

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Richard W. Roberts

PERSON

Roberts, Richard Warren,  
1953-

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable Richard W. Roberts; Richard W. Roberts ;

**Life Dates:** June 21, 1953-

**Place of Birth:** New York, New York, USA

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

**Occupations:** Federal District Court Judge; Lawyer

## Biographical Note

United States District Court Judge Richard Warren Roberts was born in New York City. Roberts graduated cum laude with an A.B. degree from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. In 1983, Roberts was a

founding member of the Washington chapter of Concerned Black Men, Inc. and served as the deputy general counsel of the organization. In 1978, Roberts received his Masters of International Administration degree from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. That same year, he received his J.D. degree from Columbia University.

From 1978 until 1982, Roberts served as a trial attorney in the criminal section of the Civil Rights Division for the United States Department of Justice. As a federal prosecutor, Roberts successfully prosecuted several high profile cases, including the killing of two Salt Lake City joggers in a racially motivated sniper attack. The offender, Joseph Paul Franklin, was a serial killer who was suspected of killing as many as twenty people between 1977 and 1980. Roberts's conviction led to Franklin's confession of various assassination attempts including magazine publisher Larry Flynt, and the 1980 shooting of Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Roberts worked in private practice in Washington, D.C. from 1982 to 1986 and as Assistant U.S. Attorney for the southern district of New York from 1986 to 1988. Roberts returned to Washington, D.C. in 1988, and worked for the U.S. Attorney's Office until 1995. In 1990, at the age of thirty-seven, Roberts prosecuted then Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry for violating federal narcotics laws. Mayor Barry had been arrested in a sting operation at the Vista Hotel by the FBI and Washington, D.C. police for crack cocaine use and possession.

After working as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Washington, D.C., in 1993, Roberts was appointed by U.S. Attorney Eric Holder as the principal Assistant U.S. Attorney, serving as second-in-command of the office. In 1995, Roberts was named chief of the criminal section of the Civil Rights Division by the United States Justice Department.

## Related Entries

**Vassar College** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Bachelor's**

**Columbia Law School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**The School for International Training Graduate**

**Institute** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Princeton University** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**U.S. Justice Department** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1978 to 1982]

**Trial Attorney**

**Covington and Burling LLP** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1982 to 1986]

**Attorney**

**U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of**

**New York** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1986 to 1988]

**Attorney**

**U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia**

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1988 to 1995]

**Principal Assistant U.S. Attorney**

**U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia**

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1995 to 1998]

**Head of the Civil Rights Division**

**U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia**

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1998 to 2016]

**Federal District Court Judge**

**Concerned Black Men, Inc. [MEMBEROF]**

[from ? to ?]

**Member, founder of the Washington, D.C.  
chapter**

**Black American Law Students Association [MEMBEROF]**

[from ? to ?]

**Member**