2022

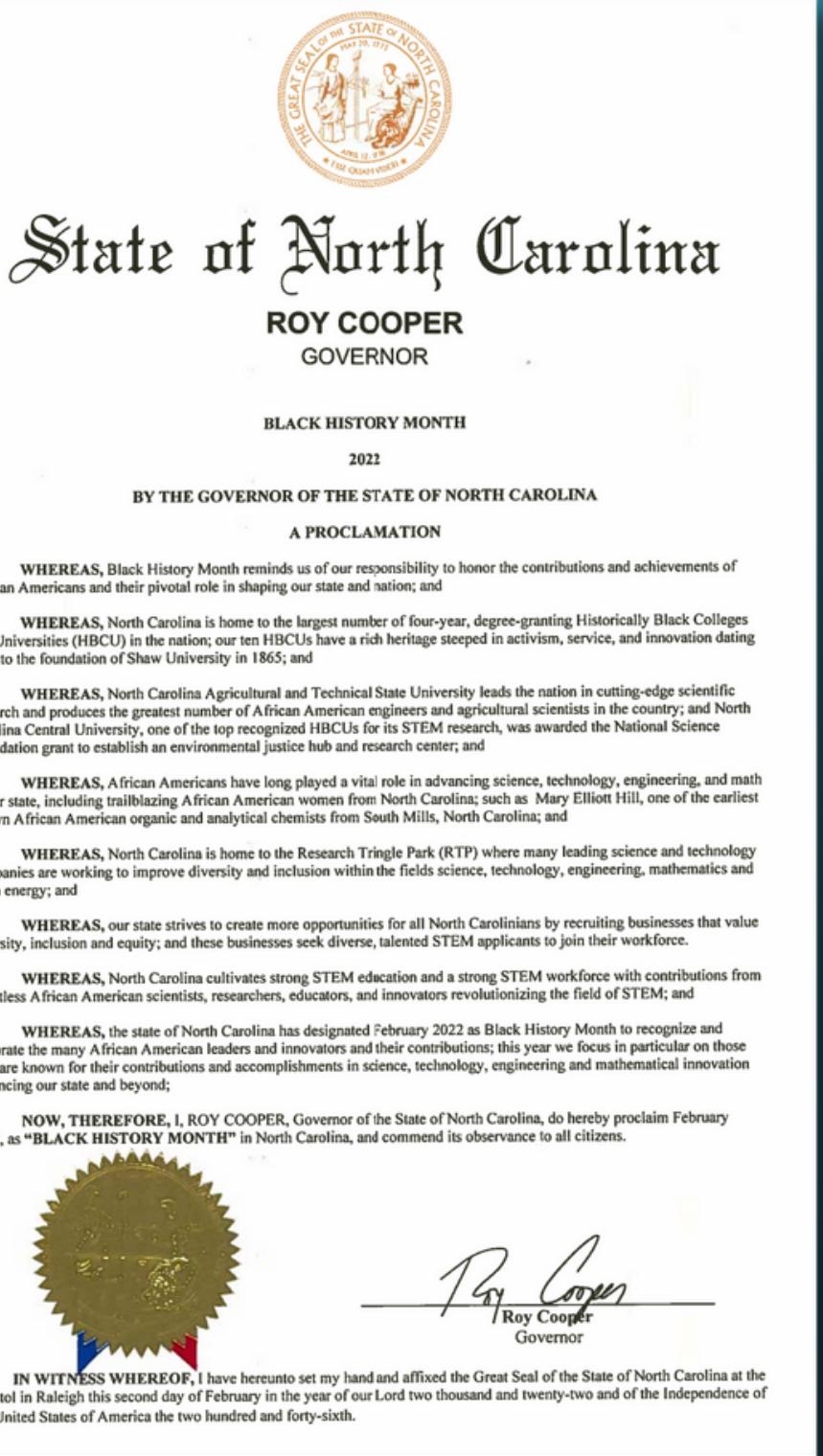
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Celebrating African American
STEM Leaders

2022 BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Black leaders in STEM have made invaluable contributions to North Carolinian's culture and history, and have opened the way for future generations. Whether in the areas of science, research, technology, business, education, government, or policy, Black STEM professionals continue to break down barriers. The following is a small collection of STEM leaders who have embodied some of the highest ideals of academic curiosity and achievement. The North Carolina African American Heritage Commission joins Governor Roy Cooper and his team in recognizing these outstanding Honorees. We celebrate them with great expectations for the future.

North Carolina African American Heritage Commission



State of North Carolina

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

2022

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Black History Month reminds us of our responsibility to honor the contributions and achievements of African Americans and their pivotal role in shaping our state and nation; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina is home to the largest number of four-year, degree-granting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in the nation; our ten HBCUs have a rich heritage steeped in activism, service, and innovation dating back to the foundation of Shaw University in 1865; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University leads the nation in cutting-edge scientific research and produces the greatest number of African American engineers and agricultural scientists in the country; and North Carolina Central University, one of the top recognized HBCUs for its STEM research, was awarded the National Science Foundation grant to establish an environmental justice hub and research center; and

WHEREAS, African Americans have long played a vital role in advancing science, technology, engineering, and math in our state, including trailblazing African American women from North Carolina; such as Mary Elliott Hill, one of the earliest known African American organic and analytical chemists from South Mills, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina is home to the Research Tringle Park (RTP) where many leading science and technology companies are working to improve diversity and inclusion within the fields science, technology, engineering, mathematics and clean energy; and

WHEREAS, our state strives to create more opportunities for all North Carolinians by recruiting businesses that value diversity, inclusion and equity; and these businesses seek diverse, talented STEM applicants to join their workforce.

WHEREAS, North Carolina cultivates strong STEM education and a strong STEM workforce with contributions from countless African American scientists, researchers, educators, and innovators revolutionizing the field of STEM; and

WHEREAS, the state of North Carolina has designated February 2022 as Black History Month to recognize and celebrate the many African American leaders and innovators and their contributions; this year we focus in particular on those who are known for their contributions and accomplishments in science, technology, engineering and mathematical innovation advancing our state and beyond;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ROY COOPER, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim February 2022, as **"BLACK HISTORY MONTH"** in North Carolina, and commend its observance to all citizens.

Roy Cooper
Governor

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this second day of February in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-two and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-sixth.

Governor Cooper Proclaims February as Black History Month

Governor Roy Cooper has proclaimed February as Black History Month to honor the contributions of Black North Carolinians and celebrate our state's rich African American culture and history.

View

HONOREES

b. Port Gibson, MS Lives in Durham, NC (Durham County)

DR. JOAN S. BARBER

Sciences

Dr. Joan Barber was born in Port Gibson, Mississippi. She is the retired Vice Chancellor for Student Life and Faculty Emeritus at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. Dr. Barber began her undergraduate studies at Alcorn State University at the age of 15, graduating with a BS in Biology. She went on to earn an MS in Biology from Jackson State University and a PhD in Zoology and Renal Physiology from Howard University. In 1984 she became the first postdoctoral fellow in the School of Medicine's Carolina Black Scholars Program (now called the Carolina Postdoctoral Program for Faculty Diversity).

Dr. Barber served the NCSSM for nearly 30 years. Two of the programs she established at NCSSM – the Summer Leadership and Research Experience, designed for underrepresented minorities who have been accepted to NCSSM, and Step Up to STEM, a program for African American, Hispanic American, and Native American rising 9th graders from across the state, are still going strong today. Step Up to STEM will expand to Elizabeth City State University this summer. She has worked tirelessly to enhance opportunities for students in STEM-related fields and to address the racial and gender gap in STEM during her retirement and continues to raise funds for NCSSM.

Image: Brian Faircloth, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics

In 2012, Dr. Barber was honored by NCSSM with the alumni-endowed Joan Barber, PhD Endowment for Under-represented Minorities Student Success. She was inducted into the NC STEM Hall of Fame in 2020 and has received the Josephine D. Clement Award for Exemplary Community Leadership for Public Education in Durham, the Keeper of the Dream award for perpetuating the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., the National Science Foundation Award, the Minority Biomedical Sciences Award, the MARC, NIH Trainee Award, the American Heart Association Award, the Carolina Black Scholars Award, and the Women in Management President's Award. She has served as an advisor, grant reviewer, and evaluator for the National Science Foundation and has served as chair and member of the Howard Alumni Book Scholarship Alumni Program since 2000.

Active in her community, Dr. Barber is a Durham County certified Master Gardener. As a Master Gardener she has worked with the NC State Extension Master Gardeners Volunteer Program to redesign their Durham Demonstration Garden to share research-based gardening techniques for urban spaces, address diversity, equity, and inclusion issues, and work with groups like the Friends of Geer Cemetery to rescue African American burial grounds and remains. She also serves on the advisory committee for the Durham Garden Forum in collaboration with Duke Gardens, has served as chair and member of the Durham Public Education Network Board of Directors, and has co-directed several programs, including the Duke Young Scholars' Program.

Dr. Barber is an avid reader who enjoys working in her garden. She credits her lifetime of success in STEM to her faculty and staff colleagues at NCSSM, friends, and mentors. She is especially grateful to her supportive family, including her mother (Henrienne Dunbar, deceased), husband (Errol Gabay, deceased), brother, Dr. Joseph Dunbar, and her two sons, Kenneth and Kelcey. She resides in Durham.

b. Greensboro, NC (Guilford County)
Raised in Goldsboro, NC (Wayne County)
Lives in Durham, NC (Durham County)

WILLIAM J. BARBER, III

Sciences

William J. Barber III is an environmental and climate justice scholar and advocate. He has deep roots in eastern NC, growing up in Goldsboro, NC until he moved to Durham to attend the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics.

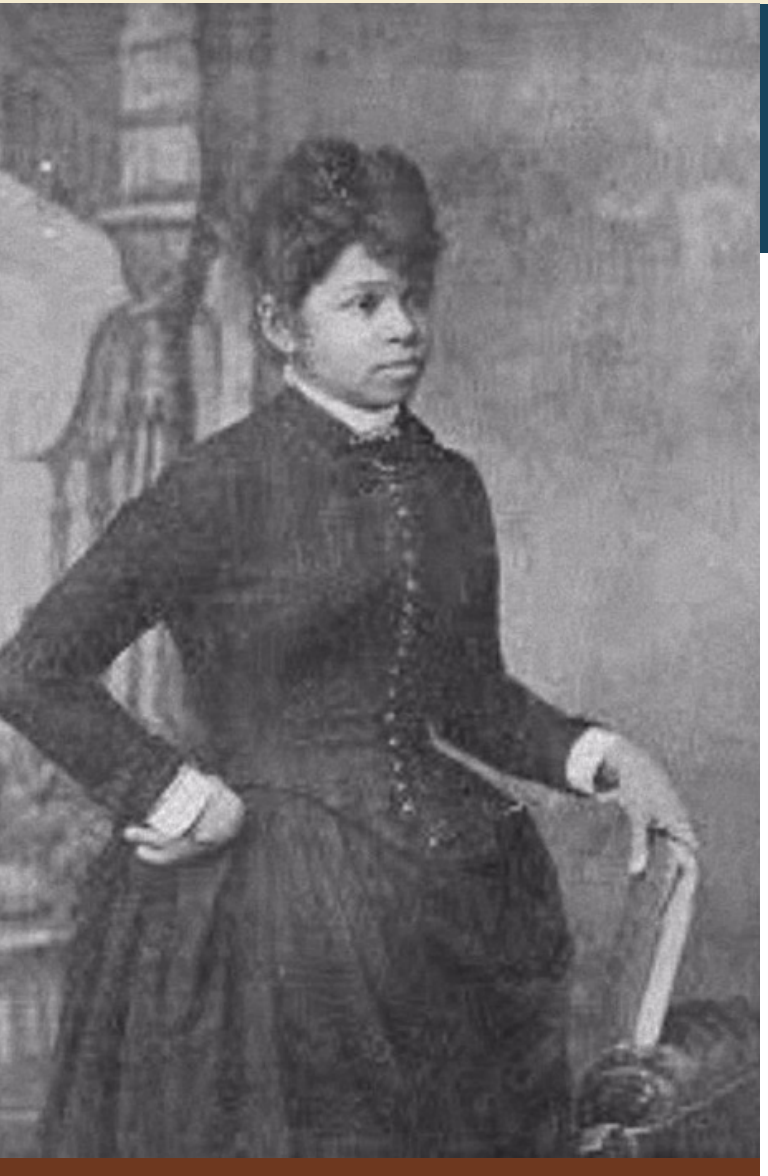
He currently works as the Strategic Partnerships Manager at The Climate Reality Project, a non-profit based in Washington, D.C. whose mission is to catalyze a global solution to the climate crisis. He also serves as a member of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality Secretary's Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Board, as well as co-chair for the North Carolina Poor People's Campaign Ecological Devastation committee. His current work includes the development of frontline and BIPOC leadership in the field of green energy and sustainability; facilitation of policies and practices which allow for frontline and BIPOC communities to benefit from the transition to the new green economy; the development of models which combine interests in self-determination, sustainability, and economic development to be implemented for minority and economically deprived communities; and the development of models of fusion coalition building coupled with electoral engagement with millennial groups.

Image: Courtesy of William J. Barber, III

Barber is founder and CEO of the Rural Beacon Initiative, a start-up designed to explore how climate finance can advance social equity and economic opportunities for frontline—particularly rural—communities. Barber has completed work with several environmental advocacy groups, including the UNC Law Center for Climate, Energy, Environment, and Economics; Clean Water for North Carolina; Clean Energy Works, and the Coalition for Green Capital.

As an advocate, Barber is committed to understanding the intersections of what he describes as the three modern crises of climate change, rampant poverty, and the erosion of democratic practices and prioritizes ideating proactive solutions. A son of both the church and social justice movements, Barber works at a unique intersection of faith, advocacy, and scholarship to navigate today's pressing crises. He is often quoted as saying that "the scale of the crises we face are too great for one sector to solve alone—we must develop an intersectional approach in order to achieve progress." Barber received his B.S. in Environmental Physics from North Carolina Central University and earned his juris doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of law, where he focused on environmental law and policy. He was recently featured in PayPal's Rising Leader Series and was recognized as a Black environmental activist fighting for justice in North Carolina by the Coastal Plains Environmental Advocate in February 2022.

Barber is the eldest son of Rebecca Barber and Bishop William J. Barber II of the Forward Together Moral Movement and the Poor Peoples Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.



b. Craven County, NC

SARAH BOONE

Engineering

Posthumous

Sarah Boone (1832-1904) was an inventor and dressmaker from Craven County, North Carolina. Boone was enslaved at the time of her birth and is believed to have secured her freedom after her marriage in 1847. Her family moved to New Haven, Connecticut after the Civil War. Denied educational opportunities earlier in her life, she learned to read and write in her 40s.

Boone was best known for inventing the modern collapsable ironing board, which had padding and a tapered shape that made it easier to iron women's clothing. She invented the ironing board to make her dresses stand out from those created by her competition. She patented the ironing board in 1892 and was one of the first African American women in the United States to obtain a patent. Sarah Boone was married to James Boone and had eight children. She passed away in 1904.

Image: Public Domain

S. BOONE IRONING BOARD, April 26, 1892

(Model.)

S. BOONE.

IRONING BOARD.

No. 473,653. Patented Apr. 26, 1892.

Fig. 1

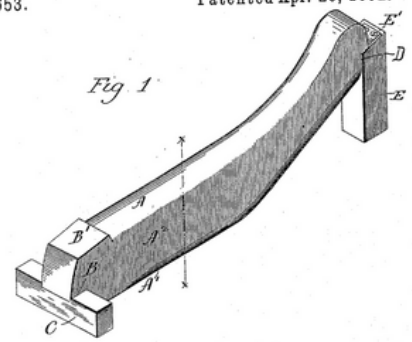


Fig 2

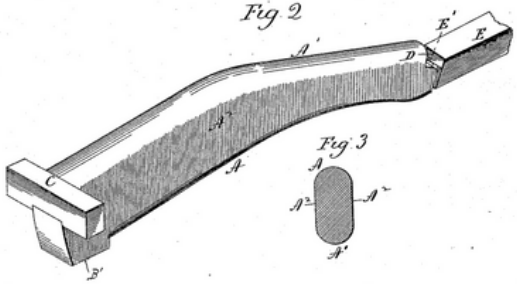


Fig 3

Witnesses
J. H. Shumway
Lillian D. Kelsey

Sarah Boone
Inventor
By atty's Earle & Seymour

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

SARAH BOONE, OF NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT.

IRONING-BOARD.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 473,653, dated April 26, 1892.

Application filed July 23, 1891. Serial No. 400,474. (Model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, SARAH BOONE, of New Haven, in the county of New Haven and State of Connecticut, have invented a new Improvement in Ironing-Boards; and I do hereby declare the following, when taken in connection with accompanying drawings and the letters of reference marked thereon, to be a full, clear, and exact description of the same, and which said drawings constitute part of this specification, and represent, in—

Figure 1, a view in perspective of an ironing-board constructed in accordance with my invention, and shown as arranged for ironing the inside seam of a sleeve; Fig. 2, a similar view showing the board in position for ironing the outside seam of the sleeve, and Fig. 3 a view of the device in transverse section on line *x x* of Fig. 1.

My invention relates to an improvement in ironing-boards, the object being to produce a cheap, simple, convenient, and highly effective device, particularly adapted to be used in ironing the sleeves and bodies of ladies' garments.

With these ends in view my invention consists in a narrow board having its edges respectively curved to correspond to the outside and inside seams of a sleeve, and provided at one end with a fixed transverse support and at its opposite end with a movable support hinged to the said end and extending in line with the board, the outer and inner edges of the same respectively having, in effect, outward and inward longitudinal curvature.

My invention further consists in certain details of construction and combination of parts, as will be hereinafter described, and pointed out in the claims.

As herein shown, the device consists of a board having its two edges A and A′ rounded and respectively curved to correspond to the outside and inside seams of a sleeve which the board resembles in its general outline, the outer and inner edges of the board respectively having, in effect, outward and inward longitudinal curvature. As herein shown, the said edges are curved in accordance with the outside and inside seams of the sleeve of a lady's garment, and having their most pronounced curvature at the "elbow-point," so to speak, of the sleeve; but these curves may be modified to suit the cut of the sleeves of men's coats, if desired. As herein shown, also, the sides A^2 A^2 of the board are made flat; but this is not the essential, although the preferred, construction, as when made flat they may be sometimes conveniently used for pressing.

The board is provided at one end with a notch B, receiving a fixed transverse support C, which projects very slightly beyond the edge A′ of the board. The same end of the board is also provided with a flat bearing-face B′, which extends slightly beyond the edge A of the board. The opposite end of the board is made somewhat smaller than the end just referred to, and constructed with a notch D, which receives one corner of a movable support E, the same being attached by a hinge E′ to the extreme end of the board and arranged in line therewith.

When the board is to be used for pressing inside seams, the movable support is turned down, as shown by Fig. 1 of the drawings, and then co-operates with the transverse support in maintaining the board in this position. For ironing or pressing outside seams the board is reversed edge for edge and its movable support extended, as shown by Fig. 2 of the drawings, and thus got out of the way, the board being steadied in this position upon its bearing-face B′.

My improved device is not only adapted for pressing the inside and outside seams of the sleeves of ladies' waists and men's coats, but will be found particularly convenient, also, in pressing curved waist-seams wherever they occur.

I would have it understood that I do not limit myself to the exact form herein shown and described, but hold myself at liberty to make such changes and alterations as fairly fall within the spirit and scope of my invention.

Having fully described my invention, what I claim as new, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

1. An ironing-board having its edges respectively curved to correspond to the outside and inside seams of a sleeve, and provided at one end with a fixed transverse support and at its opposite end with a movable

View

b. Memphis, TN Lived in Durham, NC (Durham County)

DR. MARJORIE LEE BROWNE

Mathematics

Posthumous

Dr. Marjorie Lee Browne (1914-1979) was born in Memphis, Tennessee. She completed undergraduate work at Howard University and began a teaching career in New Orleans following graduation. Dr. Browne then pursued a PhD in Mathematics from the University of Michigan while teaching at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. She graduated in 1949 – becoming one of the first African American women to earn a PhD in Mathematics in the United States. She completed additional coursework as a Ford Foundation fellow at Cambridge University in England and as an NSF Faculty Fellow at UCLA and at Columbia University.

Dr. Browne taught at North Carolina Central University (NCCU) from 1949-1979. She was the only person in the department with a PhD in Mathematics for 25 of those years and served as the department's chair from 1951-1970. She taught undergraduates and graduates during the school year and secondary school teachers during the summer, leaving little time for her own research.

Image: Public Domain

Under Dr. Browne's leadership, NCCU became the first HBCU to host a National Science Foundation Institute for secondary school math teachers. She was committed to supporting secondary teachers and encouraged them to earn graduate degrees. Dr. Browne also won a grant from IBM to fund the first computer laboratory for academic computing at NCCU, completed in 1961. This may have been one of the first computer labs at an HBCU. She was the recipient of the inaugural W.W. Rankin Memorial Award from the North Carolina Council of Teachers of Mathematics in 1974. Dr. Browne passed away in Durham, NC in 1979. She had planned to conduct research on the real number system in her retirement years.

b. Magnolia, NC (Duplin County) Lives in Winston-Salem, NC (Forsyth County)

DR. GOLDIE SMITH BYRD

Sciences

Dr. Goldie S. Byrd is the Director of the Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity (MACHE) and Professor of Social Sciences and Health Policy at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. She is a professor and nationally renowned researcher with focuses on health equity, the genetics of Alzheimer's disease in African Americans, and the inclusion of minorities in research and clinical trials. She began exploring these research areas in 2002, while on faculty at Duke University Medical Center.

In 2003, Byrd joined the faculty of NC A&T University. She served as the first female chair of the Department of Biology and as the first permanent female Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. She also served as the Interim Executive Director of NC A&T University's Center for Outreach in Alzheimer's Aging and Community Health, which she founded in 2012 using grant funds from Merck. The organization focuses on assisting those caring for people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia as well as training and research.

Byrd has also served as a faculty member at Tennessee State University and North Carolina Central University (NCCU). She won the UNC Board of Governors Award of Excellence in Teaching in 2001 for her work at NCCU and was named to the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame in 2010 for her achievements in the field of science.

Image: Wake Forest Baptist Health

Byrd serves on the executive board of the NC Institute of Medicine and co-led the task force that created North Carolina's strategic plan for addressing Alzheimer's and dementia, leading to a North Carolina Registry for Brain Health. She also serves as co-chair of North Carolina's COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee.

Dr. Byrd earned a BA in Biology and a BA in Biology Education from NC A&T University and a PhD in Microbiology from Meharry Medical College in Nashville.

b. Hertford County Lives in Winterville, NC (Pitt County)

MARSHALL CHERRY

Sciences

Marshall Cherry has served at Roanoke Electric Cooperative located in northeastern North Carolina for over 29 years and has been the organization's President and CEO since December 2021, prior to becoming the president and CEO, Cherry served as the chief operating officer since 2014. Throughout his tenure at Roanoke Electric, Marshall has gained broad experience in customer relations management, communications/public relations, information technology, organizational development, non-profit management, and economic development.

As Roanoke's new chief executive, Marshall looks forward to leading a robust four-year strategic plan labeled "Vision 2025." This plan will include advancing equitable energy efficiency financing, stimulating a market that increases electric vehicle transportation, engaging more member-owners to participate in the cooperative's deployment of smart energy devices, and completing the build out of a regional broadband network. While serving as chief operating officer and leading the organization's corporate strategy, Roanoke Electric was inducted in the Palladium Group's Hall of Fame for Executing Strategy. Marshall is a former board chair of the Carolina Small Business Development Fund, a statewide Community Development Financial Institution. In 2018, Governor Roy Cooper appointed Marshall to serve on the state's Education and Workforce Innovation Commission. He is a current member of the Duke Energy North Carolina State President's Advisory Council.

Image: Carol Hedgepeth

He received a BS in Business Administration from Livingstone College, Salisbury, North Carolina. He is also a graduate of two of North Carolina's leading economic development leadership programs–North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center's Leadership Institute and Leadership North Carolina. He received an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army Reserves after eight years of service. A father of five, Marshall and his wife, Cheryl, reside in Winterville, NC.

b. Nashville, TN Lives in Chapel Hill, NC (Orange County)

DR. SHAUNDRA B. DAILY

Technology

Dr. Shaundra B. Daily was born in Nashville, Tennessee. She is the first Black woman to serve as a professor of the practice at Duke University.

Dr. Daily is professor of the practice of electrical and computer engineering in the Pratt School of Engineering and Computer Science in the Trinity College of Arts & Sciences at Duke University. Prior to joining Duke, she was an associate professor with tenure at the University of Florida in the Department of Computer & Information Science & Engineering. She also served as an associate professor and interim co-chair in the School of Computing at Clemson University. Her research focuses on the design, implementation, and evaluation of technologies, programs, and curricula to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM fields. Her approach has focused on three key strategies: 1) Utilizing technology to support the development of interpersonal skills that will facilitate collaboration in diverse settings; 2) Developing technologies and programs geared towards making computing and engineering accessible to diverse identities; and 3) Mentoring, developing outreach, and researching the experiences of marginalized groups in computing and engineering. Having garnered over $40M in funding from public and private sources to support her research activities, Daily's work has been featured in USA Today, Forbes, National Public Radio, and the Chicago Tribune.

Image: Duke University

Dr. Daily is dedicated to encouraging young people to pursue STEM fields. She serves as the Board President for Inspiring Minds (Durham Chapter), an organization supporting Black and Latinx students in their pre-collegiate journeys. She is also the Co-Founder and Creative Director of KidzHack, an organization dedicated to providing youth with the technological tools to become physically and emotionally healthy citizens who are dedicated to envisioning and inventing the global future. Throughout her career, she has developed and participated in numerous activities geared towards engaging the public in science as well as encouraging women and minoritized groups to pursue STEM fields including talks, podcasts, outreach programs, public exhibits, and news articles.

A trailblazer, Dr. Daily was the first Black woman to chair the Human-Centered Computing Division at Clemson University and the first Black woman to earn tenure in Computer and Information Science & Engineering at the University of Florida. Among her many awards are the Caper and Marion McDonald Award for Excellence in Mentoring and Advising in 2021, was named Undergraduate Mentor of the Year by Duke University's Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture in 2020, and Delta Alpha Pi's Extraordinary Education Award (2015).

Dr. Daily holds a BS in Electrical Engineering from Florida State University, an MS in Electrical Engineering from Florida Agricultural Mechanical University, an S.M. in Media Technology from MIT, and a PhD in Media Arts and Sciences from MIT. She is the proud daughter of Skip and Joan Bryant and the proud mother of two daughters, Layla and Zoe. Dr. Daily enjoys visiting trampoline parks and resides in Chapel Hill.

b. Mooresville, NC (Iredell County) Lives in Chapel Hill, NC (Orange County)

WILLIE A. DEESE

Engineering

Willie Deese was born in Mooresville, North Carolina, He has actively interacted with corporate boards as a functional senior leader at Merck and GSK and is currently serving as a Director on four domestic and international company boards - with extensive audit, governance and compensation committee participation. He has 39 years of experience in manufacturing, supply chain, and procurement management with several global enterprises in both emerging and developed markets, driving complex transformational restructurings, internal productivity efficiencies, turnarounds, consolidations, and integrations.

In his corporate career, Deese most recently had a 12-year run at Merck & Co., Inc. In his last position he was promoted to President, Merck Manufacturing post the Merck/Schering Plough merger, reporting to the CEO. Here, he led global manufacturing, supply chain management, logistics/distribution, procurement, and Lean Six Sigma, with oversight of 42 (98 at time of merger) manufacturing sites spanning 30 countries, an annual operating budget of $9.0 billion and capital budget of $2.0 billion. His key contributions include leading a corporate strategic restructuring effort post-merger that redesigned the operating model and driving development and implementation of a transformation strategy for the Manufacturing Division that resulted in significant, sustainable operational efficiencies and financial returns across the enterprise. He joined Merck in 2004 as Senior Vice President, Global Procurement.

Image: Courtesy of Willie Deese

Prior to Merck, Deese was Senior Vice President, Global Procurement and Logistics, GMS at GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals, PLC, responsible for developing and integrating the Procurement function post-merger and leading a $1 billion+ cost improvement initiative and Senior Vice President and Director, Purchasing at SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals, PLC, accountable to the President of Worldwide Supply Operations for developing and implementing procurement strategies to support global supply initiative goals as well as delivering $100s of millions in direct and indirect goods and services and indirect costs.

Earlier in his career, Deese was Vice President of Purchasing, National Purchasing Organization at Kaiser Permanente, creating and implementing the procurement strategy for the world's largest integrated healthcare system. He also held purchasing management roles at SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals, PLC and was Site Manager at Digital.

Deese received his MBA from Western New England University and his BS in Business Administration from NC A&T State University. He received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Davidson College in May of 2021 and an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from North Carolina A&T State University in 2011. He has been named to Black Enterprise's Top 100 Leaders in Corporate America three times and named to Savoy Magazine's Top Corporate Director's list twice. North Carolina A&T State University named its College of Business and Economics in his honor in 2020. Willie Deese resides in Chapel Hill, NC.

b. Wilson, NC (Wilson County) Lives in Durham, NC (Durham County)

DR. CRYSTAL HARDEN

Sciences

Dr. Harden supervises inclusion, equity, and diversity initiatives as well as all program initiatives for Morehead Planetarium and Science Center including community engagement, youth + family, and school + interpretative programming efforts. Before joining Morehead in 2008, she served as an educational consultant for the California Department of Education. Her career in science education has spanned 30 years with work in state government administration, K-12 school teaching, and informal science center leadership.

She holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from North Carolina Central University and a master's degree and doctorate in education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research featured the science identity of rural, African American, middle school girls in North Carolina.

In 2011, Dr. Harden served as an expert on mobile science programs for the United States Department of State in Amman, Jordan. In 2013, she was awarded Outstanding Informal Educator in Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education by the North Carolina Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education Center. She has consulted with various organizations on creating a sense of belonging for their staff and audiences through the lens of inclusivity and equity.

Image: Morgan Crutchfield Photography

Currently, Dr. Harden works diligently on community partnership building and relationships through informal science programming efforts particularly in northeastern North Carolina. Leading the charge is her vision and work with the Saunders Science Scholars program in Gates County, North Carolina. Under her leadership, Morehead has vested its science education efforts in collaboration with Gates County Schools and the educational non-profit, Gates County Community Partnership, to enrich the educational opportunities and experiences of Gates County children and families.

b. South Mills, NC (Camden County)

MARY ELLIOT HILL

Sciences

Posthumous

Mary Elliot Hill was one of the first African American women to become a chemist and is best known for her contributions to the creation of plastics. Hill was born in South Mills, NC in 1907. She earned a degree in chemistry from Virginia State College for Negroes (Virginia State University) in 1929 and earned a master's degree in chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania in 1941, becoming the first African American woman to earn this degree.

Hill began her teaching career in 1930. She taught at Hampton Institute and Virginia State University during the school year and completed her master's degree in the summers. She returned to North Carolina for a year to teach at Bennett College in Greensboro, then accepted an appointment to Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Tennessee A & I State College (now Tennessee State University). She served as the head of the college's chemistry department from 1951-1962.

Hill followed her husband, Carl Hill, to Kentucky State College in 1962, where she was appointed professor of chemistry. Carl Hill was also a chemist and the couple conducted research as a team. Mary Hill was primarily an analytical chemist who studied ultra-violet light. Her most significant contribution to the field was research that led to the polymerization of ketenes, which is used today to synthesize plastics.

Image: Public Domain

She co-authored at least 40 papers during her career and co-wrote two chemistry textbooks.

Mary Elliot Hill died in Frankfort, Kentucky in 1969.

b. Fayetteville, NC (Cumberland County)
Lives in Raleigh, NC (Wake County)

TIMOTHY HUMPHREY

Engineering

Timothy “Tim” Humphrey was born and raised in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He has held various IBM executive roles spanning Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Data, Acquisitions, Supply Chain, and Sales Support. He led IBM’s efforts to transform into the premier cognitive enterprise by embedding Artificial Intelligence into internal business processes across the company. Prior to joining IBM's supply chain organization in 2011, Humphrey held several engineering roles leading the design, development and launch of several technologies and offerings for Lenovo and the former Personal Computer Division of IBM. He has over 25 years of global experience in the computing industry with experience in technical support, hardware & software development, quality assurance, and battery technology.

As Vice President, IBM Chief Data Office, Humphrey is focused on delivering a trusted, enterprise-wide data and AI platform for transforming IBM. His team also commercializes internal transformation solutions and replicates those solutions with IBM clients. Humphrey is also the Senior State Executive for IBM in North Carolina and Senior Location Executive for IBM in Research Triangle Park, NC, one of the company’s largest sites. He leads all site operations, including employee engagement, facilities management, and disaster preparation/response, for one of IBM’s largest sites and holds relationships with local lawmakers, academic institutions, media, and non-profit organizations. He is especially passionate about employee engagement, diversity, and community giveback.

Image: Robert Filcsik, Headshots & Corporate Photography

Active in the community, Humphrey engages in several non-profit fundraising activities, special events, and volunteer efforts. He served as a board member for UNC Health and currently sits on the boards of Boys & Girls Clubs of Wake County, the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, UNC World View, and UNC Health. He was appointed to the North Carolina State University Board of Trustees in 2021. Humphrey is also an active mentor to over 30 global professionals, students, and youth.

Humphrey was inducted into the North Carolina State University Electrical and Computer Engineering Hall of Fame in 2018. He holds six patents in Battery Technology and three patents in Personal Computing. His recent awards include the Business NC Power List (2021), Tech Executive of the Year, North Carolina Technology Association (2020), IBM Senior Location Executive of the Year (2020), and IBM Senior State Executive of the Year (2020).

Humphrey lives with his wife in Raleigh, NC and frequently visits his mother in Fayetteville. He was particularly close to his father, who has passed away. He has one sister, who lives in Virginia with her family, and two Goddaughters. In his free time, he enjoys traveling, watching sports (particularly the NC State Wolfpack, Carolina Hurricanes, Dallas Cowboys, and Los Angeles Lakers), watching movies and television, and playing poker.

b. Winston-Salem, NC (Forsyth County)
Lives in Chapel Hill, NC (Orange County)

RIZA JENKINS

Sciences

Riza Jenkins is the Senior Energy Consultant for ICF and Principal and Owner for the Azir Group. At ICF she serves as a renewable energy consultant specializing in the areas of Asset Management and Operations and Maintenance. She is a Board member for the NC Sustainable Energy Association and chairs its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.

Jenkins earned a BS in Business Management and Marketing from North Carolina A&T State University and an MBA and JD from Howard University.

Jenkins, a native of Winston-Salem, is a proud mother of three and volunteers as a Kindergarten elementary faith development teacher at St. Thomas More Church in Chapel Hill, NC. She was elected to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Board of Education in November 2021. She lives in Chapel Hill, NC.

Image: Courtesy of Riza Jenkins

b. Leaksville, NC (Rockingham County)
Lives in Durham, NC (Durham County)

ALISHA RENÉ GALLOWAY JOHNSON

Engineering

Alisha René Galloway Johnson was born in Leaksville, North Carolina. She currently serves as the RISE (Research Institute for Scholars of Equity) Program Coordinator and as an adjunct professor of technology at North Carolina Central University.

Johnson began her career while a student at North Carolina State University. She worked as a yarn count engineer-in-training at EI duPont in Kinston, NC for two summers and as a test engineer at IBM in Research Triangle Park during her senior year. She accepted a position as a Yarn Count Engineer at EI duPont in Chattanooga, Tennessee following graduation, where she helped to increase production of first grade yield and assisted the site's plant energy coordinator with decreasing the site's energy usage.

After leaving EI duPont, Johnson returned to North Carolina to work as a manufacturing engineer for IBM. At IBM she supported the co-op jobs program and produced a product called "Parrot" that assisted people with low or no vision; "Parrot" was later used to create a security-related government product. Her team at IBM was also involved in early virtual training efforts at the company. Johnson also worked with her team to introduce STEM/STEAM to students in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. She earned a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt during her time at IBM.

Image: Courtesy of Alisha René Galloway Johnson

Following her time at IBM, Johnson taught in the Durham County and Wake County Public School systems and served as a virtual technology teacher for the South Carolina Governors School. Johnson serves as the Tech Lead for the Raleigh-Durham Black Girls Code Chapter. Committed to her profession, she serves as the Region II Chair of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and as Secretary for the Durham Engineers Club. She is also a lifetime member of NSBE, a lifetime Silver Soror of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and a lifetime member of the North Carolina State University Alumni Society, Black Alumni Society, and Wolfpack Club.

Johnson received the Service Award from the Alpha Zeta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. in 2021. She was selected as one of the 40 of 40 NCSU Black Alumni graduates in 2019 and was honored by the inaugural Salute to Women and Youth Program held by the NC Department of Administration Council for Women and Youth Involvement in March 2013. She has received numerous diversity and volunteerism awards.

Johnson holds an undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering from North Carolina State University and a master's in Educational Technology from North Carolina Central University. She is a June 2020 graduate of the Morehead Planetarium IMPACTS (Inspiring Meaningful Programs and Communications Through Science) program. Johnson resides in Durham.

b. Kinston, NC (Lenoir County) Lives in Kinston, NC (Lenoir County)

DR. RITA L. JOYNER

Sciences

Dr. Rita L. "Dr. J" Joyner serves as the North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association's (NCSEA) Senior Adviser. She works across teams to ensure organizational goals are achieved using her multiple years of technical and managerial experience in private industry and state government. Dr. J leads the Women in Clean Energy (WICE) initiative under the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) team. As part of her work at NCSEA, Dr. J serves on the Energy Conservation Code Ad Hoc Committee of the NC Building Code Council.

In addition to her work at NCSEA, Dr. J has served as Section Chief of the State Energy Program and the Weatherization Assistance Program; was appointed Legislative Liaison to the North Carolina State Board of Education; and worked as a secondary math teacher at the Lenoir County Early College High School and as an adjunct math instructor at Lenoir Community College. She also serves on the UNC Black Alumni Reunion Light on the Hill Society Gala Committee.

Dr. J has been recognized by Phi Theta Kappa inductees as their Most Admired Instructor on multiple occasions. She created and advised a Young Engineers Club and developed a comprehensive Inventory of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) projects and initiatives in North Carolina.

Image: North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association

Dr. J is a native of Kinston and returned to her hometown seven years ago to care for her mother. She has volunteered with the Downtown Kinston Mural Program and served on the Adkin High 1951 Walkout Marker Dedication Committee.

Dr. J earned bachelor's and master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is an avid sports enthusiast who enjoys watching the NC A&T Aggies, UNC Tar Heels, and the Las Vegas Raiders.

b. Monroe, NC (Union County)

MARY BEATRICE DAVIDSON KENNER

Engineering

Posthumous

Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner (1912-2006) was born in Monroe, NC and came from a long line of inventors. She first showed interest in being an inventor as a young child. Kenner's family moved to Washington, DC in 1924; she attended Howard University but was unable to complete her education due to financial limitations. She accepted a position as a federal employee in 1941 and served in this position for a decade before opening a flower shop. Working as a florist gave her the flexibility to work on her inventions.

Kenner was an inventor who was best known for developing the adjustable sanitary belt, a menstrual sanitation product, which she invented in the 1920s and patented in 1957. A company was interested in her invention but refused to work with her due to their racial prejudices. She patented five of her inventions, including storage attachments for walkers and a toilet paper holder. Kenner's accomplishments were largely overlooked during her lifetime.

Mary Kenner was married to James Kenner, who passed away in 1983. The couple had one son, who was adopted, and served as foster parents to four other children. Mary Kenner died in 2006. (Compiled by B. Ragghianti)

Image: Public Domain

B. KENNER SANITARY BELT, May 15, 1956

United States Patent Office

2,745,406

Patented May 15, 1956

2,745,406

SANITARY BELT

Beatrice Kenner, Washington, D. C.

Application July 20, 1954, Serial No. 444,469

3 Claims. (Cl. 128—291)

This invention relates to improvements in sanitary belts and more specifically provides a device for supporting catamenial pads or sanitary napkins on the body of the wearer in a highly efficient and satisfactory manner.

An object of this invention is to provide a sanitary belt that is extremely simple in construction, easy to use, adjustable for various sized persons, well adapted for its intended purpose and very inexpensive to manufacture.

Another object of this invention is to provide a sanitary belt which is extremely inexpensive to manufacture, that may be provided at a very small cost as an addition to the packages of catamenial pads that are normally dispensed by a dispensing machine in various public and semi-public locations.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a sanitary belt constructed of flexible plastic or other suitable material and including adhesive portions for attachment to the pad wherein the adhesive portions are provided with protective coverings that must be removed prior to the assembly of the sanitary belt and catamenial pad.

Still another important object of the present invention is to provide a sanitary belt having adhesive attaching means for forming an encircling belt about the wearer and also provided with a pair of supporting elements that are freely slidable on the encircling belt thereby providing an easily adjusted and positioned device for supporting the pad in the most desired position thereby eliminating unnecessary deleterious effects, such as chafing and irritation normally caused by devices of this class.

Yet another important object of the present invention is to provide a sanitary belt that will be so low in cost that they may be economically included in packages of catamenial pads to be dispensed wherein persons may easily obtain both a pad and a sanitary belt when an unexpected onset of the menstrual period occurs.

These together with other objects and advantages which will become subsequently apparent reside in the details of construction and operation as more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

Figure 1 is a front view showing the sanitary belt of the present invention in use on the body of a wearer;

Figure 2 is a perspective view showing the sanitary belt of the present invention;

Figure 3 shows the means for securing the belt in encircling relation to the body of a wearer; and

Figure 4 is a detailed, vertical sectional view taken substantially upon a plane passing along section line 4—4 of Figure 2 showing the details of construction of one of the adhesive members secured to the supporting element.

Referring now specifically to the drawings, it will be seen that the numeral **10** generally designates the sanitary belt of the present invention for supporting a catamenial pad **12** in position on the body **14** of a wearer.

The sanitary belt **10** includes a generally elongated strap member **16** having a loop **18** formed in one end thereof. The other end of the elongated strap **16** is provided with an adhesive coated member **20** having a protective covering **22** thereon. In assembling the elongated strap **16** about the body **14**, the adhesive portion **20** is inserted through the loop **18** and the removable cover **22** is then removed and the adhesive is secured to the outer surface of the elongated strap **16** thereby securing the strap **16** about the body **14** of the wearer. If desirable, the end of the strap **16** passing through the loop **18** may be reversely bent thereby forming a loop wherein the loop will be interengaged.

Slidably positioned on the elongated strap **16** is a pair of supporting elements generally designated by the numeral **24** and including a pair of closed loops **26** that are generally enlarged and slidably received on the belt **16**. An adhesive member **28** having a protective covering **30** removably secured to one face thereof is attached to the loop **26** by reversely bending a portion of the adhesive covered portion **28** around the loop **26** as indicated by the numeral **32**. The protective covers **30** are removed and the adhesive secures the pad **12** to the supporting element **24** thereby retaining the pad **12** in the desired position and providing a device that does not form unsightly bulges and one which is relatively inexpensive so that they may be positioned with packages of pads **12** that are normally dispensed by suitable machines. The device may be constructed of any suitable plastic material or the like having the necessary qualities of flexibility and strength.

From the foregoing, the construction and operation of the device will be readily understood and further explanation is believed to be unnecessary. However, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction shown and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed as new is as follows:

1. A sanitary belt comprising an elongated member adapted to encircle the body of a wearer, means for adjustably securing the ends of the belt to each other, a pair of supporting elements adjustably positioned on said elongated member, and adhesive means for detachably securing the supporting elements to the ends of a sanitary napkin.

2. A sanitary belt comprising an elongated member adapted to encircle the body of a wearer, means for adjustably securing the ends of the belt to each other, a pair of supporting elements adjustably positioned on said elongated member, and means for detachably securing the supporting elements to the ends of a sanitary napkin, said means for adjustably securing the ends of the member together including a loop on one end of said member for loosely receiving the other end of the member, said other end of the member having an adhesive covered portion for attachment to said one end for interlocking engagement with the loop on said one end.

3. A sanitary belt comprising an elongated strap of flexible material, a loop on one end of said strap, an adhesive covered portion on the other end of said strap, a removable protector on said adhesive covered portion, said loop receiving the other end of the strap is extended therethrough for attachment to the surface of said strap thereby adjustably securing the ends together, a pair of supporting elements slidably positioned on said strap, each of said supporting elements including a loop loosely received on said strap, and an adhesive covered portion on the lower end thereof, said adhesive portion having a protective cover whereby the adhesive portions on the supporting elements may be detachably secured to the ends of a sanitary catamenial pad.

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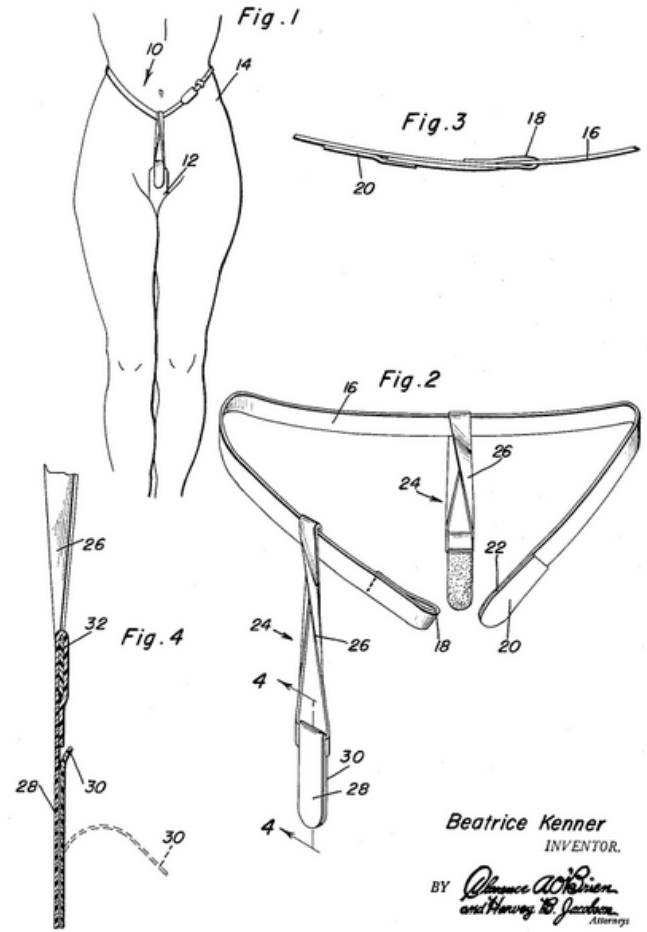
May 15, 1956 B. KENNER 2,745,406

SANITARY BELT

Filed July 20, 1954



View

b. Dayton, OH Lives in Durham, NC (Durham County)

KAREN LEVERT

Engineering

Karen LeVert is a Venture Partner with Pappas Capital and is leading the expansion of the firm's Specialized Fund Management business with a focus on identifying attractive agricultural technology investment opportunities. She is also a Co-Founder and current Board Member of Southeast TechInventures and Ag TechInventures. These innovation labs have migrated promising technologies from university research labs to the commercial marketplace. She is proud of the CEOs that have built their companies from university research to acquisition: Advanced Liquid Logic, Bioptigen, and ImagineOptix. LeVert, a native of Dayton, Ohio, previously served as Board Chair for the North Carolina School of Science and Math. She currently sits on the boards of the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, North Carolina Arboretum, Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, and OnBoardNC.

LeVert holds a BBA from Eastern Michigan University and an MBA from the University of Dayton. She enjoys sailing and is a part owner of Thistle, a 37' Tartan sailboat. She resides in Durham.

Image: Courtesy of Karen LeVert

b. Brooklyn, NY Raised in Cove City, NC (Craven County) Lives in Raleigh, NC (Wake County)

GINA LOFTEN

Technology

Gina Loften is a technology industry veteran and most recently the Chief Technology Officer for Microsoft US. She is a thought leader with a track record for successfully putting innovation into practice, reimagining businesses, accelerating profitable results and building diverse high-performing teams. Loften has also demonstrated her expertise in mergers & acquisitions by identifying and integrating software and consulting companies, creating portfolios of new products and services, and driving increased market share. Loften has held senior executive positions in Research, Development, Sales, and Consulting Services at IBM and Microsoft as well as Chief Innovation and Chief Technology Officer roles. Her leadership impact has been characterized by leading businesses ranging from emerging to multiple $B enterprises.

As a thought leader with an excellent track record scaling enterprise businesses, Loften's counsel and unique perspectives on driving growth are highly valued. Her insight, foresight and governance experience are valued on public and non-profit boards. Loften currently serves as an independent board director for the public companies NASDAQ: TTEC and NASDAQ: TWKS (Thoughtworks). In the not-for-profit space, Loften serves on the Board of Trustees of Fortune

Image: Courtesy of Gina Loften, Board Director | Chief Technology Officer | Advisor | Speaker

100 Financial Services company TIAA (Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America). She also serves on the boards of Museum of Life and Sciences, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics Foundation, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University Engineering School and Foundation and DeCODE, the largest technology, innovation and entrepreneurship community jointly hosted with UC Berkeley and Stanford. She is a sought-after speaker on diversity, equity and inclusion, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing, innovation, and leadership. Loften has also been published addressing topics of how AI can help mental health among veterans, the true value of data for government and how open source can bring agencies to the cloud. Loften was recently featured in Business Insider as one of the “9 Powerful Leaders of Color to consider for Board Seats in 2022 “and Diversity Woman Magazine as one of "The Elite 100 in Corporate America - A Tribute to Black Women Executives”. Her work and leadership have also been recognized in Diversity Inclusion Conference Top 100 CTOs, US Black Engineer, ExecutiveGov and NC Business magazine – The Changing face of Executive Talent in NC. Loften is a graduate of the renowned North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Electrical Engineering.

b. Lake City, SC College: Greensboro, NC (Guilford County)

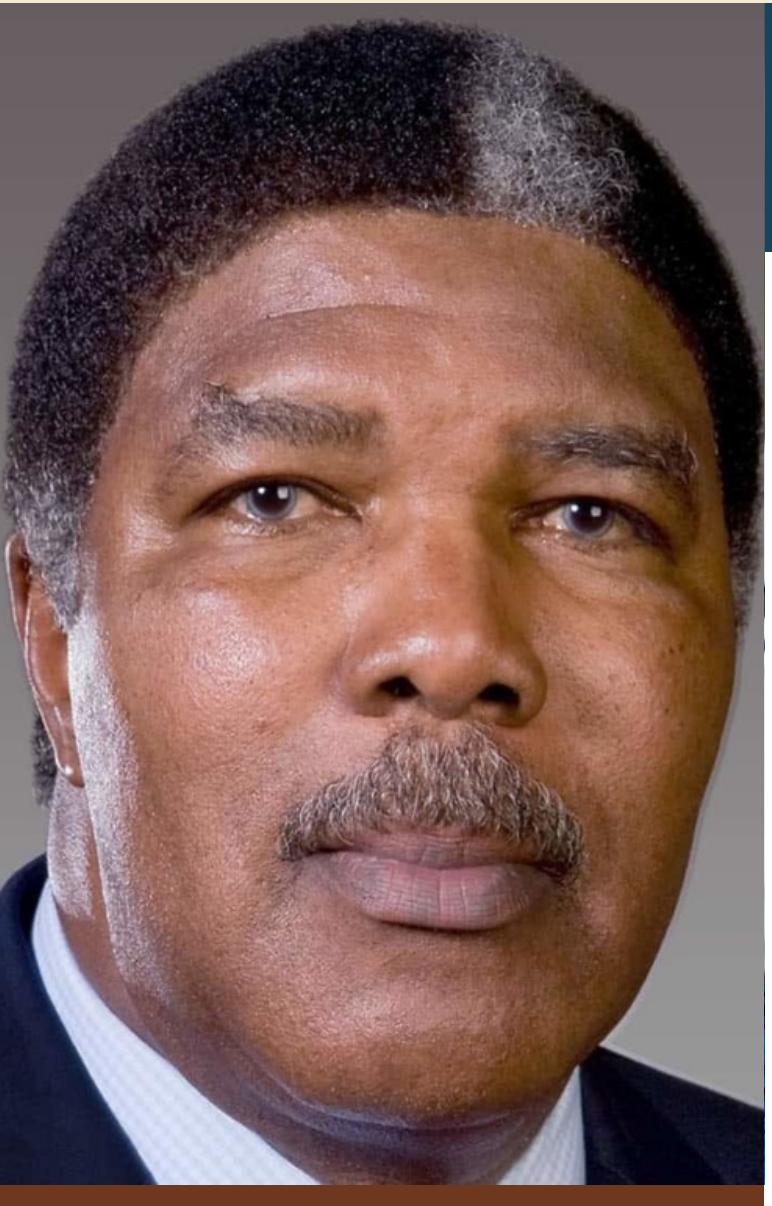
DR. RONALD ERWIN MCNAIR

Engineering

Posthumous

Ronald Erwin McNair (1950-1986) was a NASA astronaut and physicist. The second African American person to fly in outer space, Dr. McNair was, tragically, killed in the Challenger disaster in 1986. Dr. McNair was born in Lake City, South Carolina. In 1971, he moved to Greensboro, NC to attend North Carolina A&T University. He graduated with a BS in Engineering Physics and went on to earn a Ph.D in Physics from MIT. Dr. McNair studied lasers while at MIT and continued this work at Hughes Research Laboratories following graduation. He became a NASA mission specialist astronaut in 1978 and completed his first trip to space on the Challenger in 1984. Dr. McNair was also an accomplished saxophone player; he had planned to record the saxophone parts of a piece by the composer Jen-Michel Jarre while on the Challenger mission. Although Dr. McNair only lived in North Carolina for a brief time, he has served as a major inspiration to North Carolinians pursuing careers in STEM. He was awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor in 2004.

Image: NASA



b. Lumberton, NC (Robeson County)

TONY L. MITCHELL, PHD, LT. COLONEL, USAF RET.

Engineering

Posthumous

Tony L. Mitchell, PhD, Lt. Colonel, USAF Ret., was born and raised in Lumberton, North Carolina. Dr. Mitchell completed his undergraduate education at North Carolina A&T University and earned a graduate degree from Georgia Tech. He was awarded a United States Air Force (USAF) fellowship to study Electrical and Computer Engineering at North Carolina State University (NCSU). He became the first full-time African American student to earn a PhD in Electrical and Computer Engineering from NCSU in 1987 and was awarded a USAF Research and Development award for his dissertation in 1988.

Following his retirement from the Air Force at the rank of Lt. Colonel, Dr. Mitchell accepted a position as NCSU's Director of Minority Programs. He was promoted to Assistant Dean of Engineering and retired in 2011 as Assistant Dean of Engineering, Emeritus. He served as a consultant to the National Science Foundation during his retirement.

Dr. Mitchell was named to NCSU's Electrical and Computer Engineering Hall of Fame in 2015 and was awarded the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring for minority and women students in 2000. He was known for his energy and positive nature. Dr. Mitchell and his wife of 41 years, Carolyn, had three sons. Dr. Mitchell passed away in 2020.

Image: NCSU

b. Nigeria, West Africa Lives in Charlotte, NC (Mecklenburg County)

ABI OLUKEYE

Technology

Abi Olukeye is the founder/CEO of Smart Girls HQ, A National Science Foundation Award-Winning STEM education solutions provider that creates engaging content and facilitates exciting experiences to enable young girls achieve STEM Career Literacy by age 12. Core offerings include parent education for STEM informal learning at RaisingSmartGirls.com and Dear Smart Girl kits, a project-based career-focused STEM curriculum for girls.

Previously, she led tech strategy development and digital transformation projects at a diversified Fortune 500 manufacturing company. Notably transforming a $26M product portfolio that had been on a 6-year decline to growth in 12 months. Most recently she led the development and execution of a strategic product roadmap for a business unit globally representing a $1B portfolio of products. She has over fifteen years of professional and leadership experience spanning new product development, technology commercialization, process improvement and strategy.

Olukeye is a member of the Computer Science K12 Standards Committee for North Carolina, serves on the board of CSEdResearch.org, and is an IAMCS NC Ambassador. She holds a BS in Computer Science from Virginia Tech and an MBA from Indiana University.

Image: Danielli Photography

She is a proud member of Leadership Charlotte Class 41 and enjoys volunteering her time at several STEM education focused initiatives in her community. Olukeye also serves as an Adjunct Professor of Computer Science Leadership at UNC Charlotte.

Olukeye's awards include the National Science Foundation Small Business Innovation Research Award (2021), the NC Idea Foundation Seed & Growth Fund Award (2020, 2021), an Iris Award Nomination for Most Engaging Content (2018), an Iris Award Nomination for Entrepreneur of the Year (2021), the Inno on Fire Blazer Award in the Education Category (2021), and Inno Startups to Watch (2020). A native of Nigeria, West Africa, Olukeye and her husband live in Charlotte, NC and have two young daughters who greatly inspire her work. She enjoys reading, music, the arts, and travel.

b. North Carolina Lives in Oxford, NC (Granville County)

AJULO ELISABETH OTHOW, ESQ.

Sciences

Ajulo Elisabeth Othow, Esq. is the Founder and CEO of EnerWealth Solutions, and General Counsel for Carolina Solar Services. She grew up amidst southern traditions in her home state of North Carolina. Her parents, both teachers, imbued her with a love and caring for others as she prepared herself educationally to succeed in her chosen career. At a young age and as she grew into maturity , she traveled with her parents to continents outside of North America, where she became conscious of national and international conditions of humanity. Ms. Othow is now an attorney practicing in Granville County. Ms. Othow is also a solar project developer, one of the only women of color solar developers in the nation; her projects are designed to aid in minority land retention and rural economic development. For more than fourteen years prior to becoming an attorney, she worked with people in small towns across all thirteen southeastern United States, places where people's one hope is for a future where their children can return home and live a good life.

Ms. Othow holds a Master's Degree in International Development from The George Washington University, further graduate work in Public Policy from Duke University, and a Doctorate of Jurisprudence from Northeastern University School of Law.

Ms. Othow lives in Oxford, NC with her young son.

Image: Courtesy of Ajulo Elisabeth Othow, Esq.

b. Whiteville, NC (Pitt County)

DR. IDA STEPHENS OWENS

Sciences

Posthumous

Dr. Ida Stephens Owens (1939-2020) was born in Whiteville, North Carolina. Dr. Owens was a trailblazing scientist and researcher who studied how drugs are chemically processed in the body and the genetics of human diseases.

Dr. Owens studied biology at North Carolina Central University (NCCU), graduating in 1961 with a BS in Biology with a minor in Mathematics. She spent the following summer as a laboratory assistant at the National Science Foundation Summer Institute for High School Teachers at NCCU and in the lab of Daniel C. Tosteson, chair of the Department of Physiology at Duke University. Dr. Owens began her PhD studies at Duke in 1962, where she studied biochemistry and physiology. She graduated in 1967 and was the first African American woman to earn a PhD and the first woman to earn a PhD in physiology from Duke University.

Dr. Owens made her career at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NIHCHD). She studied how drugs are chemically processed in the body and the genetics of human diseases. She established her own independent research group at NIHCHD in 1975, becoming NIH's first African American investigator. She became the director of NICHD's Section on Genetic Disorders of Drug Metabolism in the Program on Developmental Endocrinology and Genetics in 1988. Dr. Owens is best known for her work on drug detoxifying enzymes and her research on a rare genetic disorder that impacts the metabolism of bilirubin. Her research is frequently cited in the field of pharmacology.

Image: NIH

Dr. Owens received the NIH Director's Award in 1992 and the Duke University Graduate School's inaugural Distinguished Alumni Award in 2013. She continued to serve Duke University through the Trinity College Board of Visitors and the Women's Studies Advisory Council and frequently spoke to student and alumni groups. The Duke Bouchet Society, which supports STEM students from historically marginalized groups, holds an annual dinner in her honor.

Dr. Owens was married to Herbert Owens and had two children. She passed away in 2020.

Watch 'The Education of Ida Owens, the First Duke African American Female PhD'

b. Chicago, IL Lives in Raleigh, NC (Wake County)

DEJA PERKINS

Sciences

Deja Perkins is an urban ecologist from Chicago, Illinois and is currently a PhD student studying Geospatial Analytics at North Carolina State University. Perkins is best known for her work to break down barriers to participation in citizen science.

In 2020, Perkins worked with a group of 30 individuals to organize #BlackBirdersWeek. Black Birders Week started as a social media movement to bring awareness to racism within outdoor activities and STEM after a white woman threatened to weaponize the police against Christian Cooper, a Black bird watcher, in Central Park, New York. As Black STEM students and early career professionals, the organizers wanted to bring attention to the fact that this was not an isolated incident and that many of them had faced experiences of their own with racism and exclusion in the outdoor profession. Black Birders Week gained international attention and connected Black nature enthusiasts around the world.

Following Black Birders Week 2020, Perkins led a group of individuals with a similar mission and established #BlackAFinSTEM, the non-profit that curates #BlackBirdersWeek. They aim to connect Black people interested in the outdoors, provide a safe space for opportunities and professional development, and showcase that Black people can have fun and be themselves in STEM.

Image: Courtesty of Justin Cook Photography

#BlackBirdersWeek2021 focused on Black joy in the outdoors and explored the many ways that people enjoy birds through a week-long schedule of events and panels. Aside from the impact of these individual events, which received thousands of views, #BlackBirdersWeek started a movement to address racism in the various other STEM fields.

One of Perkins' primary hobbies is bird watching. In her free time, she engages people in North Carolina and other states with nature through science. She leads monthly bird walks, educates people on bird behavior, and teaches people how to identify and monitor the birds in their neighborhood. She aims to provide safe and fun environments to expose people to the natural world and the organisms that share our spaces. Perkins believes that sharing nature and science through social media helps reach a broader and more diverse audience, as well as normalizes science to communities outside of academia. She uses her social media accounts (@naturallywild_ _) to share her outdoor adventures and highlight urban nature and the cool organisms that share our spaces. She strives to show that the natural sciences and STEM is a valid career option for other Black inner-city youth.

Perkins holds a BS in Environmental, Natural Resources, and Plant Sciences form Tuskegee University and a Master of Science in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology from North Carolina State University. She previously worked for Crowd the Tap, an organization that investigates the quality of in-home drinking water. Her current research is focused on using geospatial tools to investigate gaps in environmental datasets, specifically volunteer contributed datasets (citizen science). Her research indicates that data collected using eBird follows patterns of income and does not collect data equally across the urban landscape, which contributes to incidences of environmental and data injustice that impact the health and well-being of communities of color. Perkins was awarded a USGS Climate Adaptation Science Center Global Change Fellowship (2018-2019) and a NCSU Provost Fellowship (2018-2019). She won the US Fish and Wildlife Teddy Roosevelt Award in 2015 and was named a Tuskegee Presidential Scholar (2014-2018). She resides in Raleigh.

b. Nashville, TN Lives in Greensboro, NC (Guilford County)

PROFESSOR ROBERT POWELL

Sciences

Professor Robert Powell was born in Nashville, Tennessee. He is an Associate Professor of Civil, Architectural, and Environmental Engineering at North Carolina A&T University. Professor Powell began his career in the private sector, serving as an energy consultant, homebuilder, and practicing architect. He joined the faculty at NC A&T University as an Assistant Professor in 2000 and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2009. He also serves as Research Faculty for NC A&T's Center for Energy Research and Technology (CERT), where he is currently conducting a demonstration project to provide and install photovoltaic (PV) systems on the homes of ten low-to-moderate income families. Professor Powell teaches classes in integrated building design and building information modeling with an emphasis on building decarbonization.

An advocate for affordable housing and community design, Professor Powell has contributed significantly to the Greensboro community. Of note are his work to design Mary's House, which provides supportive housing for mothers and their children (2000); coordination of a class project to design Eastside Park Community Center (2001); and community design projects in Greensboro's Warnersville, Dunleith, and Ole Asheboro neighborhoods. He has also led and contributed to projects related to sustainable development, community-based neighborhood planning, and participatory design.

Image: NC A&T University

He currently serves as the Chair for the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro's Housing Committee, which coordinates the Foundation's efforts to address the lack of affordable housing in Greensboro. Professor Powell holds a BS in Architectural Engineering from Stanford University and a Master of Architecture from MIT. He is the proud husband of Mildred Powell and a proud father to his three children, Lee, Steven, and Jada. He enjoys sacred geometry and listening to jazz. Professor Powell resides in Greensboro.

b. Goldsboro (Wayne County)

ADMINISTRATOR MICHAEL S. REGAN

Sciences

Michael S. Regan was sworn in as the 16th Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency on March 11, 2021, becoming the first Black man and second person of color to lead the U.S. EPA.

Administrator Regan is a native of Goldsboro, North Carolina, where he developed a passion for the environment while hunting and fishing with his father and grandfather, and exploring the vast lands, waters, and inner Coastal Plain of North Carolina.

As the son of two public servants - his mother, a nurse for nearly 30 years, and his father, a retired Colonel with the North Carolina National Guard, Vietnam veteran, and former agricultural extension agent - Michael Regan went on to follow in his parents' footsteps and pursue a life of public service.

Prior to his nomination as EPA Administrator, Michael Regan served as the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Image: EPA

As Secretary, he spearheaded the development and implementation of North Carolina's seminal plan to address climate change and transition the state to a clean energy economy. Under his leadership, he secured the largest coal ash clean-up in United States history. He led complex negotiations regarding the clean-up of the Cape Fear River, which had been contaminated for years by the toxic chemicals per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS). In addition, he established North Carolina's first-of-its-kind Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory board to better align social inequities, environmental protection, and community empowerment.

Previously, Administrator Regan served as Associate Vice President of U.S. Climate and Energy, and as Southeast Regional Director of the Environmental Defense Fund where he convened energy companies, business leaders, environmental and industry groups, and elected officials across the country to achieve pragmatic solutions to the climate crisis.

He began his career with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, eventually becoming a national program manager responsible for designing strategic solutions with industry and corporate stakeholders to reduce air pollution, improve energy efficiency and address climate change.

Throughout his career, he has been guided by a belief in forming consensus, fostering an open dialogue rooted in respect for science and the law, and an understanding that environmental protection and economic prosperity go hand in hand.

Administrator Regan is a graduate of the North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, making him the first EPA Administrator to have graduated from a Historically Black College and University. He earned a master's degree in Public Administration from The George Washington University.

He and his wife Melvina are proud parents to their son, Matthew.

b. Charlotte, NC (Mecklenburg County) Lives in Charlotte, NC (Mecklenburg County)

SEN. DEANDREA NEWMAN SALVADOR.

Sciences

Sen. DeAndrea Newman Salvador is a native of Charlotte, NC. She is the Founder of RETI and the Senior Manager of Corporate Marketing for DataGrail. She is currently engaged in leading on climate and energy policy as a North Carolina State Senator representing North Carolina's 39th District.

Witnessing neighbors in her home state of North Carolina struggle to keep up with energy expenses, Sen. Salvador took action in 2013 and founded RETI, a nonprofit focused on helping low-income families sustainably reduce energy costs and gain access to cutting-edge technology. Through RETI, Salvador partnered to launch a low- to moderate-income shared solar program in South Carolina. RETI also worked with the City of Charlotte to create a Smart Home Kick Start for the city's residents in addition to providing local energy efficiency & solar projects and hosting community events. Sen. Salvador previously served on the Mecklenburg County Air Quality Commission and is on the Board of Directors for Clean AIRE North Carolina. She is a TED2018 Fellow, a recipient of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Young Alumna of the Year Award and was recognized as one of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Black Chamber of Commerce's 30 under 30. She was named a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Champion by NCSEA.

Image: NCGA

Sen. Salvador earned a Bachelor of Science in Economics with a minor in Anthropology from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. As a social entrepreneur and advocate, Salvador has been featured by The Atlantic, Fast Company, the BBC, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Utility Dive and the Charlotte Observer. Her own articles are published in Pacific Standard Magazine, GOOD, The Development Set, BRIGHT Magazine and on TheWeek.com.

Sen. Salvador, who resides in Charlotte, is married and has two children. She enjoys spending time with her family and participating in outdoor activities such as hiking and tennis.

b. Winston-Salem, NC (Forsyth County)
Raised in Statesville, NC (Iredell County)
Lives in Cary, NC (Wake County)

DR. JAMILA SIMPSON

Sciences

Dr. Jamila Simpson was born in Winston-Salem, NC and raised in Statesville, NC. She currently serves as the Assistant Dean for Inclusive Excellence for the College of Sciences at North Carolina State University. In this role, she is responsible for developing, guiding, and implementing diversity and inclusion strategies and programs for College of Sciences faculty, staff, postdoctoral scholars, and students. She developed the Diversity in STEM Symposium at NCSU, which has hosted about 850 people from the university and the broader community, and has taught and directed pipeline programs to recruit students from historically underrepresented groups in STEM to NCSU for over 20 years.

Dr. Simpson holds a BS in Meteorology and a PhD in Science Education from North Carolina State University. She was the first African American woman to be awarded an undergraduate degree in meteorology at NCSU. Dr. Simpson was one of three recipients of the Morehead Medal of Science from UNC-Chapel Hill's Morehead Planetarium and Science Center in recognition of her work to increase diversity in the sciences. She has also been named to the ACC Academic Leaders Network (2019-2020) to the Top 40 for 40 Alumni by the NCSU Black Alumni Society (2019). Dr. Simpson is a wife and the mother of two boys. She enjoys speaking to students about STEM, going to the beach, and kayaking at the lake with her family.

Image: Courtesy of Dr. Jamila Simpson

b. Toledo Ohio Lives in Durham, NC (Durham County)

MARIA S. THOMPSON

Technology

Maria S. Thompson is the Amazon Web Services (AWS) State and Local Government's (SLG) Cybersecurity Leader. Thompson has over 20 years of experience in information technology and cybersecurity. She served 20 years in the United States Marine Corps and retired as the cybersecurity chief. Thompson recently departed the North Carolina Department of Information Technology where she held the position as the state's first Chief Risk and Security Officer.

Born in Toledo, Ohio, Thompson's current work as AWS's Cybersecurity Leader for SLG includes building private/public partnerships focused on strengthening organization's cyber posture. This includes areas such as working with SLG customers to build and optimize their cyber strategies, accelerate digital transformation, and increase operational excellence.

Thompson holds a BS in Information Systems Management and an MS in Information Technology from the University of Maryland Global Campus. She was awarded the National Security Agency's prestigious Rowlett Award for individual achievement in information assurance in 2007 and the Office of Secretary of Defense Certificate of Excellence for the implementation of an IA strategy for the

Image: Courtesy of Maria S. Thompson

Information Assurance Workforce in 2008. Recent awards include the 2018 Triangle Business Journal Women in Business Tech Star award and the 2018 and 2021 State Scoop's 50 Award for State Cybersecurity Leader.

Thompson is dedicated to evangelizing about cybersecurity and the need to protect our nation's assets. She lives in Durham with her precocious tween-ager.

b. Durham (Durham County) Lives in Durham (Durham County)

DR. ALICIA NICKI WASHINGTON

Technology

Dr. Nicki Washington is a professor of the practice of computer science at Duke University and the author of Unapologetically Dope: Lessons for Black Women and Girls on Surviving and Thriving in the Tech Field. She is currently the director of the Cultural Competence in Computing (3C) Fellows program and the National Science Foundation-funded Alliance for Identity-Inclusive Computing Education (AiiCE). She also serves as senior personnel for the NSF-funded Athena Institute for Artificial Intelligence (AI). Her career in higher education began at Howard University as the first Black female faculty member in the Department of Computer Science. Her professional experience also includes Winthrop University, The Aerospace Corporation, and IBM. She is a graduate of Johnson C. Smith University (BS , '00) and North Carolina State University (MS , '02; PhD, '05), becoming the first Black woman to earn a PhD in computer science at the university and 2019 Computer Science Hall of Fame Inductee. She is a native of Durham, NC.

Image: Duke University

b. Bronx, NY Lives in Charlotte, NC

DESMOND A. WIGGAN JR.

Technology

Desmond Wiggan, Jr. is the CEO and Co-Founder at BatteryXchange, Inc. BatteryXchange is a Charlotte-based sharing economy platform which places charging stations at hospitals, universities, and event venues that provide untethered on-the-go portable batteries for mobile devices users. The charging stations also have LED digital screens designed to amplify the voices of small businesses. BatteryXchange translates data to build profiles that act as business intelligence and insights for partnering locations. Wiggan is particularly proud of the company's partnership with Winston-Salem State University. As the company's CEO & Co-Founder, Wiggan is responsible for providing strategic, operational, and financial leadership for the organization while developing and executing long-term strategies to increase shareholder value. Under his leadership, BatteryXchange has raised over $400,000 in investment capital and grants which are being reinvested across the organization in strategic projects designed to prepare BatteryXchange for future growth. By remaining hyper-focused on developing a diverse and inclusive company culture, Wiggan has built an amazing team of highly skilled professionals that are helping to build the BatteryXchange brand into a household name.

Image: Courtesy of Desmond A. Wiggan, Jr.

After graduating from Winston-Salem State University with a BS in Business Management, Wiggan started his career with Pepsi Bottling Ventures where he became the company's first management trainee. He was promoted to key account manager where he worked with divisional vice presidents from Target andt Walmart to build out the Eastern North Carolina market. Wiggan led the company in sales before leaving to enter grad school where he would spend several years in China.

In China, while completing an MBA, Wiggan received a job as a strategy consultant for the SIAS group China. There, he focused on building relationships between emerging tech companies from the United States and Europe and China. Desmond worked alongside companies in robotics, blockchain, Artificial Intelligence, manufacturing & other deep tech focuses. He founded BatteryXchange while in China and came back to North Carolina to build out the company.

Wiggan won the Charlotte City Startup Labs pitch competition in 2019, was a top five finalist in the 2021 BET/Mountain Dew Real Change Challenge, and was the recipient of a 2021 NC IDEA SEED Grant and a 2022 NC IDEA Growth Grant. BatteryXchange was named one of the Top 10 Groundbreaking Black Startups Founded by an HBCU grad by Afrotech in 2021. He is a board member for the NC IDEA Black Entrepreneurship Counsel and for Tech Leaders Forum (Charlotte).

Wiggan lives in Charlotte with his wife, Fanecia Wiggan, and son, Jonah. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and enjoys traveling.