

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Darren Walker

PERSON

Walker, Darren, 1959-

Alternative Names: Darren Walker;

Life Dates: August 28, 1959-

Place of Birth: Lafayette, Louisiana, USA

Residence: New York, NY

Work: New York, NY

Occupations: Foundation President;

Biographical Note

Non-profit executive and foundation president Darren Walker was born in Lafayette, Louisiana in 1959, and raised in Ames and Goose Creek, Texas. He graduated from The University of Texas at Austin in 1982, and received his J.D. degree from the University of Texas School of Law in 1986.

Walker was hired at the international law firm of Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton in 1986. In 1988, he joined the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), where he spent seven years in the capital markets division. He left UBS in 1995 and worked for a year as a full-time volunteer at The Children's Storefront, an elementary school serving low-income families in Harlem. Walker then entered the nonprofit sector as chief operating officer for the Abyssinian Development Corporation, a community development organization in Harlem, where he guided efforts to develop housing for low and moderate-income families. In this capacity, he oversaw two of Harlem's largest privately financed commercial projects as well as the development of the first public school built in New York City by a community organization.

Walker was hired by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2002 as director of its domestic urban program. In 2006, he was promoted to vice president for foundation initiatives, where he led both domestic and global programs. Then, in 2010, Walker was named the Ford Foundation's vice president for Education, Creativity and Free Expression, where he shaped more than \$140 million in annual grant-making around the world. Walker was appointed the tenth president of the Ford Foundation in September of 2013, becoming the second African American to head the foundation.

He has served on the boards of the Arcus Foundation, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Friends of the High Line, the New York City Ballet, and the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies. He also co-chaired the New York Public Library Council. In addition, Walker has taught housing, law and urban development at the New York University School of Law and Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, and is a fellow of the Institute for Urban Design. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and has received the University of Texas Distinguished Alumni Award as well as the Honorary Order of the Coif by its law school. He is the recipient of honorary degrees from Bard College and Miami Dade College.

Walker lives in Manhattan, New York with his partner, David Beitzel, a contemporary art dealer.

Darren Walker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 26, 2014.

Related Entries

University of Texas at Austin School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Sterling H S [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Cedar Bayou J H [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Texas at Austin [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1986 to 1988]

Lawyer

Union Bank of Switzerland [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1988 to 1995]

Abyssinian Development Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1996 to 2002]

Chief Operating Officer

Rockefeller Foundation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2002 to 2006]

Director of Domestic Urban Program

Rockefeller Foundation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2006 to 2010]

Vice President for Foundation Initiatives

Ford Foundation [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2010 to 2013]

Vice President for Education, Creativity and Free Expression

Ford Foundation [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2013 to ?]

President

Arcus Foundation [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

National Low Income Housing Coalition [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Friends of the High Line [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

New York City Ballet [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

New York Public Library Council [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Co-Chair

Institute for Urban Design [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Fellow

Council on Foreign Relations [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Member

The Children's Storefront [MEMBEROf]
[from 1995 to 1996]

Volunteer

