

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dolores D. Wharton

PERSON

Wharton, Dolores D.

Alternative Names: Dolores D. Wharton;

Life Dates: July 3, 1927-

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: New York, New York

Occupations: Civic Leader

Biographical Note

Civic leader Dolores D. Wharton was born on July 3, 1927 in New York City to V. Kenneth Duncan and Josephine Bradford. Wharton attended New York University, Danbury State Teacher's College, and the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City, where she studied modern dance with Martha Graham. She received her B.F.A. degree from Chicago State Teacher's College in the 1960s.

Wharton and her husband, Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., lived in Southeast Asia from 1958 to 1964. Following her return to the United States, Wharton wrote Contemporary Artists of Malaysia: A Biographic Survey, the first academic survey ever written on Malaysian art. Wharton became the first lady of Michigan State University in 1969, when her husband was appointed president of the university. As first lady, Wharton strengthened the university's relationship with the greater Lansing, Michigan area, and with the student body. President Gerald Ford appointed Wharton to the National Council on the Arts of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1971. She became the first woman, and the first African American, elected to the board of the Michigan Bell Telephone Company in 1974, as well as the boards of the Kellogg Company and the Phillips Petroleum Company in 1976. Wharton initiated and chaired both company's first social responsibility committees. She was also the first woman, and the first African American, elected to the board of the Gannett Company in 1979. Wharton went on to establish the Fund for Corporate Interns, Inc. (later the Fund for Corporate Initiatives) in 1980. In 1984, Wharton expanded FCI to include the young executives program, a week-long seminar that provided corporate leadership development to minority and women corporate employees.

Throughout her career, Wharton served on numerous other boards including the New York Telephone Company, Tulane University's board of visitors, The Key Bank

National Association, Golub, Inc., the Corporation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, NPR, and COMSAT. Wharton was also served on the board of the Michigan Council on the Arts, the Aspen Institute, the Asia Society, CSIS, the SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology, the New York City Center, The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Glimmerglass Opera, among others. Wharton has been awarded nine honorary degrees.

Wharton and her husband, Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., have two sons, Clifton Wharton III and Bruce Wharton.

Dolores Wharton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 14, 2016 and October 4, 2016.

Related Entries

Little Red School House and Elisabeth Irwin High School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

New York University [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theater [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

University of Chicago [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Main Street School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

Danbury High School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

Bethel High School [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

Western Connecticut State University [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

The Fund for Corporate Initiatives [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1980 to ?]

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chairman

Aspen Institute [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Trustee

Special Commission on Architecture [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Council on Fiscal and Economic Priorities [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Michigan Bicentennial Commission [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Vice Chairman

National Committee on the Bicentennial Era [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Albany Law School [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to 1991]

Trustee

Foreign Policy Association "Off the Record" Lecture Series [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Vice Chair

Duke Ellington Memorial Fund, Inc. [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Women's Economic Roundtable [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Corporate Board Magazine [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Editorial Advisor

Journal of Corporate Governance [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Editorial Advisor

Asia Foundation [MEMBEROf]

[from 199408 to 200108]

Trustee

National Council on the Arts of the National Endowment for the Arts [MEMBEROf]

[from 197409 to 1980]

Appointee

Michigan Council on the Arts [MEMBEROf]

[from 1971 to 1975]

Appointee

Michigan Bell Telephone [MEMBEROf]
[from 1974 to 1978]

Outside Director

Michigan National Bank [MEMBEROf]
[from 1974 to 1978]

Advisory

Tulane University Board of Visitors [MEMBEROf]
[from 1975 to 1977]

Member

Phillips Petroleum Company [MEMBEROf]
[from 1976 to 1993]

Outside Director

Kellogg Company [MEMBEROf]
[from 1976 to 1997]

Outside Director

Museum of Modern Art [MEMBEROf]
[from 1977 to 1987]

Trustee

China Medical Board [MEMBEROf]
[from 1977 to 1981]

Trustee

New York Telephone Company [MEMBEROf]
[from 1978 to ?]

Outside Director

Gannett Company [MEMBEROf]
[from 1979 to 1998]

Outside Director

Albany Institute of History and Art [MEMBEROf]
[from 1980 to 1987]

Trustee

Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MEMBEROf]
[from 1980 to 1987]

Board of Overseers

Asia Society [MEMBEROf]
[from 1982 to 1987]

Trustee

The Golub Corporation Key Bank N.A. [MEMBEROf]
[from 1984 to 1989]

Outside Director

Committee for Economic Development [MEMBEROF]
[from 1986 to 2004]

Member (Honorary Trustee)

Ethics Resource [MEMBEROF]
[from 1990 to 1996]

Trustee

SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology [MEMBEROF]
[from 1991 to 1995]

Trustee

Glimmerglass Opera [MEMBEROF]
[from 1992 to ?]

Trustee

National Public Radio [MEMBEROF]
[from 1992 to 1996]

Board Member

COMSAT Corporation [MEMBEROF]
[from 1994 to 1997]

Outside Director

New York City Center [MEMBEROF]
[from 1994 to 2007]

Trustee

Capital Bank and Trust of Albany, NY [MEMBEROF]
[from 1995 to 2002]

Outside Director

Center for Strategic and International Studies [MEMBEROF]
[from 1995 to ?]

Trustee Emeritus