

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Thomas Battle

PERSON

Battle, Thomas C.

Alternative Names: Thomas Battle; Thomas Cornell Battle

Life Dates: March 19, 1946-

Place of Birth: Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Residence: Fort Washington, MD

Occupations: Archivist

Biographical Note

Librarian, artist, curator, and historian Thomas Cornell Battle was born on March 19, 1946, at Howard University's Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C., to Thomas Oscar Battle and Lenore Thomas Battle. Battle attended Colonel Charles Young Elementary School, Bishop Henry McNeil Turner Elementary School, River Terrace Elementary School and Carter G. Woodson Junior High School. Battle graduated from William McKinley High School in 1964 while working at Mt. Pleasant Public Library. At Howard University, Battle was mentored by Loraine Williams and Rayford W. Logan and was influenced by Stokeley Carmichael, James Nabrit, Leon Damas, and Nathan Hare, among others. Battle was awarded his B.A. degree in history in 1968; he earned his M.L.S. degree from the University of Maryland College of Information Studies in 1971, and his Ph.D. degree in American studies from George Washington University in 1983. Battle's dissertation was a bibliographical study of slavery in the District of Columbia.

In 1972, advised by Oswald Person, Battle applied for and was hired as a reference librarian by Howard's Moorland-Spingarn Research Collection, then under distinguished director, Dorothy Porter. During this period, Battle was granted a fellowship through the Black Caucus of the American Library Association to study in Sierra Leone for a year. Michael Winston was director of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Collection as Battle became founding curator of the manuscript division in 1974; later, Battle became university archivist. In 1986, Battle was named director of Howard's Moorland-Spingarn Research Collection, the largest black owned archive of black history and culture in the world.

Committed to illuminating the lives of pioneer bibliophiles like Arthur Schomburg, Alexander Cromwell, and Jesse Moorland, Battle, with Paul Coates and Eleanor Des

Virney Sinnette, authored *Black Bibliophiles and Collectors: Preservers of Black History* in 1983. The realization of Howard's unique place in world history prompted the book, *Howard in Retrospect: Images of the Capstone* co-authored with Clifford L. Muse, Jr. in 1995. Battle co-edited with Donna M. Wells on the 2007 work, *Legacy: Treasures of Black History*, which features more than 150 historic items including documents, letters, images, artifacts and articles by twelve scholars including: Joseph E. Harris, Greg Carr, James Turner and Deborah Willis.

Battle taught history at Howard University, the University of Maryland, and Amherst College. In 2006, the University of Maryland College of Information Studies (CLIS) presented Battle with the James Partridge Award.

Related Entries

McKinley Technology High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Charles E. Young Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Carter G. Woodson Junior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

River Terrace Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Bishop Henry McNeil Turner Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Howard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

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

George Washington University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

District of Columbia Public Library [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Various Positions

Moorland-Spingarn Research Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

Black Caucus of the American Library Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

National Conference of African American Librarians [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Society of American Archivists [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Association for the Study of African American Life and History [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

Member