

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Gilbert R. Mason, Sr.

PERSON

Mason, Gilbert R.

Alternative Names: Dr. Gilbert R. Mason, Sr.; Gilbert R. Mason Sr. M.D.

Life Dates: October 7, 1928-July 8, 2006

Place of Birth: Jackson, Mississippi, USA

Residence: Biloxi, Mississippi

Occupations: Consumer Activist;

Biographical Note

Gilbert R. Mason, Sr., “wade-in” activist and physician, was born in Jackson, Mississippi, on October 7, 1928. When he graduated from Jackson’s Lanier High School in 1945, Mason dreamed of becoming a doctor. He earned a B.S. degree from Tennessee State University in 1949. He earned an M.D. degree from Howard University Medical School in 1954 and served a year as an intern at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri.

Mason started a family practice in Biloxi, Mississippi, in 1955. In May 1959, he led a nonviolent protest against the “whites only” section of a federally funded Gulf Coast beach. Mason’s group was arrested. Subsequent “wade-ins” ignited some of the bloodiest white rioting in Mississippi history. These resulted in a successful antidiscrimination lawsuit against the state of Mississippi, the first such case filed in U.S. history. At the same time, Mason filed the first school desegregation lawsuit in the history of Biloxi, which he also won. Mason collaborated with other Mississippi NAACP activists, including Winston Hudson, Amzie Moore, Aaron Henry and Medgar Evers. He helped the NAACP join with CORE, SNCC and SCLC to form the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO). Mason played a role in COFO’s massive black voter registration drive, the Freedom Summer of 1964. Mason served as president of the Mississippi NAACP for thirty-three years.

The recipient of numerous awards as a physician, Mason was recognized with a special commendation by joint resolution of the Mississippi State Legislature on March 1, 2002 for his contributions to the Biloxi Regional Medical Center. He resided in Biloxi where he was known as “the civil rights doctor” until his death on July 8, 2006.

On Sunday, July 30, 2006, the mayor of Biloxi, Mississippi proclaimed it to be Dr.

Gilbert Mason Day in Biloxi.

Related Entries

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

Tennessee State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S.

Howard University College of Medicine [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.D.

Private Practice [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Homer G. Phillips Hospital (St. Louis, Missouri) [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1954 to 1955]

Medical Intern

Howard Memorial Hospital [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1955 to ?]

Physician