

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gail Berry West

PERSON

West, Gail Berry, 1942-

**Alternative Names:** Gail Berry West;

**Life Dates:** September 29, 1942-

**Place of Birth:** Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

**Residence:** Washington, District of Columbia

**Occupations:** Lawyer

## Biographical Note

Lawyer Gail Berry West was born on September 29, 1942 in Cincinnati, Ohio to Johnnie Mae Newton and Theodore Berry. She received her B.A. degree in history from Fisk University in 1964, graduating magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. West went on to receive her M.A. degree in history from the University of Cincinnati in 1965 and her J.D. degree from Howard University School of Law in 1968.

In 1969, West began her career in the New York office of the general counsel for the International Business Machine Corporation (IBM). Upon moving to Washington, D.C., she transferred to the data processing division and also served as an attorney in litigation analysis, where she assisted in the litigation between IBM and the federal government. In 1977, West joined the Carter administration as special assistant to Patricia Roberts Harris, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She went on to work for Sarah Weddington, assistant to President Jimmy Carter, and served on the White House Task Force on Sex Discrimination. In 1980, West became deputy assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of the Air Force in Reserve Affairs and Installations. She was responsible for policy, program guidance and executive direction for equal employment laws and regulations. She then worked as an attorney and consultant for several companies seeking contracts with the federal government. In 1983, she became executive director of government affairs for Bell Communications (Bellcore), where she served for twelve years until 1995, when she became director of government relations for Armstrong World Industries (AWI). From 2003 to 2007, West served as a consultant for AWI until her retirement.

West served on the board of trustees for the Corcoran Gallery of Art, WETA, Meridian International Center, the Fisher House Foundation, the Arena Stage, the Decatur House Council, the D.C. Commission on Fine Arts, and the National Museum of American

History. She served as the vice regent for the District of Columbia to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, on the board of the White House Historical Association, the Hillwood Estate Museum & Gardens, and as a member of the dean's council for the Washington National Cathedral.

West is the recipient of numerous awards including; IBM Regional Manager's Merit Award for Outstanding Contribution, Air Force Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service, Bellcore President's Recognition Award and the Armstrong General Manager's Award for Team Excellence.

West and her husband, the late Togo D. West, Jr., have two daughters: Tiffany West Smink and Hilary Carter West.

Gail Berry West was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on January 17, 2019

## Related Entries

**Fisk University** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**University of Cincinnati** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**M.A.**

**Howard University School of Law** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**White House Public Liaison Office** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1979 to 1980]

**Special Assistant to Assistant of President of Public Liason Offices**

**International Business Machines (IBM)** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1969 to 1972]

**General Counsel**

**International Business Machines (IBM)** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1972 to 1975]

**Litigation Analyst**

**International Business Machines (IBM)** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1975 to 1977]

**General House Counsel**

**International Business Machines (IBM)** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1968 to 1969]

**House Counsel**

**Department of Housing and Urban Development** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1977 to 1979]

**Special Assistant to the Secretary**

**U.S. Air Force** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1980 to 1981]

**Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of the Air Force Manpower, Reserve  
and Affairs Installations**

**Department of Defense** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1981 to 1983]

**Consultant**

**Government of Washington, D.C.** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1981 to 1983]

**Attorney**

**Howard University School of Law** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1982 to 1983]

**Associate Professor**

**Bell Communications Research** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1983 to 1995]

**Executive Director Government Affairs**

**Armstrong World Industries** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1995 to 2003]

**Director of Governmental Relations**

**Armstrong World Industries** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 2003 to 2007]

**Consultant**

**Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Board**

**National Museum of African American History and Culture** [MEMBEROf]

[from 2005 to ?]

**Board of Directors**

**Corcoran Gallery of Art** [MEMBEROf]

[from 1983 to 2000]

**Board of Trustees**

**Arena Stage** [MEMBEROf]

[from 1992 to 2000]

**Honorary Member**

**Meridian International Center** [MEMBEROf]

[from 1994 to 2000]

**Board of Trustees**

**Decatur House Council** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1994 to 2010]

**Board**

**WETA-TV** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1995 to 2001]

**Board**

**Cathedral Chapter of Washington National Cathedral** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1997 to 2006]

**Board**

**Fisher House Foundation** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2000 to ?]

**Board of Trustees**

**D.C. Commission on Fine Arts** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2003 to 2009]

**Board**

**National Museum of American History** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2005 to ?]

**Board**

**Sulgrave Club** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2005 to ?]

**Board Member**

**The White House Historical Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2010 to ?]

**Board**

**Hillwood Estate Museum & Gardens** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2011 to ?]

**Board**