

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with J. Terry Edmonds

PERSON

Edmonds, J. Terry, 1949-

Alternative Names: J. Terry Edmonds;

Life Dates: September 9, 1949-

Place of Birth: Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Residence: New York, NY

Occupations: Presidential Appointee; Speechwriter

Biographical Note

Speechwriter Terry Edmonds was born on September 9, 1949 in Baltimore, Maryland. The son of Naomi Parker, a waitress, Edmonds grew up in the projects of Baltimore's inner-city. He spent time in a foster home and his family was on welfare for a number of years, but Edmonds went on to be the first in his family to attend college. He graduated from Morgan State University in 1973, with his B.A. degree in English.

In 1978, Edmonds was hired as a public relations and communications specialist at the Maryland Transit Administration. Then, in 1982, he took a position as director of public relations for Trahan, Burden and Charles Advertising. While working at Trahan, Burden and Charles, Edmonds also served as director of communications at the Joint Center for Political Studies, a Washington, D.C. think tank, from 1985 until 1987. In 1987, he was hired as a press secretary in the office of Kweisi Mfume, at that time a newly elected United States representative from Maryland. Edmonds worked in public relations for Macro Systems in 1988, Blue Cross and Blue Shield in 1989, the University Research Corporation in 1990, and R.O.W. Sciences in 1991. Then, in 1993, he was hired as a senior speechwriter for the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala. After serving under Shalala for two years, Edmonds worked as a speechwriter for President Bill Clinton in 1995, making him the first African American speechwriter for a United States President. In 1997, Edmonds was promoted to deputy director of speechwriting, and, in 1999, he was appointed by President Clinton as the director of speechwriting and assistant to the president.

In 2002, Edmonds was hired as the director of editorial management at AARP, and, in 2005, he served as the executive speechwriter for Time Warner, Inc. Edmonds then went on to work as a speechwriter for the Corporation for National and Community Service, as well as the senior advisor and speechwriter for NASA Administrator

Charles Bolden. He was also appointed associate vice president and editorial director of Columbia University.

Terry Edmonds was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 26, 2013.

Related Entries

Morgan State University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.A.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1985 to ?]

Senior Advisor and Speechwriter

Columbia University [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1979 to 1987]

Associate Vice President and Editorial Director

Maryland Transit Administration [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1978 to 1982]

Public Relations / Communications Specialist

Trahan, Burden and Charles Advertising [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1989 to ?]

Director of Public Relations

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1985 to 1987]

Director of Communications

United States House of Representatives [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1987 to 1988]

Press Secretary

Macro Systems [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1999 to ?]

Public Relations Consultant

Blue Cross Blue Shield [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1957 to ?]

Manager of Media Relations

University Research Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1990 to 1991]

Public Relations Manager

R.O.W. Sciences [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1991 to 1993]

Task Manager

United States Secretary of Health and Human Services [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1993 to 1995]

Senior Speechwriter

White House [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1995 to 1997]

Speechwriter

White House [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1997 to 1999]

Deputy Director of Speechwriter

White House [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1999 to 2001]

Director of Speechwriting / Assistant to the President

AARP [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2002 to 2005]

Director of Editorial Management

Time Warner, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2005 to ?]

Executive Speechwriter

Corporation for National and Community Service [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2010 to ?]

Speechwriter