

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jewel Lafontant-MANKarious

PERSON

Lafontant-Mankarious, Jewel, 1922-1997

Alternative Names: Jewel Lafontant-MANKarious; Jewel Lafontant-Mankarious; Jewal MANKarious; Jewel LaFontant-MANKarious ; Jewel Lafontant

Life Dates: April 28, 1922-May 31, 1997

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Occupations: Lawyer

Biographical Note

Lawyer Jewel Lafontant-MANKarious was born on April 28, 1922 in Chicago, Illinois to Aida Arabella and C. Francis Stradford, an attorney and co-founder of the National Bar Association. Lafontant-MANKarious was raised in Chicago and graduated from Englewood High School. She went on to receive her A.B. degree in political science from Oberlin College in 1943, and her J.D. degree from the University of Chicago Law School in 1946. Lafontant-MANKarious was the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Chicago Law School.

In the late 1940s, Lafontant-MANKarious and her then husband, John Rogers, Sr., went into practice together in the law firm of Rogers, Rogers, and Strayhorn. Lafontant-MANKarious also worked as a trial attorney for the Chicago Legal Aid Society, where she handled landlord-tenant disputes from 1947 to 1953. In 1955, during President Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration, she became the first African American woman to serve as assistant U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. Following that post, she was appointed by President Richard Nixon as the first African American deputy solicitor general in 1973. During President George H. W. Bush's administration, from 1989 to 1993, Lafontant-MANKarious assumed the roles of U.S. ambassador-at-large and U.S. coordinator for refugee affairs. She also served as the vice chairperson of the U.S. Advisory Commission on International, Educational and Cultural Affairs.

During her career, Lafontant-MANKarious served on more than twenty corporate boards, including Jewel Companies, Inc., Continental Bank, Mobil Corporation, Revlon, Inc., Ariel Capital Management, and Pan American Airlines. She served as secretary of the National Bar Association from 1956 to 1964, and was active in the Cook County Bar Association, Delta Sigma Theta sorority, the Commercial Club of Chicago, the Economic Club of Chicago, and the Chicago branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Lafontant-MANKarious received many awards, including the Cook County Bar Association Achievement Award; the University of Chicago citation for public service; the CARE Foundation's International Humanitarian Award; and numerous honorary degrees.

Jewel Lafontant-MANKarious was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 5, 1993.

Lafontant-MANKarious passed away on May 31, 1997 at age 75. Her son is John Rogers, Jr., founder and chief executive officer of Ariel Investments.

Related Entries

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

J.D.

United States Department of Justice [EMPLOYEEOF]
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Deputy Solicitor General

United States Department of State [EMPLOYEEOF]
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Ambassador-at-Large

United States Advisory Commission on International Educational and Cultural Affairs [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Vice Chair

Jewel Lafontant-MANKarious Papers, Oberlin College.