

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bennett Johnson

PERSON

Johnson, Bennett J., 1929-

Alternative Names: Bennett Johnson;

Life Dates: May 15, 1929-

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Evanston, IL

Work: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Book Publishing Executive

Biographical Note

Book publishing executive Bennett J. Johnson was born in 1929 in Chicago, Illinois. At the age of two his mother, Kathryn Burnice Johnson, moved to Evanston where he lived with his two sisters and five cousins. After graduating from Evanston Township High School in 1946, Johnson attended Paine College in Augusta, Georgia for three semesters. In 1948 he went to Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois where he became close friends with Harold Washington, Frank London Brown and Gus Savage. After lengthy illness he enrolled in the University of California at Los Angeles in 1953, where he graduated with his B.A. degree in English and a minor in science in 1955 and his M.A. degree in English and a concentration in education in 1956. When he returned to Chicago, Illinois and began working alongside such Chicago greats as Washington, Frank Brown, Gus Savage, Richard Durham, Herman C. Gilbert and Dempsey Travis on crucial issues such as political action, social equality and economic justice.

While at Roosevelt College Johnson participated in organizing a sit-in at a restaurant across the street from Roosevelt that refused to serve Harold Washington and forced the hiring of the first Black sales clerk on State Street. In 1966 he acted as the primary liaison for the historic meeting between Elijah Muhammad and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Johnson, Frank L. Brown, and Herman C. Gilbert began the independent publishing house, Path Press, Inc. in 1961. Path Press, Inc. was the first Black-owned book publishing company in the United States. The company published books from 1969 to 1972, and the again from 1982 to 2001. In 2001, Johnson temporarily closed Path Press to join Haki R. Madhubuti at Third World Press.

Bennett Johnson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 19, 2013.

Related Entries

Real Estate Institute of Chicago [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Post Graduate

University of California, Los Angeles [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A.

Roosevelt University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Paine College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Evanston Township High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of California, Los Angeles [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Illinois State Employment Service [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1961 to 1966]

Methods and Procedures Advisor

Path Press, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1962 to ?]

President

United States Department of Defense [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1966 to 1968]

Personnel Management Specialist

Talent Assistance Program [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1969 to 1971]

Executive Director

UCI Group, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to ?]

Vice President

United States Department of Commerce [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1971 to 1972]

Regional Director

Merit Trust [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1972 to 1973]

Deputy Director

State of Illinois Department of Human Resources [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1973 to 1974]

Assistant Director

Evanston Sentinel [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 2000 to ?]

Publisher

Third World Press [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 2001 to ?]

Vice President

Republic of Uganda [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 2008 to ?]

Honorary Consul General

Evanston Community Development Association [MEMBEROf]

[from 2000 to 2011]

President

Substance Abuse Prevention Council [MEMBEROf]

[from 2008 to 2011]

President

Minority Business Consortium, Inc. [MEMBEROf]

[from 2010 to ?]

President