

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Florence Farley

PERSON

Farley, Florence S., 1928-

Alternative Names: Florence Farley;

Life Dates: May 28, 1928-

Place of Birth: Roanoke, Virginia, USA

Residence: Petersburg, VA

Occupations: Visual Artist; Psychology Professor;
Mayor

Biographical Note

Politician and university professor Florence Saunders Farley was born on May 28, 1928 in Roanoke, Virginia to Neoda and Stacious Saunders. She attended Harrison Elementary School in Roanoke. After graduating as the salutatorian of her class from Lucy Addison High School in 1946, Farley graduated from Virginia State College (now Virginia State University) with her B.S. degree in psychology and her M.S. degree in educational psychology in 1950 and 1954,

respectively. In 1951, Farley was commissioned in the United States Women's Army Corps (WAC) as a second lieutenant, and became the first African American female training officer at Fort Lee, Virginia.

Farley served as Chief Psychologist at Central State Hospital in Petersburg, Virginia, and was the first African American clinically licensed, by examination, psychologist in the state of Virginia. Farley then joined the faculty at Virginia State where she taught graduate and undergraduate students for over forty years and also served as the chair of the department of psychology. Farley obtained her Ph.D. degree in psychology in 1977 from Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Farley also began her political career in 1973 when she was the first woman elected to the Petersburg City Council and became a member of Virginia's first majority black city council. Farley won re-election in 1978 and 1982. In 1984, after the resignation of Mayor R. Wilson Cheely, Farley became the first female mayor of Petersburg and the first African American woman to become mayor of a Virginia city.

From 2002 to 2006, Farley served on the Petersburg School Board and held the post of vice chair during her time on the school board. Farley has also received acclaim as a textile artist, exhibiting her needlework in libraries and museums across the state. In 2010, Farley was recognized by The Library of Virginia as an "African American Trailblazer in Virginia History." Farley maintains an independent psychology practice in Petersburg.

Florence Farley was interviewed was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 10, 2012.

Related Entries

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

Ph.D.

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

BS

Harrison School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Lucy Addison High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Women's Army Auxiliary Corps [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Second Lieutenant

Central State Hospital [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1955 to 1962]

Psychologist

Virginia State University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1962 to 2003]

Chair of Department

Petersburg (Va.) [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1978 to 1984]

Mayor, City Council

Petersburg School Board (Va.) [MEMBEROF]
[from 1987 to ?]

Chair