

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with David B. Wilkins

PERSON

Wilkins, David B.

Alternative Names: David B. Wilkins;

Life Dates: January 22, 1956-

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Work: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Occupations: Lawyer;

Biographical Note

Legal scholar and law professor David B. Wilkins was born on January 22, 1956 in Chicago, Illinois. His father, attorney Julian Wilkins, became the first black partner at a major law firm in Chicago in 1971. Wilkins graduated from the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools in 1973. He received his A.B. degree in government with honors in 1977 from Harvard University and his J.D. degree with honors in 1980 from Harvard Law School. While in law school, Wilkins was a member of the Harvard Civil Rights Civil Liberties Law Review, the Harvard Law Review, and the Harvard Black Law Students Association.

Upon graduation, Wilkins served as a law clerk to Chief Judge Wilfred Feinberg of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Wilkins then clerked for United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall from 1981 to 1982. In 1982, Wilkins worked as an associate specializing in civil litigation at the law firm of Nussbaum, Owen & Webster in Washington, D.C. He then joined the faculty of Harvard Law School in 1986 as an assistant professor. Wilkins was appointed as Director of the Program on the Legal Profession in 1991 and received tenure in 1992, making him the school's fourth African American tenured professor and the sixth in the history of the school. He served as the Kirkland and Ellis Professor of Law from 1996 until 2008, when he became the Lester Kissel Professor of Law. In 2009, Wilkins was appointed as Vice Dean for Global Initiatives on the Legal Profession and Faculty Director of the Program on the Legal Profession at Harvard Law School.

As a legal scholar, Wilkins authored over sixty articles on the legal profession, and co-authored, along with Andrew Kaufman, Problems in Professional Responsibility for a

Changing Profession. In addition, Wilkins served as a Senior Research Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and a member of the Faculty Committee of the Harvard University Edmond J. Safra Foundation Center for Ethics. Wilkins has also lectured on various issues in legal studies internationally as well as in the United States. Harvard Law School honored Wilkins with the Albert M. Sachs – Paul Freund Award for Teaching Excellence in 1998 and the J. Clay Smith Award in 2009. He received the Order of the Coif Distinguished Visitor Fellowship in 2008 and was honored as the American Bar Foundation Scholar of the Year Award in 2010. In 2012, Professor Wilkins was elected as a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2012, Wilkins was honored with an Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from Stockholm University in Stockholm, Sweden, the Distinguished Visiting Mentor Award from Australia National University, and the Genest Fellowship from Osgoode Hall Law School.

Wilkins and his wife, Ann Marie Wilkins, live in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

David B. Wilkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 29, 2013.

Related Entries

University of Chicago Laboratory Schools [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Diploma

Harvard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

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

J.D.

McDonald's [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Commonwealth Edison Company [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Covington and Burling LLP [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Clerk

Morrison and Foerster LLP [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Clerk

Kirkland and Ellis LLP [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1978 to 1978]

Associate

United States Court of Appeals, Second Circuit [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to 1981]

Law Clerk to the Honorable Chief Judge Wilfred Feinberg

Supreme Court of the United States [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1981 to 1982]

Law Clerk to the Honorable Thurgood Marshall

Nussbaum, Owen and Webster [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1989 to ?]

Associate, Civil Litigation

Harvard University Law School [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1986 to 1992]

Assistant Professor of Law

Harvard University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1982 to 1992]

Fellow, Harvard University's Center in Ethics and the Professions

Harvard University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1989 to ?]

Faculty Associate, Harvard University Edmund J. Safra Foundation Center for Ethics

Harvard University Law School [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1992 to 1996]

Professor of Law

Harvard University Law School [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1992 to ?]

Kirkland and Ellis Professor of Law

American Bar Association (ABA) [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1988 to 1996]

Senior Researcher

Harvard University Law School [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2008 to ?]

Lester Kissel Professor of Law

Bar Association of the District of Columbia [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

American Bar Association (ABA) [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Jack and Jill of America, Inc [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Black Students Association [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Founder; Member

BlackC.A.S.T [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

WHRB Radio [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Radio Host

Harvard Law Review [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Judicial Conference of the United States Court of Appeals [MEMBEROF]

[from 1984 to 1984]

Member

Judicial Conference of the United States Court of Appeals [MEMBEROF]

[from 1988 to 1988]

Member

American Association of Law Schools [MEMBEROF]

[from 1991 to 1993]

Executive Committee, Civil Procedure Section

American Association of Law Schools [MEMBEROF]

[from 1992 to 1993]

Chair, Civil Procedure Section

Law and Society Association [MEMBEROF]

[from 1994 to 1997]

Board of Directors

Delete [MEMBEROF]

[from 1997 to ?]

Open Society Institute [MEMBEROF]

[from 1998 to 2000]

Member, Program on Law & Society

Open Society Institute [MEMBEROF]

[from 1999 to 2000]

Advisory Board Chair, Program on Law & Society

