

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Matthew Little

PERSON

Little, Matthew, 1921-2014

Alternative Names: Matthew Little;

Life Dates: August 21, 1921-January 26, 2014

Place of Birth: Washington, North Carolina, USA

Residence: Roseville, MN

Occupations: Civil Rights Activist; Association
Branch Chief Executive

Biographical Note

Civil rights advocate Matthew Little has been one of Minnesota's most prominent black leaders. He was born on August 21, 1921 in Washington, North Carolina. As a youth he promised his parents he would become a doctor. Shortly after graduating from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in 1943, Little was drafted. After World War II, Little, an excellent student, could not get into medical school. Severely depressed, and ashamed he wanted to get to

the northernmost, coldest place he could find. He flipped a coin at the bus station and headed for Minneapolis, instead of Denver and for a year his family searched desperately for him. A year later, he picked up the phone and his mother said, "Brother, is that you?"

Leaving the formal version of segregation in the South behind him, Little settled in Minneapolis where he worked as a waiter in a hotel and at the local post office. When he sought a position as a firefighter, racial discrimination prevented his hiring and he learned a lesson about the north. Eventually, Little started his own successful landscaping business.

Little has been active in civil right efforts for over fifty years. As president of the Minnesota chapter of the NAACP, Little organized busloads of Minnesota activist for the historic 1963 March On Washington. He has rallied for continued support of affirmative action and desegregation of the Minnesota Public Schools. He supported the NAACP lawsuit against the government of Minnesota, which charged the public school system with failing to provide an equal education to all children. Little supported busing as the best solution to the problem of school inequality, which has placed him at odds with some local black politicians as well as the white ones. He cultivated a strong relationship and influence with the African American community and the business community and was instrumental in persuading the Minnesota Vikings management to hire Dennis Green as their first black head coach. He served as the chairman of the board of the Minnesota NAACP.

In recognition of his accomplishments and contributions to his community, Little has received numerous awards. He was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in May of 2002. Little and his wife Lucille lived in St. Paul. He passed away on January 26, 2014.

Matthew Little CivicMaker Civic Leader 141 words
Unidentified/BEG

Civil rights advocate Matthew Little has been one of Minnesota's most prominent black leaders. He was born on August 21, 1921, in Washington, North Carolina. Shortly after graduating from North Carolina A&T State University in 1943, Little moved to Minneapolis, where he continues to reside. Little was active in civil right efforts for more than fifty years. Formerly a president of the Minnesota chapter of the NAACP, Little then acted as its chairman. He rallied for continued support of affirmative action and desegregation. He supported the NAACP lawsuit against the government of Minnesota, which charged the public school system with failing to provide an equal education to all children. In recognition of his accomplishments and contributions to his community, Little was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in May 2002.

Related Entries

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

North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S. in biology

Howard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

