

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Jeh C. Johnson

PERSON

Johnson, Jeh Charles, 1957-

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable Jeh C. Johnson;

**Life Dates:** September 11, 1957-

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

**Residence:** Montclair, NJ

**Work:** New York, NY

**Occupations:** Lawyer; Cabinet Appointee

## Biographical Note

Cabinet officer and lawyer Jeh C. Johnson was born on September 11, 1957 in New York City to Norma Edelin and Jeh Vincent Johnson. He graduated from Roy C. Ketcham High School in Wappingers Falls, New York in 1975. He then received his B.A. degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia in 1979, and his J.D. degree from Columbia Law School in New York City in 1982.

In 1982, Johnson was hired at the law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell, and later joined the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP in 1984 as an associate. From 1989 to 1991, Johnson served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of New York. He subsequently became the first African American partner at Paul Weiss. In 1998, Johnson was appointed by President Bill Clinton to serve as general counsel of the U.S. Department of the Air Force until 2001, when he returned to Paul, Weiss. Johnson was later appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as general counsel for the U.S. Department of Defense in 2009. In 2012, Johnson returned to private law practice. The following year, Johnson was nominated by President Obama as Secretary of Homeland Security and served until 2017. He then rejoined the law firm of Paul Weiss as partner.

Johnson has served as chairman of the New York City Bar's Judiciary Committee and was elected as a fellow by the American College of Trial Lawyers in 2004. He has also served as special counsel to John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign, on the board of directors for Lockheed Martin, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Center for a New American Security. In 2008, Johnson was a delegate for the Democratic National Convention. He has also served as a non-resident senior fellow for the Harvard

Kennedy School of Business and as a trustee for Adelphi University.

In 2017, Johnson was named Cyber Security and Data Privacy Trailblazer by the National Law Journal and was honored with the Anti-Defamation League's Gorowitz Institute Service Award. He also received the Theodore Roosevelt Leadership Award, the NYSBA Pioneer Award, John J. McCloy Award, and the Ronald Reagan Peace Through Strength Award. In 2018, Johnson was listed among Savoy magazine's Most Influential Black Lawyers; and, in 2019, he received Columbia's University's Annual Black Alumni Council Heritage Award. He also has ten honorary degrees.

Jeh C. Johnson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 9, 2019.

## Related Entries

**Columbia Law School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**Morehouse College** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**P.S. 143 Louis Armstrong School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Poughkeepsie Day School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Sheafe Road Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Oak Grove Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Wappinger Falls Junior High School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Roy C. Ketcham High School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Sullivan & Cromwell** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1982 to 1984]

**Attorney**

**Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1984 to ?]

**Associate; Partner**

**Southern District of New York** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1989 to 1991]

**Assistant U.S. Attorney**

**Department of the Air Force** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1998 to 2001]

**General Counsel**

**Department of Defense** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 2009 to 2012]

**General Counsel**

**Department of Homeland Security** [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 2013 to 2017]

**Secretary of Homeland Security**

**Lockheed Martin** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Board**

**Harvard Kennedy School of Business** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Non-Resident Senior Fellow**

**Council on Foreign Relations** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Adelphi University** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Trustee**

**New York Community Trust** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Trustee**

**Vera Institute** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Director**

**New York Hall of Science** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Director**

**Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law** [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

**Director**

**New York City Bar Association** [MEMBEROf]

[from 2001 to 2004]

**Chair**