

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Les Brown

PERSON

**Brown, Les, 1945-**

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable Les Brown; Leslie Calvin Brown

**Life Dates:** February 17, 1945-

**Place of Birth:** Miami, Florida, USA

**Work:** Atlanta, GA

**Occupations:** State Representative

## Biographical Note

Motivational speaker Les Brown was born Leslie Calvin Brown on February 17, 1945, in Miami, Florida. After giving birth to Brown and his twin brother, Wes, on the floor of an abandoned building, Brown's biological mother gave her sons up for adoption when they were six weeks old to Mrs. Mamie Brown. When he was in fifth grade, Brown was forced back a grade by the school's principal after being disruptive in class. Brown's demotion subsequently led him to being placed in special education classes and labeled as mentally retarded. As an adolescent, Brown attended Booker T. Washington High School where he was influenced by a speech and drama instructor who encouraged him to pursue a career in radio broadcasting.

After graduating from high school and briefly working for the Department of Sanitation, Brown worked as an errand boy for a Miami Beach radio station. At the station, Brown observed the disc jockeys with hopes of one day becoming an on-air personality. His break came when one of the disc jockeys became inebriated. Brown stood in for him and then was hired as a disc jockey. In the late 1960s, Brown moved to Columbus, Ohio, to work for WVKO Radio, where he became active in the community. Brown's political activism in Columbus won him a seat with the 29th House District of the Ohio State Legislature. In his first year, Brown passed more legislature than any other freshman representative in Ohio State legislative history. In his third term, Brown served as chair of the Human Resources Committee.

In 1981, Brown left the Ohio State House of Representatives to care for his ailing mother back in Florida. While in Miami, he continued to focus on social issues by developing a youth center training program. In 1986, Brown entered the public speaking arena on a full time basis and formed Les Brown Enterprises, Inc. In 1989, Brown received the National Speakers Association's highest award, the Council of

Peers Award of Excellence (CPAE). In 1990, Brown recorded the Emmy Award-winning series of speeches entitled You Deserve, which became the lead fundraising program of its kind for pledges to PBS stations nationwide. In 1991, Toastmasters International selected Brown as one of the world's best speakers and awarded him the Golden Gavel Award.

Brown ranks amongst the nation's leading authorities in understanding and stimulating human potential; he is a featured guest on many radio broadcasting stations and is often hired by professional corporations to teach and inspire new levels of achievement.

## Related Entries

**Booker T. Washington High School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Frederick R. Douglass Elementary** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**WV KO radio** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**disc jockey**

**WMBM radio** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1966 to ?]

**disc jockey**

**Ohio State House of Representative** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1977 to 1981]

**State Representative**

**WEDR radio** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1982 to ?]

**disc jockey**

**Les Brown Enterprises** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1986 to ?]

**Motivational Speaker**

**National Speakers Association** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1986 to ?]

**Member**