

# AMBASSADOR PAMELA E. BRIDGEWATER (ret.)



Ambassador Pamela E. Bridgewater has led diplomatic efforts that helped change the course of world events. She graduated from Walker-Grant High School in Fredericksburg, Virginia where she was born; earned a Bachelor of Arts from The Virginia State University, a Master of Arts in political science from the University of Cincinnati, and completed course work and advanced to candidacy for the PhD degree from the American University School of International Service. She holds honorary Doctor of Laws degrees from the University of Cincinnati and Virginia State University, an honorary Doctor of Public Service from Morgan State University and an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Mary Washington.

Ambassador Bridgewater's overseas tours were in Belgium, The Bahamas, Jamaica, South Africa, Benin and Ghana. She has served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and held other assignments in the Department of State. She was the first African-American woman to serve as Consul General in Durban, South Africa, and served for six years (1990-6) making her the longest-serving U.S. diplomat in South Africa during the historic transition from apartheid to a non-racial government. A former U.S. Ambassador to South Africa said "*Bridgewater established a degree of trust and confidence with Mr. Mandela and the Africa National Congress leadership that the U.S. had not previously enjoyed.*"

At the height of the most recent civil war in Liberia, Ambassador Bridgewater was named the Department of State's Special Coordinator for Peace in Liberia and spearheaded the efforts that led to a comprehensive peace agreement and democratic elections. She was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Benin, the Republic of Ghana and to Jamaica by Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama respectively.

She previously served on the political science faculties at Morgan State University and Bowie State University in Maryland, and Voorhees College in South Carolina. As a professor, she intellectually challenged and encouraged her students who later distinguished themselves as states' attorney general, judges, academicians and authors. As a Foreign Service Officer, she shared her vast experience with new officers, providing opportunities that challenged them and enabled them to excel professionally. She continues to encourage and mentor diversity students and others interested in careers in foreign affairs. Ambassador works part time for the Dept. of State and is Board Chair of The Africa Society.

A tireless public servant, Ambassador Bridgewater has won numerous commendations for her contributions to international affairs and public policy, including two U.S. Presidential Meritorious Service Awards, Department of State Superior Honor Awards, the Secretary of State's Career Achievement and Distinguished Service Awards, and national honors from Benin and Ghana.

Pamela Bridgewater accepted Christ and was baptized at age 8 by her grandfather, the late Dr. B. H. Hester who pastored the Shiloh Baptist Church, Old Site, in Fredericksburg, Virginia. She has completed a booklet about him entitled "The Social Activism of a Black Preacher." A former Sunday School teacher and youth choir member, she considers herself foremost an Ambassador for Christ, which underpins all of her many undertakings in church and civic affairs.

Ambassador Bridgewater is married to the Rev. Dr. A. Russell Awkard, pastor of the New Zion Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

