

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Eleanor Traylor

PERSON

Traylor, Eleanor W.

**Alternative Names:** Eleanor Traylor;

**Life Dates:** December 12, 1933-

**Place of Birth:** Thomasville, Georgia, USA

**Residence:** Washington, D.C.

**Occupations:** African American Studies Scholar

## Biographical Note

Professor Eleanor Traylor was born on December 12, 1933 in Thomasville, Georgia to Esther and Philip Williams. She graduated with her B.A. degree in English from Spelman College in 1955, and went on to receive her M.A. degree in English from Atlanta University in 1956. She also received a Merrill Scholarship to study at the University of Stuttgart in German in 1957. She later earned her Ph.D. degree in English from Catholic University of America in 1976.

From 1959 to 1965, Traylor taught English courses at Howard University in Washington, D.C. She went on to become a professor of English at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland, where she taught from 1965 to 1990. While there, Traylor was a collaborating author alongside Toni Morrison on the textbook, College Reading Skills. She also served as the English department chair for the graduate school of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Traylor taught as a guest lecturer at Georgetown University in 1966; as a visiting professor at the African Studies and Research Center of Cornell University in 1979; and as an adjunct professor of drama at Howard University in 1968, where she produced a dramatic reading of Owen Dodson's The Dream Awake. In 1973, Traylor received a research fellowship to study African drama in Ghana and Nigeria. In 1990, she was hired as a graduate professor of English at Howard University. She also chaired the humanities division until 1993 when she was named chair of the Department of English at Howard University. As chair, Traylor established the annual Heart's Day Conference which honored African Americans in literature. During her tenure at Howard University, Traylor co-wrote several textbooks, worked as a consultant on the film Amistad and directed the production of Stepping Out of the Negro Caravan in collaboration with George Faison, Debbie Allen and other Howard University alumni.

Traylor served as director of evaluation procedures at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts as well as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. She also served on the board of the D.C. Black Repertory Theater Company. She was also an evaluator for the Afro-American Museums Association. In addition to working as a script writer and consultant for the Smithsonian Institution, Traylor also assisted the National Black Arts Festival as a literature consultant.

Traylor received several awards and honors for her work, including the Hazel Joan Bryant Award in 1987 as well as the Marcus Garvey Award, the Catholic University Alumni Achievement Award in literary criticism, and the Larry Neal-Georgia Douglas Johnson Award for literature and community service in 1989. In 1993, Traylor was honored with the African Heritage Studies Association Community Service Award and the Amoco Foundation's Excellence in Teaching Award. In addition to receiving a Doctor of Humane Letters from Spelman College in 2002, Traylor was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Howard University in 2017.

Eleanor Traylor was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 23, 2018.

## Related Entries

**Catholic University of America** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Clark Atlanta University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.A.**

**Spelman College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**Howard University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1959 to 1965]

**Instructor**

**Montgomery College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1965 to 1990]

**Professor**

**Department of Agriculture** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1966 to 1967]

**Chairman of English**

**Howard University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1968 to 1975]

**Professor**

**Tougaloo College** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1982 to 1982]

**Visiting Humanist**

**Howard University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1992 to ?]

**Professor**

**Howard University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1993 to 2009]

**Chair**

**D.C. Repertory Theater Company** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Board**

**College Language Association** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Modern Language Association** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**African Heritage Studies Association** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**