

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Leo Morton

PERSON

**Morton, Leo, 1945-**

**Alternative Names:** Leo Morton;

**Life Dates:** August 12, 1945-

**Place of Birth:** Birmingham, Alabama, USA

**Residence:** Leawood, KS

**Work:** Kansas City, MO

**Occupations:** Engineer; Academic Administrator

## Biographical Note

Corporate executive, academic administrator and engineer Leo Morton was born on August 12, 1945 in Birmingham, Alabama to Imogene and Leo C. Morton. After graduating from Ullman High School in 1963, he received his B.S. degree in mechanical engineering from Tuskegee University in 1968. Morton went on to receive his M.S. degree in management from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1987.

In 1968, Morton joined General Motors as an engineer designing the turbine section of jet engines. In 1970, he left General Motors and joined Rust Engineering as a designer, a position he held for two years before joining Corning Glass as a manufacturing supervisor. Morton left Corning Glass in 1973 and was hired at Bell Laboratories as an engineer, eventually becoming a director. In 1987, he joined AT&T Microelectronics as an engineering planning director in Berkeley Heights, New Jersey. Morton was promoted to director of division staff in February, 1988, vice president of manufacturing in August, 1988, and vice president of performance management in 1992, in Lee's Summit, Missouri. In 1993, he moved to Dallas, Texas, to serve as vice president of enhanced distributed power architecture. A year later, he left AT&T Microelectronics to serve as vice president of performance management at UtiliCorp United, Inc in Kansas City, Missouri. He was promoted to senior vice president in 1995, senior vice president of human resources and operations support in 1997, and chief administrative officer in 2000, before the company was renamed Aquila, Inc. in 2002. In 2008, Morton left Aquila, Inc. to serve as chancellor of the University of Missouri – Kansas City. During his tenure, Morton improved community engagement, enrollment, graduation rates and created a strategic plan for diversity and inclusion. He

also significantly improved campus facilities and philanthropic support. In 2017, he stepped down as chancellor and joined DeBruce Companies as president and chief operating officer.

Morton served as chairman of the Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City, the Kansas Area Development Council, Prep-KC and the University of Missouri-Kansas City Board of Trustees. He serves on the board of Union Station, the Marion & Henry Bloch Family Foundation, American Public Square, the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City and the Kansas City Urban Youth Academy.

In 2012, Morton received the Henry W. Bloch Human Relations Award from the Jewish Community Relations Bureau. In 2014, he was inducted into the Greater Kansas City Business Hall of Fame and was named the Kansas Citian of the Year by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. Morton received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Economic Development Corporation in 2018. In 2019, was named a Kansas City Legend by Ingram's 45th Anniversary Edition and named a Hometown Hero by Community Linc.

Morton and his wife, Yvette Morton, have three children: Leo, Keesha, and Karla.

Leo Morton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 4, 2019.

## Related Entries

**Center Street Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ullman High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Tuskegee University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.S.**

**DeBruce Companies** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**President and COO**

**University of Missouri-Kansas City** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1999 to ?]

**Chancellor**

**Aquila, Inc.** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Senior Vice President and CAO**

**AT&T Microelectronics** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1996 to 2000]

**Vice President of Manufacturing**

**Bell Laboratories** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1973 to 1987]

**Director**

**Corning Glass** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1984 to 1985]

**Manufacturing Supervisor**

**Rust Engineering** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1977 to 1980]

**Designer**

**General Motors** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from ? to ?]

**Engineer**

**Union Station** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**Marrion & Henry Bloch Family Foundation** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**American Public Square** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**Prep-KC** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**Xzeres** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**TechAccel Investment** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Advisory Committee Member**

**Civic Council of Greater Kansas City** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

