

Clarice Phelps Bio

Clarice Phelps was born in Minneapolis, MN and raised in Nashville, TN where she attended and graduated from Tennessee State University (TSU) in 2003 and holds a B.S. in Chemistry and an M.S. in Mechanical Engineering with a focus on Nuclear and Radiation Engineering from the University of Texas-Austin. After her time at TSU, she joined the United States Navy in the Nuclear Power Program where she helped to maintain the chemistry and radiological controls of two Reactor Plants onboard the aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) for the carrier's first two deployments to the middle east.

After an honorable discharge from the US Navy in 2008, Clarice then went to work at Oak Ridge National Lab beginning in June 2009 where she worked as a Nuclear Operations Technician at the Radiochemical Engineering Development Center (REDC) processing and purifying mainline radioisotopes for use in industry, private sector and various government agencies.

In 2010, Clarice began working for the Nuclear Security and Isotope Technology Division (NSITD) at ORNL, where she was a part of the team that helped to purify the isotope, Bk-249 that would be used to confirm the discovery of element 117, Tennessine (Ts), on the periodic table and was recognized in 2019 by ORNL as the very first African-American woman involved in element discovery. Clarice has lent her technical expertise to the Plutonium 238 (Pu-238) program for NASA in spectrophotometric determination of plutonium (Pu) and neptunium (Np) valence states in aqueous and organic solutions. She currently serves as the project manager for the Nickel 63 (Ni-63) and Selenium 75 (Se-75) isotope programs for industrial use at ORNL and is the current vice president of the African-American Affinity Resource Council (AAARC) at the lab.

Clarice has taught, as a special instructor, at the Project G.R.A.D. (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) Summer institute for high school students involved in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (S.T.E.A.M.) programs as well as serving as a guest instructor on the basics of Nuclear Engineering and radiochemistry at Pelissippi State Community College's Academic Summit. She has also dedicated her time to after school educational programs at Austin- East Magnet High School in association with A1 Learning Connections which focuses on educating students on careers after high school. She currently serves as board member and vice president for a 501(C)3 non-profit organization called Yo-STEM which aims to bring STEM education to underserved communities. She has also served as the Vice President and program chair of the Knoxville graduate chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc (AKA) as well as the South Eastern Regional Registration Chairman for AKA's 88th South Eastern Regional Conference. Clarice has also volunteered at Knox County Career Fairs for middle school students, Science Expos and travelling science fairs sponsored by ORNL, and the 2015 National Nuclear Science Week.

Outside of her service to science and community, Clarice has earned the 2017 Knoxville YWCA Tribute to Women Award in the area of Technology, Research, and Innovation and was selected in 2019 by the International Union for Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) for the Periodic Table of Young Chemists representing the element Einsteinium (Es). She has also recently appeared on the cover of the Fall 2019 Minority Engineer Magazine and presented a Ted Talk at the TedxNashville event in December 2019 entitled "Claiming My Seat at the Periodic Table" where she talked about her journey in the STEM field,

her accomplishments, and what she has learned along the way. In 2020, Clarice was recognized for achievements in the Knoxville, TN “Top 40 under 40” and has recently become a featured speaker on “Our Truths” speaker’s bureau while starting on her journey towards a PhD in Nuclear Engineering at the University of Tn- Knoxville. But her success would not mean anything without the support and love from her family. She is supported by a loving husband, John, and her three children: Camryn, 4, and 2.5-year-old twin boys, Jayson and Jaxon.