

# **Study & Discussion Guide: Healer: The Dr. Joycelyn Elders Story**

## **Ch. 1: Opening (00:00)**

Themes: First impressions, tone setting, resilience.

Discussion Questions:

- What tone does the opening set for the documentary?
- How does the opening reflect Dr. Elders' personality or outlook on life?
- What questions are you left with after the first few minutes?

## **Ch. 2: Roots (00:59)**

Themes: Childhood, poverty, family values, resilience.

Discussion Questions:

- How did Dr. Elders' upbringing in rural Arkansas shape her perspective on health and education?

- What challenges did she face early on that might have discouraged others?
- How does her story connect to broader African American history during that era?

### **Ch. 3: College Years (01:42)**

Themes: Education, access, opportunity.

Discussion Questions:

- What obstacles did she face in pursuing higher education?
- How did mentorship or community support play a role in her success?
- What parallels do you see between her college journey and students today?

### **Ch. 4: Army Life (03:45)**

Themes: Discipline, structure, breaking barriers.

Discussion Questions:

- How did military service impact Dr. Elders' trajectory?
- In what ways might the army have helped prepare her for medical school and leadership?
- How did race and gender shape her experience in the military?

## **Ch. 5: Med School (04:17)**

Themes: Determination, trailblazing.

Discussion Questions:

- What stands out about her medical school experience?
- What qualities helped her persist in an environment with few women, especially Black women?
- How do her experiences highlight the importance of representation in medicine?

## **Ch. 6: Residency (04:55)**

Themes: Training, mentorship, resilience under pressure.

Discussion Questions:

- What did residency teach Dr. Elders about medicine and leadership?
- How did she balance her personal life with the demands of her training?

## **Ch. 7: Love and “Coach” (05:24)**

Themes: Partnership, love, support systems.

Discussion Questions:

- How did her relationship with her husband, Coach Elders, shape her personal and professional journey?
- What role does support from loved ones play in leadership and public service?

## **Ch. 8: Chief Resident (09:51)**

Themes: Leadership, credibility, breaking barriers.

Discussion Questions:

- Why was her role as chief resident significant?

- How did she build respect and authority in that role?
- What leadership lessons can be drawn from this period?

## **Ch. 9: Arkansas Health Director (11:48)**

Themes: Public health, policy, advocacy.

Discussion Questions:

- What were the key challenges she faced as Arkansas' Health Director?
- How did she approach controversial topics like contraception and education?
- What lessons can today's health leaders draw from her time in this role?

## **Ch. 10: Surgeon General (23:58)**

Themes: National leadership, controversy, courage.

Discussion Questions:

- Why was Dr. Elders considered controversial?

- How did her willingness to speak openly about sexual health and reproductive rights challenge norms of the time?
- What parallels do you see with current debates in public health?
- Do you think her outspokenness helped or hurt public health progress?

## **Ch. 11: 88th Birthday (41:39)**

Themes: Celebration, reflection, resilience.

Discussion Questions:

- What does this milestone reveal about her character and longevity?
- How does celebrating her life and legacy highlight her impact on future generations?

## **Ch. 12: Legacy Moments (44:24)**

Themes: Lasting influence, inspiration, trailblazing.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think is Dr. Elders' greatest legacy?

- How does her story inspire future generations of women, particularly women of color, in medicine and public health?
- What lessons from her journey are relevant today in healthcare, leadership, and advocacy?

## **Big Picture Reflection Questions**

1. What qualities made Dr. Elders a “healer” beyond medicine?
2. How does her story shed light on systemic barriers and the resilience needed to overcome them?
3. What can leaders today learn from her balance of boldness, authenticity, and service?