

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Kenneth L. Coleman

PERSON

Coleman, Kenneth L., 1942-

Alternative Names: Kenneth L. Coleman;

Life Dates: December 1, 1942-

Place of Birth: Centralia, Illinois, USA

Residence: Los Altos Hills, California

Work: Sunnyvale, California

Occupations: Technology Executive

Biographical Note

Technology executive Kenneth Louis Coleman was born on December 1, 1942 in Centralia, Illinois to Louis Boyd Coleman and Katie Owens Coleman. He attended Lincoln Elementary School and graduated from Centralia High School in 1960. He then studied at The Ohio State University, earning his B.S. degree in industrial management in 1965. He went on to acquire his M.B.A. degree from The Ohio State University in 1972.

Starting in 1968, Coleman served at Osan Air Base in South Korea as an officer in the U.S. Air Force. That year, Lieutenant Coleman helped effectively defuse a potential race riot on the base. This led to an assignment to establish an Office for Affirmative Action and Drug Abuse Rehabilitation in 1970 at Hamilton Air Force Base in Marin County, California. After discharge as a captain in 1972, Coleman was introduced to the Hewlett-Packard Company by Roy Clay, the first African American vice mayor of Palo Alto, California. At Hewlett-Packard, Coleman held several senior management positions, including a two-year assignment in Northern Europe from 1974 to 1976. In 1982, Coleman joined Activision, Inc., where he became vice president of product development. Coleman then joined Silicon Graphics (SGI) in 1987. During his fourteen years at Silicon Graphics, Coleman held several executive level positions. His last position at SGI was executive vice president of sales, services, and marketing, where he managed 4,000 employees in thirty-seven countries.

In 2001, Coleman founded and became CEO of ITM Software in Mountain View, California. Over the next five years, he raised \$20 million of venture capital. The company was later sold to BMC Software. In 2006, Coleman was appointed chairman

of Accelrys, Inc., a scientific informatics software and services company for life sciences, chemical and materials research and development. He later served as chair of MIPS Technologies, Saama Technologies, and EIS Group Ltd. Coleman also has been a member of the boards of directors of City National Bank, United Online, Entertainment Partners, Prevedere, Management Leadership for Tomorrow, CSSA Insurance, and iBridge.

In 2010, Coleman was appointed to a special government advisory group on U.S./India Trade Policy. In 2019, Coleman joined the Council of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Coleman is also the recipient of numerous honors, including The Ohio State University Distinguished Service Award and the National Alliance of Black School Educators Living Legend Award. In 1999, Coleman was named one of the ten most influential African Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area, and in 2001, one of the top 25 Black executives in technology by Black Enterprise magazine.

Coleman lives in Los Altos Hills, California with his wife, Caretha Coleman. They have six children and thirteen grandchildren.

Coleman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 13, 2007 and June 29, 2022.

Related Entries

Centralia High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Lincoln School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

The Ohio State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S.

The Ohio State University Max M. Fisher College of Business [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.B.A

MIPS Technologies [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2006 to 2013]

Chair

Saama Technologies [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2013 to 2018]

Chair

EIS Group [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2017 to ?]

Chair

The Hewlett Packard Company [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1972 to 1982]

Management, HR

Activision Publishing, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1982 to 1987]

VP of Product Development

Silicon Graphics [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1987 to 2000]

Chief Administration Officer

ITM Software Corporation [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 2000 to 2005]

Founder, CEO

Accelrys, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 2005 to 2012]

Chairman of the Board

YMCA [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Volunteer

United Way Worldwide [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Campaign

Special government advisory group on U.S./India Trade Policy [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Council of the National Museum of African American History and Culture [MEMBEROf]

[from 2019 to ?]

Member