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## Presidential Documents

**Proclamation 7122 of September 15, 1998**

### **National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, 1998**

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

#### **A Proclamation**

Education has always been at the heart of opportunity in America. That has never been more true than today, when a revolution in technology is fundamentally changing the way we live and work and learn. In this new era of dynamic challenge and possibility, we recognize that the best opportunities for personal and professional success will go to those who are well educated. Our Nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) play a vital role in helping to extend access to a quality education.

Established before and just after the Civil War to educate free black students, these institutions have been African Americans' primary route—and for many the only route—to higher education. Struggling to exist in a segregated society, striving to keep tuition affordable despite limited financial resources, these schools nonetheless upheld their mission of academic excellence and equal opportunity.

Even after the 1954 Supreme Court ruling that ended legal segregation of America's public schools, the need for HBCUs did not disappear. These schools continue to provide young African Americans and other students with a nurturing and affirming environment. Today, America's 105 HBCUs are educating almost 300,000 African Americans, and they count among their graduates the majority of our Nation's African American military officers, physicians, Federal judges, elected officials, and business executives. The distinguished faculty members at HBCUs serve as role models and mentors, challenging students to reach their full potential and to refuse to set limits on their dreams. HBCUs are a source of great pride and a symbol of economic, social, and political growth.

As our Nation grows increasingly diverse in race, culture, and ethnic background, these institutions are a valuable source of knowledge about the history and heritage of African Americans, serving as keepers of significant archives and centers for the study of African Americans' many contributions to the life of our Nation. Most important, these schools continue to champion the cause of equal access to education. With a notable past, a dynamic present, and a promising future, America's HBCUs are helping to prepare our Nation's young people for the challenges and opportunities of the new millennium.

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 20 through September 26, 1998, 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 fifteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

*William Clinton*

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