

In Memoriam: Abdulalim A. Shabazz



Abdulalim A. Shabazz (May 22, 1927 - June 25, 2014) was a highly respected scholar and the first endowed professor of mathematics at Grambling State University (2007-2014), he has been widely credited with training directly or indirectly nearly half of all African Americans who have earned doctorate degrees in mathematics in the United States.

Shabazz also served at Lincoln University (1998-2000) in Pennsylvania as chair and associate professor of mathematics and computer science, the Tuskegee Institute (1956-1957) as assistant professor of mathematics, and at Clark Atlanta University (1957-1963; 1986-1995) as associate professor and department chair during his distinguished career. In 2000, President Bill Clinton honored him with a National Mentor award. He held a A.B. (1949) in Mathematics and Chemistry from Lincoln University (with honors) with minors in French and physics; a Master of Science in Mathematics (1951) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and a Ph.D. (1955) in mathematical analysis from Cornell University, with minors in geometry and algebra.

Subsequently, Dr. Shabazz worked for the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory in Buffalo, N.Y (1952-1953), and was a Research Mathematician with the Metals Research Laboratory of the Electro Metallurgical Company at Niagara Falls in 1955. In 1960 Shabazz became a member of the Nation of Islam after hearing Elijah Muhammad speak in Atlanta. Hence, he has served as Muslim Imam (spiritual leader) of Muhammad's Mosque No. 4 in Washington, D.C., and in 1963, he reestablished the University of Islam there and was Director of Education until 1975 wherein he developed elementary, high school and college education programs for the Nation of Islam. From 1975 until 1986, he taught in Chicago, Detroit, and in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Between 1976 and 1982, Shabazz was also an adjunct professor on the faculty of the Union Graduate School where he supervised four successful Ph.D. candidates, and from 1982 to 1986, he was a professor at Umm Al Qura University-the University of Makkah in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (during the summers of 1988 and 1989, he was a National Aeronautics and Space Administration-American Society for Engineering Education Summer Research Faculty Fellow at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland). In April 1994, he was the National Association of Mathematicians' Distinguished Service Award for his years of mentoring and teaching excellence.

In August 1997, he resigned his position as professor of mathematics at Clark Atlanta University and returned to Lincoln University of Pennsylvania, as Distinguished Professor of Mathematics and Chairman of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. In 1992, one hundred of the African American holders of doctoral degrees could trace their academic lineage back to Shabazz or to his students.

In 1992, the American Association for the Advancement of Science awarded him the “Mentor Award” for his leadership in efforts to increase the participation of women, minorities, and individuals with physical disabilities in science and engineering, and in 1995, he received the National Association of Mathematicians Distinguished Service Award for his years of mentoring and teaching excellence. And notwithstanding, he was a recipient of the Quality Education for Minorities in Mathematics, Science and Engineering (QEM/MSE) Network Giants in Science Award in 1995, in September of 2000, William Jefferson Clinton, the 42nd President of the United States awarded Shabazz a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring award, and in 2001, the Association of African American Educators awarded him their Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding work with African Americans in mathematics, and in the same year he was presented the Mary McLeod Bethune Outstanding Teacher Award in recognition of his pledge and continued service as an advocate for African American learners from the National Alliance of Black School Educators in Los Angeles, California, and in July 2005, he was presented the Third Annual Friends of Farrell Alumni Award for his unselfish acts and constant support of Lincoln University and the Lincoln University Alumni Association.

Shabazz is the father of three grown children, two males and one female, and he later adopted two young Ethiopian brothers, the first at the age of sixteen while living in Makkah in 1986 and the other at age fourteen in 1993.