

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Leo Ellwood Holt

PERSON

Holt, Leo Ellwood, 1927-

Alternative Names: The Honorable Leo Ellwood Holt;

Life Dates: July 2, 1927-

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Civil Rights Lawyer; State Circuit Court Judge

Biographical Note

Leo Ellwood Holt, a retired Cook County Circuit Court judge, was born July 2, 1927 in Chicago, Illinois to Laverne Hamilton Holt and Pullman porter Miller Holt. Attending Willard Elementary School and Englewood High School, he dropped out at age sixteen to become a cook on the Santa Fe Railroad. After briefly returning to Englewood High, Holt joined the United States Army in 1945 and earned his diploma. In 1947, Holt enrolled at Wilson Junior College and received his A.A. degree in 1949. After studying accounting and business law at Roosevelt University, Holt entered John Marshall Law School, graduating with his L.L.B. degree in 1959.

In 1960, Holt passed the bar, got married and began private practice with former classmate, Earl Taylor. Working with attorney James Montgomery to defend Al Raby, Dick Gregory and other Chicago open housing activists, Holt's involvement bolstered the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Jesse L. Jackson. Holt was elected judge of Circuit Court of Cook County in 1986. In 2003, Holt received the Charles E. Freeman Award from the Illinois Judicial Council.

Holt's honors include the Richard Westbrook Award from Cook County Bar Association in 1975; the Robert Ming Award from the Cook County Bar Association in 1981; the Operation Push Community Service Award in 1981 and the South Suburban Leadership Council Community Service Award in 1985. Holt is an outspoken advocate of increasing the number of African Americans in the judiciary. Father of two grown daughters, Holt lives in Chicago.

Related Entries

Englewood High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Frances E. Willard Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

John Marshall Law School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Wilson Junior College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Roosevelt University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

City of Chicago [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Timekeeper

City of Chicago [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Public Defender

Private Practice [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Criminal Defense Attorney

Circuit Court of Cook County [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Judge

PUSH [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Volunteer