

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Josie Johnson

PERSON

Johnson, Josie, 1930-

Alternative Names: Josie Johnson;

Life Dates: October 7, 1930-

Place of Birth: San Antonio, Texas, USA

Residence: Minneapolis, MN

Occupations: Academic Administrator; Education
Consultant

Biographical Note

Born in 1931, Josie Robinson Johnson has played an active role in the civil rights movement since her teenage years, when she and her father canvassed her hometown of Houston to gather signatures on an anti-poll tax petition.

In the early 1960s, Johnson lobbied professionally for passage of bills concerning such issues as fair housing and employment opportunities. In 1964, she traveled

from Minneapolis to Mississippi with an integrated group of women to witness and take part in the struggle there. After visiting an open-air freedom school where blacks were organizing, the group learned the school was bombed later that day. Johnson became a community organizer for Project ENABLE, a pioneering effort in developing parenting skills and strengthening family life in 1965. A member of the Minneapolis Urban League, she served as acting director between 1967 and 1968.

Johnson worked with elected officials many times over the years. In 1968, she became a legislative liaison and community liaison as a mayoral aide in Minneapolis during a time of trouble for African Americans in the town. The executive assistant to the lieutenant governor of Colorado from 1975 to 1978, Johnson went back to Texas in 1978 and supervised Judson Robinson's campaign staff. In 1980, she served as deputy campaign manager for the Jimmy Carter presidential campaign in Tennessee.

Johnson has also had an ongoing relationship with the University of Minnesota. Between 1971 and 1973, she served on the University's Board of Regents. She earned a B.A. in Sociology at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and an M.A. and Ed.D. at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The University of Minnesota offered her a senior fellowship in 1987. Johnson directed its All-University Forum as diversity director from 1990 to 1992. That year, she became responsible for minority affairs and diversity at the college as the associate vice president for academic affairs. The University of Minnesota established the annual Josie Robinson Johnson Human Rights and Social Justice Award in her honor.

Johnson founded Josie Robinson Johnson and Associates in 1996. She is a Minneapolis Institute of Arts trustee, a Minnesota Medical Foundation trustee and sits on the advisory board of the Harriet Tubman Center. She is a recipient of the Committed to the

Vision Award from the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights and the African American Community Endowment Fund Award.

Josie Johnson CivicMaker Educator b. 1931 151 words

Josie Johnson was born on October 7, 1930, in Houston. As the daughter of Houston civil rights pioneers, she grew up with a deep concern for social justice and civil rights. After receiving her B.A. in sociology from Fisk University and her M.A. in education from the University of Massachusetts, Johnson went to work in 1956 as a lobbyist to help pass Minnesota's anti-discrimination laws. In 1967, she served one year as the acting director for the Minneapolis Urban League. In 1971, after teaching in the African American Studies Department at the University of Minnesota, she was appointed to the Minnesota Board of Regents, where she served until 1973. In 1992, she accepted the position as associate vice president in charge of minority affairs and directed their All-University Forum as diversity director. The University of Minnesota established the Annual Josie Robinson Johnson Human Rights and Social Justice Award in her honor.

Related Entries

Fisk University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Minneapolis Urban League [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1967 to 1968]

Acting Director

City of Minneapolis [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1968 to ?]

Mayoral Aide

Lieutenant Governor of Colorado [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1975 to 1978]

Executive Assistant

University of Minnesota [EMPLOYEE OF]

[from 1990 to 1992]

Diversity Director

University of Minnesota [EMPLOYEE OF]

[from 1992 to ?]

Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs