

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with James D. Montgomery

PERSON

Montgomery, James D., 1932-

**Alternative Names:** James D. Montgomery;

**Life Dates:** February 17, 1932-

**Place of Birth:** Louise, Mississippi, USA

**Residence:** Chicago, IL

**Work:** Chicago, IL

**Occupations:** Civil Rights Lawyer

## Biographical Note

James Douglas Montgomery was born on February 17, 1932 in Louise, Mississippi to Mildred and James Montgomery. A skilled litigator, Montgomery is renowned for his handling of civil rights cases, as well as criminal, personal injury and medical malpractice cases.

In 1949, Montgomery graduated from Wendell Phillips

High School in Chicago, Illinois. After receiving a B.A. from the University of Illinois in Champaign at Urbana, he enrolled in the university's College of Law and earned a J.D. in 1956. Montgomery went to work at the law firm of Rogers, Stayhorn and Harth, becoming a U.S. prosecutor in 1958. Going into private practice, he became a partner in different law firms and founded James D. Montgomery and Associates, Ltd. In the 1960s, his clients included the Blackstone Rangers and the Black Panthers. In 1983, Montgomery made history when he became the corporation counsel for the City of Chicago under Mayor Harold Washington. He was the first and only African American to hold this position. In 2000, Montgomery became a managing partner in the law firm of Cochran, Cherry, Givens, Smith and Montgomery and together with the well-known trial attorney Johnnie L. Cochran, they have successfully handled several high profile cases.

Montgomery has perfected his craft, lecturing throughout the country on trial and litigation techniques. He has spoken before for the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, DePaul University, the Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education, Harvard Law School and the University of Chicago. Montgomery has been honored with the Edward H. Wright Award, the Earl Burrus Dickerson Award and the National Bar Association's Hall of Fame Award. In 1999, the Illinois Academy of Lawyers inducted Montgomery as a laureate in the academy, describing him as a man who personifies the "greatness of the legal profession." Montgomery is married to Pauline Montgomery and has six adult children: Linda, James, Michelle, Lisa, Jewel and Jilian. The three oldest are members of the Illinois Bar.

## **Related Entries**

**Wendell Phillips Academy High School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**North Kenwood/Oakland Elementary School**

[STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**O.M. McNair Middle School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Melville W. Fuller Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**University of Illinois at Navy Pier** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**University of Illinois College of Law** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**U.S. Attorney's Office, Chicago** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 195810 to 196008]

**Assistant U.S. Attorney**

**Montgomery, Holt, and Bolden** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 196410 to 196606]

**Partner**

**Rogers, Rogers, Strayhorn and Harth** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1956 to 1958]

**Cochran, Cherry, Givens, Smith and Montgomery**

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2000 to ?]

**Managing Partner**

**City of Chicago** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 198305 to 198602]

**Corporation Counsel**

**Newman, Kipnis and Montgomery** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 196606 to 197007]

**Partner**

**James D. Montgomery and Associates** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1984 to ?]

**Founder**

**Montgomery and Holland** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 197709 to 198002]

**Partner**