

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Bill Perkins

PERSON

Perkins, Bill, 1949 April 18-

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable Bill Perkins;

**Life Dates:** April 18, 1949-

**Place of Birth:** Bronx, New York, USA

**Work:** New York, NY

**Occupations:** State Senator

## Biographical Note

Political official and activist Bill Perkins was born on April 18, 1949 in the South Bronx neighborhood of New York City. After completing high school preparatory courses at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, Perkins was awarded a full scholarship to attend the elite Collegiate Preparatory School during high school. Following graduation, he received a full scholarship to attend Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where he earned his B.A. degree in political science in 1972.

After graduating from Brown University, Perkins returned to New York City, where he worked as a social worker and tenant organizer. Encouraged by former Harlem politician, Bill Lynch, Perkins founded the Sojourner Truth Democratic Club as a base for his community activism. In 1998, Perkins was elected to the New York City Council, where he served as deputy majority leader during his seven year tenure. Perkins garnered national attention as an outspoken advocate for progressive issues, including public health, human rights, community services, and education reform. He sponsored the Childhood Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention Act of 2004, and tackled New York City's rat infestation problem. As an advocate of public education, he also secured funding for scholarships, full-time staffing, and college preparatory courses for the City University of New York (CUNY) system. In 2006, Perkins was elected to the New York State Senate as a representative of New York City's 30th District, which encompassed Harlem, East Harlem, the Upper West Side, and Washington Heights. Perkins supported raising the minimum wage, reforming the juvenile justice system to prevent minors from being sentenced as adults, setting limits on the solitary confinement of prisoners, and prohibiting eating on subways to minimize the rat population. In 2007, Perkins was the first New York City politician to support presidential hopeful Barack Obama.

After leaving the New York Senate in 2017, Perkins returned to the New York City Council as a representative of the 9th District. He introduced the Patriot Act Resolution in the City Council, and sponsored landmark legislation to protect the rights of gay, lesbian and transgender communities.

Perkins is married to Pamela Green.

Bill Perkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 26, 2016.

## Related Entries

**Dartmouth College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A. in Political Science**

**Collegiate School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**High School Diploma**

**Brown University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**Unknown** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Tenant Organizer**

**New York City Council** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1998 to 2005]

**Councilman**

**New York State Senate** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2006 to ?]

**Senator**

**Sojourner Truth Democratic Club** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1974 to ?]

**Founder**

**New American Movement** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1974 to ?]

**Affiliate**

**Pittsburgh NAM** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1982 to ?]

**Member**

**Democratic Socialists of America** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1985 to ?]

## Member