

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Donna M. Mendes

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Mendes, Donna M.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Donna M. Mendes,
Dates:	February 14, 2023 and March 28, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007 and 2023
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:46:43).
Abstract:	Medical professor and vascular surgeon Dr. Donna M. Mendes (1951 -) became the first African American female vascular surgeon certified by the American Board of Surgery. Mendes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 14, 2023 and March 28, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_116
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Medical professor and vascular surgeon Dr. Donna M. Mendes was born to Benjamin and Bernice Mendes on October 25, 1951. The second of three children raised in Oceanside, New York, Mendes attended Hofstra University in New York in 1969. With the help of her parents and Hofstra University counselor, Beatryce Nivens, Mendes became a pre-med major and graduated from Hofstra University in 1973 with her B.A. in biology.

In 1973, Mendes enrolled in Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. Mendes chose to study peripheral vascular surgery, which is the treatment of the vessels that branch out of the heart. Mendes graduated the following year and became an intern at St. Luke's Hospital and a visiting clinical fellow at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. She became a resident at St. Luke's in 1978, and a surgical resident two years later.

In 1981, Mendes was promoted to surgical chief resident at St. Luke's Hospital, and served as a fellow in vascular surgery at Englewood Hospital in 1982. After completing her vascular surgery fellowship, Mendes returned to St. Luke's Hospital and became an instructor in clinical surgery at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons.

In 1986, Mendes married her husband, Ronald LaMotte, and became the first African American female vascular surgeon certified by the American Board of Surgery. Mendes' clinical research has focused on the effects of race on vascular disease, and she seeks to discover why peripheral arterial disease (blockages of blood vessels away from the heart) seems to impact African American patients more frequently, and with greater severity.

In 1990, Mendes became assistant clinical professor of surgery at Columbia University. She was hired as the chief of St. Luke's Hospital's Division of Vascular Surgery in 1993. Five years later, Mendes had become the senior attending surgeon in the Department of Surgery at St. Luke's, and was hired as the attending vascular surgeon at the Department of Surgery Lenox Hill Hospital in 1999.

Mendes lives in Englewood, New Jersey, with her husband.

Donna M. Mendes was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 28, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Donna M. Mendes was conducted by Larry Crowe and Shawn Wilson on February 14, 2023 and March 28, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Medical professor and vascular surgeon Dr. Donna M. Mendes (1951 -) became the first African American female vascular surgeon certified by the American Board of Surgery.

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®.

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.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Mendes, Donna M.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Mendes, Donna M.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Vascular Surgeon

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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. Donna M. Mendes, February 14, 2023 and March 28, 2007. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Donna M. Mendes, Section A2007_116_001_001, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Dr. Donna M. Mendes was born on October 25, 1951 to Bernice Mendes and Benjamin Mendes in Oceanside, New York. Her maternal grandparents, Theodore Bennett and Henrietta Smith, lived in Freeport, New York, where her grandfather was involved in local politics. Her paternal grandfather came from Cape Verde to Long Island, where he met her paternal grandmother. Mendes' parents married, and raised their three children in the middle class African American community of Roosevelt, New York, where businessman John Mackey and basketball player Julius Erving were their neighbors. Her father worked at Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation and the post office. Mendes attended the integrated Queen of the Most Holy Rosary School in Roosevelt, and later the majority-white Sacred Heart Academy in Hempstead, New York. Mendes talks about the development of her racial identity during her Catholic schooling, as well as the impact of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968.

African American families--New York (State)--New York.

African American children--New York (State)--New York.

African American fathers--New York (State)--New York.

African American students--Education (Elementary)--New York (State).

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Donna M. Mendes, Section A2007_116_001_002, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Dr. Donna M. Mendes attended Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York from 1969. Initially a speech therapy major, she switched to pre-medical studies in her second year. She was encouraged by her counselor, Beatryce Nivens, to apply to medical school, and was admitted to Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York in 1973, where she was a classmate of Dr. Ragsbert Phillips. Mendes completed her surgical internship and residency at St. Luke's Hospital in New York, where she was the only black woman in a field traditionally dominated by white men. After her residency in 1980, Mendes became a fellow at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center in New Jersey. She specialized in vascular surgery under the mentorship of Herbert Dardik. There, she was not only the first African American, but also the first woman in the program. In 1984, Mendes opened her private practice; and, in 1986, became the first African American woman to be certified in vascular surgery by the American Board of Surgery.

African American medical students.

African American physicians--New York (state)--New York.

Columbia University. School of Medicine.

African American couples--New York.

African American women physicians.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Donna M. Mendes, Section A2007_116_001_003, TRT: 0:27:28 ?

Dr. Donna M. Mendes was named the New York County Medical Society's outstanding young woman of the year in 1990. She talks about her specialty in limb salvage surgery, and her research into the high rate of amputation among African Americans. Mendes' research showed that controllable factors, such as diet and smoking, often led to amputation, and that a healthy lifestyle with

exercise and relaxation decreased the risk. In 1990, Mendes became an assistant clinical professor of surgery at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, and conducted outreach to attract more African American students to the medical program. In 1992, she was awarded the Teacher of the Year Award by residents of Mount Sinai St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, where she mentored four female vascular surgeons. Mendes joined the Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. and the Society of Black Academic Surgeons to draw attention to the disproportionate rate of heart disease in African American women.

African American women physicians.

African American physicians--New York (state)--New York.

Self-care, Health.

African Americans--Health and hygiene.

Health--Information services.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Donna M. Mendes, Section A2007_116_001_004, TRT: 0:20:02 ?

Dr. Donna M. Mendes participated in an outreach campaign for the Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. in 2003. During the campaign, she promoted a healthy lifestyle, and raised awareness of the prevalence of heart disease in African American women alongside poet Maya Angelou and restaurant owner Sylvia Woods. That year, Mendes was featured in an article in Ebony magazine, through which she met several young African American women, and inspired them to pursue careers in surgery. She also continued her diversity outreach with the Society for Vascular Surgery. As a member of The Links, Incorporated, Mendes partnered with her husband, Ronald E. LaMotte, and his chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, to create a police safety education program at Teaneck High School in New Jersey. Mendes reflects upon her life and career, including the attention she has brought to African Americans' health needs through her research. She also describes how she would like to be remembered.

Angelou, Maya.

Self-care, Health.

Health--Information services.

African Americans--Health and hygiene.

Mentoring in the professions.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Donna M. Mendes, Section A2007_116_002_005, TRT: 5:28:08 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Donna M. Mendes, Section A2007_116_002_006, TRT: 6:31:41 ?