

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Roger Wilkins

PERSON

Wilkins, Roger W., 1932-

Alternative Names: Roger Wilkins; Roger Wilkins

Life Dates: March 25, 1932-March 26, 2017

Place of Birth: Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Occupations: Newspaper Columnist

Biographical Note

Pulitzer Prize-winning author and distinguished professor Roger Wilkins was born in 1932 in Kansas City, Missouri. His father, a business manager with a prominent black paper, The Kansas City Call, died when Wilkins was a child and the family moved to New York and then to Michigan, where Wilkins spent most of his formative years.

Wilkins attended the University of Michigan, receiving his B.A. in 1953 and his J.D. in 1956, interning with Thurgood Marshall at the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund. Following graduation, Wilkins worked in several capacities as an advocate for justice. Beginning his career as a caseworker in the Ohio Welfare Department, Wilkins went on to work for the U.S. Agency for International Development and then as assistant attorney general under President Lyndon B. Johnson. Wilkins' interest in legal issues and equality stems partially from his family's background. His uncle, Roy Wilkins, was executive secretary of the NAACP from 1955 to 1977.

In 1972, Wilkins began writing for the editorial page of The Washington Post just as the Watergate scandal was breaking. His critically informed editorials about the issues leading up to President Richard Nixon's resignation won him a shared Pulitzer Prize, along with reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein and cartoonist Herb Block. He then moved to The New York Times, where he served as the first African American on its editorial board as well as a columnist. Subsequently, Wilkins worked for the Institute for Policy Studies, The Washington Star, National Public Radio and CBS Radio. He continues to be a major commentator and analyst on American public policy and social justice issues.

Wilkins was a history professor at George Mason University. He was also the author of several books, including A Man's Life (1982), Quiet Riots (1988) with Fred Harris, and Jefferson's Pillow (2001). In addition, Wilkins was the publisher of the NAACP's journal, The Crisis.

Wilkins passed away March 26, 2017.

Related Entries

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Caseworker

United States Agency for International Development [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1983 to 2009]

United States Department of Justice [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Assistant Attorney General

New York Times [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Editor and Columnist

Institute for Policy Studies [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Washington Star [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

National Public Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

CBS Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Washington Post [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1972 to ?]

Editorial Writer