

James L. Solomon and the End of Segregation at the University of South Carolina

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Figure 1. Solomon family with plaque model.

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Last year, the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees approved the installation of a plaque honoring James L. Solomon, Jr., a former math graduate student and one of the first three African American students to desegregate the university in 1963.¹

This article provides an overview of segregation, its impact on mathematics, and James Solomon's role in bringing it to an end. It also includes speeches from an April 22, 2019 ceremony where a model of the plaque was unveiled: Henrie Monteith Treadwell (one of the other students to desegregate the university) contributes a letter about her friendship with Solomon, Nathaniel Knox talks about his experience as a PhD student in mathematics at the university in the 1970s, and Carl L. Solomon (James's son) talks about his father.

The Origins of Segregation at the University of South Carolina

Immediately after the Civil War, African Americans in South Carolina had unprecedented educational opportunities. An 1868 reform to the state constitution made publicly funded schools—including the University of South Car-

¹In this article, the term "segregation" is used to refer to *de jure* segregation that prevented African American student enrollment. It should be noted that some of the universities mentioned in this article were only partially segregated. For example, in footnote 6 Vanderbilt University is described as being segregated in 1960, although some schools within the university admitted African Americans as early as 1953. A detailed treatment of desegregation at Vanderbilt is given in [Kea08] and an overview of desegregation at state universities in the South is given in [WHM09]. It should also be noted that some schools that are not usually described as "segregated" had exclusionary policies regarding access to amenities like housing. For example, The Ohio State University started admitting African American students in 1889 but maintained an unwritten policy of prohibiting them from campus housing until the 1940s; see e.g. [Him72, p. 27].

olina—open to all students regardless of race. Starting in 1873, the first African American students began enrolling in the university, making it the only integrated state-supported university in the South. African Americans also held high-level positions at the university: the faculty included Richard Greener (the first African American graduate of Harvard), and the board of trustees was half African American. However, the racial integration of the university did not last long. This measure and the broader platform of reforms that it represented were swept away in the 1876 election, which brought to office the former Confederate general Wade Hampton as Democratic governor. One of the first resolutions passed by the new government declared:

Be it resolved...to...devise plans for the organization...of one university...for the white and one for the colored youth of the State, which...shall be kept separate and apart, but shall forever enjoy precisely the same privileges.... [Car77, No. 37 Joint Resolution]

This resolution was followed by legal and social restrictions enforcing racial separation. These measures limited the options available to an African American student in South Carolina to attending an HBCU (or Historically Black College or University) or to moving north to attend one of the land-grant or private universities that admitted African Americans.

Segregation and Its Impact on Mathematics

The professional trajectories of African American mathematicians were profoundly shaped by legalized segregation and other exclusionary policies.² Not only did such measures make it difficult for African Americans to obtain a college education, but those who persevered and wanted to work as professional mathematicians faced limited job opportunities. While HBCUs employed largely African American faculty, many other universities had formal or informal policies against hiring African Americans. Moreover, those who did secure academic positions still struggled to participate fully in academic culture. The career of William Claytor vividly illustrates these challenges.

Claytor was the third African American to receive a PhD in mathematics (from the University of Pennsylvania in 1933). Early in his career, Claytor went to the 1936 AMS meeting at Duke University. At the meeting, he was forced to stay at a private residence because he was barred from the (whites-only) hotel reserved for conference participants. Even though his talk was well received by mathematicians such as Lefschetz, Claytor was deeply discouraged by his experience and hesitated to attend future professional meet-

²Despite the barriers they faced, African Americans made remarkable mathematical achievements during the twentieth century. Their achievements are nicely surveyed in Edray Goins's 2019 MAA Invited Address [Goi19].

A PROBLEM FOR ALL:

Capable Negroes Fail To Get Teaching Jobs

Figure 2. Headline for an article in the *Michigan Daily* student newspaper critical of the University of Michigan's failure to hire Claytor as math faculty [Con43].

ings [Lor, p. 87]. Claytor's research career was marked by such exclusionary experiences.³ In 1941, he left academia to enlist in the army, and while he later returned to university teaching, he stopped publishing research.

Mathematicians at Fisk University and Atlanta University challenged these barriers.⁴ They were inspired to do so after a group of African Americans from Fisk attended a 1951 Southeast meeting of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) and were denied entrance to the banquet dinner. The Fisk mathematicians wrote a letter requesting that the AMS and MAA protect members from discrimination by modifying the bylaws. Both organizations responded by passing antidiscrimination measures, but these measures had limited impact. The AMS Council passed a motion directing its secretary to obtain assurances that there would be no racial discrimination at AMS meetings.⁵ Despite the motion, between 1951 and 1960, the Society continued to hold meetings at segregated institutions and recommended separate hotels to African Americans and whites (see Figure 3).⁶

	Single	Double
Washington Duke Hotel Corcoran and Chapel Hill Sts., Durham	\$4.50	\$8.25
Biltmore Hotel (colored) 332 East Pettigrew, Durham	3.00	4.00
Eden Rock Motel, 3 miles South of Durham on Highways 15A and 501(3 1/2 miles from the Physics Building)	---	10.00

Figure 3. In the October 1958 issue of the *Notices*, the announcement of the 551st meeting of the AMS offered separate hotel accommodations for African Americans (referred to as "coloreds").

³Claytor worked at the HBCU West Virginia State College from 1933 to 1936. Frustrated by the limited opportunities for doing research, he left the college to hold short-term positions at the University of Michigan. In 1939, Claytor was proposed for a faculty position at Michigan, but the proposal was rejected. An article in the student newspaper attributed the rejection to racism (see Figure 2). He then held a position in Michigan's Correspondence Division until he left for the army. After his military service, he worked at Howard University for the rest of his career. For more details, see [Par16].

⁴The present account is largely based on the documentation in a supplement of [SSotM95] and Appendix 2 of [New80]. This account focuses on the barriers related to segregated housing and restaurants at professional meetings. African American mathematicians at this time were also concerned about being excluded from positions of authority in professional societies and not being permitted to give invited lectures at professional meetings. The author thanks Johnny L. Houston for a helpful correspondence on this subject.

The response of the MAA was stronger, although only partially successful. The MAA Board of Governors passed a resolution affirming “its steady intention to conduct the scientific meetings of the Association...so as to promote the interests of Mathematics without discrimination....” They delegated the implementation of the resolution to individual Section officers. This gave the organizers of regional MAA meetings considerable autonomy, and there was significant variation in how they applied the resolution. Organizers in the MD-DC-VA and Louisiana-Mississippi regions made significant changes to make meetings more accessible to African Americans. For example, meetings in Mississippi were held at desegregated resort hotels.⁷ By contrast, there were problems with implementing the resolution in the Southeastern region. This was highlighted in 1960 when a group of African American mathematicians from Atlanta University found themselves repeating the earlier experience of the Fisk mathematicians. That year a regional meeting was held at the University of South Carolina. The university was still closed to African Americans, so to accommodate them, the meeting was held at a nearby hotel. However, the hotel was “whites-only,” and while the Atlanta mathematicians were allowed to attend the meetings, they were forbidden from staying there. They left the meeting in protest. In a striking symbol of the persistence of exclusionary policies, the hotel in question was the Hotel Wade Hampton, named after the very governor who had ushered in segregation.

Higher Education before Desegregation

In protesting the MAA meeting, the Atlanta mathematicians were part of a growing group of people challenging the segregation of the University of South Carolina. African Americans had tried to enroll at the university since the 1930s, but until 1954, university officials could block their efforts by simply complying with state laws. However, this

⁵This motion is not well documented. For example, Appendix 2 of [New80] does not record any response of the AMS. The only reference to the AMS motion the author could find is [Par16, p. 235], which cites a 1952 letter from the AMS secretary to David Blackwell. [Par16] quotes that motion as directing the secretary “to obtain, as a condition of holding a meeting, assurances that at any event scheduled in the program there will be no discrimination as to race, color, religion, or nationality, and that when accommodations and other facilities are provided these shall be provided to all attending the meeting.”

⁶Old issues of the Notices and the Bulletin show that meetings were held at Tulane University in 1951, Auburn University in 1951, North Carolina State University in 1952, Wofford College in 1953, University of Alabama in 1954, Rice University in 1955, the University of Miami in 1957, Duke University in 1958, Wake Forest University in 1959, and Vanderbilt University in 1960. At the time, these institutions were segregated. Additionally, whites and African Americans were offered separate hotel accommodations at a 1956 meeting at the University of Kentucky (which was not segregated).

⁷A description of how meetings were made accessible and welcoming to African Americans is given in [NB95].



Figure 4. The Hotel Wade Hampton.

changed when those laws were declared unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court’s *Brown* decision.⁸

As the Atlanta mathematicians’ 1960 experience in South Carolina demonstrated, the *Brown* decision did not immediately open the university to African Americans. Rather than desegregate, university officials and state politicians responded by setting up barriers to implementing the *Brown* decision. Ten days after the decision was issued, the faculty at the University of South Carolina voted in favor of requiring applicants to submit standardized test scores, a policy designed, in part, to legally restrict the admission of African Americans.⁹ Faculty, staff, and students were pressured not to challenge segregation. University administrators fired a dean and an assistant professor who openly criticized segregation [Les01, pp. 123–128], and administrators at nearby Allen University and Benedict College, under pressure from the governor, dismissed seven faculty [SBM60].

African American students who tried to desegregate universities faced even more serious threats. No African American students were admitted to the University of South Carolina in the 1950s, but students in other Deep South states were. Their experiences were an indication of what could be expected. One of the first students to try to use the *Brown* decision to gain admission to a university was Autherine Lucy. In 1956, she secured a court order that forced the University of Alabama to admit her, and she began attending classes. During her first week, riots in

⁸The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision declared state laws segregating public schools unconstitutional. The case had its origins in South Carolina. The Supreme Court combined the suit from Topeka, Kansas with five other suits. The first of these was *Briggs v. Elliott*, a case challenging the segregation of schools in Summerton, SC.

⁹The committee that developed this policy was headed by the chair of the math department. At the time, requiring test scores was innovative. The University of South Carolina was the first public university in the South to require SAT scores for undergraduate admissions. This policy was part of a broader program in which state officials maintained exclusionary policies through the use of national standardized tests. For more details, see [Les01, pp. 120–122] and especially [Bak06, pp. 129–135].

protest of her attendance broke out on campus. Civil unrest proved an effective means for blocking desegregation when legal tools failed. Citing safety concerns, university officials suspended Lucy, and by the end of the month, they had expelled her. For the next seven years, no African American students attended the university.

African Americans had greater success in desegregating universities in the Deep South in the 1960s: the University of Georgia was desegregated in 1961 and the University of Mississippi in 1962. As in Alabama, the enrollment of African American students was met with fierce resistance with riots breaking out during the first month of classes. The riots in Mississippi were especially violent, with two killed and many injured. To maintain order, army troops were stationed on the campus for the academic year. Remarkably, the African American students at Georgia and Mississippi completed their degrees despite the violence on campus. The desegregation of the University of Mississippi left South Carolina as the only state to have avoided desegregating its public universities.¹⁰

James Solomon and the Desegregation of the University of South Carolina

By July 1963, the University of South Carolina had exhausted its legal options for preventing desegregation. Henrie Monteith Treadwell, an African American who had been denied admission, filed a lawsuit, and in response, a federal court ordered the university to admit all qualified African American applicants.¹¹ James Solomon, an applicant to the graduate program in mathematics, was one of the first three African American students admitted under the court order.

At the time, Solomon was teaching math at Morris College. He had been a student there and then gone to Atlanta University (AU) as a graduate student. At AU, he wrote an MS thesis, "Lectures in the theory of functions of a complex variable Part III," which presents the theory of residue calculus and conformal representations. The thesis was submitted only a few months after the 1960 MAA meeting in South Carolina, and the thesis drew on lectures of Lonnie Cross,¹² one of the mathematicians who had left the meeting in protest.

¹⁰Desegregation of private universities had occurred earlier. The first university to desegregate was the private HBCU Allen University which enrolled Andre Toth, a white student from Hungary, in early September, 1957. As a private university, the state laws segregating higher education did not apply, although that year, the university found itself in conflict with the state government. This conflict is detailed in [SBM60], while Toth's experience is described in [Por16, Chapter 6].

¹¹This was not the first court order to desegregate a public university in South Carolina. A federal court had ordered Clemson University to desegregate in January 1963, and the first African American student, Harvey Gantt, enrolled later that month.

¹²Lonnie Cross later changed his name to Abdulalim A. Shabazz.



Figure 5. Unidentified African American students from Allen University trying to enroll at the University of South Carolina in 1958. Each was told that their application could not be accepted.

It was after returning to teach at Morris College that Solomon became interested in desegregation and the civil rights movement through discussions with student leaders. Enrolling in the University of South Carolina's newly established graduate program in mathematics was a way to get involved in the movement while also gaining useful professional development.

The symbolic power of Solomon's involvement in desegregation cannot be emphasized enough. Morris College was founded to provide education for African Americans who had been largely excluded from higher education by law. The college founder, James J. Durham, was a freed slave who had started his formal education at the University of South Carolina but had been unable to complete his degree due to exclusionary laws passed in 1877. Solomon was attacking those very laws in 1963, and he was doing so with the support of Morris College students and faculty.

Solomon discussed applying to U of SC with Morris College President Reuben. Reuben encouraged him (which was no small matter, as applying would put the college at risk of political attacks like those experienced at Allen University and Benedict College in the 1950s), and he decided to apply.

Solomon's decision made the news. The *Charlotte Observer* announced his application under the headline "Third Negro Seeks USC Entry in Fall" [AP63b], and *The State* newspaper featured a photo of him arriving on campus to take the GREs [AP63a].¹³ Solomon recalled being concerned that the whole world would know if he didn't score well enough on the test to be admitted. He evidently did

¹³Recall from footnote 9 that officials had implemented a policy of requiring applicants to submit standardized test scores, in part as a way to legally restrict the admission of African American students.

well as Solomon and the other applicants, Robert Anderson and Henrie Monteith Treadwell, were admitted and entered the university on September 11, 1963.¹⁴

In a recent speech, U of SC President Pastides described the students' experiences as "mixed." While there was none of the violence and disorder that was seen at other Deep South schools, the students also were not fully welcomed on campus. Robert Anderson had a particularly hard time. He lived in a dorm room on campus and was regularly harassed throughout the night by students bouncing basketballs outside his room and shouting obscenities. To provide support, Solomon would occasionally stay with Anderson, and he remembered the experience as frightening. The harassment followed Anderson elsewhere. Solomon recalled walking across campus with Anderson and having students stand by their windows and shout racist insults at them. Solomon himself was not constantly exposed to the campus environment the way the other two students were because he was married with kids and living in Sumter, South Carolina.

In later interviews, Solomon had positive things to say about his time in the math department. He said that he received a warm welcome from many people. He praised the department chair Wyman Williams, the only person he mentioned by name, for helping him obtain NSF support for his studies. Solomon said that although some of the professors had a problem with racism, they were never unfair to him with grading. Summarizing the experience, he said, "I must truthfully say that I encountered no real problems" [Hay89].

After his time at the University of South Carolina came to an end, Solomon continued to teach at Morris College for many years and then served in various positions in state



This edition of the *Hornet* is dedicated to a young man who is deeply concerned with the "Forward Look." This concern did not build up overnight.

Mr. James Lewis Solomon, Jr. present Professor of Mathematics, adviser to the Student Council and the only Negro in the graduate school of Mathematics at our own University of South Carolina, paved his way through the highway of progress and is looking forward to receiving his Ph.D. from this university.

Figure 6. The 1964 Morris College Yearbook was dedicated to James Solomon.

¹⁴The day after they registered, another African American student, James Hollins, registered for classes at the University of South Carolina Beaufort.

government including as commissioner of the Department of Social Services. Desegregation was not, however, the end of Solomon's work reforming higher education. In 1981, the federal government declared South Carolina's higher educational system to be noncompliant with the Civil Rights Act, and Solomon served on a commission that implemented major reforms that brought the system into compliance. While higher education in South Carolina remains marked by persistent racial disparities, the speeches below by Nathaniel Knox and Carl Solomon attest to how Solomon created opportunities that had been impossible during segregation.

Solomon is an honored figure in the community. The year after desegregation, Morris College students dedicated the school yearbook to him (see Figure 6). For his public service, Governors Richard Riley and Carroll Campbell both awarded him the Order of the Palmetto, the highest award that can be given to a resident of the state. Solomon truly embodies Morris College's motto: "Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve."



Figure 7. The students after registration; l to r: Robert Anderson, Henrie Monteith Treadwell, James Solomon.

Letter from Henrie Monteith Treadwell

Henrie Monteith Treadwell was one of the first students to desegregate U of SC. She received her PhD in biochemistry and molecular biology from Atlanta University and works as director of Community Voices at Morehouse School of Medicine. The following is a letter from her that was read by Associate Dean Tracey Weldon-Stewart at the April 22, 2019 ceremony at the University of South Carolina in honor of James Solomon:

It is my honor and pleasure to send remarks that reflect my collaborative friendship with Jim Solomon. Jim and I were colleagues, bound to the goal of freedom from the beginning of OUR September 11th. I knew and know him to be a man of principle, a man of courage, an individual committed to freedom, and a champion and supporter of the dramatic strides made by the University of South Carolina. Because of Jim, a servant-leader of South Carolina, we have reached un-paralleled successes. We have miles to go before we reach the final destination of social and civic justice and equity for all. But I am convinced that my friend will be present, walking side by side with me and many others, as we continue to make his legacy one that informs and motivates future soldiers for justice.

My warmest greetings and much love to you, my friend. I regret sincerely that I cannot be present to witness the honors awarded to you. But my soul and spirit are there with you as you receive this wonderful and well-deserved respect.

Speech of Nathaniel Knox

Nathaniel Knox received his PhD in math from U of SC in 1974 and retired as associate provost at Morgan State University. At the April ceremony honoring Solomon, he contributed the following speech about his time at the U of SC:

I thank the planning committee for allowing me to say a few words about my experience in the Mathematics Department here at the University of South Carolina.

First: I acknowledge and thank my wife, Jo Emily, and my son, Gordon. They allowed me to quit my job as a mathematics teacher at C. A. Johnson High School and pursue a dream.

Second: I acknowledge and thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Hermann E. Scheiblich. He challenged me and guided me through that work. I still count him among my dearest friends.

I really enjoyed my time here. Standing on the shoulders of Mr. Solomon, there were no trails to blaze. So the only things that mattered for me were the mathematics and the goals I had set for myself.

I will share with you two of the many experiences I recall from my time here. The first is this: One day as I walked in a LeConte hallway, I suddenly understood the concept of a function. I had been dealing with functions since ninth grade Algebra I, but after about fifteen years I saw the beauty and power of the concept. It could be a sledge hammer or a scalpel.

The second relates to my dissertation work with Dr. Scheiblich. We met, I think, at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, starting in September. We'd meet and discuss my progress or lack thereof. In either case, there was a lot of learning on my part. Then, one day in April as we discussed my work over the past week, he smiled and I knew I had succeeded. However, my thoughts were "I've got him, I've got him." The rest is history.

While I have the floor, I must acknowledge another set of strong shoulders on which I stand. Our nation is indebted to Dr. Johnny Houston for the work he has done in shepherding the National Association of Mathematicians



Figure 8. Nathaniel Knox, a 1974 U of SC PhD, speaking about his time as a PhD student.

(NAM) through most of its existence. Through NAM programs, my students and faculty, and those of other institutions serving students of color, were afforded opportunities to exhibit the quality of their work in arenas that matter. As a result, the country is reaping the benefits of the work of these individuals as mathematicians in various government agencies and high tech organizations, as university faculty, and as entrepreneurs. So, on behalf of our country, I thank you, Johnny. I also thank Dr. Goins and the current Board for carrying on the work.

I commend the organizing committee and the University for acknowledging Mr. Solomon's achievement as an important milestone in the development of the U of SC Mathematics Department. Again, I thank you for allowing me to speak.

Speech of Carl L. Solomon¹⁵

Carl L. Solomon is the son of James Solomon. He received a JD from U of SC in 1994 and runs the Solomon Law Group. He contributed the following speech about his father at the April commemoration:

His story started in 1942 or 43 depending on who's telling the story. And it started in McDonough, Georgia when my grandmother Tessie told my grandfather, "My sons are too smart to pick tomatoes." Because at his age and at that time, when you got old enough you left school and you went out into the fields. So my grandfather put them all on the wagon and went to Atlanta so my father could continue in school. And in Atlanta my grandfather who didn't have anything and kind of needed a vocation that wasn't related to the field started learning how to preach. And part of what he did was he had to teach the next generation of preachers. My dad didn't want to be a preacher, but my grandfather said, "Boy I have to have a job, so somebody's got to come to church on Sunday and learn from me." And my daddy went because it was required. At that time, my father had never considered going to college. So one day they were sitting in the pews and another person close to his age went over to him and said, "Where are you going to school?" And that was a question he had never answered because my grandmother wanted him to be the first Solomon to graduate high school. But he's

now around people that are second generation, not only business owners, but people that had graduated college. He said, "I'm going to Morris Brown." He didn't know about Morris Brown College.¹⁶ He had seen the name, and he didn't want to be embarrassed. So he graduated at 16 and he went to Morris Brown because that's what he set his sights on sitting in that pew.

At 18 he got drafted into the Korean War and after he ended up in little old Sumter, South Carolina where he met my mother. And he met her and told her he wanted to impress her and he was broke. And he told her, "I know I don't have a lot to offer you, but I have had two years of college. And if you marry me, we'll go back to school. I'll pay for it." He's broke now, but he laid floors and worked in factories and they both graduated and if you ask my mom, she'll say her grades were better than his every semester. So he gets a degree at Morris College and he wants to do something and they gave him a little job at a school but to be a professor you needed another degree. So he ended up at Clark Atlanta University¹⁷ and got a mathematics degree.

So my dad is in Sumter and he's teaching math at Morris College and he had a saying that he developed there that I learned to hate until I met people that he used to teach. His saying was, "You not only have to get it right, you have to get it right the first time." Now what does that mean when you're his son and you have to learn algebra? It means you have to use a pen to do your math, which I thought was the most absurd thing in the world and I did not always get it right the first time.

So my father is there, he's starting to teach, and he meets some people: Ruben L. Gray, Ernest Finney, and later, Matthew Perry. And this was at a time when no African Americans had been elected to anything. And in my dad's words: "We just couldn't understand, having learned math, with the numbers of diversity in Sumter, how we couldn't get elected." They didn't run in parties, they ran in slates and if just the African Americans voted for them they would fall in the middle of the slates whether they got any white votes or not. So they ran. He credited math for giving him the courage to run for the

¹⁵Based on a transcript provided by Candace Bethea.

¹⁶Morris Brown College is an HBCU in Atlanta, GA and is different from Morris College, the college that Solomon taught at.

¹⁷The university was called Atlanta University when Solomon attended. The name was changed in 1988 when the university merged with Clark College.



Division of Natural Sciences

James L. Solomon, Jr.
 Director, and Assistant to the Dean
 B.S., Morris College, M.S., Atlanta University, N.S.F. Science Faculty Fellow University of South Carolina

Figure 9. James Solomon in the 1970 Morris College yearbook.

first time and win these offices, one was in the House of Representatives and my father was on the school board for the Sumter School District. So then he had this relationship with Matthew Perry and Attorney Perry got to represent people on these issues, you may have heard of *Briggs v. Elliot*, you may have heard of Harvey Gantt going to Clemson, and he told my dad, "You know, Henrie Monteith has brought a case, and I think she's going to get in. There's all of these issues. If you've got a desire, now's the time." So my dad never brought a lawsuit but he applied. And he was let in.

Now the university has been so entwined with the success of the Solomon family it can't be overstated. So here I am, about to graduate high school. I'm only a second-generation college person. Don't even know I'm not supposed to go to college, don't even think it's a question whether or not I go to college because since I've been 9 or 10 I've been coming down to the university. When George Rogers won the Heisman, I got to meet him and tried to tackle him. My dad was always at the university and the university always treated him well so I just knew you went to school. And it was the University of South Carolina that gave my family that foothold, that opportunity, that understanding, not only by allowing him to come here but by the way they treated him and all the years after, and for that we will be forever grateful.

Thank you so much for this opportunity. I will leave you with this: my father and mother couldn't be here today. They're 88 and 86 years of age. One has Alzheimer's and one has a slight vascular dementia. They remember great things from the 1950s, not too many things from last week. I will tell you that being in love and dancing when you're 30 and when you're 40 is great, but being together and dancing when you're 80 and all you can ever remember is being together is even better.



Figure 10. Participants at the April 22 ceremony; l to r: Edray Goins, Candace Bethea, Tracey Weldon-Stewart, Jesse Leo Kass, Carl L. Solomon, Lacy K. Ford, Johnny L. Houston, Linyuan Lu, Matthew Boylan, Paula Vasquez.

The Legacy of Desegregation

Installing a plaque commemorating James Solomon is an important and necessary step in honoring his legacy. Yet the plaque should serve not just as a reminder of Solomon and his actions but also as a call to continue challenging racial disparities in higher education. For AMS members, a fitting way to do this would be to work with Morris College and other HBCUs in the Deep South. The substantial support these schools provided Solomon helped guarantee that African American mathematicians cannot be formally excluded from professional meetings as they had been in the 1950s, but these benefits have not fully reached the communities the schools serve. African American undergraduate enrollment at U of SC, for example, is lower today than it was in 1981 (the year Solomon began to serve on an education reform commission). We encourage readers to learn about ways in which the AMS is collaborating with HBCUs and to think of ways for further collaboration.

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