

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Samuel Greenlee

PERSON

Greenlee, Sam, 1930-

Alternative Names: Samuel Greenlee;

Life Dates: July 13, 1930-May 19, 2014

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Fiction Writer; Poet

Biographical Note

Over the course of his career, Sam Greenlee has been a novelist, poet, screenwriter, journalist, teacher, and talk show host. Born in Chicago on July 13, 1930, he attended Chicago public schools. At age fifteen, Greenlee participated in his first sit-in and walked in his first picket line. His social activism continues to this day.

In 1952, Greenlee received his B.S. in political science from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and the following year he attended law school. Deciding against a law career, he transferred to the University of Chicago, studying international relations from 1954 to 1957. In 1957, he began a seven year career with United States Information Agency as a Foreign Services Officer, serving in Iraq, East Pakistan, Indonesia, and Greece, and in 1958, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Award for bravery during the Baghdad revolution.

Greenlee's first and most well known novel, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, was published in 1968. This prize-winning novel quickly became an underground favorite for its fictionalization of an urban-based war for African American liberation. Greenlee co-wrote a screenplay adaptation of the novel, and in 1973 *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* was released on film. The film was an overnight success when it was released and was then unexpectedly taken out of distribution.

Greenlee has written numerous novels, stage plays, screenplays, poems. He recently moved back to Chicago after several years of voluntary exile in Spain and West Africa and is currently hosting a radio talk show program.

Sam Greenlee passed away on May 19, 2014.

Related Entries

Betsy Ross Elementary School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

William W. Carter Elementary School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Emmett Louis Till Math & Science Academy [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Englewood High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

University of Wisconsin-Madison [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Bachelor's

University of Chicago [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Masters in political science

United States Information Agency [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1957 to 1965]

Delete [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1965 to ?]

writing and various jobs (taxi driver, etc.)