

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable James Clyburn

PERSON

Clyburn, James

**Alternative Names:** The Honorable James Clyburn;

**Life Dates:** July 21, 1940-

**Place of Birth:** Sumter, South Carolina, USA

**Residence:** Columbia, SC

**Work:** Columbia, SC

**Occupations:** U.S. Congressman

## Biographical Note

United States Congressman James Enos "Jim" Clyburn was born on July 21, 1940 in Sumter, South Carolina to Enos Lloyd Clyburn, a fundamentalist minister, and Almeta Clyburn, a beautician. Clyburn was elected president of his NAACP youth chapter when he was

twelve years old, and went on to help organize many civil rights marches and demonstrations as a student leader at South Carolina State College (now South Carolina State University), where he graduated in 1962 with his B.S. degree in history. He later attended the University of South Carolina Law School.

Upon graduation from South Carolina State College, Clyburn was hired as a social studies teacher at C.A. Brown High School in Charleston, South Carolina. From 1965 to 1971, he worked as an employment counselor, a director of youth programs and led the South Carolina Farm Workers Commission. After an unsuccessful run for the South Carolina General Assembly, Clyburn joined the staff of Governor John C. West in 1971 and was appointed as the first minority advisor to a South Carolina governor. In 1974, he was named the South Carolina Human Affairs Commissioner. He served in that position until 1992 when he stepped down to run for U.S. Congress. In November of 1992, Clyburn was elected the U.S. Representative for South Carolina's 6th Congressional District, becoming the state's first African American to serve in Congress since 1897.

As a Congressman, Clyburn was elected co-president of his freshman class in 1993, and was unanimously elected chair of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1998. In 2002, he won an election among three House members to serve as vice chair of the House Democratic Caucus. Clyburn rose to the position of caucus chair in January 2006, and in 2007, he became the first South Carolinian to serve as house majority whip. In 2011, he became the assistant house democratic leader and the third-ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives.

Clyburn has served as Steering Committee Chairman for the International Museum of African American History in Charleston, South Carolina, and as a member of the governing boards of Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina; Brookgreen Gardens in

Murrells Inlet, South Carolina; and The Palmetto Conservation Foundation. In addition, he has been awarded honorary doctorate degrees by numerous colleges and universities, and has authored two books: *Uncommon Courage: The Story of Briggs V. Elliott, South Carolina's Unsung Civil Rights Battle* (2004); and *Blessed Experiences: Genuinely Southern, Proudly Black* (2014).

Clyburn and his wife, Emily, live in Columbia, South Carolina. They have three daughters: Mignon, Jennifer Reed, and Angela Hannibal.

U.S. Congressman Jim Clyburn was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 20, 2014.

## Related Entries

**Boylan-Haven-Mather Academy** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**diploma**

**South Carolina State University** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**History**

**Lincoln High School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Liberty Street School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Savage Glover School** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**C.A. Brown High School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1962 to 1965]

**History Teacher**

**SC Employment Security Commission** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1965 to 1966]

**Counselor**

**Neighborhood Youth Corps and New Careers**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1966 to 1968]

**Director**

**SC Commission for Farm Workers** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1968 to 1971]

**Executive Director**

**State of South Carolina** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1971 to 1974]

**Assistant to Governor**

**SC Human Affairs Commission** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1974 to 1992]

**Commissioner**

**U.S. House of Representatives** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1993 to ?]

**Congressman 6th District**

**Omega Psi Phi Inc.** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**NAACP** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Life Member**

**SCSU Alumni Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Life Member**

