

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Beny J. Primm

---

## 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>	Primm, Beny J
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Beny J. Primm,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 7, 2001
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2001
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:50:06).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Nonprofit chief executive, chief executive officer, and physician Dr. Beny J. Primm (1928 - 2015 ) is a national authority on drug addiction and one of the world's foremost authorities on HIV and AIDS. In 1969, he helped to found the Addiction Research Treatment Corporation and has been the executive director ever since. A.R.T.C., located in Brooklyn, New York, is one of the largest minority non-profit community-based substance abuse treatment programs in the country, treating over 2,300 men and women from underserved communities. Primm was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 7, 2001, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2001_060
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dr. Beny Primm was born on May 28th, 1928, in Williamson, West Virginia, the son of an educator and a mortician. He and his brother Jerome were raised in a home in which education was emphasized, and in 1941, Primm's mother, who was the principal of a local elementary school, moved the family to the Bronx, New York so that her sons could attend integrated high schools.

From an early age, Beny Primm wanted to be a doctor, and after four years at DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, he received a basketball scholarship to attend Lincoln University. There, Primm was surrounded by bright and driven students, and six of the members of his basketball team would go on to become doctors or Ph.D.'s. He left Lincoln after two years, unable to cope with the school's rigorous academic pressure, and returned to West Virginia where he graduated from West Virginia State University. After several years in the service as a paratrooper, Dr. Primm returned home with an injury, and was unable to get into medical school in the United States. Having studied German in college, he decided to apply to the University of Heidelberg, and was accepted in 1953. After a year at Heidelberg, Primm transferred to University of Geneva, in Switzerland, and received his M.D. in 1959.

In 1969, he helped to found the Addiction Research Treatment Corporation and has been the executive director ever since. A.R.T.C., located in Brooklyn, New York, is one of the largest minority non-profit community-based substance abuse treatment programs in the country, treating over 2,300 men and women from underserved communities.

Since 1983, Dr. Primm has also been president of the Urban Resource Institute, an umbrella organization that supports various community-based initiatives and social service programs for battered women, the developmentally disabled, substance abusers, and those infected with HIV and AIDS. A national authority on drug addiction, Dr. Primm has served as an adviser to the National Drug Abuse Policy Office since the Nixon administration.

Dr. Primm is also internationally recognized as one of the world's foremost experts on HIV and AIDS, an area of study he pursued initially due to the disease's intimate relationship with addiction and the epidemic levels of infection among I.V. drug users. He has served on the Presidential Commission on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus Epidemic, and has represented the U.S. at numerous international conferences, including the World Health Organization's conference in Geneva and the International Conference for Ministers of Health on AIDS prevention in London.

Widely published, he has written over thirty articles on addiction, which have appeared in numerous medical texts and journals. He has also delivered speeches, lectures and keynote addresses around the world, and has been a visiting lecturer at a dozen different academic institutions, including Columbia University, Harvard University and New York University.

Primm passed away on October 16, 2015.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Beny J. Primm was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on March 7, 2001, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit chief executive, chief executive officer, and physician Dr. Beny J. Primm (1928 - 2015 ) is a national authority on drug addiction and one of the world's foremost authorities on HIV and AIDS. In 1969, he helped to found the Addiction Research Treatment Corporation and has been the executive director ever since. A.R.T.C., located in Brooklyn, New York, is one of the largest minority non-profit community-based substance abuse treatment programs in the country, treating over 2,300 men and women from underserved communities.

---

## 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:**

Primm, Beny J

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Primm, Beny J--Interviews

---

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

**Occupations:**

Physician

---

Nonprofit Chief Executive

---

Chief Executive Officer

---

**HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers|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. Beny J. Primm, March 7, 2001. 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. Beny J. Primm, Section A2001\_060\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:41 ?

Physician Beny J. Primm explains the origin of his name and then details his family origins. He talks about his parents' backgrounds as he tells of their careers and personalities. Primm then details his move to New York City and explains his mother's wants for her children to attend integrated schools. He then discusses his father's life in further detail and shares memories of him.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Beny J. Primm, Section A2001\_060\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:59 ?

Physician Beny J. Primm talks about the prominent black physicians in his hometown and how they affected him. Next he discusses attending school in the segregated South and of the culture shock he experienced upon his move to New York City. Primm details experiences in New York before talking about the pressure of succeeding academically in college.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Beny J. Primm, Section A2001\_060\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:39 ?

Physician Beny J. Primm recalls time spent at Lincoln University and his transfer to West Virginia State University. He then details his military service and his medical school education in Europe. He goes in depth in his experiences in Geneva, Switzerland before reflecting on his medical school career abroad. Beny J. Primm discusses his family and cultural adjustment upon his return to the U.S.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Beny J. Primm, Section A2001\_060\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:27 ?

Physician Beny J. Primm talks about shifting his focus from anesthesiology to the study of drug addiction and details his work with addicts in Harlem in the 1960s. Next, he discusses the origins of methadone and its effects on the brain. Beny J. Primm talks about federal aid to combat substance abuse and AIDS in the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Beny J. Primm, Section A2001\_060\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:03 ?

Physician Beny J. Primm discusses the facts and myths surrounding HIV/AIDS, reflects on his career and gives advice to future African Americans in the

medical profession. Then, Primm summarizes his career and considers his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Beny J. Primm, Section A2001\_060\_001\_006, TRT: 0:17:17  
?