

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Jerome W. Mondesire

PERSON

Mondesire, Jerome Whyatt,
1949-2015

Alternative Names: The Honorable Jerome W. Mondesire; Jerome "Jerry" Whyatt Mondesire; Jerome Whyatt Mondesire; Jerome Mondesire; J. Whyatt Mondesire; Jerry Mondesire

Life Dates: October 10, 1949-October 4, 2015

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Work: Philadelphia, PA

Occupations: Association Branch Executive;
Newspaper Publishing Chief Executive

Biographical Note

Newspaper publisher and former congressional staff

member Jerome Whyatt “Jerry” Mondesire was born October 10, 1949, in Harlem, New York. Mondesire’s working class parents, Jerome Alexis Mondesire, a Dominican Garveyite, and Winnifred Taylor Mondesire of South Carolina, emphasized education. Mondesire attended P.S. 88 and Junior High School 172; he graduated from Martin Van Buren High School in Queens in 1968, where he was a member of the NAACP High School Youth Council. Mondesire attended City Colleges of New York, where he studied journalism and was a student activist and volunteer with SNCC in 1969.

Mondesire covered the Black October killings of Maryland State Senator James Turk Scott and “Pee Wee” Matthews for the Baltimore Sun in 1973. At the Philadelphia Inquirer in 1974, Mondesire covered Mayor Frank Rizzo’s strip-searching of the Black Panthers. At the Inquirer, Mondesire became assistant city desk editor, turning to politics full-time in 1977. Mondesire was later chosen to work as chief of staff for William H. Gray’s successful congressional campaign. As Congressman Gray’s top aide, Mondesire influenced and shaped policy; he was instrumental in the 1985 national Stop The Springboks! Campaign, and helped to write the South African sanctions legislation for Congress. In 1991, Mondesire started his own weekly newspaper, The Philadelphia Sunday Sun. In 1992, after Congressman Gray retired, Mondesire acquired the Philadelphia Sun newspaper including the online edition. Mondesire also hosted the FreedomQuest, a local public and political affairs talk show on Philadelphia cable television. Mondesire was elected president of Philadelphia’s NAACP chapter where he increased membership to over 5,000. Under Mondesire the NAACP overturned the ex-felon disenfranchisement law in 1999. Mondesire remained active in welfare to work training, health care, youth violence and police brutality.

Mondesire passed away on October 4, 2015.

Related Entries

Martin Van Buren High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

H.S.

P.S. 88 [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Irwin Altman Middle School 172 [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

City College of New York [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

The Philadelphia Inquirer [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Journalist

Philadelphia Sun [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Owner

The Baltimore Sun [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1971 to 1973]

Journalist

Congressman William H. Gray, III [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1980 to 1991]

Chief of Staff

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

NAACP [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

President - Philadelphia Chapter