



# ADVANCING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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# **Would You Send Your Daughter to Howard? Historically Black Colleges and Universities Advancing Black Women in Leadership**

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**In this article, we address the influence of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) on Black women's participation in American politics. Focusing on the rise and record number of Black women running and winning political office in 2018, a remarkable list of over 400 Black women candidates were collected. Focusing on lives of three Black women whose dedication, determination, leadership, and activism are shifting the American political; Kamala Harris, Stacey Abrams, Lucy McBath, its evident that HBCUs have empowered Black women to continue to lead, make a change and break barriers in American politics. These results highlight some of the long-term impacts supporting HBCU environments has created for Black women in politics and America.**

**Keywords: black women, politics, underrepresented, gender, leadership, historically black colleges and universities**

My dear President Johnson: Last night, February 24, at the meeting of the University Council in the course of your remarks, you said that a certain man had asked you if he should send his daughter to Howard University. You did not say what your answer to him was, but you did turn to several men near you and ask, "Would you send your daughter to Howard"? I believe that there are fine women students at Howard University as there are at any University in the country; indeed I happen to know that the women are much finer in manners and standards of conduct than they are in many Negro and white schools.

Dean Lucy Diggs Slowe (1932)

On November 9, 2016, while many media headlines focused on the defeat of Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, others read "Kamala Harris is second black woman elected to the U.S. Senate Howard University alum beat out fellow Democrat Rep. Loretta Sanchez" (Evans, 2016). Just shy of the 50th anniversary of the election of U.S. Representative Shirley Chisholm as the first Black Woman elected to the U.S. Congress, Senator Kamala Harris' victory symbolized an attempt at balancing a male-dominated American political order (Godwin, 2018; Hochschild 2011; Stephanie 2017). Remarkably, less than eight months in office, the conversation would evolve to "Kamala Harris: young, black, female – and the Democrats' best bet for 2020?" In 1922 when President Durkee called Slowe to shoulder the responsibility of being a Dean of Women at Howard University, for years, Slowe set out to chart a course

and develop a model where "Negro women [would] be prepared [and protected] for making their contribution to the problems of the world." Howard University and many other Historically Black Colleges and Universities encompass a long legacy of training women and men for a level of citizenship that thrives on community building, empowerment, and development for a better future. Kamala Harris and many other Black Women are a benefactor of this legacy.

From BBC, The New York Times, NPR, and even Bizarre Fashion Magazine the conversation on the rise and record number of Black women running and winning seats in political office in 2018 have been everywhere. Candidates such as Stacy Abrams, Lucy McBath, Stephany Rose Spaulding, and Letitia James represent a long legacy of Black women standing before a glass ceiling looking to do more than just give it a crack. While the focus around gender and race politics concentrates on the alarming barriers Black Women face in attaining positions in political office (Fox, 2013; Lawless and Pearson 2008), this project attempts to switch the lens to focus on what has assisted Black Women in the struggle for political representation and recognition. One common experience Abrams, McBath, Spaulding, and James share is a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) experience.

For decades, HBCU scholars have and continue to influence almost all areas of society nationally and, in some cases, internationally. Contributions, by Spelman college graduate Marian Wright Edelman in policy, West Virginia State graduate

Katherine Johnson in STEM, Tennessee State University graduate Oprah Winfrey in media, and Howard University graduate Toni Morrison in the arts, are just a few examples. From Barbara Jordan, Ella Baker, now Kamala Harris and hopefully Stacey Abrams, in the never-ending struggle for justice in America, HBCUs in many cases have been at the forefront of social change. To increase such momentum, we must look to support HBCUs even more.

## **Black Women and American Politics**

### ***Political Participation***

For centuries Black women have been politically involved in staging demonstrations and protests, signing petitions, boycotting, volunteering for political campaigns, contributing campaign funds, organizing and boldly speaking out, before having the right to vote. Even though men have dominated American politics throughout time, in 1965, after being disfranchised, the impact of the Voting Rights Act uncovered opportunities Black Women would utilize to extend their political participation and grip a seat at the table. Between 1970 and 1990 alone, the rapid growth in the number of Black Women in political office was an estimated 1463% increase (William 1991). As Shirley Chisholm in 1968 became the first Black woman in Congress, Patricia Roberts Harris in 1977 the first Black Women appointed to a White House Cabinet, and Carol Moseley Braun in 1993 the first Black Women elected to the U.S. Senate, year after year, large disparities on the federal, state and local level continued to be chipped away (Center for American Women and Politics, 2018; Higher Heights 2017; 2015).

By the 21st century, it was no secret a Black Women's vote mattered. During the election of former President Barack Obama, Black Women led the defeat over Clinton in the 2008 primaries, and in the presidential elections over John McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012 (Hanna, Harris-Perry, 2018; Harris-Perry, 2011; Price, 2008; Smooth 2018; Sinclair-Chapman, Pew Report, 2009). Yet, as Black Women continue to make substantial strides, in 2018, men still hold 80.0% of the 535 seats in the 114th U.S. Congress, 77% of the statewide elective executive offices across the country, and 80% of the 285 mayoral seats of U.S. cities with populations 100,000 and over (Center for American Women and Politics, 2018).

Patricia Hill Collins (1998) in *The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same: African-American Women and the New Politics of Containment* states,

In, one sense, the organization of power confronting African American women as a result of the civil rights and feminist gains of the 1960s and 1970s appears to be entirely different from that characterizing earlier patterns of slavery and de jure segregation in the South... Relying on the visibility of African-American women to generate the invisibility of exclusionary practices of racial discrimination, this new politics produces a remarkably consistent Black female disadvantage while claiming to do the opposite. (p. 13-14)

While Black women make up 7.3 % of the U.S. population and represent 30% of the elected officials in the 115th Congress, the visibility of representation in one area becomes a deceptive gain, for they do not represent all Black Women. Within Congress, the legislative branch of government that makes laws that influence our daily lives, among states with large populations of people of color, Black politicians are underrepresented and, in some areas, nonexistent (Jones, 2015). Over 64 percent of people of color in the United States live in just ten states, and in seven of the ten states, Black Women do not hold a congressional seat at all (Center for American Women and Politics, 2018). Of the 73 women serving in statewide elective executive offices, only 3 Black Women hold seats; serving states with Black populations at less than 15%. Thus far, a Black woman has not been elected as a state governor, Director of the FBI, CIA, member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed a supreme court judge, or U.S. Vice President or President.

The Chisholm effect signified extensive political gains for Black Women in American politics (Harris, 2018). Yet, why do so few Black women hold positions of power in the United States? Most recently, researchers have discovered and publicized compelling evidence to suggest that regardless of the political position when men and women run for office, they both have an equal opportunity at winning (Cook 1998; Fox 2018; Lawless and Fox, 2013) Lawless and Pearson 2008;). Fox (2018), states "there are almost no gender differences in terms of the major indicators of electoral success: vote totals and fundraising" (p.218). Yet, the "almost" must be in reference to Black Women. In a letter addressed to the Democratic party, Black Women expressed strong sentiments of political dissatisfaction,

Dear Chairman Tom Perez:

Black women have consistently shown up for Democrats as a loyal voting bloc, demonstrating time and again that we are crucial to the protection of progressive policies such as economic security, affordable, and criminal justice reform. We have voted and organized our communities with little support or investment from the Democratic Party for voter mobilization efforts. We have shown how Black women lead, yet the Party's leadership from Washington to the state parties have few or no Black women in leadership... (Estell, et.al, 2018)

Scholars suggest "the fundamental reason for women's underrepresentation is that they do not run for office. There is a substantial gender gap in political ambition; men tend to have it, and women don't" (Lawless and Fox, 2006). Yet, from the oldest HBCU, Cheney State University, to the smallest HBCU Talladega College, HBCUs continue to be at the forefront of empowering Black people, especially, Black women with the ambition to lead, make a change and break barriers.

### ***Historically Black colleges and Universities and American Politics***

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established to educate the freed descendants of enslaved

Africans in the United States. Since the establishment of Cheney State University in 1837, for over 180 years, HBCUs play a significant role in American Society. In cultivating civil rights leaders such as Thurgood Marshall, Barbara Jordan, Ella Baker, Diane Young, Martin Luther King Jr., and Jesse Jackson Sr., HBCUs have been influential in leading the nation towards equality for all. Including, 1939 Lincoln University graduate, Kwame Nkrumah became the first prime minister and president of Ghana, HBCUs have developed an extensive and undeniable history of advancing young Black women and men to even enter into the international political arena.

Academically and socially, today of the 101 HBCUs in the United States, institutions such as Howard University, Morehouse College, Spelman College, Fisk University and Xavier rank among the top degree institutions in the U.S. (Allen and Jowell, 2002). Howard University alone is the top producer of Black undergraduates earning PhDs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, especially among black women, representing the highest gains. (News Release, 2014). Yet, as productive HBCUs are, it is bittersweet as many struggles with funding, enrollment, accreditation, and retention (Allen and Jowell, 2002; Gasman, 2013; Mutakabbir, 2011).

In 2018, although sometimes overlooked and overworked, when HBCU alumni front-running political candidates such as Andrew Gilliam and Stacy Abrams dominated conversations for progress and change in America, this is evident that HBCUs are still successfully educating and graduating a powerful generation of leaders. Building on HBCUs legacy of instilling confidence and ambition in Black Women to lead, make a change and break barriers, the underrepresentation of Black women in elected offices, could historically be changed in the 2018 midterm elections.

### **The Numbers**

The research presented is based on data collected from three independent sources (1) The Black Women in Politics database (BWP), (2) The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) and (3) VoteSmart.org. The data represents a major cross-sectional effort designed to provide information on Black women in and running for political office in 2018.

The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) is nationally known as the leading source of academic research and data about American women's political participation. Established in 1971, at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics, CAWP (2018) "has been committed to advancing scholarship about women in politics and Making Women's Leadership more visible." Luvvie Ajayi developed Blackwomeninpolitics.com in 2017 after Doug Jones was elected to the Alabama Senate by the surprising massive support of Black women. As a searchable database of over 400 black women running for local, state, and federal in 2018, Blackwomeninpolitics.com is a strong public effort to ensure Black Women and heard and seen. Vote Smart is a free and unbiased database of candidates and elected officials in

America. From their website, if disclosed, each political candidate's biographical description includes their previous professions, education, family life, and organizational memberships to their social media accounts and latest email addresses. The data represented in the study is not exhaustive but attempts to capture a representative scoop. It also should be noted that attending an HBCU does not mean a candidate graduated from an HBCU.

After cross-referencing all three data sources the names of 409 Black Women running for federal and state political offices were confirmed in 2018.

### **Black Women Lead**

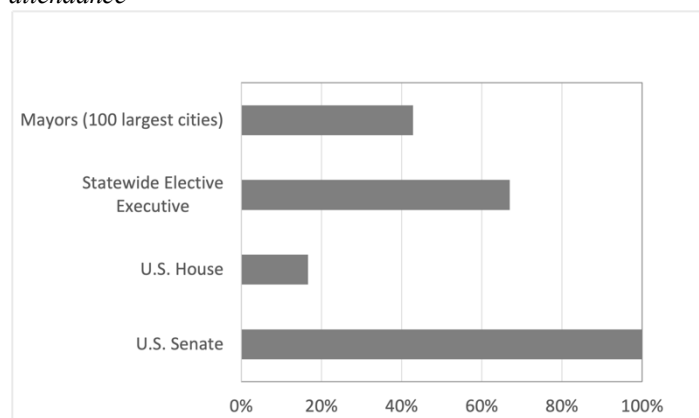
As an Africana Studies instructor, in my Black Women in America II course one of the first books we read are Black Women in Antiquity, by Ivan Van Sertima. The volume provides an impressive historiography of Black queens, leaders, rulers, and goddesses who have dominated since ancient times. Against a backdrop of stereotype threats that plague Black Women in society, for my students this text debunks them all. Although, for many, the central question in advancing Black women in leadership is the relationship between race and gender, yet for many Black Women coming from HBCUs they are taught there are no questions. Black Women just Lead.

In 2017, Howard alumna, Kamala Harris in her speech to the graduating class of 2017, understood that,

Since this school was founded, in 1867, Howard has awarded more than 120,000 degrees. It has prepared and produced thousands of Black lawyers and doctors; and artists and writers... It prepared me for a career in public service, starting with my first-ever political race—for freshman class representative on what was then called the Liberal Arts Student Council... History has proven that each generation of Howard graduates will forge the way forward for our country and our world.... I chaired the economics society and was on the Howard debate team. And I pledged my dear sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha. So the notion of rejecting false choices that Howard taught us had carried me throughout my career—as the District Attorney of San Francisco, as the Attorney General of California, and now as a United States Senator.

Today, Senator Kamala Harris' presence is felt as she sits on the Senate Committee on Budget, Homeland Security and Government Affairs, Judiciary, Intelligence; subcommittee on Federal Spending, Regulatory Affairs, Oversight, Agency Action, Privacy, Technology, and the Constitution. Born in California, raised in Montreal, Québec, Canada, then schooled in Washington, DC, it was at Howard University that Senator Harris was able to manifest the political ambition to lead.

**Figure 1**  
*Black Women Serving in Political Office in 2018, by HBCU attendance*



Currently, on the federal, state, and local level the influence of HBCUs in the lives of Black Women in political office are also evident. From Figure 1 of the 8 Black women serving in the 115th Congress, Howard University alumna, Kamala Harris is the only Black Women elected to the United States Senate. Within the U.S. House, Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) is an alumna of North Carolina Central, Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-OH) is an alumna of Central State University, and Rep. Frederica Wilson (D-FL) is an alumna of Fisk University. As a member of the Fisk University class of 1963, Congresswoman Wilson was educated in the heart of the civil rights movement and has become known as a “voice for the voiceless.” Of the 74 women serving in statewide elective executive offices, 3 are Black, 2 of whom are alumnae of HBCUs. When Virginia State University alumna Denise Lynn Nappier (D-CT) took office as State Treasurer in January 1999, she became the first Black woman elected to serve as a State Treasurer in the U.S. and the first Black woman elected to a statewide office in Connecticut. Lincoln University Alumna Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver was first elected to the General Assembly in 2003, as the first Black woman in state history and the second in the country. Graduating from the first degree granting HBCU in 1974, Lieutenant Governor Oliver ran and won the third most powerful elected position in New Jersey.

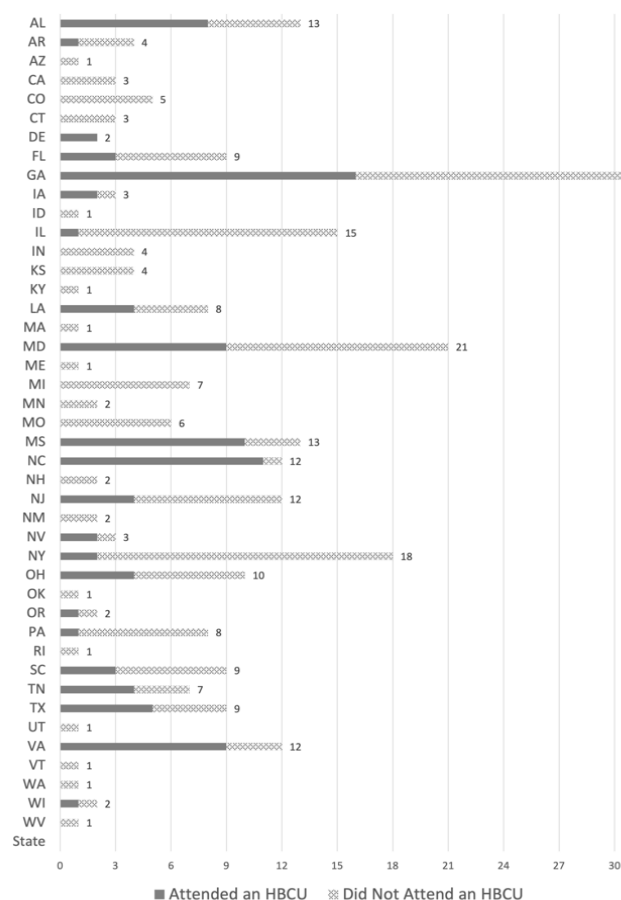
From the most current list of women mayors of the top 100 cities, 3 of the 7 Black Women in leadership have attended an HBCU. From Morgan State University alumna Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh, she “was really engaged at Morgan. It was really a great place to be around, so many African Americans striving to achieve and be a part of the leadership of the city.... One thing Morgan State University taught us was how to be leaders” (Sybil, 2018). Following the footsteps of the first woman to be the mayor of Atlanta and the first black woman to be elected mayor of a major Southern city, Howard University alumnae Shirley Franklin, Florida A&M University Graduate Mayor Bottoms is now the second woman to be elected to Atlanta’s highest office. Lastly, in an interview, the Mayor LaToya Cantrell states “I wanted to go to an HBCU because that

was instilled in us...I told my family I was applying to all these schools, and I only applied to Xavier.” These were the words of Mayor Cantrell, who made history in 2017 as she was elected the first woman mayor of New Orleans.

Figure 2 graphically depicts the 275 Black women serving as state legislators nationwide in 2018, by HBCU attendance. In Delaware (100%), North Carolina (92%), Massachusetts (77%), Virginia (75%), Nevada (67%), Indiana (67%), Alabama (62%), Tennessee (57%), Texas (56%), Georgia (52%), Wisconsin (50%), Oregon (50%) and Louisiana (50%) over 50% of the Black women in office have attended an HBCU.

In red states, such as Alabama, Alabama State University, Alabama A&M University, Miles College and Tuskegee University alumnus; in Tennessee, Tennessee State University and Lemoyne-Owen College alumnus, and in Texas, Texas A&M University, Texas Southern University, and Prairie View A&M alumnus are leading against the majority. For example, in the state of Massachusetts where 13 Black Women are in office, and 77% hold an HBCU experience, in studies ranking women’s economic, social well-being, and health, Massachusetts comes in second as a women-friendly policy state (Caiazza, 2008).

**Figure 2**  
*Black women serving as state legislators nationwide in 2018, by HBCU attendance*



## A Change Is Coming

At Howard University with a substantial population of women, after the presidential election of Trump, even with the threat of death lingering, leading into 2018 midterm elections, Black Women had no intentions of slowing down (Yeboah, 2018). Following in the footsteps of Senator Kamala Harris and other game changers in 2017, the rise and record number of Black women running for political office in 2018 has been remarkable. First-time candidates such as Lucy McBath (D-GA) ran for change in gun-control, Veronica Johnson (D-AL) change in education, Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D-FL) change in healthcare, and Raychel Proudie (D-MO) change in prison reform. With 36 governorships, 35 Senate seats and 435 house races open, Black Women were not hesitant to run for a seat at the table. As HBCUs continually demonstrate that their students and alumni both serve and lead, McBath, Johnson, Cherfilus-McCormick, and Proudie are just a few representing a wave of HBCU scholars moving towards a political change in America.

By November 1, 2018, the Black Women in Politics database, reported a list of over 400 Black women candidates running for office in 2018. Of which, “58 were for federal seats, 180 for state seats, 213 for local seats... 178 in blue states, 290 in red states, 181 incumbents and 287 challengers” (BWP, 2018). One of the first-time candidates, Lucy McBath, joined the political trail after the murder of her son Jordan Davis in 2012. When Michael Bloomberg’s Everytown for Gun Safety, donated more than \$500,000 in ads for McBath during election primaries, she became a political front-runner (Mom’s Demand Action, 2018). The HBCU, Virginia State University, alumnae and Mother of the Movement representative felt it was time for a change.

Heading to the Statehouse might seem a heavy lift for a political novice, but McBath isn’t precisely that. She attended civil rights marches as a child with her father, then the president of the

Illinois branch of the NAACP...McBath graduated from Virginia State University in 1982 with a degree in political science and interned for Douglas Wilder, who would become the state’s first black governor. Activism, McBath says, “is in my DNA.” – (King, 2018)

With her success on November 7th, the Democratic nominee for Georgia’s 6th District, Lucy McBath successfully changed a red district that voted overwhelmingly in support of Trump in 2016 to a Democratic blue district. In Table 1 and 2, looking at the 409 Black Women running for a federal or state office in 2018 the ambition for change by the state is clear.

In states like Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Indiana where republicans won the electoral vote, over 30% of the Black Women running for office have attended HBCUs. In Texas especially, of the 25 Black Women running for federal or state office, 60% have attended an HBCU. In Alabama of the 29 Black Women running for federal or state office, 48% have attended HBCUs. In Missouri where Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill struggled to remain in control, minority voters in Ferguson, MO worried about race relations and criminal justice reform, but Raychel Proudie, Grambling State University alumna, lead the race for State Representative of Missouri’s 73rd District. In Colorado, Clark Atlanta University alumnae, Stephany R Spaulding, Ph.D., pushed to make history by changing Colorado’s 5th Congressional District democratic for the first time. Lastly, in Tennessee and Texas HBCU alums from Tennessee State University, Xavier University, Howard University, Jackson State University, Langston University, Texas A&M University, and Texas Southern University pushed for a political shift. In Georgia, the success of Spelman College Alumnae Stacey Abrams would symbolize not only change but also the historical legacy of HBCU scholars breaking barriers.

**Table 1**  
*Black Women Running for Political*

	Black Women Running for Political Office in 2018	Percentage of Black Women Running for Political Office in 2018 Attended an HBCU	2016 U.S. Electoral Vote Winner	Number of U.S. Electoral Votes
Maryland	46	36.96%	Democrat	10
New York	30	6.67%	Democrat	29
Alabama	29	48.28%	Republican	9
Georgia	29	31.03%	Republican	16
Texas	25	60.00%	Republican	38
Pennsylvania	24	16.67%	Republican	20
Illinois	23	8.70%	Democrat	20
Florida	18	22.22%	Republican	29
California	17	17.65%	Democrat	55
North Carolina	16	56.25%	Republican	15
Ohio	16	18.75%	Republican	18
Michigan	11	9.09%	Republican	16
Oklahoma	9	44.44%	Republican	7
Missouri	9	22.22%	Republican	10
Arkansas	8	37.50%	Republican	6

Tennessee	8	37.50%	Republican	11
Minnesota	8	12.50%	Democrat	10
South Carolina	7	28.57%	Republican	9
Wisconsin	6	50.00%	Republican	10
Nevada	6	16.67%	Democrat	6
West Virginia	5	20.00%	Republican	5
Arizona	5	0.00%	Republican	11
Washington	4	25.00%	Democrat	12
Delaware	4	0.00%	Democrat	3
Massachusetts	4	0.00%	Democrat	11
Colorado	3	33.33%	Democrat	9
Indiana	3	33.33%	Republican	11
Oregon	3	33.33%	Democrat	7
Alaska	3	0.00%	Republican	3
Iowa	3	0.00%	Republican	6
Kentucky	3	0.00%	Republican	8
New Jersey	3	0.00%	Democrat	14
Utah	3	0.00%	Republican	6
Virginia	3	0.00%	Democrat	13
Connecticut	2	0.00%	Democrat	7
Nebraska	2	0.00%	Republican	5
New Hampshire	2	0.00%	Democrat	4
Vermont	2	0.00%	Democrat	3
Idaho	1	0.00%	Republican	4
Kansas	1	0.00%	Republican	6
Louisiana	1	0.00%	Republican	8
Maine	1	0.00%	Democrat	4
Mississippi	1	0.00%	Republican	6
New Mexico	1	0.00%	Democrat	5
Rhode Island	1	0.00%	Democrat	4
Montana	0	0.00%	Republican	3
North Dakota	0	0.00%	Republican	3
South Dakota	0	0.00%	Republican	3
Wyoming	0	0.00%	Republican	3

**Table 2**  
*Black Women Running for Political Office in 2018 by Percent Black Population*

	Black Women in the State Legislature in 2018	Black Women Running for Political Office in 2018	Percentage of Black Women Running for Political Office in 2018 Attended an HBCU	% Black of Population
Mississippi	13	1	0.00%	38
Louisiana	8	1	0.00%	32
Georgia	31	29	31.03%	31
Maryland	21	46	36.96%	30
South Carolina	9	7	28.57%	28
Alabama	13	29	48.28%	27
North Carolina	12	16	56.25%	22
Delaware	2	4	0.00%	22
Virginia	12	3	0.00%	20
New York	18	30	6.67%	18
Florida	9	18	22.22%	17
Tennessee	7	8	37.50%	17
Arkansas	4	8	37.50%	16
Illinois	15	23	8.70%	15
New Jersey	12	3	0.00%	15

## Breaking Barriers

America has never elected a Black Woman Governor to lead a state, yet HBCU Spelman College alum Stacey Yvonne Abrams is running to break that barrier. Twenty-eight years after, Howard University alum, Lawrence Douglas Wilder became the first elected Black governor in America for Virginia, Abrams is attempting to make her mark. In following the argument, Lawless and Fox suggest, the fundamental reason for women's under-representation being political ambition, in Stacey Abrams autobiography *Minority Leader: How to Lead from the outside* and make the real change she traces her ambition to Spelman College.

Suddenly, I found myself seeing how much blacks could achieve... our college expected us to dream beyond our narrow understanding of what we could be. I threw myself into college life, hungry to become this new superwoman: the Breaker of Stereotypes, Destroyer of Black Women Myths. I was now in a context that included people of color, women no less, who had confidence that they could succeed... Once we accept that we deserve to want more and we understand how giving birth to ambition requires knowing ourselves better, we're ready to actually start figuring out what lights us up and then plotting out our pathways to get it. (Abrams, 2018, 10)

Similar to Kamala Harris' HBCU experience, Stacey Abrams was able to develop ambition by knowing herself as a Black woman. It was not only about knowing herself but knowing that a Black Woman meant anything she wanted that to be, instead of what others told her she could be. With the historical legacy of oppression, Black women face in America before political ambition can manifest, personal ambition must be at the foundation. Rarely, are Black girls and women socialized to understand that they have leadership potential or the capacity to

develop leadership skills that transcends race and gender barriers. Unlike, national organizations and training programs like Emily's List, Vote Run Lead, and the Women's Campaign School, organizations like Higher Heights, founded by Black women for Black women's to develop political growth and equity, and Black Girls Lead, offering black girls tools and resources to become dynamic leaders, innovators, and public servants, produces a more profound sense of both personal and political ambition Black Women need to run and win.

With personal ambition for herself, she then moved to political ambition. It was at Spelman College again, located in the heart of Atlanta Georgia, during the wake of the Rodney King verdict that Stacey Abrams, without a political background or academic interest, took a step towards running for political office.

I can easily trace my goal of becoming mayor to my freshman year of college... The [Atlantic University Center] possesses a proud tradition of civic engagement, as the college home of luminaries such as Martin Luther King Jr., Marian Wright Edelman, and Walter Francis White. I wanted to do their legacy justice and felt called to continue their work... Still, as the police moved into our area of the city to quell the unrest, a strange thing happened. Tear gas canisters rained down onto our college quads, vile smoke flooding the open spaces. Across the street, similar bombs exploded in the eyes of Section 8 housing dwellers.

From the traumatizing experience, a young Stacey Abrams would question the role of law enforcement and government, in relationship to her personal ambitions. She continued to ask that question as she interned for the mayor's office, studied law at Yale, was elected Deputy City Attorney for Atlanta, Minority Leader for the Georgia General Assembly and now as she attempts to break barriers and become the first Black Woman Governor to lead a state.

**Table 3**

*Black Women Running for state Governor and Attorney General in 2018*

Name	State	Office	College/University Attended	Midterm Results
Stacey Abrams	GA	Governor	<i>Spelman College*</i> , University of Texas and Yale Law School	L
Yvonne Girard	CA	Governor	Websters University, California State University, University of Maryland	L
Constance N. Johnson	OK	Governor	<i>Langston University*</i> and University of Pennsylvania	L
Leticia Sanders	AR	Governor	<i>Arkansas Baptist College*</i>	L
Vanessa G. Ward	NE	Governor	unknown	L
Leecia Eve	NY	Attorney General	Smith College, Harvard University, and Harvard Law School	L
Sharon Fairley	IL	Attorney General	Princeton University, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Chicago Law School	L
Erika N. L. Harold	IL	Attorney General	The University of Illinois and Harvard Law School	L
Letitia James	NY	Attorney General	Lehman College, Columbia University and <i>Howard University School of Law*</i>	W
Lakresha S. Roberts	DE	Attorney General	Pace University and Delaware Law School	L

*Historical Black College and University\**



HBCU alumnae have been breaking barriers for years. In the 2018 midterm elections, Black women with an HBCU experience were doing the same. In Table 3, Howard University alumna, Letitia James ran and won to break barriers as the first black woman elected in New York State as Attorney General. Spelman College alumnae, Stacey Abrams, and Arkansas Baptist College alumnae, Leticia Sanders in 2018 were 2 of 5 attempting to break barriers to become the first Black women governor in the U.S. Stacey Abrams, in the extended gubernatorial election, HBCUs in many cases have been at the forefront of social change. To increase such momentum, we must look to support HBCUs even more.

### Moving Forward Black Women in Leadership

Even though the heart-breaking struggles of 2016 and 2017 women faced socially and politically in America, Black Women have not gotten weary in running. The rise and record number of Black women running and winning seats in political office in 2018 were historic. After staging marches, signing petitions, campaigning, raising funds, lobbying and speaking out, the results were mixed. For Black Women the results of the 2018 Mid-term elections included historical wins, loses, draws and possible recounts/runoffs. Yet, how do Black Women continue to harness political ambition? What are the steps necessary for advancing Black Women in leadership? Our results show the support and recognition of Historically Black Colleges and Universities for Black Women must be involved in the plan. HBCUs for decades have developed an extensive history of cultivating young Black women and men to be leaders. Focusing on leverage HBCU space and recruiting Black Women to run, history proves not only benefits women but all Americans. As the most devoted Democratic political participants, the Democratic party must reciprocate the support. Focusing on the early stages of political involvement, as Senator Harris and Abrams experienced in college, having stronger impacts. These results highlight some of the long-term impacts support HBCU environments can create from women.

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