Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Denise Rolark-Barnes

Rolark-Barnes, Denise, 1954-

Alternative Names: Denise Rolark-Barnes;

Life Dates: December 26, 1954-

Place of Birth: Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Residence: Washington, D.C.

Work: Washington, D.C.

Occupations: Newspaper Publishing Executive

Biographical Note

Newspaper publisher Denise Rolark-Barnes was born in Washington, D.C. Her father, Dr. Calvin W. Rolark, Sr., was the founder and the editor of the The Washington Informer; her stepmother, Wilhelmina J. Rolark, a politician and activist, served on the Council of the District of Columbia from 1976 to 1984. Rolark-Barnes was interested in writing at a young age and
first wrote for the The Washington Informer while she was in middle school. After graduating from Howard University in 1976 with her B.A. degree in communications, Rolark-Barnes enrolled in the Howard University School of Law where she became editor of The Barrister, the law schools’ student newspaper. Rolark-Barnes graduated from the Howard University School of Law with her J.D. degree in 1979.

In 1980, Rolark-Barnes joined the staff of The Washington Informer and was assigned as the newspaper’s managing editor. After working with her father, Dr. Calvin W. Rolark, she took over as publisher of The Washington Informer in 1994. Rolark-Barnes also served as the director of The Washington Informer Charities and is the executive producer of “The Washington Informer News,” a bi-weekly television news program. In addition, she is the host of “Let’s Talk,” a public affairs program, and “Reporter’s Roundtable.” Rolark-Barnes has appeared as a guest reporter on “The Tavis Smiley Show,” “Tony Brown’s Journal,” NBC-4’s “Reporter’s Notebook,” and several local radio and television programs.

 Rolark-Barnes is the president of the District of Columbia chapter of AARP and is a member of the board of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and the United Black Fund, Inc. She is actively involved with the District of Columbia Black Public Relations Society Foundation, the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and several other community non-profit organizations. Through The Washington Informer Charities, Rolark-Barns sponsors the annual Washington Informer City-Wide Spelling Bee as well as internships and writing competitions for high school and college students interested in pursuing careers in journalism.

In March of 2008, Rolark-Barnes was honored by the National Newspaper Publishers Association with the Chrysler Financial/National Newspaper Publishers
Association Foundation Entrepreneurial Award, which recognizes the nation’s black-owned newspapers for their entrepreneurial accomplishments and commitments to community service. In 2011, she received the Jack and Lovell Olender Foundation Generous Heart Award and the Summit Health Institute for Research and Education (SHIRE) Community Champion Award.

Rolark-Barnes lives in the Washington, D.C. with her husband, Lafayette Barnes. They have two sons.

Denise Rolark-Barnes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 7, 2013.

Related Entries

Howard University [STUDENT OF] [from ? to ?]

B.A

Howard University [STUDENT OF] [from ? to ?]

J.D.

Rudolph Elementary School [STUDENT OF] [from ? to ?]

Barnard Elementary School [STUDENT OF] [from ? to ?]

Benning Elementary School [STUDENT OF] [from ? to ?]

Keene Elementary School [STUDENT OF] [from ? to ?]

Rabaut Junior High School [STUDENT OF] [from ? to ?]
Calvin Coolidge Senior High School [StudentOf]  
[from ? to ?]

Hampton University [StudentOf]  
[from ? to ?]

Barrister [EmployeeOf]  
[from 1978 to 1980]

Editor

Washington Informer [EmployeeOf]  
[from 1980 to 1994]

Washington Informer [EmployeeOf]  
[from 1994 to ?]

Publisher