

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Keith H. Williamson

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Williamson, Keith H., 1952-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Keith H. Williamson,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 16, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:10:10).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Corporate executive and corporate lawyer Keith H. Williamson (1952 - ) served as president of the capital services division of Pitney Bowes, and is the senior vice president, general counsel, and company secretary of Centene Corporation. Williamson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 16, 2005, in Shelton, Connecticut. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_051
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Keith Harvey Williamson, president of Pitney Bowes Capital Services Division, was born May 16, 1952, in St. Louis, Missouri. Williamson's father, Irving A. Williamson, was a journalist and photographer for St. Louis based newspapers, such as the *Argus*, the *Mirror*, and the *Sentinel*. Attending Harrison Elementary School and Walnut Park Gifted School, Williamson graduated in 1970 from Thomas Jefferson High School in St. Louis, Missouri, after spending the summer after his junior year in Europe. Williamson earned his B.A. degree in economics and sociology from Brown University in 1974, and a combined M.B.A. and J.D. degree from Harvard University in 1978. Later Williamson would obtain his LL.M. degree in taxation from New York University.

In 1978, Williamson worked as a tax lawyer with the Washington, D.C., based firm Covington & Burling, and in 1981, he joined Revis & McGrath (later named Fulbright Jaworski). Pitney Bowes hired Williamson as director of tax in 1988; he later worked for the company as assistant general counsel for financial services, and deputy general counsel for mergers. In 1999 Williamson became president of the capital services division of Pitney Bowes; in 2002, he was chosen by *Fortune* magazine as one of the fifty most powerful African American executives. Williamson became the senior vice president, general counsel, and company secretary of Centene Corporation in 2006.

A member of the Executive Leadership Council and the Urban League's Black Executive Exchange Program, Williamson, his wife Addie, and their daughter reside in suburban Connecticut.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Keith H. Williamson was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 16, 2005, in Shelton, Connecticut, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Corporate executive and corporate

lawyer Keith H. Williamson (1952 - ) served as president of the capital services division of Pitney Bowes, and is the senior vice president, general counsel, and company secretary of Centene Corporation.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Williamson, Keith H., 1952-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Williamson, Keith H., 1952---Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Interviews

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African American executives--Interviews

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African American lawyers--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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## The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Pitney-Bowes, inc.

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### Occupations:

Corporate Lawyer

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Keith H. Williamson, February 16, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Keith H. Williamson, Section A2005\_051\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Keith H. Williamson was born on May 16, 1952 in St. Louis, Missouri. His

mother, Elizabeth Giddings Williamson, was born in Yonkers, New York in 1918 to Mabelle Gulliver Giddings and Arthur Giddings, Sr., a graduate of New York University, the first black Phi Beta Kappa and an engineer who worked on the Tappan Zee Bridge. Williamson's mother studied at Hunter College in New York City, earned her master's degree from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and became a social worker. Williamson's father, Irving Williamson, was born in 1908 in Berwind, West Virginia, but was raised in Chicago, Illinois by an aunt. After graduating from The Ohio State University, he eventually settled in St. Louis where he worked as a journalist at the St. Louis Argus, The Mirror and the St. Louis Sentinel. He was also involved with many civic organizations and did commercial photography on the side. Williamson's and his two older siblings were raised in St. Louis, and he remembers his childhood as pleasant and sheltered.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Keith H. Williamson, Section A2005\_051\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Keith H. Williamson loved reading and playing tennis as a child, and idolized his older brother, Irving Williamson, Jr. His family attended Antioch Baptist Church, and his father was active in its administration. At home, his family regularly watched the evening news together and sometimes discussed the Civil Rights Movement. His father and sister traveled to the March on Washington, which his father covered as a journalist. After starting at Harrison Elementary School, Williamson transferred to Walnut Park School in the fifth grade for its gifted program. He enjoyed studying science and once won a prize in the city's science fair competition. For high school, he attended the small, strict, private Thomas Jefferson School where he was the only black student. After a teacher gave him a backhanded compliment about his ability to debate and argue, he decided to become a lawyer. When it came time to apply to college, he was only interested in Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, his brother's alma mater.

Video Oral History Interview with Keith H. Williamson, Section A2005\_051\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Keith H. Williamson graduated from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island in 1974 with a bachelor's degree in sociology and economics. His older brother and sister, who had completed law and business school, respectively, inspired him to pursue a joint J.D./M.B.A. program at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At Harvard, Williamson's classmates included HistoryMaker Charles Ogletree, and he was taught by Stephen Breyer, who later served on the U.S. Supreme Court, and Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox, though he was disappointed at missing his chance to study with the first African American governor of the Federal Reserve, HistoryMaker Andrew F. Brimmer. After graduating, Williamson was hired at Covington & Burling LLP in Washington, D.C. as a tax lawyer and worked on the Penn Central Transportation Company bankruptcy case. He then joined Reavis & McGrath in New York City, but when the firm fell on hard financial times, he left to head the tax department of Pitney Bowes Inc. in 1988.

Video Oral History Interview with Keith H. Williamson, Section A2005\_051\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Keith H. Williamson was assistant general counsel for Pitney Bowes Credit Corporation of Pitney Bowes Inc. before being promoted to general counsel in

1994. After serving as deputy general counsel for mergers and acquisitions, he was appointed president of the Capital Services division in 1999. Since then, he has headed up financing for Pitney Bowes products. Williamson shares his thoughts about effective management, sales strategies and the challenges of implementing efficiency. To give back to the community, he joined the Executive Leadership Council and the National Urban League's Black Executive Exchange Program for mentoring young black college students. At the time of the interview, Williamson had been tapped to lead a new division at Pitney Bowes and hoped to join a for-profit board. He shares advice for aspiring young professionals, his concerns for the African American community and his reasons for not starting his own business. He reflects upon his life and legacy and talks about his family.

Video Oral History Interview with Keith H. Williamson, Section A2005\_051\_001\_005, TRT: 0:12:50 ?

Keith H. Williamson's parents lived to see all three of their children attain professional success in their careers. In this part of the interview, Williamson speaks about his own daughter, Nicole Williamson, and his hopes for her education. At the time of the interview, she was enrolled at New Canaan Country School in New Canaan, Connecticut. Attending board meetings for her school prompted Williamson to envision an ideal school curriculum. In describing how he would like to be remembered, Williamson hopes that it will be for positive contributions in all endeavors of his life, personal and professional. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.