

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dolores R. Spikes

PERSON

Spikes, Dolores R., 1936-2015

Alternative Names: Dolores R. Spikes;

Life Dates: August 24, 1936-June 1, 2015

Place of Birth: Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Residence: Baton Rouge, LA

Occupations: Math Professor; University President

Biographical Note

Esteemed college professor and mathematician Dolores Margaret Richard Spikes was born on August 24, 1936 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Margaret and Lawrence Richard. She received her elementary and high school education by attending Baton Rouge's parochial and public school systems. Throughout her youth, Spikes' parents strongly advocated the value of a college education and upon her enrollment at Southern University in 1954, her father volunteered for overtime hours at his job to help pay for her expenses.

She went on to earn her B.S. degree in mathematics in 1957 from Southern University where she was initiated as a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and met her future husband, Hermon Spikes.

After graduating, Spikes moved to Urbana, Illinois and pursued her M.S. degree in mathematics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While pursuing her master's degree, Spikes gained a passion for teaching and decided that she would give back to her community by teaching at a historically black college. In 1958, she returned to Louisiana and accepted a teaching position at Mossville High School in Calcasien Parish. While serving in that capacity, Spikes helped to improve the school's ratings by introducing independent study programs. Then, in 1961, she returned to her alma mater, Southern University, and served as an assistant professor of mathematics.

In 1971, Spikes made history by becoming the first African American to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics from Louisiana State University. She went on to serve as the chancellor for Southern University-Baton Rouge and Southern University-New Orleans in the late 1980s. Spikes was the first female chancellor (and later, president) of a public university in the State of Louisiana. She was then appointed as a board member of Harvard University's Institute of Educational Management in 1987, and in 1988, she made history once again when she was appointed as president of Southern University and the A&M College System, becoming the first woman in the United States to head a university system. Later, in 1996, Spikes became the president of the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore where she served until 2001.

Spikes has received numerous awards and recognitions for her accomplishments in academia, including: the Thurgood Marshall Educational Achievement Award and Ebony Magazine's "Most Influential Black Women in America." She has also served on the board

of advisors for historically black colleges and universities; the board of directors for Education Commission of the States; and the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities.

Spikes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 27, 2008.

Spikes passed away on June 1, 2015.

Related Entries

St. Francis Xavier Catholic School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

McKinley Senior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S.

University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.S.

Louisiana State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Ph.D.

University of Maryland, Eastern Shore [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19970113 to 20020630]

President

Southern University at New Orleans [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19870701 to 19981003]

Chancellor

Southern University at Baton Rouge [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19650901 to 19870630]

**Assistant Professor Professor Assistant to the
Chancellor Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Executive Vice Chancellor**

Southern University at Baton Rouge [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19891101 to 19910630]

Chancellor

Southern University System [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 19891101 to 19961231]

President

Louisiana Board of Ethics [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Naval Academy [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

**National Agricultural Research, Education, and
Economics Advisory Board** [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

**National Association of State Universities and Land-
Grant Colleges** [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

[MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member