

HISTORY MAKER

JACQUELYNE MARY JOHNSON JACKSON

Born: Feb 24, 1932, Winston-Salem

Died: Jan 28, 2004, Stillwell, Kansas

Known for: A sociologist, educator and speaker dedicated to the use of empirical data and who challenged the status quo in social and policy discussions of aging members of minority groups.

As a child, Jacquelyne Johnson Jackson witnessed the impoverishment of a couple who were friends of her parents. In the days before Medicare and Medicaid, the couple depleted their life savings and had to sell their home to pay for medical expenses associated with aging. Public housing was the only option left to them.

This incident led her to a career that spanned more than 40 years studying how elderly minority groups are impacted by policies based on societal assumptions rather than clear data. She dug into questions of physical and psychological issues, gender inequality and economic losses based on life expectancy among Black, Asian, Hispanic and Native Americans populations and women in general.

Armed with that information, she worked to change policy and advocate for basic civil rights.

Her parents, James A. and Beulah (Crosby) Johnson, were teachers in Winston-Salem when she and her twin sister were born. Soon afterwards, her father took a position at the Tuskegee Institute, and the family moved. But she maintained a connection to the Winston-Salem, where her maternal grandparents had deep roots.

She studied at a number of universities, earning both her bachelors and masters in sociology from the University of Wisconsin in 1953 and '55 and her doctorate from the University of Ohio in 1960. She would go on to study, research, teach and hold fellowships at institutions such as the University of Colorado, Jackson State College, Howard, Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill.

In 1966, she was the second Black professor in Duke University's history and the first Black female professor.

She authored two books and more than 80 published articles, most on matters of the elderly, but she also frequently and bluntly covered a range of topics including Affirmative Action, Social Security and the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas controversy in 1991.

In 1970, while at Duke, she challenged a widely accepted theory that Black women had built such a matriarchal family tradition that Black men felt emasculated, leading to the



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breakdown of the nuclear family in that population.

Her biographical entry in the 1998 book "Notable Black American Scientists" calls Jackson a "prominent voice in public policy debates over programs directed to elderly minority populations for over 30 years."

In an interview that year, she said she hoped her work would "play a small part in contributing towards the gradual increase in effective research, adequate training (of) personnel, and above all, meaningful services available to aging and aged Blacks."

The Association of Black Sociologists ensures that spirit continues with the Jacquelyne Johnson Jackson Early Career Award, given to sociologists focused on scholarly rigor with a record of service and leadership in the public sector for social justice, diversity and continued research.