

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Richard Hatcher

PERSON

Hatcher, Richard G., 1933-

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable Richard Hatcher;

**Life Dates:** July 10, 1933-December 13, 2019

**Place of Birth:** Michigan City, Indiana, USA

**Residence:** Gary, IN

**Work:** Bloomington, IN

**Occupations:** Law Professor; Mayor

## Biographical Note

Successful politician, social servant and educator Richard Gordon Hatcher was born on July 10, 1933, in Michigan City, Indiana. He received a B.S. degree in business and government from Indiana University in 1956, and a bachelor of law with honors in criminal law and a J.D. from Valparaiso University School of Law in 1959.

After moving to Gary, Indiana, Hatcher began practicing law in East Chicago, Indiana. In 1961, he began serving as a deputy prosecutor for Lake County, Indiana, until he was elected to Gary's City Council in 1963. He was the first and only freshman elected president of the City Council in Gary's history. When he was elected as mayor of Gary in 1967, Hatcher was the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city. He remained in office for an unprecedented five terms, until 1987, when he was defeated in a bid for a sixth term. During his twenty years as mayor, Hatcher was known for developing innovative approaches to urban problems and for being a national and international spokesman for civil rights, minorities, the poor and America's cities.

In 1988, Hatcher started his own consulting firm, R. Gordon Hatcher & Associates. From 1988 to 1989, he worked as an Institute of Politics fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School. He also began teaching political science at Roosevelt University in 1989 and then at Valparaiso University, where he is a senior research professor, in 1991. In the summer of 1996, Hatcher taught a law course at Cambridge University in England, and since 1989 he has worked as an adjunct professor at Indiana University. As a long time friend and advisor to the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Hatcher also played a leading role in Jackson's bids for the presidency as campaign chairman in 1984 and an adviser in 1988. Hatcher has authored numerous articles about urban affairs, civil

rights, politics and law and has been working on a book. Hatcher has many affiliations and memberships with various civic, urban, political and civil rights organizations and has received a myriad of awards and honors for his lifetime of dedication to his community.

Hatcher passed away on December 13, 2019.

The Honorable Richard Hatcher was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on December 11, 2002.

## Related Entries

**Park Elementary School** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Elston Middle School** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Indiana University** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**Valparaiso University School of Law** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**Harvard University Kennedy School** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Institute of Politics Fellow**

**Lake County, Indiana** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1961 to 1963]

**Deputy Prosecutor**

**Gary Common Council** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 2006 to 2011]

**City Councilman**

**City of Gary, Indiana** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 196409 to 197008]

**Mayor of Gary**

**R. Gordon Hatcher & Associates** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1988 to ?]

**Founder**

**Roosevelt University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1989 to ?]

**Professor**

**Indiana University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1989 to ?]

**Adjunct Professor**

**Valparaiso University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1991 to ?]

**Senior Research Professor**

**Cambridge University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1996 to ?]

**Instructor**