

## Secondary Navigation

- [Contact](#)
- [Give](#)
- [COAS Strategic Plan](#)
- [Digital Democracy](#)
- [Mission & Vision](#)

[Apply](#)

Search this Site

Trigger Search

## [College of Arts and Sciences](#)

### Main navigation

- [About](#)
  - [Dean's Welcome](#)
  - [Office of the Dean](#)
  - [Mission & Vision](#)
  - [COAS Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025](#)
- [Admission & Aid](#)
  - [How to Apply](#)
  - [Scholarships & Grants](#)
- [Degrees & Programs](#)
  - [Majors & Minors](#)
  - [Military Education](#)
  - [Pre-Professional Education](#)
  - [Writing Center](#)
- [Experiential Learning](#)
  - [Independent Research](#)
  - [Internships](#)
  - [Service Learning](#)
- [Information For](#)
  - [Alumni](#)
  - [Current Students](#)
  - [Faculty](#)
  - [Parents & Family](#)
  - [Prospective Students](#)
  - [Staff](#)
- [Research](#)
  - [Research Centers](#)
  - [Research Initiatives](#)
  - [Research Resources, Opportunities, Funding, & Grants](#)
- [Honors Program](#)
- [Office Of Academic Student Affairs](#)
  - [Engagement Opportunities](#)
  - [Contact Academic Student Affairs](#)

[Apply](#)

## Secondary Navigation

- [Contact](#)
- [Give](#)
- [COAS Strategic Plan](#)
- [Digital Democracy](#)
- [Mission & Vision](#)

1. [Home](#)
2. [Back to Information For](#)
3. Alumni

## Alumni

Two fraternity alumni greeting each other during homecoming concert

We understand that learning how to navigate the system and locate resources can sometimes be challenging. That's why we have listed helpful links to pages frequently viewed by alumni. Information about:..... and more can be found here

## Helpful Contacts

### **Division of Development & Alumni Relations**

Howard University

1851 9th Street, NW 3rd Floor

**Phone:** (202)238-2340 Washington, DC 20001

**Email:** [howardalumni@howard.edu](mailto:howardalumni@howard.edu)

**Website:** <https://alum.howard.edu/>

### **Office of Career Services**

C.B. Powell Building, Suite 212

525 Bryant Street, NW

Washington, DC. 20059

**Phone:** (202)806-7513

**Email:** [careerservices@howard.edu](mailto:careerservices@howard.edu)

**Website:** <https://careerservices.howard.edu/>

[Howard University Alumni Association](#)

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## Our Iconic Alumni

### **Patricia Bath**

Ophthalmologist, Inventor, Health Advocate, Class of 1968, M.D.

[View More about Patricia Bath](#)

### **Patricia Bath**



**Title:** Ophthalmologist, Inventor, Health Advocate  
**Affiliation:** Alumni  
**Hometown:** New York City, NY  
**Class of:** 1968  
**Degree Earned:** M.D.

Dr. Patricia Bath was an ophthalmologist, inventor, researcher, and humanitarian. Born in 1942 to parents who encouraged her interest in science, Dr. Bath's research began at the young age of 16, when she won a merit award for her discoveries at a cancer research workshop. She received her medical degree at Howard University, graduating with honors in 1968. Dr. Bath's career was full of "firsts": In 1974, she was the first woman ophthalmologist appointed to the faculty of the University of California; in 1983, she became the first woman chair to an ophthalmology residency program in the United States. Dr. Bath was dedicated to bringing ophthalmic health services to underserved communities. She conducted epistemological research and found that blindness occurred in black patients at twice the rate of white patients.

In response to this discovery, Dr. Bath created community ophthalmology, a new discipline that brought volunteer ophthalmic health services to thousands of people who otherwise would not have been able to afford treatment. She didn't stop there: In 1976, Dr. Bath and three of her colleagues founded the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness, an organization that operates on the principle that eyesight is a basic human right. She also invented the Laserphaco Probe, a surgical tool that uses lasers to treat cataracts with less pain and more precision than previous treatments. She patented the device in 1988, becoming the first African American female doctor to patent a medical technology.

My love of humanity and passion for helping others inspired me to become a physician.

## Chadwick Boseman

Award-Winning Actor and Producer, Class of 2000, Bachelor of Fine Arts

[View More about Chadwick Boseman](#)

## Chadwick Boseman



**Title:** Award-Winning Actor and Producer  
**Affiliation:** Alumni, 2018 Commencement Speaker  
**Hometown:** Anderson, South Carolina  
**Class of:** 2000  
**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Fine Arts

A native of South Carolina, Chadwick Boseman graduated from Howard University and attended the British American Dramatic Academy at Oxford, after which he began his career as an actor, director and writer. Boseman starred as T'Challa/Black Panther in the worldwide phenomenon Marvel Studios' "Black Panther," which has shattered box-office records both domestically and internationally. Boseman made his debut as the African superhero Black Panther in Marvel Studios' "Captain America: Civil War," in May 2016. He reprised the role for Marvel's "Avengers: Infinity War" in 2019. Boseman's breakout performance came in 2013 when he received rave reviews for his portrayal of the legendary Jackie Robinson in Warner Bros' "42." He previously starred in the title role of Open Road Films' "Marshall," which tells the story of Thurgood Marshall, the first African American Supreme Court Justice, as he battles through one of his career-defining cases as the Chief Counsel to the NAACP. His other feature film credits include: the revenge thriller "Message from the King," Summit Entertainment's "Draft Day," the independent psychological post-war drama, "The Kill Hole" and Gary Fleders' drama, "The Express." Boseman was diagnosed with stage III colon cancer in 2016. During his four-year battle with cancer, he continued his work, persevering through the production of several films between countless surgeries and chemotherapy. Boseman passed away in August of 2020, surrounded by his wife and family.

Purpose is the essential element of you. It is the reason you are on the planet at this particular time in history. Your very existence is wrapped up in the things you are here to fulfill. Whatever you choose for a career path, remember the struggles along the way are only meant to shape you for your purpose.

## Beth Brown

Astrophysicist & Educator, Class of 1991, B.S. In Astrophysics

[View More about Beth Brown](#)

## Beth Brown



**Title:** Astrophysicist & Educator  
**Affiliation:** Alumni  
**Hometown:** Roanoke, VA  
**Class of:** 1991  
**Degree Earned:** B.S. In Astrophysics

Beth Brown, Ph.D., was an astrophysicist and educator who studied elliptical galaxies and worked on multiple outreach projects. Born in Virginia in 1969, Brown cultivated a fascination in science from an early age, starting with her interest in science fiction. She studied astrophysics at Howard University, undertaking two internships at NASA during her undergraduate years. She went on to graduate school at the University of Michigan, where she became the first black woman to get a doctorate in astronomy from the institution. An astronomy course she developed during her graduate education is still taught and remains popular at the University of Michigan. Having attained her doctorate, Brown was then hired as an astrophysicist at NASA, where she collected data on elliptical galaxies. Brown's wonder at the night sky translated into a desire to share that wonder with others. She represented NASA on television interviews, combining her warm presence with her astronomical expertise to present information on astronomy to the general public in an accessible manner. She was passionate about helping minorities to succeed in physics. Her greatest achievement, in her own words, was "...convincing a young woman not to give up on her dreams of becoming a scientist."

If you didn't get a good physics background in high school, it isn't too late to study physics.

## Kenneth Bancroft Clark

Pioneering Psychologist on Black Racial Identity, Class of 1935, Bachelor of Science, Psychology

[View More about Kenneth Bancroft Clark](#)

## Kenneth Bancroft Clark



**Title:** Pioneering Psychologist on Black Racial Identity  
**Affiliation:** Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.  
**Hometown:** Panama Canal Zone  
**Class of:** 1935  
**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Science, Psychology

**Kenneth Bancroft Clark** was an African-American psychologist and researcher. He and his wife, Mamie Phipps Clark, studied psychology at Howard University in the 1930's and were active in the civil rights movement. During his time at Howard University, the course of Clark's life was forever changed when he took a class taught by psychology professor, Francis Sumner. "What this professor showed me," Clark told the *New Yorker*, "was the promise of getting some systematic understanding of the complexities of human behavior and human interaction... the seemingly intractable nature of racism, for example." Together, the Clarks went on to design and conduct a series of experiments commonly known as "the doll test" to study the psychological effects of racial segregation on African-American school children. Their research was cited in arguments during *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that ruled segregation unconstitutional and sparked a shift historic toward integration. Clark's research contributed to the development of integrationist policies implemented at both federal and state levels of government and he published extensive work about the plight of African-Americans in impoverished urban communities.

...I think that effective solutions have to be based upon facts - have to be based upon reason - have to be based upon logic, logistics, and things of that sort, but I don't think - and in looking at this society from the perspective of a Negro and a psychologist, the things that really appalls me about this society is that one does not get to the point of even seeking the rational solutions for long-standing social ills...

## Elijah Cummings

House Representative, Orator, Civil Rights Leader, Class of 1973, BA in Liberal Arts

[View More about Elijah Cummings](#)

## Elijah Cummings



**Title:** House Representative, Orator, Civil Rights Leader  
**Affiliation:** Alumni  
**Hometown:** Baltimore, MD  
**Class of:** 1973  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Liberal Arts

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings was a lawyer, orator and advocate who worked throughout his lifetime to preserve American democracy. Born to

former sharecroppers in Baltimore, Maryland in 1951, Cummings was no stranger to adversity. With the encouragement of his mother, who had only a fourth-grade education herself, Cummings went on to become the first African American in Maryland history to be named Speaker Pro Tempore, a senior member of the majority party chosen for skill in presiding. Elijah Cummings graduated from Howard University in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in political science. He then went to law school at the University of Maryland. He maintained a close relationship with Howard University throughout his lifetime. Cummings practiced law and served in the Maryland House of Delegates for 14 years. In 1996, he was elected to the Federal House of Representatives, where he advocated for the working class in his Black-majority district. He became a powerful voice against voter suppression, launching investigations in Georgia, Texas, and Kansas, as well as monitoring organizations accused of targeting voters of color. The issue of voter suppression was personal to Cummings, who, during a speech in February 2019, recalled his mother's dying words: "Do not let them take our votes away from us." In that same speech, Cummings vowed to fight until death to defend the right to vote—and fight he did, until his passing in October of 2019. Rep. Elijah E. Cummings's legacy as an advocate who fought tirelessly for the rights of all Americans lives on, both at Howard and in the countless lives he touched.

I will fight until death to make sure every citizen...has that right to vote.

## David Dinkins

Former Mayor of New York City, Class of 1950, Bachelor of Science Mathematics

[View More about David Dinkins](#)

## David Dinkins



**Title:** Former Mayor of New York City

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Trenton, New Jersey

**Class of:** 1950

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Science Mathematics

David Norman Dinkins was an American politician, lawyer and author who became the first African American Mayor of the New York City, from 1990 to 1993. He joined the faculty of Columbia University upon leaving office. Born on July 10, 1927, in Trenton, New Jersey, Dinkins served in the United States Marine Corps during World War II. He used veteran educational benefits to earn his bachelor of science degree in mathematics from Howard University in 1950. He later obtained his law degree from Brooklyn Law School in 1956. Dinkins was a founding member of the Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus of New York State, the Council of Black Elected Democrats of New York State, and the One Hundred Black Men. He was also vice president of the United States Conference of Mayors, and a member-at-large of the Black Leadership Forum. Dinkins passed away in November of 2020 at age 93.

Race relations can be an appropriate issue...but only if you want to craft solutions, and not catalogue complaints. If we use the issue appropriately, we can transform it from the cancer of our society into the cure.

## David Driskell

Artist, professor, curator, Class of 1955, Bachelor of Fine Arts

[View More about David Driskell](#)

## David Driskell



**Title:** Artist, professor, curator

**Affiliation:** Alumnus and professor

**Class of:** 1955

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Fine Arts

A 1955 graduate of Howard, Professor David C. Driskell began his studies in 1949 as a history major, however, his outstanding work in the drawing class of Professor James Wells not only led him to become an art major and afforded him a full scholarship. It was Professor James A. Porter who then urged him to switch to art history, stating: "You just can't afford to be an artist, you must also show the world what our people have contributed."

Driskell excelled in the rigorous art history curriculum, as well as in design, drawing, painting, and printmaking. He soon achieved his greatest triumph as a student—a scholarship to the prestigious summer program at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, where he won the 1953 Leonard Bacour Progress Prize in Art. In the Fall, Dr. Driskell assigned his own painting studio by the Howard University College of Fine Arts and studied under Dr. Albert Carter (1915-1977) the Curator of the Art Gallery, who Dr. Driskell assisted with the a major exhibition of African Art.

After earning his B.F.A. from Howard in 1955, and his M.F.A from Catholic University in 1962, Dr. Driskell looked to university teaching. His professorial career began at Talladega College in 1958. In 1961, he exhibited at the Howard's new art gallery in the show, "New Vistas in American Art." Over time, he evolved into a true art historian, a curator and author, art consultant, and most importantly, a practicing artist.

In 1962, Dr. Driskell was selected as a full-time faculty member at Howard; and in 1963-64, he was appointed Acting Chairman of the Art Department and Director of the Art Gallery during Professor Porter's sabbatical year. During this period, Dr. Driskell published a complete informational brochure of the Art Department for the public. As a member of the American Federation of Arts, he secured funding for the purchase of 15 modern masterworks for the permanent collection.

In 1966, Professor Driskell became Chairman of the Art Department and Director of the Carl Van Vechten Gallery at Fisk University. As gallery director, Professor Driskell cultivated a relationship with two of America's greatest artists. Georgia O' Keeffe (1887-1986) was known as the "mother of American Modernism" and her husband, photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) pioneered urban nocturnal views as fine art.

In the 1970s, Professor Driskell exhibited his own work widely and he cataloged the Fisk University collection with Professor Earl Hooks. His greatest achievement of this period was the curation of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art exhibition: "Two Centuries of Black American Art, 1750-1950," which included 200 works by 63 artists. It was a monumental undertaking that exposed black artistic achievement to the masses on a grand scale. The 1970s also saw Professor Driskell's departure from Fisk to assume a professorship at the University of Maryland, where he became Chairman of the Department of Art in 1978. In 1980 he was honored with a solo exhibition at the gallery there: "David C. Driskell, a Survey"; and in 1981, his alma mater, Howard, bestowed upon him the Distinguished Alumni Award.

His most ambitious undertaking in the fields of exhibiting and teaching African American art and contextualizing black art history occurred in 1999. Sponsored by the Andover Academy of American Art and the Studio Museum in Harlem, "To Preserve a Legacy: American Art from Historically Black Colleges and Universities" was an eight city, two year journey, exhibiting the collections of six institutions: Howard, Fisk, Hampton, Clark-Atlanta, Tuskegee and North Carolina Central. Not only were their collections shown at the major civic museums adjacent to each school but, the ancillary shows of additional masterpieces from their permanent collections helped to continuously spark headlines. This undertaking embodied the passion that Professor Driskell had for black art institutions, especially HBCUs.

[Source: Scott W. Baker](#)

## Roberta Flack

GRAMMY-winning musician, Class of 1958, MU BME

[View More about Roberta Flack](#)

## Roberta Flack



**Title:** GRAMMY-winning musician

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Asheville, North Carolina

**Class of:** 1958

**Degree Earned:** MU BME

Classically trained on the piano, GRAMMY Award-winning musician Roberta Flack received a music scholarship at age 15 to attend Howard University. She was discovered by jazz musician Les McCann while singing at the Washington, D.C. nightclub, Mr. Henry's, and was promptly signed to Atlantic with a string of hits, including, "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," "Where Is the Love" (a duet with former Howard University classmate Donny Hathaway), "Killing Me Softly With His Song," "Feel Like Makin' Love," "The Closer I Get to You," "Tonight I Celebrate My Love," and "Set the Night to Music." In 1999, she received a star on Hollywood's legendary Walk of Fame. Flack regularly performs for audiences around the world, and has had the pleasure of appearing with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. In February 2009, Flack performed with critically acclaimed orchestras in Australia, including the Melbourne, Queensland, and Sydney Symphonies. She is currently involved with a new venture — an interpretive album of Beatles' classics. As a humanitarian and mentor, Flack founded the Roberta Flack School of Music at the Hyde Leadership Charter School in the Bronx, providing an innovative and inspiring music education program to underprivileged students free of charge.

My hope is that out of all the anger and seeming hostility that we hear in some of today's music will come some sort of coalition that will become politically involved.

## Leslie Hale

CEO, RLJ Lodging Trust, Class of 1994, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance

[View More about Leslie Hale](#)

## Leslie Hale



**Title:** CEO, RLJ Lodging Trust

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, California

**Class of:** 1994

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance

Leslie Hale is president and CEO of RLJ Lodging Trust, and serves on the Board of Directors. Hale's promotion makes her the first African American woman to be chief executive of a publicly traded real estate investment trust. Prior to August 2018, she served as chief financial officer since 2007, executive vice president of Real Estate & Finance since 2013 and chief operating officer since 2016. She is intricately involved in the company's investment decision-making and long-term strategic planning. In addition, Ms. Hale oversees the execution of all asset and corporate level transactions, investor relations, and the management of the Company's Asset Management and Design and Construction functions. Hale earned a BBA degree with a concentration in finance from Howard University, graduating summa cum laude. She earned her MBA from Harvard Business School, where she was a Goldman Sachs and Robert F. Toigo Fellow. She currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Macy's, Inc. and as a trustee of Howard University. In 2011, she was honored by the Washington Business Journal as one of the "Top 40 Executives Under 40."

I really fell in love with finance in college...I like the concept that you can take a dollar and turn it into two.

## Kamala Harris

Vice President of the United States, Class of 1986, Bachelor of Arts

[View More about Kamala Harris](#)

## Kamala Harris



**Title:** Vice President of the United States

**Affiliation:** COAS Freshman Council Representative, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Debate Team

**Hometown:** Oakland, California

**Class of:** 1986

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Arts

Sen. Kamala D. Harris was born in Oakland, Calif. She refers to her time at Howard as her "formative years" where she first was introduced to her love of politics. After earning an undergraduate degree from Howard University and a law degree from the University of California, Hastings, she began her career in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office. In 2003, Sen. Harris became the District Attorney of the City and County of San Francisco. Having completed two terms as the District Attorney of San Francisco, Kamala was elected as the first African-American and first woman to serve as California's Attorney General. In this role, she worked tirelessly to hold corporations accountable and protect the state's most vulnerable people. In 2017, Harris was sworn in as a United States Senator for California, the second African-American woman and first South Asian-American senator in history. Harris serves on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, the Select Committee on Intelligence, the Committee on the Judiciary, and the Committee on the Budget. On January 21, 2019, she formally announced her run for president and hosted her first press conference at her alma mater, Howard University. Harris's historic selection as the Democratic vice presidential candidate was announced in August of 2020. Harris is the first Black woman and the first Asian-American to run for vice president on a major party ticket in the United States. Harris's candidacy represents a milestone opportunity for our democracy to acknowledge the leadership Black women have always exhibited, but has too often been ignored. She was inaugurated as Vice President of the United States on January 20th, 2021.

The thing that Howard taught me is that you can do any collection of things, and not one thing to the exclusion of the other. You could be homecoming queen and valedictorian. There are no false choices at Howard.

## Taraji P. Henson

Actress, Producer, Mental Health Advocate, Class of 1995, BFA in Drama

[View More about Taraji P. Henson](#)

## Taraji P. Henson



**Title:** Actress, Producer, Mental Health Advocate

**Affiliation:** Alumni



**Hometown:** Washington, D.C.  
**Class of:** 1995  
**Degree Earned:** BFA in Drama

Taraji P. Henson is an Academy Award-nominated actress, producer, and mental health advocate. She was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in an apartment that she described as “one step up from the projects”. Henson’s path to an acting career was not always clear-cut. After graduating high school, she pursued a degree in electrical engineering at North Carolina University, but dropped out after failing a math class. Henson transferred to Howard University, where she studied theater while working two jobs to support herself and her newborn son.

After graduating from Howard in 1995, Henson moved to Los Angeles, where she took on an office job and landed small roles in various television series. Her breakthrough role came in 2001, when she starred in the film, “Baby Boy.” From there, her repertoire of film roles grew, and in 2008, she was nominated for an Academy Award for her role as the titular character’s mother in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” She focused primarily on film until 2015, when she returned to television in “Empire” as Cookie Lyon, a role for which she received an Emmy nomination and a Golden Globe award. Her 2016 role as Katherine Johnson in the critically acclaimed film “Hidden Figures” cemented Henson’s popularity and iconic status. In 2018, Henson founded The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation, a nonprofit committed to challenging the perception of mental illness in the African American community.

## Taraji P. Henson

Actress, Producer, Mental Health Advocate, Class of 1995, Bachelor of Fine Arts

[View More about Taraji P. Henson](#)

## Taraji P. Henson



**Title:** Actress, Producer, Mental Health Advocate  
**Affiliation:** Alumna  
**Hometown:** Washington, D.C.  
**Class of:** 1995  
**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Fine Arts

Taraji P. Henson is an Academy Award-nominated actress, producer, and mental health advocate. She was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in an apartment that she described as “one step up from the projects”. Henson’s path to an acting career was not always clear-cut. After graduating high school, she pursued a degree in electrical engineering at North Carolina University, but dropped out after failing a math class. Henson transferred to Howard University, where she studied theater while working two jobs to support herself and her newborn son.

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## Zora Neale Hurston

Author, Anthropologist, Class of 1920

[View More about Zora Neale Hurston](#)

## Zora Neale Hurston



**Title:** Author, Anthropologist  
**Affiliation:** Co-founder of The Hilltop Newspaper  
**Hometown:** Notasulga, Alabama  
**Class of:** 1920

Zora Neale Hurston is considered one of the foremost female writers of the 20th century. She was born in Notasulga, Alabama on January 15, 1891. At a young age, her family relocated to Eatonville, Florida where they flourished. Her father became one of the town’s first mayors. In 1917, Hurston enrolled at Morgan College, where she completed her high school studies. She then attended Howard University and earned an associate’s degree. Hurston was an active student and participated in student government. She also co-founded the school’s renowned newspaper, The Hilltop. In 1925, Hurston received a scholarship to Barnard College and graduated with a BA in anthropology. During her time in New York City, Hurston befriended other writers such as Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. Together, they joined the black cultural



renaissance taking place in Harlem. Hurston dedicated herself to promoting and studying Black culture. She traveled to Haiti and Jamaica to study the religions of the African diaspora. Her findings were included in several newspapers throughout the United States. Hurston often incorporated her research into her fictional writing. As an author, Hurston started publishing short stories as early as 1920. Unfortunately, her work was ignored by the mainstream literary audience for years. One of her most popular works was "Their Eyes were Watching God." Hurston broke literary norms by focusing her work on the experience of a Black woman.

Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.

## Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Esq.

Civil Rights Activist, Class of 1960, Juris Doctorate

[View More about Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Esq.](#)

## Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Esq.



**Title:** Civil Rights Activist

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Atlanta, Georgia

**Class of:** 1960

**Degree Earned:** Juris Doctorate

Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Esq. is a leader of advocacy and change in law and civil rights. He earned his J.D. degree from the Howard University School of Law and ignited his ambition to serve through many executive leadership positions and presidential appointments, including chairman of the Clinton Presidential Transition Team, president of the National Urban League, and executive director of the United Negro College Fund. He is a member of the Bars of Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Georgia, and the U.S. Supreme Court, and is the senior managing director of Lazard Frères & Co. LLC in New York. He has been a director of American Express and Xerox Corporation and is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Jordan, a Howard University trustee emeritus, holds honorary degrees from more than 60 colleges and universities, and is the author of "Vernon Can Read! A Memoir" (Public Affairs, 2001) and "Make It Plain, Standing Up and Speaking Out" (Public Affairs, 2008). In 2007, his portrait was unveiled in the Great Hall of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery.

I'm here because I stand on many, many shoulders, and that's true of every black person I know who has achieved.

## Thurgood Marshall

Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Class of 1933, Juris Doctorate

[View More about Thurgood Marshall](#)

## Thurgood Marshall



**Title:** Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Baltimore, Maryland

**Class of:** 1933

**Degree Earned:** Juris Doctorate

Thurgood Marshall sought admission into Howard University Law School following his denial of admission on the basis of his race into University of Maryland Law School. Unbeknownst to him, this decision directed his professional career where he championed for equal rights - particularly on the basis of race. The dean of Howard law, Charles Hamilton Houston, became his mentor and instilled in him the passion to advocate for the oppressed and voiceless. Marshall's first major court case came in 1933 when he successfully sued the University of Maryland to admit a young African American Amherst University graduate named Donald Gaines Murray. He later became the chief counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) where he fought for racial equality by taking on challenging cases to end state-sponsored discrimination like Brown v. Board of Education. This landmark case ended the legal basis for segregation in the U.S. In 1965, Marshall was appointed U.S. solicitor general by President Lyndon B. Johnson. He went on to win 14 of the 19 cases that he argued before the Supreme Court for the government. In 1967, he became the first African-American to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court where he served until his retirement until 1991.

Truth is more than a mental exercise.

## Toni Morrison

Nobel & Pulitzer Prize-Winning Novelist, Essayist & Professor, Class of 1953, Bachelor of Fine Arts

[View More about Toni Morrison](#)

## Toni Morrison



**Title:** Nobel & Pulitzer Prize-Winning Novelist, Essayist & Professor

**Affiliation:** Alumni, Faculty

**Hometown:** Lorain, Ohio

**Class of:** 1953

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Fine Arts

Toni Morrison told her parents, “I want to be surrounded by black intellectuals,” and chose Howard University. She explored her love for drama as a member of the Howard University Players, which is the university’s oldest student-run performing arts organization. Morrison graduated in 1953 with a bachelor’s degree in English and minor in classics. After getting her master’s degree in English from Cornell University, Morrison returned to Howard as an English professor for seven years. She also became involved with a writers’ group while at Howard, which she has credited with starting her on the road to becoming a novelist. Morrison is hailed widely as one of the world’s greatest storytellers. She exemplifies Howard University’s core value of truth as she dares to explore race, love, and even the supernatural. Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for her novel *Beloved*, which would later be adapted into a film. Since the publishing of *Beloved*, Morrison has been awarded numerous honors for her writing and activism, including the Nobel Prize in Literature, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, presented by President Barack Obama.

Make a difference about something other than yourselves

## Jessye Norman

Opera Singer & Humanitarian, Class of 1967, Bachelor of Music

[View More about Jessye Norman](#)

## Jessye Norman



**Title:** Opera Singer & Humanitarian

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Augusta, GA

**Class of:** 1967

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Music

Jessye Norman was a Grammy Award-winning operatic singer, humanitarian, and Howard alumna known for her powerful voice and stage presence. She was born in 1945 in Augusta, Georgia to a musical family that nurtured her budding talent. Growing up in the Jim Crow South, Norman helped to integrate local businesses, participating in sit-ins at segregated lunch counters. At the age of 16, Norman’s performance at a vocal competition earned her a full scholarship to Howard University. She graduated from Howard in 1967 with a degree in music, then went on to complete her graduate education at the Peabody Conservatory and later at the Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance. Over the course of her lifetime, she earned several honorary degrees from a number of other prestigious institutions.

Norman’s opera career took off in Europe. She made her debut in 1969 in Germany, then continued to perform at famous opera houses around the world. Her worldwide success as a Black woman on the operatic stage was both rare and groundbreaking. Though billed as an operatic soprano, Norman had an impressive vocal range and a diverse range of musical interests, including popular music, gospel, blues, and more. As a humanitarian, Norman addressed hunger, homelessness, youth development, and arts education. In 2003, the Jessye Norman School of the Arts opened in her hometown of Augusta to provide free education in the arts to underprivileged children. After a long and successful career, she died of complications related to a spinal injury in 2019. Thanks in part to her trailblazing efforts, Norman left the opera world a more inclusive place than when she entered it.

I do not consider my Blackness a problem. I think it looks rather nice.

## Mamie Phipps Clark

Social Psychologist, Class of 1938, Psychology

[View More about Mamie Phipps Clark](#)

## Mamie Phipps Clark



**Title:** Social Psychologist

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Hot Springs, Arkansas

**Class of:** 1938

**Degree Earned:** Psychology

Mamie Phipps Clark was born on April 18, 1917 in Hot Spring, Arkansas. Despite the extremely meager opportunities available to black students, she was offered several scholarships to pursue higher education, including an offer from Howard University. She began her university career in 1934 as a math major minoring in physics. At Howard University, Clark met her future husband, Kenneth Bancroft Clark, a master's student in psychology who later became famous for his involvement in the pivotal Supreme Court Case: Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka. It was Kenneth who eventually convinced Mamie to pursue psychology. In 1938, Mamie Clark graduated magna cum laude from Howard University and immediately enrolled in the psychology graduate program. In her master's thesis, she investigated when black children became aware of themselves as having a distinct "self," and when they became aware of belonging to a particular racial group. Her thesis, "The Development of Consciousness of Self in Negro Pre-School Children," was the beginning of a line of research that became historic when it was used to make racial segregation unconstitutional in American public schools. Her research provided social scientific evidence that was influential in the Supreme Court's decision in the 1954 Brown case.

I'd always had an interest in children. Always, from the time I was very small. I'd always thought I wanted to work with children, and psychology seemed a good field.

## Phylicia Rashad

American actress, singer and stage director, Class of 1970, Bachelor of Fine Arts

[View More about Phylicia Rashad](#)

## Phylicia Rashad



**Title:** American actress, singer and stage director

**Affiliation:** Alumni, Trustee

**Hometown:** Houston, Texas

**Class of:** 1970

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Fine Arts

Phylicia Rashad knew that she would get a "sense of pride" at Howard University. She studied theatre and made her way to New York City, taking her first apprentice role with New York's pioneering Negro Ensemble Company. Years later she would become a Tony-winning Broadway, film, and television actress, and alumni trustee. Her career paved the way for countless African-American women. Rashad also takes on the roles of director and master class professor. Although she is most known for her award-winning role as "Clair Huxtable" on "The Cosby Show," her roster runs long, with performances in "Dreamgirls," "The Wiz," "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," and most recently, the movie, "Creed," and the television show, "This is Us" as Howard alumna Susan Kelechi Watson's mother. She has won several awards, including a Tony Award for Best Actress in a Play for "A Raisin in the Sun," two NAACP Image Awards for Best Actress in "The Cosby Show," and an award for Outstanding Actress in a Television Movie, Mini-Series or Dramatic Special. She was the first recipient of the Denzel Washington Chair in Theatre at Fordham University, and has received 10 honorary doctorate degrees, including one from her alma mater.

Howard University affords not only a structure but a foundation as well, for the human being. As a student you would always feel your connection to the legacy of the institution. You don't feel a part of that legacy, but in truth you are. From the time you enter, you become a part of this living legacy that is Howard University.

## Kasim Reed

Former Mayor of Atlanta, Class of 1991; 1995, Bachelor of Arts Political Science, Juris Doctorate

[View More about Kasim Reed](#)

## Kasim Reed



**Title:** Former Mayor of Atlanta

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Plainfield, NJ

**Class of:** 1991; 1995

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Arts Political Science, Juris Doctorate

Kasim Reed is an American attorney and politician who served two terms as the 59th mayor of the city of Atlanta from 2010 to 2018. Reed is a graduate and proud alumnus of Howard University where he received his Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor degrees and an honorary Doctor of Laws. As an undergraduate member of Howard University's Board of Trustees, he created a fundraising program entitled The Independence Initiative that has contributed more than \$12 million to the University's endowment since its inception. Reed became the institution's youngest general trustee in June 2002 and remains a dedicated trustee emeritus. Reed was a prime-time speaker at the 2016 National Democratic Convention in Philadelphia. In 2011, Governing Magazine named Reed one of the top state-and-local government officials of the year. Thomas Friedman, the Pulitzer-Prize winning New York Times columnist and author of That Used to Be Us, called Reed "inspiring" and labeled him as "one of the best of this new breed of leaders." In 2013, he was ranked among the top 10 most influential African Americans in the nation by The Root. His civic leadership and service have been nationally recognized on news outlets and programs such as Meet the Press, MSNBC, CNN, FOX and CNBC; and in publications including The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post.

Howard was built to be a dream factory for a people – a place where you can come and be a pastor, a nurse, a teacher, an engineer, a social worker, a physician, a scientist, a lawyer, a place where if you had the grit and the toughness and the intellect, then your lesson plan could become a dream plan.

**Kwame Ture**

Pan-African Activist & Organizer, Class of 1964, B.A. in Philosophy

[View More about Kwame Ture](#)

**Kwame Ture**

**Title:** Pan-African Activist & Organizer

**Affiliation:** Alumni

**Hometown:** Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

**Class of:** 1964

**Degree Earned:** B.A. in Philosophy

Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) was a civil rights activist, writer, and orator known as a lead figure within the Pan-African and Black nationalist movements, and for coining the slogan, "Black power." Ture was born in Trinidad in 1941 and immigrated to New York City in 1952. In high school, watching a televised sit-in for civil rights inspired him to join the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and participate in sit-ins across the United States. During his freshman year at Howard University, where he majored in philosophy, he participated in his first Freedom Ride. The Freedom Rides were integrated bus trips through the American South in protest of the segregated public transportation system.

After graduating from Howard in 1964, Ture became a field organizer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He played a vital role in the Freedom Summer, a campaign to register black voters in the Deep South. However, he eventually became disillusioned with the slow pace of progress and continued police violence faced by activists for integration. In 1966, Ture gave the speech wherein he first spoke the words "Black Power," calling for cultural, political, and economic self-determination for Black people around the world. He joined the Black Panther Party and journeyed around the world to visit with revolutionary leaders, eventually ending up in Conakry, Guinea, where he changed his name from Stokely Carmichael to Kwame Ture in 1969. There, he dedicated the rest of his life to Pan-African unity. In his writings and speeches, Ture helped to redefine African American identity--as well as Black identity around the globe--with his revolutionary proclamation that Black is beautiful.

The job of the conscious is to make the unconscious conscious.

**Lawrence Douglas Wilder**

Former Virginia Governor, Class of 1959, Juris Doctorate

[View More about Lawrence Douglas Wilder](#)

**Lawrence Douglas Wilder**

**Title:** Former Virginia Governor

**Affiliation:** Trustee Emeritus

**Hometown:** Richmond, Virginia

**Class of:** 1959

**Degree Earned:** Juris Doctorate

Douglas Wilder is the first African-American in the United States to be elected as governor of a state, serving Virginia from 1990-1994. Also, he was the first Black senator in Virginia and first African American to win election to statewide office. As a student at Howard University School of Law, he met with other influential politicians such as the future mayor of Richmond, Henry L. Marsh III, and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. Two years after earning his J.D. in 1959, he started his legal practice Wilder, Gregory and Associates. Wilder notably went the extra mile to personally involve himself as a lawyer into his civil rights cases by refusing to sit in segregated courtrooms. Wilder was a strong force in pushing for a holiday to honor Martin Luther King Jr., and lobbied for the budget expansion of Virginia's public works, universities, and hospitals. The grandson of slaves, Wilder found it critical to organize plans for the National Slavery Museum in Virginia. He returned to Howard University to serve as a trustee from 1993 to 2014.

You don't ever earn a right to stop doing anything if you feel there is an obligation to move in terms of public service.

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