

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joseph Johnson

PERSON

Johnson, Joseph Benjamin, 1934-

Alternative Names: Joseph Johnson;

Life Dates: September 16, 1934-January 2, 2018

Place of Birth: New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

Residence: Fairburn, GA

Occupations: College President; University President

Biographical Note

Joseph Benjamin Johnson, the youngest of three children, was born September 16, 1934, in New Orleans, Louisiana to Lillie and Sidney. Johnson attended public school in New Orleans and went on to Grambling College to earn his B.S. in 1957. He later attended the University of Colorado at Boulder to earn an M.S. in 1967 and a Ph.D. in education in 1973. Johnson also did post-doctoral work at Harvard University.

Johnson started his educational career in 1962 as a high school teacher in Shreveport, Louisiana, moving on to Greenville Park High School a year later. In 1969, Johnson went to work as the assistant to the president of the University of Colorado, a position he held until 1977. In that year, he returned to his alma mater, Grambling State University, to become the president of the school. During his tenure, he reversed the trend in decreased enrollment and helped erase the school's debt. In 1991, Johnson left Grambling for Talladega College, a small liberal arts college. Once again, Johnson increased the school's revenue base before retiring in 1998.

In addition to his academic work, Johnson has served as a member of many organizations including the United Negro College Fund, the Commission on Leadership Development of the American Council of Education. He is also the past chairman of the Academic Advisory Committee of Black Entertainment Television, as well as a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association President's Commission and the University of Colorado Board of Directors of the National Alumni Association. He has been honored with numerous awards, such as the Thurgood Marshall Educational Achievement Award and the Jewish Tree of Life Award. He has received honorary doctorates from Western Michigan University and the Gandhigram University of India, and an honorary doctor of laws degree from Grambling State University.

Johnson passed away on January 2, 2018 at age 83.

Related Entries

Greenville Park High School [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1963 to ?]

Teacher

University of Colorado [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1966 to 1980]

Assistant to the President

Grambling State University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1977 to 1991]

President

Talladega College [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1991 to 1998]

President