



**Proclamation 6921 of September 20, 1996**

**National Historically Black Colleges and Universities  
Week, 1996**

*By the President of the United States of America  
A Proclamation*

Since the Reconstruction period, when 24 private black colleges were founded within 10 years, our Nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have played a central role in providing access to higher education for many Americans. Growing steadily after this early burst, HBCUs fought a hard struggle for survival over many decades,

ultimately proving themselves to be not only factories of learning, but also bastions of the core American ideals of freedom, diversity, and enterprise.

Today, more than 100 HBCUs throughout our country serve a unique role in educating African Americans. Although as a group they make up only 3 percent of American institutions of higher learning, they award one-third of all bachelor's degrees—and a major proportion of the graduate degrees—earned by African Americans each year. Their alumni rolls include scores of leaders in fields ranging from law to the sciences, and from the arts to medicine. Often working with limited resources, these institutions have earned a reputation for achieving “the most with the least” public dollars—consistently keeping tuition costs affordable, for example, or accepting higher numbers of students who need special educational or financial assistance.

Our Historically Black Colleges and Universities are an enduring beacon of hope offering thousands of our citizens a critical opportunity to achieve their full potential. HBCUs give these students not only access to a quality education, but also a supportive environment in which to learn and positive role models whose lives they can strive to emulate. In addition, these institutions contribute to the pluralism of American education, giving students a broader choice. Ultimately, they also help instill and preserve the African American cultural heritage, in the process educating all Americans to the richness of the Black experience.

The future of HBCUs is as bright as their past, and they are busy developing ways to meet the challenges of a new century: special outreach initiatives designed to spread their wealth of resources into the communities that have grown up around them; cutting-edge projects in science and technology involving corporate and governmental partnerships; and international educational efforts spanning the entire globe.

They will continue at the creative forefront of American education, offering the tools and skills necessary to prepare students for today's competitive and technological society. In this coming week, let us honor the contributions—past and present—of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and let us treasure forever the rich resource they provide to our Nation: a proud tradition of well-educated Americans, eager to make this a better world for all of us.

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 22 through September 28, 1996, 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 black colleges and universities, and their graduates.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON