

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY  
THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS INSTITUTE

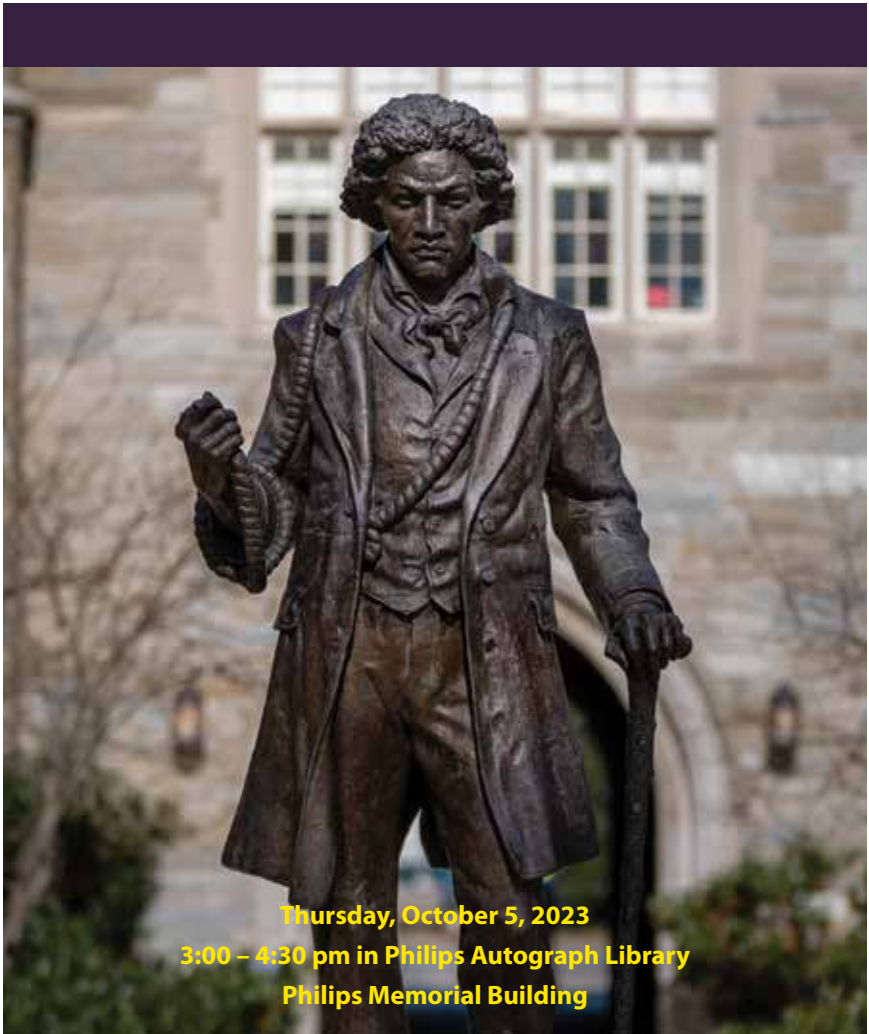
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The Fourth Annual

Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste Frederick Douglass Institute Lecture  
Featuring Dr. Brenda A. Allen, President Lincoln University

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## **Literacy Versus Orality or Orality Supports Literacy: The Power of Culture in Producing Educational Equity**



**Thursday, October 5, 2023**

**3:00 – 4:30 pm in Philips Autograph Library**

**Philips Memorial Building**

# Program Schedule

## **Welcome Remarks**

Dr. Chris Awuyah  
Professor, Comparative Literature  
Director, Frederick Douglass Institute

## **Song Selection**

Lift Every Voice and Sing  
Sung by the West Chester University Gospel Choir

## **Invocation**

Rev. Dr. Kyle J. Boyer  
Pastor at Mount Carmel Church of God in Christ  
Dean of Students at Norristown Area High School

## **Greetings**

Honorable Lillian DeBaptiste  
West Chester Borough Mayor, and  
Daughter of Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste

## **Remarks from the President**

Dr. Chris Fiorentino  
West Chester University, President

## **Piano Interlude**

## **Speaker Introduction**

Dr. Jocelyn Manigo  
Director Learning Assistance & Resource Center,  
FDI Board Member

## **Speaker**

Dr. Brenda A. Allen  
Lincoln University, President  
*Literacy Versus Orality or Orality Supports Literacy:  
The Power of Culture in Producing Educational Equity*

## **Closing Remarks**

Dr. Tracey Robinson  
Vice President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion,  
Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer



In a fitting tribute to the great abolitionist, orator, and statesman, the fourth Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste Frederick Douglass Lecture is held in Philips Autograph Library next to the University's Academic Quad and alongside the majestic statue of Frederick Douglass. This statue stands in commemoration of the abolitionist's last public lecture on WCU's campus and was erected in 2003 by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The lecture, which is open to the public free of charge, is hosted by the Frederick Douglass Institute and is made possible through the generous gift of Dr. Clifford DeBaptiste, the first African-American mayor of West Chester Borough and a recognized champion of education.

Highlighting Dr. DeBaptiste's life of service and dedication to the West Chester University community, Dr. Christopher Fiorentino made the following observations, "Our students and those who live in the community are fortunate to be aligned with an individual who is deeply committed to advancing humanity and initiating rich conversations about the legacy of a man whose life merits much reflection. All of us can become well-rounded citizen scholars by studying Douglass' example, examining issues of social justice, and improving the present by learning from the past. We are equally proud that West Chester University's Frederick Douglass Institute will be taking the lead in coordinating these particularly relevant lectures for many years to come."



**The mission of the Frederick Douglass Institute** at West Chester University of Pennsylvania (FDI) is to maintain the legacy of the great abolitionist, orator, and statesman Frederick Douglass before the campus community, local community, region, and the nation through the highest quality of

academic programming that promotes excellence in scholarship, teaching, and institutional advancement. Consistent with its mission, and with the mission, vision, and values of the university, the Institute is an educational and cultural resource for advancing multicultural studies across the curriculum and for deepening the intellectual heritage of Frederick Douglass, the former slave, distinguished orator, journalist, author, and statesman. Douglass, who was a frequent visitor to the West Chester area, gave his last public lecture on West Chester's campus on February 1, 1895, just nineteen days before his death.

Guided by the spirit of Douglass and his legacy, the Institute aims to create opportunities to build a better community for all of us to fulfill our destiny as human beings. Perhaps Douglass himself put it best when on October 1, 1865, at the inauguration of an Institute named for him in Baltimore, Maryland, Douglass said that the mission of that Institute was, in part, "to be a dispenser of knowledge," and "a radiator of light." As Douglass also declared in his remarks, "In a word, we dedicate this Institution to virtue, temperance, truth, liberty, and justice." Through the leadership of WCU, there are Frederick Douglass Institutes at all campuses of the Pennsylvania State Universities System (PASSHE). Collectively the Frederick Douglass Institutes at all campuses of the State System are known as the FDI Collaborative.

The programs listed below are examples of how we continually work to keep the spirit of Douglass alive.

**The DeBaptiste/Douglass Lecture:** The past speakers, Dr. James Trotman, Rev. Dr. Wayne Croft, and Senator Andy Dinniman. The future speaker is Rev. Dr. Kyle J. Boyer (2024)

**The Lunch (En)Counter Series:** The series takes its name from the famed Lunch-Counter Protests of Civil Rights era, aims to provide campus forums for discussing topical issues related to race, equity, and civil rights. This academic year FDI's focus is on book banning and its implications on reconstructing historic experiences.

**The FDI Educational Outreach:** This project connects 3,000 elementary students at Coatesville and 800 high school students at Coatesville and Norristown school systems.

**The FDI Debate Team:** In spring of 2023 the FDI Debate Team won the PASSHE FDI Debate Tournament.



## **Dr. Clifford Evans DeBaptiste**

The life and legacy of Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste is defined by four equally important pillars. Those of business, civic engagement, education, and philanthropy are the building blocks on which he has continually built his life.

Having visited West Chester often as a young man to see his Aunt Louise he fell in love with the town of West Chester. Following Clifford's discharge from the United State Army, serving in both WWII and the Korean conflict, he made the bold decision to move to West Chester, PA. It was here in West Chester in 1954, that he opened his first Funeral Home. This single proprietor business would grow to two locations. Under his visionary leadership he acquired four additional mortuaries across The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Which he, as a licensed Funeral Director, continued to operate until their sale. In 1964, he along with his wife, constructed the first funeral home to be built in West Chester. It was then it became DeBaptiste Funeral Home, Inc. In 2008 he opened Milestone Events LLC, a reception center, which expanded the business model to allow a place for receptions and other life changing events to be held. Since 1949, Dr. DeBaptiste has diligently served his profession. He has served as a member, Past-Chairman (13 Years) of PA State Board of Funeral Directors Association, Past-President of Pennsylvania Funeral Directors Association, Past-President of Chester County Funeral Directors Association, Past-President of Quaker State Funeral Directors Association and remains active in funeral service at DeBaptiste Funeral Home, Inc. mentoring and inspiring many others in funeral service.

Clifford DeBaptiste's civic, social, and community engagement is legendary. From the very first African- American award in 1956 to over 500 awards later recognizing his many leadership roles. Through the years he has served on

numerous boards. These boards include but are not limited to Board of Trustees for West Chester University. As trustee he promoted the university's expansion and advocated for enhanced student opportunities and diversity programs. Dr. DeBaptiste also served for 35 years as a Director of the First National Bank of Chester County (1975-2010). His participation in a plethora of organizations including Rotary International, Corporate Board of YMCA, Chester County Private Industrial Council, Chester County Art Association Board, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi (Boule), Past Exalted Ruler of Captain Levi Hood #159 Lodge, I.B.P.O.E. of West Chester, along with being 33<sup>rd</sup> Degree Member of the Martin Luther King Jr. Consistory #86 of Freemasonry working, collaborating, building community across the borough of West Chester, Chester County, and WCU allowed him to become a successful and first black Mayor of West Chester, PA (1994-2002). As Mayor, Clifford E. DeBaptiste had the unique ability to unite people. As a catalyst for change he turned West Chester from a tumbleweed town to set the tone for the world class town we have today. The pinnacle of his masterful collaborative efforts as Mayor was a yearlong Bicentennial Celebration in 1999, commemorating West Chester's 200<sup>th</sup> year.

Educating himself, his children, and making education possible for countless other has been a hallmark in Dr. DeBaptiste's life. His first goal after successfully raising three college educated daughters, was to return to school himself. Thus in 1984 he received his Master's in Human Services from Lincoln University. Understanding the importance of education towards achieving a productive and successful life, he wanted to provide assistance for others to achieve, Dr. DeBaptiste began a lifelong habit of philanthropy with scholarships across many platforms. These scholarships have been established at West Chester public high schools, at West Chester University School of Social Work, a scholarship for aspiring funeral directors with Pennsylvania Funeral Directors Association, The Inez DeBaptiste Scholarship at the Woman's League for Minority Education, and lastly, he provided the seed money for a multitude of scholarship initiatives. These scholarships, many in other's names, are held by the community foundation of Chester County. This selfless giving to others for their academic pursuits have been game changers in many students lives. Dr. DeBaptiste's love of education and belief in giving back to the community led him in 2010 to make the initial \$50,00 commitment towards the Frederick Douglass monument at WCU. This 19<sup>th</sup> century author, orator, and civil rights leader gave his final public speech on West Chester's campus in 1895. In addition, in 2018 Dr. DeBaptiste established the

Frederick Douglass annual lecture series for others to continue to learn of the impact of Frederick Douglass.

This magnificent bronze sculpture of Frederick Douglass legacy prominently surveys the academic quad of WCU in the Clifford and Inez DeBaptiste Plaza. This serene oasis on the campus is a spot where everyone can site in history while contemplating their own future. Clifford E. DeBaptiste's life has been replete with both the magic of God's blessing and the mundane of a purpose driven life. Through the years he has been honored by both grassroots and prominent organizations, churches, and clubs. In 1984 he was named Outstanding Citizen of the Year. In 1994 he received both the Presidents Medallion and an Honorary Doctor Laws from WCU. In 2001 he became only the 4th recipient to receive the rarely given Founders award by Chester County Historical Society (now history center). Assigned by the state department to the far east during his tour of duty, he was honored in 2009 by the National Purple Heart Association. In 2013 he was one of 7 to be inducted into West Chester Walk of Fame. In 2014, honored by Quaker State FD with the Guiding Light award. In 2022 he was the recipient of the Doctor of Humane Letters from Lincoln University. These awards along with countless others encompass a lifetime of overcoming obstacles, determination, tireless work ethic, perseverance, but most importantly faith, his faith in God and belief that there are more good people in this world than otherwise. This confidence has sustained his efforts to bring a spirit of unity to his beloved community of West Chester.

His faith, principles, and values were modeled by his mother, Lillian. Widowed at a young age with three young children, she showed him what hard work, frugal living, and a God centered life looked like. It is those same values Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste lives by today. His faith is grounded in membership at the church of the Holy Trinity and St. Paul's Baptist Church, both in West Chester. His extraordinary career has taken him around the world, and yet there is nowhere he'd rather be than home. A home where he and the late Inez E. DeBaptiste (1990) raised three daughters, Mayor Lillian L. DeBaptiste, Inez A. DeBaptiste Esq., and Dr. Celeste E. DeBaptiste MD. Along with four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, at 98 years, Dr. DeBaptiste's wisdom, infectious optimism, quick wit, and active mind continue to influence all those who seek his counsel. See you on his 100th birthday May 19th, 2024.



## Lillian L. DeBaptiste

Lillian L. DeBaptiste was officially sworn in to serve as the first Black female mayor of the Borough of West Chester in Pennsylvania on January 3, 2022. She's following in the footsteps of her father, Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste, who served two terms as the first African American mayor in West Chester starting in 1994.

Mayor Lillian DeBaptiste moved to West Chester at an early age, with her parents Clifford and the late Inez E. DeBaptiste. Graduating from Henderson High School, she matriculated to West Chester State College—now known as West Chester University—with a degree in Psychology. Lillian is a believer in the power of education, which was instilled by her mother and father who were both first generation college students.

In 1973, Mayor DeBaptiste joined the family business as a licensed Funeral Director and remains the President and Director of DeBaptiste Funeral Home and of Milestone Events.

Through the years, Mayor Lillian DeBaptiste has been involved with multiple community organizations. She has previously served on the board of The Chester County Community Foundation, Planned Parenthood and The Charles A. Melton Arts and Education Center. She recently became a Board Member of Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center. Mayor DeBaptiste is also a founding member of the Valley Forge Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta.

Lillian's greatest treasure is spending time with her family. She shares five children and 4 grandchildren—her life's true source of joy—with her husband, Thomas E. Lambert Sr.

Mayor DeBaptiste's family, friends, and community inspire her to continue to work for cultural diversity, environmental initiatives, and racial and social justice.





## **Brenda A. Allen**

Dr. Brenda A. Allen was named the 14th president of her alma mater, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania on May 11, 2017. She began her tenure on July 1, 2017.

From July, 2009 through June, 2017 she served as Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Winston Salem State University (WSSU). Dr. Allen was also a tenured member of the faculty there, holding the title of Professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences. At WSSU, Dr. Allen's primary responsibility was to provide executive level leadership for the institution as it pursued its academic mission. Dr. Allen was responsible to the Chancellor for the overall coordination and effective implementation of the University's academic programs, and exercised leadership in promoting quality instruction, research, and university and public service. She had responsibility for developing and administering the academic policies and regulations of the University, and in collaboration with other senior officers, she had lead responsibility for the development of the University's annual budget and long-term financial plans.

As Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, Dr. Allen provided oversight and leadership of the following academic and operating units: the College of Arts, Sciences; Business and Education; the School of Health Sciences and University College.

Other units reporting to the Provost included: Information Resources (IT and the Library); Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research; the Division of Lifelong Learning (Evening and Week-end Programs, Continuing Education, Distance Learning and Summer Session); the Honors College; Enrollment Management (Admission, Financial Aid, and the Registrar); the Center of Excellence in Teaching and Learning; the Center for Community Safety; the Center for Health Disparities; and the Center for Design Innovations.

Dr. Allen departed WSSU with a legacy of achievement. Her many accomplishments included leading revision of the curriculum, overseeing the establishment of WSSU's first two doctoral programs, expanding undergraduate research funding, restructuring academic support to strengthen advising, creating an Office of Faculty Affairs, strengthening standards for tenure and promotion, and helping raise more than \$ 10 million for capital projects, scholarships and other student support. Under her watch, the university's retention and graduation rates rose dramatically and the number of students engaged in research and study abroad also increased.

Dr. Allen served as Associate Provost and Director of Institutional Diversity before moving to WSSU. There she was credited with helping to raise nearly \$15 million to support diversity goals, co-authoring a successful \$3.3 million NSF ADVANCE Grant, and leading efforts that culminated in 36% and 45% increases in the number of women and minority faculty members, respectively.

Prior to joining Brown University, Dr. Allen held a number of academic and administrative positions at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. Promoted through the ranks at Smith to Full Professor Dr. Allen served as the chair of the African American Studies Department, the Assistant to the President and Director of Institutional diversity, and Special Assistant to the Provost.

Prior to her tenure at Smith College, Dr. Allen spent three years at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut where she held several positions, including Postdoctoral Associate in the Department of Psychology, and Lecturer in the Departments of Psychology and African American Studies.

Dr. Allen holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Lincoln University, a master's degree in Experimental Psychology and a doctorate in Developmental Psychology, both from Howard University in Washington, DC.

# Frederick Douglass Institute Board Members

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*Administrative Assistant*

**Miriam Andoh**

*Graduate Assistant, Department of Public  
Health -Community Health*

**John Omole-Matthew**

*Graduate Assistant, Department of Public  
Health*

## **Previous Speakers**

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*2018*

**DR. JAMES TROTMAN**

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*2021*

**REV. DR. WAYNE CROFT SR.**

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*2022*

**SEN. ANDREW DINNIMAN**

## **Upcoming Speakers**

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*2024*

**REV. DR. KYLE J. BOYER**