

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mora McLean

PERSON

McLean, Mora L.

Alternative Names: Mora McLean;

Life Dates: December 6, 1955-

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: Washington, District of Columbia

Occupations: Nonprofit Executive

Biographical Note

Nonprofit executive Mora McLean was born on December 6, 1955 in New York City to Vera and William McLean. She was raised in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands where she graduated from Charlotte Amalie High School in 1973. McLean then graduated from Wesleyan University where she earned her B.A. degree in African studies in 1977 before receiving her J.D. degree from Columbia University School of Law in 1980.

From 1980 to 1981, McLean worked as a legal associate for Riker, Danzig, Scherer & Hyland, Attorneys at Law where she focused on commercial litigation. The following year, she became an aide to the New Jersey Assembly Labor Committee, working on legislative research, analysis, and drafting. McLean remained there until 1985 when she was appointed counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives' commerce subcommittee on commerce, transportation, and tourism. She served in this capacity for five months before becoming an assistant program officer in the human rights and governance division of the Ford Foundation. She was promoted to program officer in 1987; and, in 1990, she became the Foundation's representative for Nigeria and assistant representative for West Africa. From 1993 to 1995, McLean served as the Foundation's representative for West Africa with oversight of the Foundation's offices in Lagos, Nigeria and Dakar, Senegal. For the next year, McLean served as deputy director for all of the Foundation's Africa and Middle East programs. She left the Ford Foundation upon being named president and CEO of the Africa-America Institute in 1996, which she led until 2012. Rutgers University hired McLean as a visiting scholar at their center for African studies where she worked for two years. In 2015, the school made her the program strategy advisor for their Newark campus's launch of a global urban studies doctoral program; and, in 2016, she became a Cornwall Center Senior Fellow, adjunct professor, and director of corporate and foundation relations in the office of the chancellor. In 2019, West African Youth Challenges and Opportunity Pathways was

published, of which McLean was editor.

McLean has served on numerous boards throughout her career, including the Council on Foreign Relations, Legal Aid Society of Mercer County, New Jersey, the Orphan Society of the Oranges and Maplewood, United States Institute of Peace, and chairing the U.S. Trade Advisory Committee on Africa. She has also received several awards, including the 2002 Distinguished Wesleyan Alumna and being named Wesleyan Trustee Emerita in 2008 and Africa-America Institute President Emerita in 2012.

McLean resides in New Jersey and has one adult child, Atinuke.

Mora McLean was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 23, 2019.

Related Entries

All Saints Cathedral School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Addelita Cancryn Jr. High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Charlotte Amalie High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Wesleyan University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Columbia Law School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Ford Foundation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1985 to 1987]

Assistant Program Officer; Human Rights and Governance

Ford Foundation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Representative, Nigeria; Assistant Representative, West Africa

Ford Foundation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1995 to 2002]

Representative, West Africa

Ford Foundation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1987 to ?]

Deputy Director; Africa and Middle East Programs

Africa-America Institute [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

President and CEO

New York University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2009 to ?]

Adjunct Professor

Rutgers University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Visiting Scholar; Center for African Studies

Rutgers University-Newark [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Program Strategy Advisor

Rutgers University-Newark [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2016 to ?]

Senior Fellow; Lecturer; Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations

Riker, Danzig, Scherer & Hyland, Attorneys at Law [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1979 to ?]

Legal Associate

New Jersey State Office of Legislative Services [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Aide, New Jersey Assembly Labor Committee

U.S. House of Representatives [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1983 to ?]

Counsel; Subcommittee on Commerce, Transportation, and Tourism

Ford Foundation [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2001 to ?]

Program Officer; Human Rights and Governance

Council on Foreign Relations [MEMBEROf]
[from 1999 to ?]

Member

U.S. Trade Advisory Committee on Africa [MEMBEROf]
[from 2007 to 2012]

Chair

NAFSA: Association of International Educators [MEMBEROf]
[from 2011 to 2013]

Board Member

Wesleyan University [MEMBEROf]
[from 2004 to 2008]

Trustee

U.S. International University [MEMBEROF]
[from 2004 to 2008]

Trustee; Nairobi, Kenya

United States Institute of Peace [MEMBEROF]
[from 2000 to 2007]

Trustee

Orphan Society of the Oranges and Maplewood [MEMBEROF]
[from 2015 to ?]

Trustee