



Charlayne Hunter-Gault Doctor of Humane Letters

For all of us, the experiences and lessons of childhood shape who we become and what we value as adults. **Charlayne Hunter-Gault**, to understand who you have become and all that you have accomplished is to appreciate the values instilled in you early on by the most powerful forces in your life – the church, your teachers, your community, and most importantly, the extraordinary influences of a mother and grandmother who, more than anyone else, taught you and nurtured in you a faith that has brought strength, comfort and inspiration in your most challenging of moments.

Your mother taught you early in life to follow your dreams. One of those dreams, inspired by hero comic book reporter Brenda Starr, would draw you to what would become an exemplary forty year career as an award-winning journalist. Having reported for this country's most venerable news organizations – *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, PBS, CNN and NPR, the honors you have earned include two Emmy awards, two Peabody Awards, and more than two dozen honorary degrees. You have been recognized by Amnesty International for your human rights reporting; and last year you were inducted into the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame.

As is the case with anyone who chooses to be the first, you created a pathway to change when in 1961 you became one of the first African-American students to attend the University of Georgia in its 176 year history. Your pioneering spirit in the face of insurmountable resistance demonstrated to the world that you were a model of grace under pressure, a beacon of hope and a model for all who dreamed that the dignity of all individuals could someday be affirmed.

Throughout your career as journalist – par excellence - you have been a leading voice opening doors and exposing injustices in our own country and around the world. While today we celebrate all you have accomplished, you would be the first to remind us how much more requires our attention and resolve. In honoring you today we pay tribute to the values and principles that have always been at the core of your being – truth, compassion, fairness and justice.

By the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I hereby confer upon you, **Charlayne Hunter-Gault**, the doctorate of humane letters, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges thereto appertaining.