

# National Resource: Historically Black Colleges And Universities

By N. JOYCE PAYNE  
Special to the Chronicle

Historically black public colleges can be traced back to 1837 when a Quaker group in Philadelphia established Cheyney State College, which in 1983 became Cheyney State University of Pennsylvania. At a time of great controversy and social struggle, Cheyney State University became a potent force, challenging elitism in American higher education. The creation of higher education institutions exclusively for African-Americans was an outgrowth of a tenaciously segregated society.

This unparalleled time in history also influenced passage of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, the latter of which led to the creation of black land-grant institutions exclusively for African-Americans. Today, the rich legacy of the land-grant tradition remains prominent on the campus of 17 public black colleges and universities.

The most striking testimonial to the resiliency and value of the nation's 37 historically black public institutions is the prominence of leaders they have produced. They include the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Lincoln University of Pennsylvania; Barbara Jordan, former member of U.S. House of Representatives, Texas Southern University; Jesse Jackson, former presidential candidate and civil rights leader, North Carolina A&T State University; the late Ronald McNair, astronaut, North Carolina A&T State University; and the late Congressman George "Mickey" Leland, Texas Southern University.

Few people know that the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff has produced more African-American legislators, businessmen, educators, dentists, doctors and army officers than the combined totals of all higher education institutions in the state. More than 55,000 students have graduated from the prestigious Tuskegee University, and Florida A&M University is second to Stanford University in attracting National Merit Scholars.

Public black colleges and universities have performed what no other social institutions could accom-

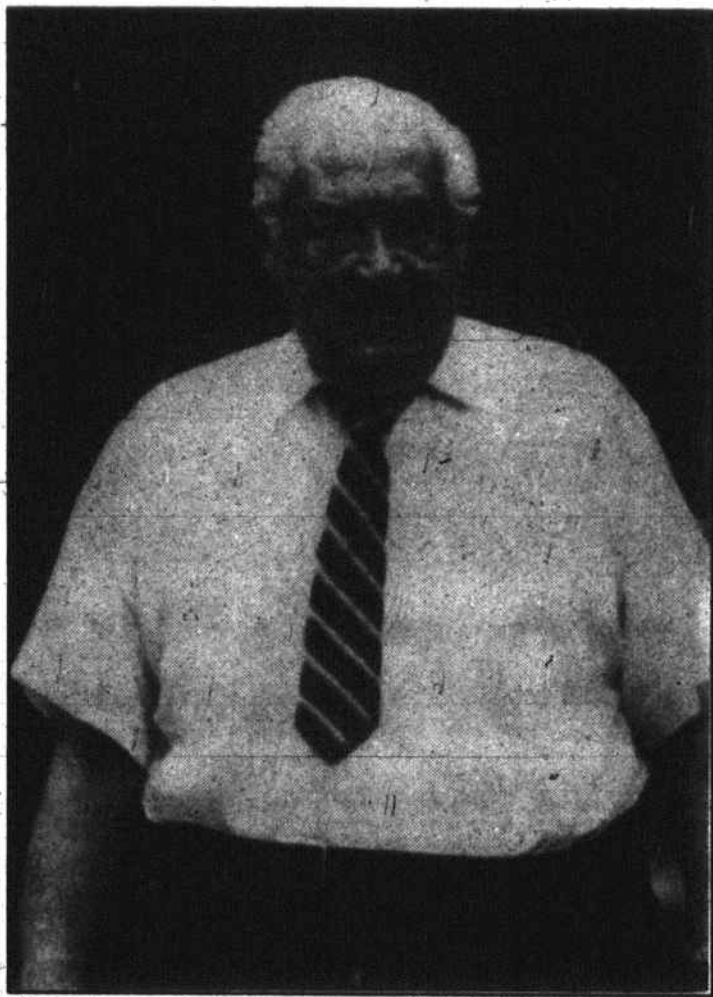


Former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan attended Texas Southern University.

plish. While enduring the injustices of society, these institutions have provided exemplary role models; served as a fertile source of professional leadership; and fostered an unyielding commitment to academic excellence, social equality and the assurance of a decent future for students from the lowest economic strata of the nation.

Each year, these institutions educate more than 54 percent of the African-American who go on to graduate school and beyond. With limited fiscal resources and facing nearly insurmountable odds, public black universities have made great strides in building highly competitive academic programs in engineering, business, mathematics, computer sciences, environmental sciences, nursing and journalism. They possess broad expertise in teaching, research, technical assistance and extension or public service.

Consider what historically black public colleges accomplish each year despite limited fiscal resources. The nation's 37 public black institutions annually enroll more than 170,000 students constituting over 70 percent of all students enrolled in historically black four-year colleges and universities (HBCUs). In 1993, enrollments increased by more than seven percent and nearly 32 percent of all baccalaureate degrees awarded to



Former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first black to serve on the nation's highest court, attended Lincoln University of Pennsylvania.

African-Americans came from historically black public colleges and universities (HBPCUs). Thirty-two of the 43 historically black colleges listed as the top producers of baccalaureate degrees conferred in 1989 were HBPCUs.

These institutions are in the forefront of educating youths who are at risk, providing research vital to the quality of life and the environment, and addressing the social and economic needs of both urban and rural communities. Teaching, research and extension remain prominent on these campuses.

Historically black public colleges constitute some of the largest and most prestigious systems of higher education in the nation:

- Jackson State University is producing the largest number of African-American graduates in computer science in the nation.
- Alabama A&M University has established a \$1 million endowed chair in physics.
- Florida A&M University offers a Ph.D. in pharmacology and has six advanced degree programs in pharmacology and chemical and mechanical engineering.

Annually, six public black colleges produce nearly 20 percent of all African-American bachelor's degree recipients in engineering and graduate over 70 percent of all black recipients of bachelor's degrees in agricultural sciences. Tuskegee University alone has trained more than 80 percent of the nation's black veterinarians.

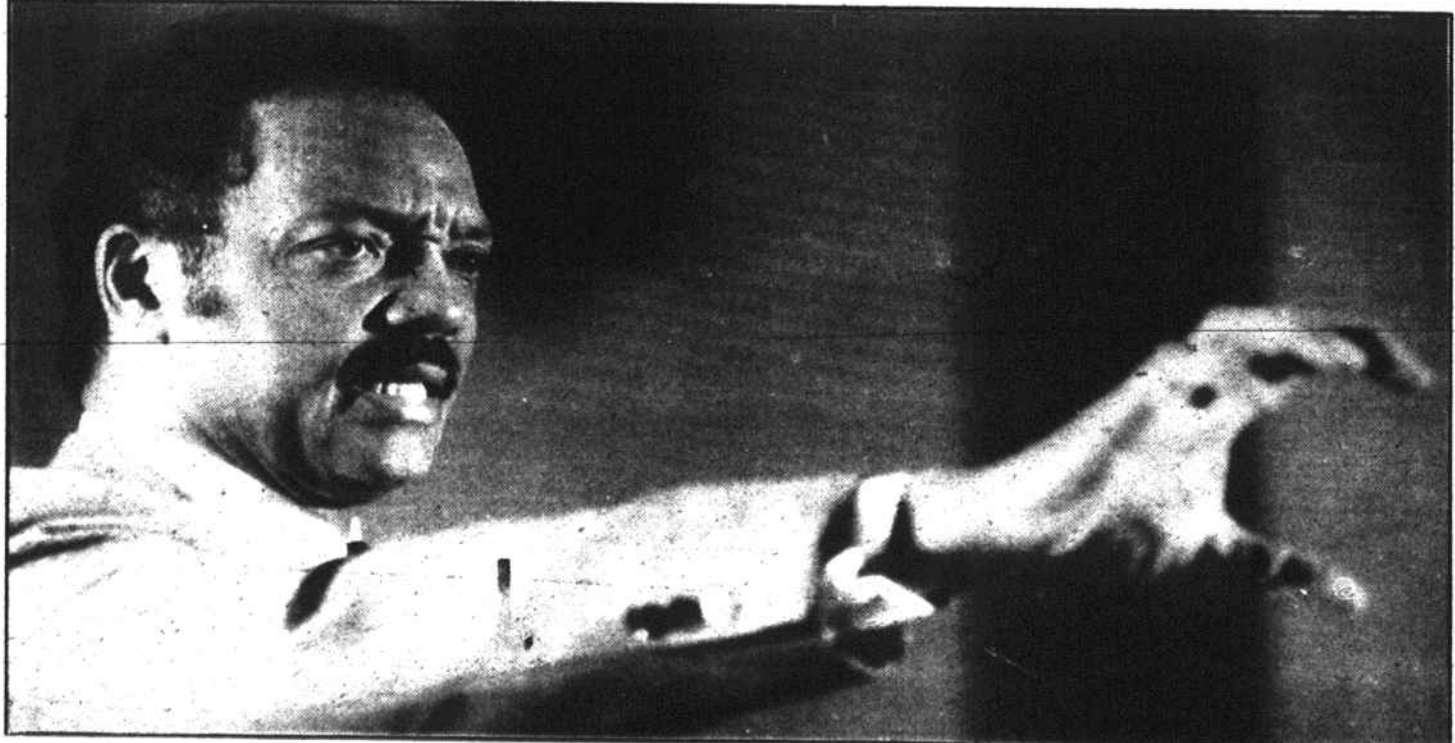
The growth of new course offerings, as well as expansion of areas of specialization, indicated continued support of the "tradition of excellence" at these colleges. Today, historically black public colleges offer over 1,100 different majors including nearly 230 programs leading to master's degrees. Information systems management, architectural engineering, airway science, biotechnology and fisheries biology are just a few of the new majors.

Seven of the top ten black institutions in the nation contributing to the production of African-Americans doctorates are historically black public universities with Florida A&M University, Morgan State University, Tennessee State University, and Southern University and A&M College among the top five.

If current trends continue, historically black public universities of the future will offer a variety of opportunities at the Ph.D. level and beyond that will continue to strengthen the quality and quantity of teaching, research and public service - while serving as economic instruments of the state and the nation.

\*\*\*\*\*

(Dr. N. Joyce Payne is director of the Office for the Advancement of Public Black Colleges, an information and advocacy office that administers the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund, a merit scholarship program that provides full four-year scholarships to students attending 37 historically black public college and universities involved with the fund. This is the first column in a continuing series on higher education in the African-American community.)



The Rev. Jesse Jackson attended N.C. A&T State University.

THE GREATER WINSTON-SALEM  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
SALUTES  
THE *Winston-Salem Chronicle*  
FOR 20 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

**Winston-Salem**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Congratulations  
on twenty years  
of excellence  
and thank you  
for supporting the arts.**

**ARTS  
COUNCIL**  
WINSTON-SALEM • FORSYTH COUNTY

*Congratulations*  
**Winston-Salem Chronicle**  
*Celebrating 20 years of  
Service to Our Community*

**Winston-Salem  
Urban League**

*\*Working Together We Can Make a Difference*