

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Bullard

PERSON

Bullard, Robert , 1946-

**Alternative Names:**

**Life Dates:** December 21, 1946-

**Place of Birth:** Elba, Alabama

**Residence:**

**Occupations:** Environmental Activist; Sociologist

## Biographical Note

Environmental activist and sociologist Robert Bullard was born on December 21, 1946, in Elba, Alabama, to Myrtle and Nehemiah Bullard. He was the fourth of five children. Growing up in Alabama during the 1950s, Bullard experienced the effects of a segregated community. After graduating from high school, Bullard went on to attend the Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University. He received his B.A. degree in history and government with a minor in sociology in 1968. He continued his education at Atlanta University, where he earned his M.S. degree in sociology in 1972. During his graduate studies, Bullard started his work in urban planning and went on to complete his Ph.D. program at Iowa State University in 1976.

After receiving his Ph.D. degree, Bullard moved to Texas to teach at Texas Southern University. It was in Texas that Bullard met his future wife, Linda McKeever. In 1978, Bullard was asked by Linda to collect data for a lawsuit, *Bean v. Southwestern Waste Corporation*, she had filed in federal court involving the placement of garbage facilities in mostly black Houston neighborhoods. This was the first lawsuit that charged environmental discrimination using federal civil rights laws. This inspired Bullard to learn more about careers in the environmental field. After Texas, Bullard taught at universities in Tennessee and California before returning to his alma-mater, Clark Atlanta University, where he was named the Edmund Asa Ware Distinguished Professor of Sociology and the Director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University. In this position, Bullard was able to do research and actively pursue the issue of environmental justice.

Bullard has been a pioneer in the field of environmental justice. Among his many accomplishments, Bullard helped to organize the 1991 National People of

Color Environmental Leadership Summit, the first meeting of its kind where various minority groups could discuss the problems associated with environmental justice. Just a few years later, he was instrumental in President Clinton's signing of Executive Order 12898, the first legal document that defined the need for environmental justice in the United States. For his continued research on contemporary cases of environmental justice and his active presence in the community, Bullard has been called the "Father of Environmental Justice." Bullard has delivered many presentations and he has written over fifteen books detailing his research and perspectives on environmental policy. A selection of his works include: "Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality," "Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots" and "Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina".

Among the many awards that Bullard has received is the American Sociological Association's William Foote Whyte Distinguished Career Award in 2007. He was also named one of Newsweek's thirteen "Environmental Leaders of the Century," in 2008.

Robert Bullard was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 12, 2011.

## Related Entries

**Bullard, Nehemiah** [CHILDOf]  
Father

**Bullard, Myrtle** [CHILDOf]  
Mother

**McKeever , Linda** []  
Ex-wife

**Brundidge, Savannah** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Grandmother (M)

**Bullard, Jim** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Grandfather (P)

**Bullard, Minnie** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Grandmother (P)

**Hammons, Lucinda** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Great-grandmother (P)

**Hammons, Peter** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Great-grandfather (P)

**Alabama A&M University** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A. Sociology**

**Atlanta University** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.A. Sociology**

**Iowa State University** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D. Sociology**

**U.S. Marines** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**City of Des Moines, Iowa** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Urban planner**

**Texas Southern University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Assistant Professor and Director of research**

**University of California, Riverside** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Associate Professor - Professor**

**Clark-Atlanta University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Professor**

**Environmental Justice Resource Center** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Director**

**National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit** [MEMBEROF]

**Founder**