

Oprah Winfrey

Tennessee State University Alumna



Oprah Winfrey is a global media leader, philanthropist, producer, actress and author. Over the course of her esteemed career, she has created an unparalleled connection with people around the world, making her one of the most respected and admired figures today.

For 25 years, Winfrey was host and producer of the award-winning talk show “The Oprah Winfrey Show.”

In her role as Chairman and CEO of OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network, she guided her cable network to success, is the founder of O, The Oprah Magazine and digital site OprahDaily.com, and oversees Harpo Productions. In 1996, Oprah’s Book Club launched, serving as a catalyst for the creation of book clubs

around the world and millions of books sold across genres, with the 100th selection recently being named.

In 2017, the podcast debut of “Super Soul” launched as #1 on Apple Podcasts and has been downloaded over 600 million times by listeners in over 155 countries worldwide. Additionally, her “Wisdom of Sundays” debuted as #1 on the New York Times Bestsellers List under her personal book imprint “An Oprah Book.” In 2020, “What Happened to You” debuted on the New York Times best-seller list, which Winfrey co-authored with Dr. Bruce Perry and remained on the audio best-seller list for nearly two straight years.

Winfrey is an Academy Award-nominated actress for her role in “The Color Purple,” earned critical acclaim in “Lee Daniels’ The Butler” and produced and acted in the Academy Award-winning film “Selma.” Winfrey starred in the Emmy nominated HBO Films “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.”

Through Harpo Productions, Winfrey oversees scripted and unscripted programming. Upcoming projects include the new musical feature, “The Color Purple,” for Warner Bros. Discovery; the feature adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates’s novel, “The Water Dancer,” for MGM; the Apple limited series adaptation of Tayari Jones’s novel, “An American Marriage;” and the Hulu drama series adaptation of Charmaine Wilkerson’s novel, “Black Cake.”

Winfrey is also a dedicated philanthropist. During a December 2002 visit with Nelson Mandela, she pledged to build a school in South Africa and has thus far contributed more than \$200 million towards providing education for academically gifted girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. Graduates of the school have continued on to higher education both in South Africa and at colleges and universities around the world. Winfrey is a founding donor of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. Winfrey’s Morehouse Scholars Program has supported over 600 men graduate from college, with her additional pledge in 2019 bringing her total investment to \$25 million, marking the largest endowment in the college’s history. In 2020, Winfrey donated over \$20 million in vital COVID-19 relief support to cities around the country, including her hometowns of Nashville, Chicago, Baltimore, Milwaukee, Los Angeles and Kosciusko, MS.

In 2013, Winfrey was awarded the Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor. In 2018, Winfrey became the first African American woman to be honored with the Golden Globes’ Cecil B. DeMille Award. In 2022, Winfrey was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

United States Congressman Bennie G. Thompson ***Mississippi 2nd District***



Born in a state with a unique history of racial inequality, Congressman Bennie G. Thompson draws inspiration from the legacies of Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, Aaron Henry, and Henry Kirksey. The Bolton, Mississippi native considers it an honor to walk the path Mississippi civil rights icons paved decades ago. Serving his 15th term in the United States House of Representatives, Thompson represents Mississippi's Second Congressional District where he has spent his entire life fighting to improve the lives of all people.

Congressman Bennie G. Thompson is the longest-serving African American elected official in the State of Mississippi and the longest Democrat in the Mississippi Congressional Delegation. He began his grassroots political activism being a civil rights champion through the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) while a student at Tougaloo College – a private historically black college in Jackson, Mississippi. He organized voter registration drives for African Americans throughout the Mississippi Delta on behalf of the organization before graduating and following in the footsteps of his mother by becoming a schoolteacher. During his tenure educating the youth of Mississippi, a fire inside Thompson was ignited pushing him to be a voice for the voiceless through elected office.

His reputation as a no-nonsense problem solver has earned him the trust of his constituents and the respect of his colleagues in Washington. In 1975, he was a plaintiff in a lawsuit that resulted in a \$503 million increase in funding for Mississippi's historically black universities. In 2000, Congressman Thompson's legislation creating the National Center for Minority Health and Health Care Disparities became law.

Congressman Thompson served on the Agriculture, Budget, and Small Business Committees before assuming the top Democratic position on Homeland Security in 2005. Soon after, his colleagues promoted Congressman Thompson to serve as the first-ever Democratic Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee.

On July 1, 2021, Speaker Nancy Pelosi named Rep. Thompson Chairman of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol. Under Ranking Member Thompson's leadership, the bipartisan committee conducted a thorough investigation of the facts, circumstances, and causes of the January 6th attack and worked to ensure nothing like that attack ever occurs again. The Select Committee presented its findings about a multi-part effort to overturn the 2020 election, reflecting the body of evidence the committee has built through more than 1,000 interviews and the hundreds of thousands of records the committee has obtained.

Congressman Thompson is a lifelong member of the Asbury United Methodist Church in Bolton, Mississippi. He has been married to his college sweetheart, London Johnson of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, for 42 years. The couple has one daughter Bendalonne, one granddaughter, Jeanna, and one grandson, Thomas Gordon.