

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Colbert I. King

PERSON

King, Colbert

**Alternative Names:** Colbert I. King;

**Life Dates:** September 20, 1939-

**Place of Birth:** Washington, District of Columbia, USA

**Residence:** Washington, District of Columbia

**Work:** Washington, District of Columbia

**Occupations:** Newspaper Editor; Newspaper Columnist

## Biographical Note

Newspaper columnist and editor Colbert I. King was born September 20, 1939 to Amelia Colbert King and Isaiah King III in Washington, D.C. Growing up in the old Foggy Bottom section of Washington, D.C., King attended Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School, Francis Junior High School, and graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in 1957, where he was a member of the ROTC and Dunbar's championship drill team. King earned his B.A. degree in government from Howard University in 1961, where he heard lectures by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Patrice Lumumba and Walter White.

After graduating from Howard University in 1961, King married Gwendolyn Stewart King, on July 3, 1961. He then served as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army's Adjutant General's Corps from 1961 to 1963. After a brief time with the U.S. Civil Service Commission, he served as a special agent for the U.S. State Department but quit because of his disagreement with the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO). In 1970, King, on a fellowship with James Farmer at Health Education and Welfare, called attention to sickle-cell anemia and the unequal attention given to minority health care. From 1971 to 1972, he worked for Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), an anti-poverty program created by President Lyndon B. Johnson. King then drafted the District of Columbia Home Rule Act of 1973, which effectively combined Washington D.C. and areas like Georgetown, and the Conflict of Interests Bill. In 1975, King left government service, but returned in 1976 as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Department. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter appointed King as the United States Executive of the World Bank. In this position, King successfully helped Robert McNamara include the People's Republic of China in the World Bank. King left in

1980 to become executive vice president of the Middle East and Africa divisions at Riggs National Bank. At Riggs National Bank, King was concerned with federal financial services, international banking and third world indebtedness. In 1990, King joined the editorial board of the Washington Post in Washington D.C. He started writing a weekly column in 1995 and in 2000, King was appointed deputy editor of the Washington Post editorial page. He retired in 2007.

In 2003, King received the Pulitzer Prize for his columns, which often challenged racial discrimination and religious fundamentalism, critiqued the criminal justice system, and spoke out against the exploitation of the poor.

King lives in Washington D.C. with his wife, Gwendolyn. His son, Rob King, served as the editor-in-chief of ESPN Digital Media.

Colbert I. King was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 4, 2005 and October 4, 2022.

## Related Entries

**Paul Laurence Dunbar High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

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

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

**B.A.**

**United States Civil Service Commission** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**United States Army** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1961 to 1963]

**Commissioned Officer**

**United States State Department** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1964 to 1980]

**Special Agent**

**United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1970 to 1971]

**Fellowship**

**United States Treasury Department** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1976 to 1979]

**Deputy Assistant Secretary**

**World Bank** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1979 to 1980]

**United States Executive Director**

**Riggs National Banks** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1980 to 1990]

**Executive Vice President of the Middle East and Africa Division**

**Washington Post** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1990 to ?]

**Editor**

**Liberty Baptist Church** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]