

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joyce Hughes

PERSON

Hughes, Joyce A., 1940-

Alternative Names: Joyce Hughes;

Life Dates: February 7, 1940-

Place of Birth: Gadsden, Alabama, USA

Residence: Chicago, Illinois

Work: Chicago, Illinois

Occupations: Law Professor

Biographical Note

Northwestern University law professor Joyce Hughes' life has been a series of important "firsts." Hughes was born in Gadsden, Alabama, on February 7, 1940. Her parents, determined not to have their children limited by a segregated South, made the decision to move their family north to Minnesota.

After graduating from Carleton College magna cum laude, Hughes was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship where she spent a year at the University of Madrid in Spain. Upon returning to the United States, she attended the University of Minnesota Law School. When Hughes received her J.D. degree in 1965, she was the first African American female to do so.

Following law school, Hughes was awarded a clerkship with a federal district court judge in Minnesota. This was also a first. She practiced law with a small Minneapolis firm after her clerkship, and in 1971, joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota Law School. Hughes was the first woman and the first African American to teach there, as well as the first African American female to be hired as a tenure track professor at any majority white institution. During this time, she also served on the Board of Directors of the National Urban League.

In 1975, Hughes became a member of the Northwestern University Law School faculty and in 1979, she was first African American female tenured full professor in any department at Northwestern University. Hughes also became politically active, serving on the Chicago Board of Education, where she was influential in school desegregation policy; in the legal department of Continental Illinois National Bank; and as the first

woman and the first African American General Counsel of the Chicago Transit Authority.

Hughes continues to teach at Northwestern University. Currently, she sits on the Board of Directors of Chicago's Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities and the Board of Visitors of Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Related Entries

National Urban League (NUL) [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1954 to 1964]

Board Member

University of Minnesota Law School [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1971 to ?]

Professor

Northwestern University Law School [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1975 to ?]

Professor