

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Willie Pearson, Jr.

PERSON

Pearson, Willie, 1945-

Alternative Names: Willie Pearson, Jr.;

Life Dates: June 29, 1945-

Place of Birth: Rusk, Texas, USA

Residence: Atlanta, Georgia

Work: Atlanta, Georgia

Occupations: Sociologist;

Biographical Note

Sociologist Willie Pearson, Jr. was born on June 29, 1945 in Rusk, Texas. In 1968, Pearson graduated with honors from Wiley College with his B.A. degree in Sociology. Three years later, Pearson earned his M.A. degree in sociology (Presidential Scholarship) from Atlanta University. He received his Ph.D. degree in sociology in 1981 from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

After graduating from college, Pearson moved to Kansas City, Missouri where he worked as a benefits claims examiner at the Department of Health Education and Welfare and as an administrative and legal specialist for the United States Army. In 1972, Pearson was hired as an assistant professor in the sociology and anthropology departments at Grambling State University where he was named an outstanding teacher. Pearson moved to North Carolina where he worked as an assistant professor at Wake Forest University in 1980 while completing his dissertation. In 1985, Pearson completed his first book, *Black Scientists, White Society and Colorless Science: A Study of Universalism in American Science*. In 1988, Pearson was awarded a Congressional Fellowship from the Office of Technology Assessment, Congress and received tenure at Wake Forest University. In 2001, Pearson joined the faculty at Georgia Institute of Technology as a sociology professor and chair of the School of History, Technology and Society. During the same year, Pearson was named a National Associate (life-time appointment) of the National Academy of Sciences.

Most of Pearson's research has centered around the U.S. scientific and engineering workforce and on broadening participation of underrepresented groups in science and engineering. In addition to having published numerous articles in newspapers and

academic journals, Pearson has authored and co-authored seven books and monographs, including *Blacks, Education and American Science*, *Who Will Do Science?: Educating the Next Generation*, *The Role and Activities of American Graduate Schools in Recruiting, Enrolling and Retaining United States Black and Hispanic Students*, and *Beyond Small Numbers: Voices of African American Ph.D. Chemists*. Pearson has served on numerous committees, advisory boards and panels at the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, American Sociological Association and many more. He has a love of teaching, research and community service and he has mentored numerous undergraduate and graduate students throughout his career. Pearson has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Schoonmaker Faculty Prize for Community Service from the Wake Forest University Alumni Council and the Distinguished Lecturer award from Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society.

Willie Pearson, Jr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 13, 2011.

Related Entries

Wiley College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A. Sociology

Clark Atlanta University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A. Sociology

Southern Illinois University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Ph.D.Sociology

Emmett J. Scott High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

W.A. Peete Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Louisiana Tech University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Instructor

Southern Illinois University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1976 to ?]

Researcher

University of Central Arkansas, Conway [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Assistant Professor

Wake Forest University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Associate Professor

Wake Forest University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1970 to 1978]

Professor

Georgia Institute of Technology [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

Grambling State University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

Louisiana Tech University [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

National Science Foundation (NSF) [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Committee Member

Graduate Records Examination Board Technical Advisory Committee [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member