

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Jerry Washington

PERSON

Washington, Jerry, 1940-

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable Jerry Washington;

**Life Dates:** December 23, 1940-November 9, 2020

**Place of Birth:** Merigold, Mississippi, USA

**Residence:** Chicago, IL

**Occupations:** State Representative

## Biographical Note

Jerry Washington was born on December 23, 1940 in Merrigold, Mississippi. He moved with his family to the Chicago area and attended Bloom Township High School in Chicago Heights and Dunbar Vocational High School in Chicago. Upon graduating from high school, Washington attended Wilson Junior College (now Kennedy-King College) and Northwestern University.

After marrying Ella Willoughby and starting a family, Washington was forced to hold two jobs while continuing his education. During the early 1960s, Washington became involved with the Young Republicans Organization, primarily because his father was a Republican precinct captain. He ran for elective office in 1972, but was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, he worked as a marketing group consultant for Blue Cross Blue Shield Insurance. In 1984, Washington was elected to represent the 24th District in the Illinois General Assembly. In that role, Washington served as a member of the House Committees on Appropriation, Election, Revenue and others. He was also a member of the 84th General Assembly Special Education Task Force. During his term in office, Washington was the recipient of several awards and commendations.

Washington was one of the few Republicans in the Legislative Black Caucus, often working with and supporting his black Democratic counterparts. For instance, his cooperative efforts with Democratic Senator Howard Brookins resulted in the expansion of the DuSable Museum of African American History. Washington's final act in the state legislature was to work for passage of a joint House/Senate resolution that created housing for retired Illinois veterans. Several other challenges plagued Washington during and after his tenure in office. In 1987, he suffered a brain aneurysm

while driving, luckily recovering after being in a coma for two weeks. Ten years later, a brain tumor was operated on, but was found to be benign. Washington has also suffered from diabetes for most of his life.

Washington and his wife, Ella, have seven children and ten grandchildren. An outspoken advocate for educational reform, Washington has served as a consultant for 21st Century V.O.T.E. and currently serves as a member of the Englewood Local School Council.

Washington was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 9, 2000.

Washington passed away on November 9, 2020.

## Related Entries

**Bloom High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Northwestern University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Kennedy–King College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Northwestern University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Marketing Consultant**

**Illinois General Assembly** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1984 to ?]

**State Representative**

**Parent Advisory Council** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Vice President**

**United American Progress Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1985 to ?]

**Member**

**United States Small Business Association of Illinois** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1985 to ?]

**Black Local School Council's Network** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1989 to ?]

