

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Elsie Rumford

PERSON

Rumford, Elsie, 1945-

**Alternative Names:** Elsie Rumford;

**Life Dates:** January 15, 1945-

**Place of Birth:** Berkeley, California, USA

**Residence:** Los Angeles, California

**Occupations:** School Social Work Coordinator;

## Biographical Note

Suicidologist Elsie R. Rumford was born in Berkeley, California, on January 15, 1945; her mother, Elsie R. Carrington Rumford, was a teacher in Berkeley, and her father, pharmacist William Byron Rumford, was the first African American elected official in northern California. Attending Longfellow Elementary School, Burbank Junior High School and Berkeley High School, Rumsford earned her B.A. degree in Spanish and sociology from San Francisco State University in 1967, and her M.S.W. degree from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1973.

Rumford's graduate thesis on the rising black suicide rate challenged popular thinking on the subject. After speaking before the Charles R. Drew Post Graduate Medical School, Martin Luther King Hospital, and the Suicide Prevention Center of Los Angeles in 1974, Rumford presented to the California State Senate Subcommittee on Medical Education and Health Needs in support of SB1814, the Suicide Prevention Act of 1974. Rumford appeared on many television and radio talk shows to discuss black suicides and worked as a script consultant to a suicide-related episode of The Jeffersons in 1976. Rumford worked as a clinical social worker for the Dignity Center, a Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center program, from 1974 to 1975, and El Nido Services from 1976 to 1981. From 1985 to 1988, Rumford was a school-based counselor for the Carson Child Guidance Partnership Program for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and from 1988 to 1996 she was their outreach coordinator. After 1997 Rumford began working as a team leader/DIS Counselor at the Los Angeles Unified School District's School Mental Health.

A member of the American Association of Suicidology; the National Association of Black Social Workers; and the National Association of Social Workers, Rumsford received the Carson Coordinating Council's Outstanding Service Award in 1996.

Rumford, who had three sons, remained a resident of Los Angeles.

Elsie Rumford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 2, 2005.

## Related Entries

**Berkeley High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

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

**Longfellow Middle School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**San Francisco State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**University of California, Berkeley** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**MSW**

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

**MSW**

**University of California, Los Angeles** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**MSW**

**State of California Dept. of Employment** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1967 to 1970]

**Minority Representative**

**City of Oakland, California** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1970 to 1970]

**Personnel**

**Suicide Prevention Center** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1973 to 1975]

**Reseacher**

**El Nido Services** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1976 to 1981]

**Counselor**

**Los Angeles Unified School District** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1985 to ?]

## **Psychiatric Social Worker**

**American Association of Suicidology** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**National Association of Black Social Workers** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**National Association of Social Workers** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]