

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Denise Rolark-Barnes

PERSON

**Rolark-Barnes, Denise, 1954-**

**Alternative Names:** Denise Rolark-Barnes;

**Life Dates:** December 26, 1954-

**Place of Birth:** Washington, District of Columbia, USA

**Residence:** Washington, D.C.

**Work:** Washington, D.C.

**Occupations:** Newspaper Publishing Executive

## Biographical Note

Newspaper publisher Denise Rolark-Barnes was born in Washington, D.C. Her father, Dr. Calvin W. Rolark, Sr., was the founder and the editor of the The Washington Informer; her stepmother, Wilhelmina J. Rolark, a politician and activist, served on the Council of the District of Columbia from 1976 to 1984. Rolark-Barnes was interested in writing at a young age and first wrote for the The Washington Informer while she was in middle school. After graduating from Howard University in 1976 with her B.A. degree in communications, Rolark-Barnes enrolled in the Howard University School of Law where she became editor of The Barrister, the law schools' student newspaper. Rolark-Barnes graduated from the Howard University School of Law with her J.D. degree in 1979.

In 1980, Rolark-Barnes joined the staff of The Washington Informer and was assigned as the newspaper's managing editor. After working with her father, Dr. Calvin W. Rolark, she took over as publisher of The Washington Informer in 1994. Rolark-Barnes also served as the director of The Washington Informer Charities and is the executive producer of "The Washington Informer News," a bi-weekly television news program. In addition, she is the host of "Let's Talk," a public affairs program, and "Reporter's Roundtable." Rolark-Barnes has appeared as a guest reporter on "The Tavis Smiley Show," "Tony Brown's Journal," NBC-4's "Reporter's Notebook," and several local radio and television programs.

Rolark-Barnes is the president of the District of Columbia chapter of AARP and is a member of the board of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and the United Black Fund, Inc. She is actively involved with the District of Columbia Black Public

Relations Society Foundation, the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and several other community non-profit organizations. Through The Washington Informer Charities, Rolark-Barnes sponsors the annual Washington Informer City-Wide Spelling Bee as well as internships and writing competitions for high school and college students interested in pursuing careers in journalism.

In March of 2008, Rolark-Barnes was honored by the National Newspaper Publishers Association with the Chrysler Financial/National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation Entrepreneurial Award, which recognizes the nation's black-owned newspapers for their entrepreneurial accomplishments and commitments to community service. In 2011, she received the Jack and Lovell Olender Foundation Generous Heart Award and the Summit Health Institute for Research and Education (SHIRE) Community Champion Award.

Rolark-Barnes lives in the Washington, D.C. with her husband, Lafayette Barnes. They have two sons.

Denise Rolark-Barnes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 7, 2013.

## Related Entries

**Howard University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A**

**Howard University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**Rudolph Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Barnard Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Benning Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Keene Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Rabaut Junior High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Calvin Coolidge Senior High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Hampton University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Barrister** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1978 to 1980]

**Editor**

**Washington Informer** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1980 to 1994]

**Washington Informer** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1994 to ?]

**Publisher**