

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Eugene Rivers

PERSON

Rivers, Eugene

Alternative Names: Reverend Eugene Rivers; Eugene Rivers, III; Eugene Franklin Rivers, III ; Eugene Rivers;

Life Dates: April 9, 1950-

Place of Birth: Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Work: Boston, Massachusetts

Occupations: Pastor; Nonprofit Chief Executive

Biographical Note

Youth activist Reverend Eugene Franklin Rivers, III was born on April 9, 1950, in Boston, Massachusetts. Rivers spent his early years in Chicago where his parents, Mildred Bell Rivers and Eugene F. Rivers, Jr. were members of the Nation of Islam. Rivers's father, as Eugene 3X, designed the masthead for Muhammad Speaks. Rivers attended Edmund Elementary School and McCosh Elementary School in Chicago. After his parents divorced, Rivers attended Joseph Parnell Elementary and Wagner Junior High School. Mentored by Reverend Benjamin Smith of Philadelphia's Deliverance Evangelistic Temple, Rivers graduated from Dobbins Vocational High School in 1968. Rivers then studied painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, while he became active in street level organizing and black church politics. In 1970, Rivers was a part of the Black Economic Development Conference working with Muhammad Kenyatta; he later joined Lucius Walker and James Forman in the Reparations Movement. Rivers attended Yale as an unregistered activist from 1973 to 1976. Officially admitted to Harvard University in 1976, Rivers was mentored by Dr. Martin Kilsonl. Rivers met his wife, Jacqueline, at Harvard University.

Recognized as one of the most effective crusaders against gang violence, Rivers founded Azusa Christian Community in 1984 in the Four Corners section of Boston's inner city Dorchester neighborhood. As President of the National Ten Point Leadership Foundation, he worked to build new grassroots leadership in forty of the worst inner city neighborhoods in inner city America. Rivers served as president of the Ella J. Baker House, the separate 501 (c)(3) non-profit originally created by the Azusa Christian Community.

Rivers has appeared on CNN's Hardball, NBC's Meet the Press, PBS's Charlie Rose,

BET's Lead Story, and National Public Radio, among other programs. Rivers was featured or provided commentary for publications such as Newsweek, The New Yorker, The New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Herald, and the Boston Globe, as well as periodicals such as the Boston Review, Sojourners, Christianity Today, and Books and Culture. Rivers authored or co-authored numerous essays, including On the Responsibility of Intellectuals in an Age of Crack, Beyond the Nationalism of Fools: A Manifesto for a New Black Movement, Black Churches and the Challenge of U.S. Foreign and Development Policy (2001), An Open Letter to the U.S. Black Religious, Intellectual, and Political Leadership Regarding AIDS and the Sexual Holocaust in Africa (1999), and A Pastoral Letter to President George W. Bush on Bridging our Racial Divide (2001). In addition to television and print appearances, Rivers lectured at universities, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Calvin College.

Related Entries

Murrell Dobbins Vocational School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Edmund Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Emmett Louis Till Math & Science Academy [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Joseph Parnell Elementary [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Wagner Junior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Harvard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

The Black Theology Project [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member