

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Yosef ben-Jochannan

PERSON

**Ben-Jochannan, Yosef**

**Alternative Names:** Yosef ben-Jochannan;

**Life Dates:** December 31, 1918-March 19, 2015

**Place of Birth:** Ethiopia

**Residence:** New York, NY

**Work:** New York, NY

**Occupations:** Africana Studies Professor

## Biographical Note

Africana studies professor Yosef Alfredo Antonio ben-Jochannan was born on December 31, 1918 in Ethiopia to a Puerto Rican woman, Julia Matta and an Ethiopian man, Kriston ben-Jochannan. Shortly after his birth, the family moved to St. Croix, part of the United States Virgin Islands, where he grew up as an only child. ben-Jochannan attended the Christian Stead School in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. After graduation from high school in 1936, ben-Jochannan attended the University of Puerto Rico where, in 1938, he received his B.S. degree in engineering. During that summer, ben-Jochannan's father sent him to Ethiopia to study firsthand the ancient history of African people. He returned home and received his M.A. degree in anthropology from the University of Havana in 1939. ben-Jochannan held a Ph.D. degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Havana. In 1940, ben-Jochannan immigrated to the United States and worked as senior draftsman for architecture firm, Emery Roth & Sons, in New York City. Seven years later, he began leading tour groups to Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. He led the groups twice a year for several decades. ben-Jochannan's teaching career began in 1950 at Malcolm-King Harlem College and City College of New York in New York City. In 1976, he became an adjunct professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. ben-Jochannan had worked closely with other notable Africana studies scholars including John Henrik Clarke, Edward Scobie, and Leonard Jeffries. ben-Jochannan had written and published over forty-nine books and papers including, *We the Black Jews*, *Black Man of the Nile and His Family*, and *Africa: Mother of Major Western Religions*.

ben-Jochannan passed away on March 19, 2015 at age 96.

## Related Entries

**University of Puerto Rico** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**City University of New York** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Professor**

**Malcolm-King College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Professor**

[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Emery Roth & Sons** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Draftsman**

**Cornell University Africana Studies and Research Center** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1976 to 1987]

**Adjunct Professor**

**Dr. Ben's Alkebu-Lan Educational Tours** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Founder**

Yosef ben-Jochannan Collection, Nation of Islam.