County Training School in Tollette, Arkansas in 1942. She earned a four-year scholarship to attend Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas where she received her B.S. degree in biology in 1952. In 1960, Elders earned her M.D. degree and her M.S. degree in biochemistry in 1967 from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, Arkansas. In 1978, Elders earned her certification as a pediatric endocrinologist. After she earned her M.D. degree, Elders began a pediatric internship at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, Minnesota. She became the chief resident at the University of Arkansas Medical School in 1963. Elders was hired as an assistant professor at the University of Arkansas in 1971 and was promoted to the position of professor in 1976. In 1987, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton appointed Elders as director of the Arkansas Department of Health. She then became the 15th Surgeon General of the United States under President Clinton in 1993. As Surgeon General, Elders focused on women's reproductive health care and promoted sex, alcohol, drug, and tobacco education in public schools. She resigned from that position in 1994 and returned to the University of Arkansas, where she worked as a professor of pediatric endocrinology. In 2002, Elders retired from the University of Arkansas Medical Center. In 2016, the Jocelyn Elders Clinic was established in Kisinga, Uganda. The clinic served students at Garama Humanist Secondary School, and promoted sex education and treated students that suffered from diseases such as malaria.

During her career, Elders published over one hundred academic papers that related to insulin resistance and other endocrine disorders. In 1997, she published her memoir, *From Sharecroppers' Daughter to Surgeon General of the United States of America*.

Elders was the recipient of the Woman of Distinction Award from Worthen Bank in 1987, the Arkansas Democrat Woman of the Year from Statewide Newspaper in 1998, and the Candace Award from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women in 1991. She was inducted into the Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame in 2016. Elders also received the Career Development Award from the National Institute of Health. In 2009, The Joycelyn Elders Chair in Sexual Health Education was established at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

In 1992, Elders was elected president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers. She was also a board member for the National Center for Healthy Housing.

Dr. Joycelyn Elders was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 20, 2017.

Related Entries

Philander Smith College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.A.

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

M.D.

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

M.S.

Arkansas Department of Health [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1987 to 1993]

Director

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1993 to 1994]

U.S. Surgeon General

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1995 to ?]

Professor of Pediatrics; Professor Emeritus