

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Christopher Leggett

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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>	Leggett, Christopher, 1960-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 26, 2008 and September 11, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007 and 2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	10 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:33:16).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Cardiologist and healthcare executive Dr. Christopher Leggett (1960 - ) was the Director of Cardiology at Medical Associates of North Georgia and practiced at multiple medical institutions in the Southeastern region, particularly in Atlanta, Georgia. Leggett was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 26, 2008 and September 11, 2007, in Duluth, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_253
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Clinical interventional cardiologist Dr. Christopher J.W.B. Leggett was born on November 8, 1960, in Cleveland, Ohio, the tenth of eleven children to Willie and Ethel Leggett. At thirteen years of age, Leggett was awarded a three year academic scholarship by the A Better Chance organization to attend Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. After his high school graduation, Leggett received a four year scholarship to attend Princeton University. While attending Princeton, Leggett was a campus leader and member of the Princeton University basketball team. In 1982, Leggett graduated from Princeton University with his B.A. degree in sociology.

In 1982, after attending the University of Cincinnati's School of Medicine in Cincinnati, Ohio, Leggett attended Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio, where he received his M.D. degree. At Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, Leggett was also chairman of the Student National Medical Association. In 1986, Leggett interned in internal medicine at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland; after completing his residency at Johns Hopkins in 1989, Leggett completed his cardiology fellowship at the Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia.

In 1992, Leggett became a physician at the Cardiovascular Laboratory in the Veterans Administration Hospital at the Emory University School of Medicine in Decatur, Georgia. In 1993, Leggett became an interventional cardiology fellow in the Department of Cardiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine. During his fellowship, Leggett was under the tutelage of world leader and pioneer, Dr. Gary S. Roubin.

In 2002, Leggett was appointed by the United States Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to serve on the National Practicing Physician Advisory Council in Washington, D.C. for a four year term. In 2002, a Georgia State Senate Resolution honored Leggett for his contributions to society; in May of that same year, Leggett was the recipient of the President's Award at Oakwood College for being an exemplary role model for

Alumni. Leggett is the Director of Cardiology at Medical Associates of North Georgia and practices medicine at Northside Hospital – Cherokee in Canton, Georgia; St. Joseph's Hospital of Atlanta, Georgia; and Gwinnett Health System in Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Christopher Leggett was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 11, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett was conducted by Denise Gines on February 26, 2008 and September 11, 2007, in Duluth, Georgia, and was recorded on 10 Betacame SP videocassettes. Cardiologist and healthcare executive Dr. Christopher Leggett (1960 - ) was the Director of Cardiology at Medical Associates of North Georgia and practiced at multiple medical institutions in the Southeastern region, particularly in Atlanta, Georgia.

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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:

Leggett, Christopher, 1960-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Leggett, Christopher, 1960- --Interviews

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Cardiologists--Interviews

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African American physicians--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:

Cardiologist

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Healthcare Executive

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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. Christopher Leggett, February 26, 2008 and September 11, 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).

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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. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett was born on November 8, 1960 in Cleveland, Ohio to Ethel Leggett and Willie Leggett, Sr. His mother was born in McComb, Mississippi, and grew up on a farm in Slidell, Louisiana. There, she assisted her parents and two siblings with farm chores, and aspired to leave the South. She believed in the importance of education and hoped to attend college, but married Leggett's father before she had the opportunity. Leggett's father was also born in McComb, where he was educated through the eighth grade. He was illiterate until later in life, and often asked Leggett's mother to help him read the Bible while he studied to become a Baptist minister. He was also a strict disciplinarian, and developed creative punishments for his eleven children, including Leggett. On one occasion, Leggett fell asleep in church, and was required to go to bed immediately after school for the next week. Leggett's father died of influenza when Leggett was eight years old.

Cardiologists--Interviews.

African American physicians--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett's parents, Ethel Leggett and Willie Leggett, Sr., moved in the 1950s from Mississippi to Cleveland, Ohio. There, they raised eleven children, of whom Leggett was the tenth born. Together, his family listened to gospel music, took road trips and enjoyed his mother's cooking. Leggett's father was a Baptist minister, and led the family in prayer each morning. After his death in 1968, Leggett's mother found work in the lunchroom of a local elementary school. His nine older siblings also took on new responsibilities, including assisting with Leggett's homework and school projects. Leggett particularly admired his older brother, Robert Leggett, who was one of eight African Americans to integrate Princeton University in the 1960s. During the summers, Leggett's brother returned home to work at General Electric. He served as a role model for the family, and impressed upon Leggett the importance of maintaining personal standards of excellence.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett attended the segregated Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School in Cleveland, Ohio. He earned good grades, and was elected president of his sixth grade class. Leggett was also mischievous, and did not reform his behavior until witnessing his mother's disappointment when he was rejected from the National Junior Honor Society because of his disciplinary record. As a student at Harry E. Davis Junior High School, Leggett joined the football team, won the school talent show and played trombone in the band. He enjoyed math, and aspired to become an engineer like his older brother, Robert Leggett. Due to his exceptional grades, Leggett was accepted to the A Better Chance program, which funded his tuition to the Phillips Academy Andover in

Massachusetts. Leggett, who had attended African American schools all his life, enrolled at his mother's insistence, and became one of African American students at the school. One of his first close friends there was John F. Kennedy, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett attended the Phillips Academy Andover in Massachusetts, where he made a number of lifelong friends. Among them was his roommate, John F. Kennedy, Jr., who introduced Leggett to his mother, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Leggett was one of only ten African Americans at the school, and was exposed to white culture for the first time. He also introduced his white peers to music from the African American community of Cleveland, Ohio, and performed songs by The Dramatics with his friends in the school's talent show. Initially, Leggett struggled academically in the elite private school environment. He was criticized for writing in an African American vernacular style, and for his history presentation on the Civil Rights Movement, which was not covered in the curriculum. However, Leggett excelled in his math courses; and, upon graduating from the Phillips Academy Andover in 1978, aspired to study at Princeton University, the alma mater of his older brother, Robert Leggett.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_002\_005, TRT: 0:29:08 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett was selected for A Better Chance, a program that provided high-achieving students of color with scholarships to prestigious high schools. Leggett was admitted to the Phillips Academy Andover in Massachusetts, where he was provided with new educational resources and intellectual challenges. However, he was one of only ten African American students; and was once chastised for his class project on the Civil Rights Movement, which was deemed too divisive by the history teacher, who preferred to teach about President Andrew Jackson. Leggett got along well with his white classmates, many of whom had never interacted with the African American community. John F. Kennedy, Jr. became Leggett's close friend, and accompanied him on trips to an African American barber shop in Boston, Massachusetts. Leggett also played on the basketball team; and, although he was offered a scholarship to play for Yale University, opted to matriculate at Princeton University, where his brother was an alumnus.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_002\_006, TRT: 0:28:41 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett worked at a grocery store near his home in Cleveland, Ohio during summer vacations from the Phillips Academy Andover in Massachusetts. Due to the lack of Baptist churches in Andover, Leggett attended chapel during the school year, and studied the Bible on his own. Leggett excelled academically; and, in 1978, was admitted to Princeton University with an academic scholarship. Although he initially aspired to become an economist or engineer like his older brother, Robert Leggett, his interest in science drew him to a career in medicine. The rigor of the Phillips Academy Andover prepared him well for Princeton University, where he majored in sociology, and completed pre-medical coursework. His free time was spent playing on the basketball team. Leggett graduated in 1982, and went on to earn a degree from the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, where he was mentored by professors like Dr. Edgar B. Jackson, Jr., an African American physician.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_002\_007, TRT: 0:29:05 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett met his wife, Denise Cleveland Leggett, at his family's church in Cleveland, Ohio during the summer prior to his senior year at Princeton University. They dated long distance for four years while she attended college in Alabama and law school in Boston, Massachusetts. Leggett completed his first two years of medical school at the University of Cincinnati, where he was mentored by pediatric surgeon Alvin Crawford. He also formed a relationship with Harvard University's Dr. Augustus A. White, III, and shadowed him on several occasions while visiting Boston. In 1984, Leggett married his wife, and moved to Cleveland, Ohio. There, he completed medical school in 1986 at Case Western Reserve University. He was admitted to a residency at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, and moved with his wife to Baltimore, Maryland. During Leggett's residency, which was intellectually and physically strenuous, he was mentored by Dr. Levi Watkins and Dr. Benjamin Carson, Sr.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_002\_008, TRT: 0:29:16 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett faced racial discrimination from patients and colleagues during his residency at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. Although there were few African Americans in the field at the time, Leggett was mentored by leading black physicians like Dr. Levi Watkins. A cardiothoracic surgeon, Dr. Watkins introduced Leggett to interventional cardiology, which became his field of specialty. In 1989, Leggett accepted a fellowship at Emory University, which had a strong cardiology department, and was located in his wife's hometown of Atlanta, Georgia. He was taught by Andreas Gruentzig, who invented the first successful balloon angioplasty technique for treatment of heart attacks. Leggett worked at the Atlanta Veterans Affairs Medical Center until 1993, when he moved to the University of Alabama Birmingham to train under Gary Roubin, a pioneering cardiologist who invented the Gianturco-Roubin stent. In 1994, Leggett returned to Atlanta to join the Medical Associates of North Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_002\_009, TRT: 0:29:17 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett trained from 1989 at the Emory University School of Medicine and Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. He went on to join the Medical Associates of North Georgia, where he gained experience with a broad range of cardiovascular issues; and, in 1994, was named director of cardiology. In 1997, Leggett moved to Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital, where he treated a woman who suffered a heart attack while six months pregnant, and miraculously saved both the mother and child. From 2002, Leggett served a five year term on the oversight committee of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He also served as the southeast regional president of the American Heart Association (AHA), and on the organization's national board. In 2007, he was honored as the AHA's physician of the year. At the time of the interview, Leggett had two children with his wife, Denise Cleveland-Leggett. He reflects upon his life and legacy, and describes how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Christopher Leggett, Section A2007\_253\_002\_010, TRT: 0:11:39 ?

Dr. Christopher Leggett narrates his photographs.