

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Doris Bunte

PERSON

Bunte, Doris, 1933-

Alternative Names: The Honorable Doris Bunte;

Life Dates: July 2, 1933-February 15, 2021

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: Brookline, MA

Occupations: State Representative

Biographical Note

State representative and city official Doris Bunte was born on July 2, 1933 in New York City to Evelyn Johnson Brown and Herbert Brown. She attended Food Trades Vocational High School, but left before receiving her diploma. In 1953, she moved to Boston, Massachusetts with her three children, and earned her G.E.D. in 1968. Bunte enrolled in Harvard University in 1978, where she earned a certificate in environmental studies from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and her M.A. degree in education in 1982.

Upon her arrival in Boston, Bunte joined the Barcolene Company. She moved to the Orchard Park Housing Projects, where she joined the maintenance management council and co-founded the Boston Public Housing Tenants Policy Council. In 1969, Bunte was nominated to the Boston Housing Authority board, making her the first public housing tenant to serve. She was dismissed from the Boston Housing Authority board in 1971 by Mayor Kevin H. White, but was reinstated by the Massachusetts Supreme Court. In 1973, she was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, becoming the first African American woman to serve in the Massachusetts legislature. There, Bunte helped found the Massachusetts Legislative Black Caucus and the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators. After twelve years as a representative, she left the Massachusetts legislature to become the director of the Boston Housing Authority, where she headed public housing integration efforts. Bunte left the Boston Housing Authority in 1992, and began working for the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University and the Boston University School of Public Health, where she continued tenant-focused activist work. Bunte retired in 2010.

She held positions on the National Rent Board and in the National Tenants Organization. She also served on the Critical Minority Affairs Committee and the

National Association of Housing and Development, as well as the Citizens Housing and Planning Association. Bunte received recognition for her contributions, including being featured in a mural at the historic Alvah Kittredge House and in an exhibit called “Portraits in Black: Gaining Ground, Holding Office” in the Museum of African American History, Boston and Nantucket in 2004.

Doris Bunte was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 19, 2016.

Bunte passed away on February 15, 2021.

Related Entries

[STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Food Trades Vocational High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Harvard Graduate School of Design [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Harvard Graduate School of Education [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

MAEd

Boston University Metropolitan College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Massachusetts Boston [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Massachusetts State Government [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1973 to 1985]

Massachusetts House of Representatives

Boston Housing Authority [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1985 to 1992]

Director

Northeastern University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1998 to 2010]

Fundraiser, Center for the Study of Sport in Society

Knowledge is Power Training Program [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2008 to 2010]

Founder

Caucus of Women Legislatures [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Co-Founder

Boston Housing Authority [MEMBEROF]
[from 1969 to 1971]

Board Member

Boston Housing Authority [MEMBEROF]
[from 1972 to 1973]

Board Member

Black Legislative Caucus [MEMBEROF]
[from 1975 to ?]

Co-Founder

Northeastern University's Community Enrichment Fellows [MEMBEROF]
[from 2004 to ?]

Steering Committee Member