

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Rene Martin Earles

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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>	Earles, Rene Martin, 1940-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Rene Martin Earles,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 14, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:25:25).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Dermatologist Dr. Rene Martin Earles (1940 - ) developed his own surgical technique, The Earles Flap, for treating alopecia marginalis in African American women. He also created his own skin and hair product line: Dr. Earles. Earles was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 14, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_084
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dermatologist Dr. Rene Martin Earles has developed techniques and products formulated for the uniqueness of African American skin and hair. Dr. Rene Martin Earles was born on October 31, 1940, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Growing up in Washington, D.C., Earles graduated from Coolidge Senior High School in 1958. Following high school graduation, Earles attended Howard University, where he received his B.S. degree in chemistry and biology in 1963. Upon graduation, Earles attended the College of Medicine at Howard University and finished with his M.D. degree in 1967. Throughout his tenure in medical school, Earles worked at the Freedmen's Hospital.

Earles held a residency at the District of Columbia General Hospital in general surgery. The following year, 1969, he began a second internship in orthopedic surgery. In 1970, Earles joined the United States Navy to direct the Medical Clinic at Sand Point Naval Air Station in Seattle, Washington. While in the Navy, he received a preceptorship in dermatology at the University of Washington, beginning his career as a dermatologist. In 1972, Earles moved to Chicago, Illinois, to begin a dermatological residency at Rush-Presbyterian St. Luke's Hospital. Three years later, Earles opened a private practice in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood. In 1976, Earles attended a course in hair transplantation in Arkansas. The following year, he developed his own surgical technique for treating alopecia marginalis, hair loss at the hairline, in African American women. This procedure is called the "Earles' flap" and revolutionized the field of hair transplantation for black females. This led to his appointment as chairman in the Division of Dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago from 1979 until 1981.

Earles presented his findings of strategies for hair loss management for African American males and females at numerous conferences and magazines including the *Journal of the National Medication Association*, *Ebony*, *American Academy of Facial Plastic Surgery*, *Essence*, and the *Journal of Dermatologic Surgery and Oncology*. Earles has served as a consultant for African American personal care lines including SoftSheen-Carson and Fashion Fair Cosmetics. This early work helped prepare Earles to launch his own skin and hair product line, Dr.

Earles, in which he has received two United States patents for an anti-dandruff formula and the process by which it is made. The company, Dr. Earles, LLC, is operated by his son, Robert Earles.

Earles is a member of multiple professional organizations including the National Medication Association, the American Academy of Dermatology, and the Chicago Dermatologic Society. He was named by *Black Enterprise* magazine as one of the top African American physicians. Earles has twenty thousand active patients and has treated over two hundred thousand people in the course of a forty-year career.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Rene Martin Earles was conducted by Denise Gines on July 14, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Dermatologist Dr. Rene Martin Earles (1940 - ) developed his own surgical technique, The Earles Flap, for treating alopecia marginalis in African American women. He also created his own skin and hair product line: Dr. Earles.

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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:

Earles, Rene Martin, 1940-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Earles, Rene Martin, 1940- --Interviews

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Dermatologists--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:

Dermatologist

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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. Rene Martin Earles, July 14, 2008. 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. Rene Martin Earles, Section A2008\_084\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Dr. Rene Martin Earles was born on October 31, 1940 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Marion Daniels Earles and Lucius Earles, Jr. His maternal great-grandmother, Belinda Grooms, was a teenager when slavery ended, and worked as a cook in New Orleans. There, she built a house with her husband, Frederick Grooms. Earles' paternal great-grandfather, Stephen Earles, was born into slavery in Virginia, then moved to Mississippi, where he married Earles' great-grandmother, Charlotte Earles, in 1873. A graduate of Jackson College in Jackson, Mississippi, his grandfather moved to St. Francisville, Louisiana, where Earles' father was born. The family then settled in the Scotlandville area of Baton Rouge. Earles' mother was the oldest of four girls born to teacher Lottie Grooms Daniels and minister Hubbard Daniels, and raised in New Orleans, where she graduated from Dillard University. His father attended Southern University, and then met Earles' mother in St. Joseph, Louisiana, where they were both teachers.

Dermatologists--Interviews.

African American physicians--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Rene Martin Earles, Section A2008\_084\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Dr. Rene Martin Earles spent his early years in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he began his education at Sylvania F. Williams School. When he was in the third grade, his family moved to Washington, D.C., where his parents, Marion Daniels Earles and Lucius Earles, Jr., taught in the District of Columbia Public Schools. In Washington, D.C., Earles attended Thomas P. Morgan Demonstration School; and in the fifth grade, transferred to Charles Young Platoon School. At the segregated Hugh M. Browne Junior High School, he faced strict regulations. Although he was a shy student, Earles enjoyed playing with his friends in his neighborhood. His family then moved to the Northwest section of Washington, D.C., where he attended the predominantly white Calvin Coolidge High School. At this time, he became interested in engineering; and while he was admitted to Howard University's School of Engineering and Architecture, he decided to major in the life sciences. He also describes his siblings, and early religious experiences.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Rene Martin Earles, Section A2008\_084\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Dr. Rene Martin Earles excelled academically at the predominantly white Calvin Coolidge High School in Washington, D.C. During this time, Earles delivered newspapers and worked at a drugstore to help fund his college tuition. Following the example of his parents and his older brother, Lucius Earles, III, he matriculated at Howard University in Washington, D.C. During his undergraduate career in the College of Arts and Sciences, he double majored in biology and chemistry. He also participated in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and pledged Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. Upon graduating in 1963, Earles went on to attend Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C. He struggled his first two years with undiagnosed symptoms of attention deficit disorder, such that he was unable to concentrate or maintain organized notes. Earles describes the lessons from his paternal grandmother, Sallie Earles,

who informed his outlook on life. He also remembers his high school prom.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Rene Martin Earles, Section A2008\_084\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:15 ?

Dr. Rene Martin Earles attended Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C., where he studied under William Montague Cobb, LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr. and Burke Syphax. Even though he interned at a psychiatric hospital during his senior year, he decided to fulfill his residency in general surgery and orthopedics at Freedmen's Hospital and the District of Columbia General Hospital in Washington, D.C. He then worked for a year in the emergency room at Lorton Reformatory in Lorton, Virginia before joining the U.S. Navy. He was sent to Seattle, Washington as an orthopedic surgeon. During his two years there, he studied under Dr. George F. Odland, the head of the University of Washington's dermatology department. He then moved to Chicago, Illinois, where his brother, Lucius Earles, III, practiced dermatology. Earles completed his residency in dermatology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago in 1975; and once he started his practice, developed a hair transplant technique called the Earles flap.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Rene Martin Earles, Section A2008\_084\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Dr. Rene Martin Earles started his dermatology practice in the Chicagoland area in 1975. Around this time, he honed his understanding of dermatological chemicals and developed his own line of hair and skin care products named Dr. Earles, which treated conditions common to the African American community. In 1986, his article 'Surgical Correction of Traumatic alopecia Marginalis or Traction Alopecia in Black Women,' was published in the Journal of Dermatologic Surgery and Oncology. Earles worked as a tester for Fashion Fair cosmetics, and as a consultant for Soft Sheen Products, Inc. He recalls meeting John H. Johnson of Johnson Products Company. He also talks about his methods of treating keloids. Earles and his wife, Eve Evans Earls, had two children: Robert Earles and Andrea Earles, who later joined his dermatology practice. He reflects upon his life; and then he concludes the interview by reciting his poem, 'Bull Spit,' and a verse from his song, 'Oh Baby.'