

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Junius Williams

PERSON

Williams, Junius W., 1943-

Alternative Names: Junius Williams;

Life Dates: December 23, 1943-

Place of Birth: Suffolk, Virginia, USA

Residence: Newark, NJ

Occupations: Lawyer

Biographical Note

Lawyer Junius Williams was born on December 23, 1943 in Suffolk, Virginia. Williams graduated from Armstrong High School in Richmond, Virginia. He earned his B.A. degree from Amherst College in 1965, and his J.D. degree from Yale Law School in 1968.

While attending law school, Williams spent his summers living in Newark, New Jersey to work with the Newark Community Union Project. Following his graduation from Yale Law School, Williams moved to Newark to help rebuild the city after the riots of 1967 and maintain a private law practice. He began as the director of the Newark Area Planning Association, where he helped produce affordable housing and job training programs for minorities. In 1970, Williams was named as the director of the Model Cities Program for the City of Newark. He was then named as the youngest president in the National Bar Association's history in 1978, and his administration became known as "The Year of Affirmative Action." In 1990, Williams was named as counsel to the Municipal Council of Irvington, New Jersey. Only four years later, he became the Township Attorney for Irvington. During his career, Williams also served as the director for the Abbott Leadership Institute at Rutgers University.

In addition to his professional career, Williams was also involved with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the Civil Rights Movement. As a member of SNCC, he participated in the 1963 March on Washington and the Selma to Montgomery March. Williams was involved in the Civil Rights History Project as a part of the Smithsonian Institute as well. He served as a chairman of the Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church from 1990 until 2003 and as an official observer at the first South African National Election in 1994. He was also the chairman of the board of trustees for the Education Law Center from 2000 until 2005. Williams published his

own book on African American politics, *Unfinished Agenda: Urban Politics in the Era of Black Power*, in 2014.

Williams and his wife, Dr. Antoinette Ellis-Williams, have four children: Camille, Junea, Junius, and Che.

Junius Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 31, 2017.

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