

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michael Roberts, Sr.

PERSON

Roberts, Michael V., 1948-

Alternative Names: Michael Roberts, Sr.; Michael Victor Roberts, Sr.

Life Dates: October 24, 1948-

Place of Birth: St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Residence: St. Louis, MO

Work: Saint Louis, MO

Occupations: City Alderman; Entrepreneur

Biographical Note

Entrepreneur Michael Victor Roberts, Sr. was born on October 24, 1948, in St. Louis, Missouri to Delores Talley Roberts and Victor Roberts. He grew up the first of four siblings. The Roberts family was educated in the St. Louis Public School System, and Roberts began working as a youth, earning money doing chores around the neighborhood and delivering newspapers. Roberts heard St. Louis' Dick Gregory talk about the Civil Rights Movement and was inspired. Graduating from Northwest High School in 1967, where he played the trombone and tennis, Roberts attended Central Missouri State University and Forest Park Community College. He met Jack Danforth at Camp Minnewanka and finished Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri as a Danforth Fellow. He began his first business selling dashikis and other African merchandise to area bookstores. Roberts studied law at St. Louis University School of Law, and in 1974, earned his J.D. degree and began Roberts-Roberts and Associates, a business and construction management firm headquartered in St. Louis.

In 1976, Roberts worked as St. Louis campaign manager for Jimmy Carter, and after Carter's election as U.S. President, he was a regular guest at the White House. One year later, Roberts was elected the youngest alderman in St. Louis. His brother, Steven C. Roberts, would claim this title two years later, serving along with Mike Jones, Virvus Jones and Wayman Smith. Roberts was the chief sponsor of the St. Louis Center and Union Station developments, and he was involved in major redevelopment efforts for the City of St. Louis.

In 1981, Roberts and his brother began Roberts Broadcasting. After establishing WRBU-TV in St. Louis, the Roberts Brothers would build eleven more television

stations across the country, from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Mobile, Alabama. While building these stations, the Roberts Brothers founded Roberts Construction Company in 1989. This additional business enterprise supplemented the commercial and residential developments the brothers had established in 1982 known as Roberts Brothers Properties.

In 1999, the Roberts Brothers opened the first Sprint PCS-affiliated wireless store in Jefferson City, Missouri. It was the only PCS-affiliated company owned by African Americans. The Roberts Companies include a \$460 million thirty-four-company organization, with an aviation division, a gated Bahamas community and other real estate developments. Roberts serves as chairman of the board, while his brother Steven serves as president.

Related Entries

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

Scullin Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Cupples Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Saint Louis University School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Lindenwood University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

University of Central Missouri [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

The Roberts Companies [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1974 to ?]

Founder and CEO

St. Louis Board of Aldermen [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1977 to 1985]

Alderman

National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators and Developers [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Chair

HOME, Inc. [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Founding Member

