

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Vivian Pinn

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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>	Pinn, Vivian W.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 22, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:44:17).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Medical director Dr. Vivian Pinn (1941 - ) the third woman and first African American woman appointed to chair a department of pathology in the U.S. while at Howard University College of Medicine, served as founding director of the Office of Research on Women's Health in the Office of the Director at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and as associate director for Research on Women's Health at NIH. Pinn was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 22, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_197
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Medical director Vivian W. Pinn was born in 1941 in Halifax, Virginia. She grew up in Lynchburg, Virginia. Pinn received her B.A. degree from Wellesley College in 1963. She earned her M.D. degree from the University of Virginia School of Medicine in 1967 where she was the only woman and only minority in her class. Pinn completed her residency in pathology at the Massachusetts General Hospital in 1970 while also serving as a teaching fellow at the Harvard Medical School

In 1970, Pinn joined Tufts University as assistant professor of pathology in the School of Medicine and the Tufts New England Medical Center Hospital, with a concurrent appointment as the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. In 1982, she moved to Washington, D.C. where she served as a professor as well as the third woman and first African American woman appointed to chair a department of pathology in the U.S. while at Howard University College of Medicine. Pinn became the first director of the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) in the Office of the Director at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 1991. In February of 1994, she was named associate director for Research on Women's Health at NIH. While there, Pinn completed a national initiative to reexamine priorities for the women's health research agenda, as well as areas in need of research. This new strategic plan for the coming decade, *Moving into the Future with New Dimensions and Strategies: a Vision for 2020 for Women's Health Research*, was presented publicly at the 2010 NIH Scientific Symposium and the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the ORWH. She also served as co-chair of the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers.

In 1989, Pinn was elected as president of the National Medical Association after serving in many other capacities including as Speaker of the House of Delegates and Trustee. The UVA School of Medicine established the Vivian W. Pinn Distinguished Lecture in Health Disparities, and further honored her in 2010 by naming one of its

advisory colleges for medical students in her name, the Vivian Pinn College of UVA. In 2011, she received the Tufts University School of Medicine Dean's Medal. Pinn was elected as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the Institute of Medicine. Pinn has also been elected as an Honorary Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine, and received the Academy Medal for Distinguished Contributions in Health Policy.

Dr. Vivian W. Pinn was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 22, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 22, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Medical director Dr. Vivian Pinn (1941 - ) the third woman and first African American woman appointed to chair a department of pathology in the U.S. while at Howard University College of Medicine, served as founding director of the Office of Research on Women's Health in the Office of the Director at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and as associate director for Research on Women's Health at NIH.

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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:

Pinn, Vivian W.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Pinn, Vivian W.--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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## Occupations:

Medical Director

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

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. Vivian Pinn, July 22, 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 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).

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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

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn, Section A2013\_197\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:21 ?

Dr. Vivian Pinn was born in Halifax, Virginia on April 21, 1941 to Francena Evans Pinn and Carl Pinn. Pinn's mother was born to Annie James Evans and John Evans on a farm in Clays Mill, Virginia. The great-granddaughter of slaves, Pinn's mother graduated from Virginia State University. She taught home economics and earned a master's degree at New York University. She passed away from a misdiagnosed bone cancer when Pinn was nineteen years old. Pinn's father was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, a descendant of Cherokee Native Americans. His father attended Hampton University and changed his last name from Penn to Pinn. Pinn's father graduated from West Virginia State University and worked as a physical education teacher. He taught at the Halifax County Training School, where Pinn's mother's younger siblings were students. They met after Pinn's mother obtained a job there, and they married in secret because Pinn's maternal grandparents disapproved of their relationship.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn, Section A2013\_197\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:40 ?

Dr. Vivian Pinn was the only child of Francena Evans Pinn and Carl Pinn. She grew up in Lynchburg, Virginia, where she was raised by her father and paternal grandparents, Samuel H. Pinn and Rosa White Pinn. During this time, Pinn's mother taught at the Halifax County Training School, which was too far from Lynchburg to commute each day. Instead, Pinn spent the summers with her mother on her maternal grandparents' farm in Halifax. At this point in the interview, Pinn talks about the history of Lynchburg, which was founded by Quaker businessman John Lynch. Pinn began her education in Lynchburg during the mid-1940s at the all-black Robert S. Payne Elementary School and Dunbar High School. She attended the Eighth Street Baptist Church until 1960, when it merged with the larger, majority-white Church of the Good Shepherd. There, Pinn faced discrimination from the white church staff, including while planning her mother's funeral in 1961.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn, Section A2013\_197\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:10 ?

Dr. Vivian Pinn aspired to become a doctor from a young age. With her father, Carl Pin, she helped care for her grandparents, Rosa White Pinn and Samuel H. Pinn, who had diabetes and cancer. In Lynchburg, Pinn was exposed to African American physicians like Ralph Harbison "Doc" Boulware, Walter Robert "Whirlwind" Johnson, and Leon M. Braswell, Sr. She was also influenced by guidance counselor Pauline Weeden Maloney, who introduced her to chemist Percy L. Julian. After school, Pinn was involved in multiple extracurricular activities, including theater, where she developed her public speaking ability. She attended a summer physics program at Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana, where she learned calculus for the first time. Upon graduating as valedictorian of her high school class in 1958, Pinn enrolled at Wellesley College in Massachusetts on a scholarship. There, she worked hard to keep up in classes such as French and chemistry, as she had not had the same preparation as her wealthy classmates.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn, Section A2013\_197\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:17 ?

Dr. Vivian Pinn was one of eight black students in her class at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. She excelled in her biology and zoology classes, but struggled with chemistry. During this time, Pinn's mother, Francena Evans Pinn, became very ill, and Pinn arranged to take a semester off due to the emotional and financial burden. After her mother's death in 1961, Pinn returned to school on an increased scholarship. Upon graduating, Pinn returned to Virginia to be close to her father, Carl Pinn. She also enrolled at the University of Virginia

School of Medicine in 1963. She was the only woman and only person of color in her class, and experienced discrimination from peers and landlords. She was barred from attending her senior class party at The Boar's Head Inn, which was segregated at the time. She relied on the emotional support of father, as most of her instructors were cold and distant. Pinn talks about how this experience influenced her later decision to mentor black medical students.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn, Section A2013\_197\_001\_005, TRT: 5:33:38 ?

Dr. Vivian Pinn graduated from Wellesley College and enrolled at the University of Virginia School of Medicine in 1963. Between semesters, she worked as a research assistant in an organ transplant laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital, where she also completed her medical residency. With help from pathologist Benjamin Castleman, Pinn obtained a faculty appointment at Tufts University School of Medicine in 1970. She worked to increase the number of black doctors in the field, establishing the Progressive Alliance for Minority Students and the Central Recruitment Council of Harvard Medical School. In 1982, Pinn accepted a position as chairwoman of the pathology department at Howard University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C. In this part of the interview, Pinn talks about her early interest in kidney transplantation, and the importance of organ donation in the African American community. Pinn went on to become known for her advocacy of a comprehensive approach to women's health care.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn, Section A2013\_197\_001\_006, TRT: 6:28:56 ?

Dr. Vivian Pinn was appointed to serve as the founding director of the Office of Research on Women's Health at the National Institutes of Health in 1991. The office was established following the Hunt Valley report, which was the result of congressional concerns about gaps in the medical understanding of women's health. In her role as director, Pinn was responsible for establishing the scientific basis for including women in medical research. Until this time, studies of conditions such as heart disease had never included female subjects. Pinn served in this position until her retirement in 2011. As director of the Office of Research on Women's Health, Pinn similarly advocated for the relevance of race in medical research. At this point, Pinn talks about her membership in the National Medical Association. She joined the organization in the 1970s as a junior faculty member and eventually became its second female president, following Dr. Edith Irby Jones.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn, Section A2013\_197\_001\_007, TRT: 7:30:21 ?

Dr. Vivian Pinn was trained as a pathologist and had an extensive career in the field of women's health. She retired in 2011 from the National Institutes of Health, where she sought to improve awareness of the social factors that contributed to health outcomes. At this point in the interview, Pinn talks about the unique health issues faced by black women due to their race and gender. She also reflects upon her legacy and talks about her hopes for the Affordable Care Act. Pinn concludes this part of the interview by talking about her diagnosis with bone cancer, the condition that killed her mother in the 1960s. While her mother was misdiagnosed by her physician, Pinn's medical team was able to identify and successfully treat the disease.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Vivian Pinn, Section A2013\_197\_001\_008, TRT: 8:13:54 ?

Dr. Vivian Pinn was diagnosed with bone cancer of the leg by her orthopedist, Richard E. Grant, after he urged her to seek imaging tests for her symptoms. The cancer was successfully treated with surgery. In her retirement, Pinn advised medical students and younger doctors about the importance of patient care and the value of the medical profession. At this point, Pinn reflects upon the

importance of mentorship. She also talks about her awards and honors, including the naming of the Vivian W. Pinn, MD, Scholarship at Tufts University and Vivian Pinn College at the University of Virginia.