



# Celebration OF *WOMEN IN MATHEMATICS*

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### **Where are you from?**

I was born in Washington, D.C. to Henry and Doretha Jackson. I am the youngest of three children, my two older siblings are nine years older than me and were born in the same year, don't ask it's a long story. I was raised in Prince George's County Maryland and graduated 2nd in my class from Suitland High School. I wrote in my high school memory book that I would one day obtain a Ph.D. in mathematics, but went on to major in mechanical engineering at North Carolina A&T State University. After one year as an engineering major, and my inability to put together an electric car, I knew I was in the wrong field and switched my major to mathematics education. Although I thought I would be a high school mathematics teacher, my love for mathematics grew as an undergraduate and I went on to receive my Master's and Ph.D. in mathematics from North Carolina State University.

### **Please describe an experience that helped you discover your interest in the mathematical sciences.**

While mathematics always came naturally to me, my enjoyment of mathematics grew immensely during my junior and senior years of high school. My high school mathematics teacher had a lively personality that captured your attention; his enthusiasm was infectious. On the first day of class he walked in and said "My name is Stan, if you call me Mr. Kowalski I will deduct ten points from your grade". Although calling him by his first name definitely allowed the class to connect with him on a personal level it by no means equated to him being an easy teacher. Stan was both challenging and precise; deducting points if your sine curve was not "smooth and flowing" and requiring you to get three 99s in a row before he awarded you a 100, he actually took off 1 point on my test once and told me I spelled my own name wrong. Stan made mathematics fun and forced you to not simply perform computational calculations but to understand the "why" behind the mathematics. My love for mathematics became even deeper after I took my first proof-based course, Foundations of Mathematics. I vividly remember how elated I felt when I proved my first Theorem, the sum of two even numbers is even, and knew that I had found my true calling. I often wish I still had my first proof so I could frame it in my office because it was truly the spark that lit my passion for mathematics.

### **What is/are your most proud accomplishment(s) in regards to your career in the mathematical sciences?**

During my fourth year as a professor, my career came full circle when I started to do research in secondary teacher education, the profession I initially envisioned for myself as an undergraduate. Although I did not study mathematics education in graduate school, I quickly realized that the key to creating the next generation of mathematicians was to train highly qualified teachers armed with the tools and skills necessary to inspire young mathematical minds. Seeing the success of my former mathematics education students and the impact they have on their students is by far my proudest mathematical accomplishment. It is one thing to positively affect the life of one student, but knowing that you have played a small role in impacting the lives of generations to come is truly amazing.

### **What is/are your most proud accomplishment(s) in regards to your personal life?**

I am most proud to be raising a smart and compassionate son with my loving husband, Allen. I am also extremely proud, and blessed, to have a group of friends that are my biggest cheerleaders and always in my corner supporting me.

### **Please share some words of wisdom/inspiration.**

Know your strengths and weaknesses so you know when to seek help and when to take the lead. Self-reflect and be open to constructive criticism, it will only make you stronger. Be authentically you, all impersonations have an expiration date.

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