

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Julius Chambers

PERSON

Chambers, Julius L. (Julius LeVonne), 1936-

**Alternative Names:** Julius Chambers;

**Life Dates:** October 6, 1936-August 2, 2013

**Place of Birth:** Mount Gilead, North Carolina, USA

**Work:** Charlotte, NC

**Occupations:** Civil Rights Lawyer

## Biographical Note

Born in Mount Gilead, North Carolina, in 1936, veteran civil rights lawyer, activist and educator Julius L. Chambers was influenced by the racial intolerance he saw growing up in a rural community east of Charlotte. After graduating from high school in 1954, he entered North Carolina Central University, where he graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in history and was president of the student body. He then attended the University of Michigan, earning an M.A. in history. Chambers began law school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1959, where he became the first African American editor-in-chief of the school's law review. Upon graduating in 1962, Chambers ranked first in his class of 100 students. He went on to earn his LL.M. from Columbia University Law School in 1964.

Chambers became the first intern with the new NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF) in 1963. Subsequently, in June 1964, he opened his own practice in Charlotte, which eventually became the first integrated law firm in North Carolina. Together with his founding partners, James E. Ferguson II and Adam Stein, this firm is credited with influencing more landmark state and federal legislation in school desegregation, employment and voting rights than any other in the United States. Together with lawyers of the LDF, they helped shape civil rights law by winning benchmark United States Supreme Court rulings such as the famous decision of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), which led to federally mandated busing, helping integrate public schools across the country. Chambers and his team also won in two of the Supreme Court's most monumental Title VII employment discrimination decisions, *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* (1971) and *Albemarle Paper Co. v. Moody* (1974).

In 1984, Chambers left his firm to become director-counsel of the LDF. Under

Chambers' leadership, the organization fought for civil rights legislation and affirmative action programs that began in the 1970s and 1980s. Remaining devoted to education, however, he returned to his alma mater, North Carolina Central University, where he served as chancellor for eight years. Chambers published numerous books, teaches at various law schools, and was a member of many boards and organizations.

Chambers passed away on August 2, 2013 at age 76.

## Related Entries

**North Carolina Central University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**University of Michigan** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.A.**

**Ferguson Stein Chambers Gresham & Sumter PA** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1964 to 1984]

**Founder**

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1984 to 1993]

**Director-Counsel**

**North Carolina Central University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1993 to 2001]

**Chancellor**

**Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]