

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Cornell William Brooks

PERSON

Brooks, Cornell William, 1961-

Alternative Names: Cornell William Brooks;

Life Dates: January 29, 1961-

Place of Birth: El Paso, Texas, USA

Residence: Woodbridge, Virginia

Work: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Occupations: Association Branch Executive

Biographical Note

Civic leader Cornell William Brooks was born on January 29, 1961 in El Paso, Texas to Jamee Rosa Maria Prioleau and Willie Brooks. He received his B.A. degree in political science in 1983 from Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi, his M.Div. degree in social ethics and systematic theology in 1987 from Boston University School of Theology in Boston, Massachusetts, and his J.D. degree in 1990 from Yale Law School in New Haven, Connecticut.

After receiving his J.D. degree, Brooks served a judicial clerkship with Chief Judge Sam J. Ervin, III on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in Richmond, Virginia. He then served as a trial lawyer with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the United States Department of Justice before being named the executive director of the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington in Washington, D.C. After running as the Democratic nominee for U.S. Congress for the Tenth District of Virginia in 1998, Brooks served as the senior counsel of the Federal Communications Commission, where he also directed the Office of Communications Business Opportunities. In 2007, he was named president and CEO of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice in Newark, New Jersey. In 2014, Brooks was elected the eighteenth president and CEO of the NAACP in New York, New York. In 2017, Brooks served as a senior fellow at the New York University School of Law and visiting professor of social ethics, law, and justice movements at Boston University. In 2018, he was named Hauser Professor of the Practice of Nonprofit Organizations and Professor of the Practice of Public Leadership and Social Justice at the Harvard Kennedy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He also serves as director of the William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice at the Harvard Kennedy

School's Center for Public Leadership and as Visiting Professor of the Practice of Prophetic Religion and Public Leadership at Harvard Divinity School. Brooks is an ordained minister in the AME Church.

Brooks has served as a member of several boards, including those of Humanity in Action, Inc., the East Orange Hospital, and Common Cause.

Brooks is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including honorary doctorates from Boston University, Drexel University, Saint Peter's University, and Payne Theological Seminary and the highest alumni awards from Boston University and Boston University School of Theology.

Brooks and his wife, Hertha Janice Broome, live in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They have two sons, Cornell Brooks II and Hamilton Brooks.

Cornell William Brooks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 8, 2022.

Related Entries

Jackson State University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Boston University School of Theology [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

M.Div.

Yale Law School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Chief Judge Sam J. Ervin, III on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1990 to 1991]

Clerk

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Trial lawyer

United States Department of Justice [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Trial lawyer

Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Executive Director

Federal Communications Commission [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Senior Counsel

New Jersey Institute for Social Justice [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2007 to 2014]

President & CEO

NAACP [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2014 to 2017]

President & CEO

New York University School of Law [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2017 to 2017]

senior fellow

Boston University [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2017 to 2018]

visiting professor of social ethics, law, and justice movements

Harvard Kennedy School [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2018 to ?]

Professor

AME Church [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Minister

Humanity in Action [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board

East Orange Hospital [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board

Common Cause [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board