

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dorothy B. Gilliam

PERSON

Gilliam, Dorothy Butler, 1936-

**Alternative Names:** Dorothy B. Gilliam; Dorothy B. Gilliam

**Life Dates:** November 24, 1936-

**Place of Birth:** Memphis, Tennessee, USA

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

**Occupations:** Newspaper Columnist

## Biographical Note

Former president of the National Association of Black Journalists Dorothy Gilliam was born November 24, 1936, in Memphis, Tennessee. Her parents, Adele and Jessie Mae Butler had ten children, only five of whom survived. Gilliam began attending Ursuline University in Louisville and transferred to Lincoln University to study journalism.

While attending Ursuline University, Gilliam began working as a typist for the Louisville Defender, but at the age of seventeen, she was named the society editor. In 1957, while working for the Tri-State Defender, Gilliam, against the wishes of her boss, covered the integration of Little Rock. While there, she met an editor from Jet magazine and was offered a job as an associate editor. In 1959, after two years with Jet, Gilliam left to continue her education at Tuskegee Institute, and in 1960, she was accepted at Columbia University in the graduate school of journalism. Following graduation, Gilliam decided to travel to Africa with Crossroads, and upon her return in 1961, she was offered a job with The Washington Post. Leaving in the mid-1960s to spend time with her family, she returned to the Post in 1972, where she worked for more than thirty years and her popular Metro section columns often focused on issues of education, politics and race. In 1997 Gilliam became director of the Young Journalists Development Project, which helps local high schools develop journalism programs. Today, she is a fellow at the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs.

Gilliam served as the president of the National Association of Black Journalists from 1993 to 1995. She is also a former fellow of the Freedom Forum at the Media Studies Center at Columbia University and the Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She has also authored the 1976 biography Paul Robeson, All American.

## Related Entries

**Wheatley Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Madison Junior High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Lincoln Institute** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

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

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

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

**Louisville Defender** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Typist**

**Louisville Defender** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1953 to ?]

**Society Editor**

**Tri-State Defender** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1957 to ?]

**Jet Magazine** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1997 to 1999]

**Associate Editor**

**Washington Post** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1991 to 1993]

**Washington Post** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1972 to 2003]

**Columnist**