

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Craig Watkins

PERSON

Watkins, Craig, 1967-

Alternative Names: Craig Watkins;

Life Dates: November 16, 1967-

Place of Birth: Dallas, Texas, USA

Work: Dallas, TX

Occupations: Lawyer

Biographical Note

Lawyer Craig Watkins was born on November 16, 1967 in Dallas, Texas to Richard Watkins and Paula Watkins. Watkins graduated from David W. Carter High School in Dallas, Texas in 1986. He earned his B.A. degree in political science from Prairie View A&M University in Prairie View, Texas in 1990 and received his J.D. degree from the Texas Wesleyan University School of Law in Fort Worth, Texas in 1994.

Watkins began his legal career working in the Dallas city attorney and public defender's office. He subsequently left the City of Dallas office and formed his private practice, Craig Watkins Attorney at Law, PLLC, where he worked mainly as a licensed bail bondsman. Although he campaigned and lost a 2002 election for district attorney, Watkins won the election in 2006 and became the first African American district attorney elected in the State of Texas. He served as district attorney from 2007 until 2015, during which time he was credited with securing a 99.4% conviction rate with a focus on prosecuting cases of child sexual abuse. Watkins also worked to resolve cases of wrongful conviction through the use of DNA testing and the review of evidence illegally withheld from defense attorneys. Watkins ran for re-election as district attorney in 2014, but was defeated by former Judge Susan Hawk.

As district attorney, Watkins attracted state and national recognition for his work. He was featured in Texas Monthly, Jet, and Ebony magazines in 2007. In 2008, Watkins was named Texan of the Year by the Dallas Morning News. During the same year, he was featured on an episode of 60 Minutes. Watkins also appeared on PBS NewsHour in a live interview with journalist Ray Suarez for his office's 2011 exoneration of Cornelius Dupree, who was previously convicted of armed robbery in Texas.

Watkins' involvement in the community included Friendship-West Baptist Church,

Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated, the Circle 10 Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and the Prairie View A&M Alumni Association.

Watkins and his wife, Tanya, have three children: Chad, Cale, and Taryn.

Craig Watkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 14, 2017.

Related Entries

David W. Carter High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Adelle Turner Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Prairie View A&M University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

William Hawley Atwell Law Academy [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Texas A&M University School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Dallas County Public Defender's Office [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1995 to 1998]

Attorney

Craig Watkins Law Firm, PLLC [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1998 to ?]

Attorney

Dallas County District Attorney's Office [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2007 to 2014]

District Attorney

Phi Beta Kappa Fraternity [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Jack and Jill of America, Inc [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

