

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7225 of September 17, 1999

National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have provided a crucial avenue to educational and economic advancement for African American youth for more than 150 years. These institutions, dedicated to equality and excellence in higher education, have their roots in a segregated society; their survival in the face of limited financial resources or outside support stood as a beacon of hope for generations of African Americans.

While our society has changed in the intervening decades, the need for these institutions has not. Our Nation's HBCUs have assisted African American and other students from low-income communities in achieving their educational goals and reaching their full potential, while keeping tuition costs affordable. The vast majority of African Americans with bachelor's degrees in engineering, computer science, life science, business, and mathematics have graduated from one of the 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities. According to the Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics, HBCUs conferred 28 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded to African American graduates in 1996, although enrollment at HBCUs constituted only 16 percent of all African American college students.

In addition to giving students the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today's challenging global economy, HBCUs also offer students leadership opportunities that build self-confidence, a nurturing learning and social environment, and networks of successful alumni who serve as positive role models and mentors for graduates. Cultural programs and educational outreach to minority- and low-income areas in our Nation help preserve African American heritage and make HBCUs a source of pride and knowledge for the communities they serve.

By serving the African American community, HBCUs serve all Americans. These institutions embody many of our most deeply cherished values—equality, diversity, opportunity, and hard work. HBCUs prepare talented young men and women to succeed in every sector of our economy. And the alumni of HBCUs have contributed immeasurably to our Nation's success—as scientists, businesspeople, educators, public servants, and so much more. As education and diversity become increasingly important in the 21st century, graduates of HBCUs will continue to be at the vanguard of America's progress.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 19 through 25, 1999, as National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week. I call upon the people of the United States, including government officials, educators, and administrators, to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities honoring America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their graduates.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William Clinton

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