

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

PERSON

Williams, Jeraldine, 1946-

Alternative Names: Jeraldine Williams;

Life Dates: January 14, 1946-

Place of Birth: Tampa, Florida, USA

Residence: Plant City, FL

Occupations: Journalist

Biographical Note

Journalist and lawyer Jeraldine Williams was born on January 14, 1946 in Ybor City, Florida to Mildred Williams and Judge Williams. Williams graduated from George S. Middleton High School in 1963, and enrolled at the University of Florida, where she and thirteen other African American students integrated the College of Journalism. Williams received her B.S. degree in journalism and communication in 1967, and was the first African American to be awarded the Hearst Journalism Award. Upon graduating, she accepted a position as a general assignment reporter at The St. Petersburg Times. Williams earned her M.B.A. degree from Atlanta University in 1972.

During the early 1970s, Williams worked as an assistant manager at First Federal Savings and Loan before becoming the first African American female manager of Freedom Savings and Loan in Tampa, Florida in 1973. She also worked as an education planner and state coordinator with the Model Cities Program for the City of Tampa. Williams enrolled at the Florida State University College of Law in 1977, earning her J.D. degree in 1981. She was then hired by the Florida Department of Insurance, where she worked as a staff attorney. In 1982, she became the owner and publisher of the Capitol Outlook newspaper in Tallahassee, Florida. In the early 1990s, Williams moved to South Africa, where she worked as a writer for Ebony - South Africa. She also established Management Consultancies and conceptualized her book *Up to the Bottom* while living in Johannesburg, South Africa. Upon returning to the United States in the late 1990s, Williams practiced law with her daughter, Salesia Smith-Gordon, in Palm Beach, Florida before moving to Hillsborough County, Florida, where she worked as an attorney in the 13th Judicial Circuit Court.

Williams helped to establish the Greater Tampa Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc., and served on the board of the Bob Gilbertson Central City Family YMCA. She

also served on the board of the Joshua House, Infants and Young Children of West Central Florida, Inc. and founded the East Ybor Historic & Civic Association, Inc. She was also a marathon runner, participating in a Lymphoma and Leukemia marathon in 2001, the 60-mile walk for Breast Cancer in 2006, and the Egyptian Pyramids Marathon for Infants and Young Children of West Central Florida, Inc. in 2011. Williams received the Tampa NAACP's Living Legend Award in 2015 and the Griot Drum Award from the Tampa Bay Association of Black Journalists in 2017.

Williams has one daughter, Salesia Smith-Gordon, one son, Walter L. Smith, II, and one grandson, Walter L. Smith, III.

Jeraldine Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 9, 2018.

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