

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with John Silvanus Wilson, Jr.

PERSON

Wilson, John Silvanus, Jr., 1957-

Alternative Names: John Silvanus Wilson, Jr.;

Life Dates: August 16, 1957-

Place of Birth: Philadelphia , Pennsylvania, USA

Residence: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Work: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Occupations: Academic Administrator; College President

Biographical Note

College president and academic administrator John Silvanus Wilson, Jr. was born on August 16, 1957 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Genester Millicent Nix and John Silvanus Wilson, Sr. He received his B.A. degree in business administration and management from Morehouse College in 1979. In 1981, Wilson earned his M.T.S. degree from Harvard Divinity School. He then attended the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he earned his Ed.M. degree in education in 1982, and his Ed.D. degree in education in 1985.

Wilson began his career in 1985 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he served as an associate in the analytical studies and planning group in the office of the president. In that role, he conducted research for a report on the experiences of African American students at MIT. He then shifted to financial management and fundraising, serving first in corporate development and, ultimately, as director of foundation relations by 1994. He was an officer in two major capital campaigns at MIT, with goals of \$700 million and \$2 billion. In 2001, he moved from MIT to The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. During his eight-year career there, Wilson served as senior assistant vice president from September to December 2001, executive dean of the Virginia campus from 2002 to 2006, and associate professor at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development from 2007 to 2009. He was appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities in 2009, where he remained until 2013. From January 2013 to April 2017, Wilson served as the eleventh president of Morehouse College. He moved to Harvard University as a president in residence at the School of Education, where he began research for a book about the future of American

higher education, with an emphasis on HBCUs. In April 2018, Wilson was appointed as senior advisor and strategist to the president of Harvard University.

Wilson has served on multiple boards, including Spelman College and Harvard University. He has received various awards for his work in higher education, including the 1998 Bennie Leadership Award presented by Morehouse College, Ebony magazine's Power 100 Award in 2014, and the Atlanta Business Chronicle's 100 Most Influential Atlantans Award in 2015.

Wilson and his wife, Carol Espy-Wilson, have three adult children: twin daughters, Ayana and Ashia, and son, John Silvanus Wilson, III.

John Silvanus Wilson, Jr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 27, 2019.

Related Entries

Morehouse College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Harvard Divinity School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Th.M.

Harvard Graduate School of Education [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.Ed.

Harvard Graduate School of Education [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

D.Ed.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1994 to 2002]

Associate; Analytical Studies and Planning Group, Office of the President

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1995 to ?]

Associate; Financial Operations Group

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1989 to 1994]

Assistant Director of Corporate Development

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1977 to ?]

Associate Director of Corporate Development

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1997 to 1999]

Director of School Development Services and Associate Director of Foundation Relations

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Assistant Provost for Outreach

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 199406 to 200108]

Director of Foundation Relations and School Development Services

The George Washington University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Executive Dean; Virginia Campus

The George Washington University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 200109 to 200112]

Senior Assistant Vice President

The George Washington University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1981 to ?]

Associate Professor; Graduate School of Education and Human Development

White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Executive Director

Morehouse College [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

President

Harvard University School of Education [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2002 to ?]

President in Residence

Harvard University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Senior Advisor and Strategist to the President

[EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

[EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

[EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

[EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Harvard University Board of Overseers [MEMBEROF]
[from 2015 to ?]

Member

Carnegie Mellon University [MEMBEROF]
[from 2015 to 2017]

Member, President's Global Advisory Council

Council on Independent Colleges [MEMBEROF]
[from 2015 to 2017]

Member, Steering Committee

Associated Colleges of the South [MEMBEROF]
[from 2015 to 2017]

Board Member

United Negro College Fund [MEMBEROF]
[from 2013 to 2017]

Board Member

Spelman College [MEMBEROF]
[from 2007 to 2009]

Board Member, Advancement and Finance Committees

Gallaudet University [MEMBEROF]
[from 2007 to 2008]

Advisory Board Member

Independent Federal Savings Bank [MEMBEROF]
[from 2005 to 2009]

Board Member, Audit and Operational Excellence Committees

Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund [MEMBEROF]
[from 2000 to 2001]

Advisory Board Member

The Mott Foundation/George Ayers Associates [MEMBEROF]
[from 2000 to 2002]

Advisory Board Member

The Kresge Foundation HBCU Initiative [MEMBEROF]
[from 2000 to 2005]

Advisory Board Member

Harvard Graduate School of Education Alumni Council [MEMBEROF]
[from 1996 to 2000]

Board Member

Bridging Bridges [MEMBEROF]

[from 1993 to 2001]

Founder, Chairman, & Co-Director

The Samaritans [MEMBEROF]

[from 1991 to 1995]

Board of Trustees

Andover Newton Theological School [MEMBEROF]

[from 1990 to 1994]

Board of Trustees

Greater Boston Morehouse College Alumni Association [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

President

Morehouse College Class of 1979 Reunion/ Scholarship Fund Committee [MEMBEROF]

[from 1979 to ?]

President

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member