

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Adjoa Aiyetoro

PERSON

Aiyetoro, Adjoa, 1946-

**Alternative Names:** Adjoa Aiyetoro;

**Life Dates:** April 1, 1946-

**Place of Birth:** St. Louis, Missouri, USA

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

**Occupations:** Lawyer

## Biographical Note

Lawyer and civic activist Adjoa Aiyetoro received an A.B. degree from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1967, and two years later graduated from George Warren Brown School of Social Work with an M.S.W. degree. In 1978, she graduated cum laude from St. Louis University School of Law and was admitted to the Missouri Bar that year.

Aiyetoro worked as a community mental health specialist from 1970 to 1977. After obtaining her law degree, she served as staff attorney with the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice (1978-1982) and then as an attorney with the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation (1982-1993). As director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL) from 1993 to 1997, she intensified its advocacy efforts and strengthened the organization's fiscal position. Her legal activism within the NCBL has included criminal justice issues, the environmental justice movement, the D.C. statehood movement, and reparations for Africans and African descendants.

A leader in the reparations movement - which seeks acknowledgment that the transatlantic slave trade, slavery and colonialism were crimes against humanity - Aiyetoro is chief legal consultant to the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) and co-chairperson of the Reparations Coordinating Committee. She has also represented the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's UFORJE (United for Racial Justice: Truth, Reparations, Restoration and Reconciliation) campaign. In 2001, she was selected by the African and African Descendants Caucus to contribute to an international presentation and declaration and program of action concerning reparations.

As a visiting professor and scholar in residence at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Aiyetoro focused on chattel slavery and its legacy and taught a seminar on reparations. She is an adjunct professor at Washington College of Law, American University, where she teaches a course on litigating reparations for African Americans. Aiyetoro has served on the board of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) and the Steering Committee of the National Association of Black Social Workers. She is a popular speaker at international conferences and on national and local television and radio programs. She has testified before Congress and other legislative bodies concerning issues of race, class and gender injustices within the United States.

## Related Entries

**Gundlach Elem.** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Beaumont High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

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

**B.S.**

**Washington University in St Louis** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.S.W.**

**Saint Louis University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Chief Legal Consultant**

**University of California, Santa Barbara** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Visiting Professor and Scholar in Residence**

**American University Washington College of Law** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Adjunct Professor**

**St.Louis Community Mental Health Department, Malcom Bliss Hospital** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1970 to 1977]

**Mental Health Social Worker**

**United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1978 to 1982]

**Special Litigation Attorney**

**American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1982 to 1992]

**Staff Attorney, National Prison Project**

**National Conference of Black Lawyers** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2000 to 2001]

**Executive Director**

**Association of Black Psychologists** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**President**