

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Helen Marshall

PERSON

Marshall, Helen M.

Alternative Names: The Honorable Helen Marshall;

Life Dates: September 30, 1929-March 4, 2017

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Work: Kew Gardens, NY

Occupations: Borough President

Biographical Note

New York City's Queens Borough chief executive Helen Marie Marshall was born on September 30, 1929, on Manhattan Island in New York City. Marshall was a product of the New York Public School system; after earning her high school diploma, she went on to graduate with her B.A. degree in education from Queens College. Marshall later took graduate level courses in education and public administration at Bank Street College and Long Island University.

Marshall began her professional career as an early childhood educator; she decided to leave the teaching profession in 1969 to help found and become the first director of the Langston Hughes Library in New York City. Marshall held this position for five years, simultaneously acting as director of the Elmcree Testing and Placement Program. In 1974, Marshall became involved in politics when she ran for and was elected to the position of Democratic District leader in New York City. One year later, Marshall became a Democratic National Committeewoman, and in 1982, was elected to the first of five terms she would serve in the New York State Assembly. In 1991, Marshall was elected to the New York City Council, where she represented the 21st District. As a city councilwoman, Marshall served as chairwoman of the Higher Education Committee; co-chaired the Council's Black and Latino Caucus; and was a member of the Housing and Buildings, Environmental Protection, and Women's Issues Committees. In November of 2001, Marshall was elected the Queens Borough's first African American president.

During Marshall's political career, she was an advocate for quality health care, senior citizens, and the environment. Marshall worked to provide funding to upgrade every library under her jurisdiction, and helped open two new senior centers in her district. LaGuardia Community College honored Marshall with the school's annual Crystal

Globe Award for Excellence and Leadership in education.

Marshall and her husband, Donald Marshall, raised two children: Donald, Jr. and Agnes Marie.

Marshall passed away on March 4, 2017 at the age of 87.

Related Entries

Ps 42 Claremont Community School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

City College of New York [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A. Education

Langston Hughes Library [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1969 to 1974]

Founder and Director

New York State Assembly [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1982 to 1991]

Committee Person

New York City Council [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1991 to ?]

Council Member

Queens Bourough [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2001 to 2013]

President