

Webb, Alfreda Wilhelmena Johnson ^[1]

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by Aniya Laney, North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, SLNC Government and Heritage Library, January 2023

February 21, 1923 - October 14, 1992



Dr. Alfreda Webb. NC A&T University, Greensboro, NC. 1978. Image courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center at NC State University Libraries.

^[2]Dr. Alfreda Wilhelmena Johnson Webb, public servant, academic, and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, was born on February 21, 1923 in Mobile, Alabama to parents Bibb Garden Johnson and Cattie Lee Avant Johnson. She was the first Black American woman to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Veterinary Medicine, and one of the first two Black American women to become a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. She was also the first Black woman to hold a position in the North Carolina General Assembly.

Webb was the oldest of three sisters in the Johnson family; her younger sisters were named Gladys and Mercides. She was originally a native of Mobile, Alabama, but also lived in the city of Tuskegee, within a short distance of Tuskegee University. While living in Tuskegee, Webb worked at a laundry office, performing clerical and logistical duties there. She received her high school diploma in June 1940./p>

Webb's collegiate education culminated in a Bachelor's Degree in Veterinary Medicine, which she earned in 1943 from Tuskegee University. She was the first Black woman to ever earn this degree. Webb began teaching after she earned her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1949 from Tuskegee Institute. She and Jane Hinton ^[3] were the first two Black women to become Doctors of Veterinary Medicine in the United States as they both earned their degrees in 1949. In 1950, Webb earned a master's degree in Anatomy at Michigan State University. According to Dr. Webb, she was interested in Michigan State University because the department head of anatomy was a woman. She began teaching anatomy at Michigan State University in 1950 and would stay there until 1959. In 1959, she left Michigan for Greensboro, North Carolina, where she taught as a professor of biology and mathematics at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University ^[4] until her retirement.



Members of the '49 and '50 classes of Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine, including Dr. Alfreda J. Webb (seated). 1950. Image courtesy of Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine.

^[5] Webb also became the first Black woman to participate as a member in the North Carolina General Assembly in 1972. She was appointed to this position by Robert W. Scott ^[6] in 1971. Despite losing a bid for a full, non-appointed term in 1972, Webb remained active in politics. According to the 17th Edition of *Who's Who in American Politics* (1999), she served as a member of the Democratic National Committee (and a delegate of their 1976 Convention) and was the Chairman of Minority Affairs for the North Carolina State Democratic Executive Committee. She was the first Black woman who served on the committee. She was also president of the Democratic Women of North Carolina. To celebrate her involvement in the community, she was given Alpha Kappa Alpha's award for Political Excellence and was recognized as a distinguished alumnus by Tuskegee University in 1972. She was also a member of the Society of Sigma Xi and the Gamma Sigma Delta Honorary Society. Lastly, she became a member of the Democratic Women of North Carolina and the Hayes YMCA organization. She retired from her chaired positions in 1978 for an election bid for the state House in Greensboro. Webb became involved in the planning committee for the School of Veterinary Medicine for North Carolina, originally founded at North Carolina State University in 1981.

Alfreda Webb was married to Dr. Burleigh Carlyle Webb (1923-1997). He was also an academic, and had worked and studied at many of the same institutions as Alfreda: Michigan State University, Tuskegee University, and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, where he served as the Dean of Agriculture for 32 years (1962-1993). Alfreda and Burleigh had two sons, named Burleigh Webb and Alfred Webb, as well as one daughter, Kathryn Webb.

The Webb's oldest son, Burleigh, Jr., was killed on March 12, 1988, and on October 14, 1992, Dr. Alfreda Webb died at 69 years old after battling breast cancer for fourteen years. She is buried in Lakeview Memorial Park ^[7], in Greensboro, North Carolina. Her husband, Burleigh, Sr. passed away ^[8] a few years later on July 18, 1997 from emphysema. Alfreda and Burleigh Sr. were survived by their son Alfred and daughter Kathryn. Kathryn passed away on October 19, 2016.

Alfreda was posthumously inducted by NC A&T into their Agriculture Hall of Fame ^[9] in 1999. In 2013, Senate Resolution 133 ^[10] was passed by the North Carolina General Assembly to honor the life and contributions of Dr. Alfreda Webb, among others. In 2016, a scholarship endowment at NC State University, the Dr. Alfreda Johnson Webb Scholarship Award ^[11], was named for her. One of the houses of academic study at NC State's College of Veterinary Medicine ^[12] is also named for Alfreda Webb.

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