

Colin Powell

Colin Luther Powell was born in Harlem in 1937. His parents were Jamaican immigrants. Powell grew up in the South Bronx and went to the City College of New York to study geology. While there, he joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) and in 1958, he graduated at the top of his ROTC class. After graduation, Powell went to fight in the Vietnam War. While in the war, Powell earned many honors such as the Soldier's Medal for rescuing his comrades from a burning helicopter.

Colin Powell returned to the U.S. and entered George Washington University in Washington, D.C. where he earned a Master's in Business Administration (MBA). In 1987, Powell became America's National Security Advisor. In 1991, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President George Bush, Powell became a national figure during the successful Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations which expelled the Iraqi army from Kuwait.

In 1997, he returned to his alma mater, the City College of New York, to open the Colin Powell Center for Policy Studies, offering high-achieving CCNY students the opportunity to prepare for careers in policy and public service. For the rest of the decade, he continued his work with young people as Chairman of America's Promise: the Alliance for Youth. In 2001, Bush appointed Colin Powell to be Secretary of State. At the time, it was the highest rank ever held by an African American in the United States government. In his first months in office, Powell won praise for his efficient administration of the State Department, and cordial relations with other governments.

Powell and his wife, Alma Johnson Powell have one son, Michael, who was the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) from 2001 to 2005.