

Congratulatory Remarks
by
Honorable Reginald E. Gilliam, Jr. *

on the occasion of

The Department of Africana Studies
40th Anniversary Celebration
and Alumni Reunion

at the
University at Albany (SUNY)

September 24-26, 2009

* As Assistant Professor of African-American Studies at SUNYA from 1969-72, Mr. Gilliam developed and taught courses in Civil Rights/Constitutional Law, and Political/Economic Development.

Brothers and Sisters, as a member of the first faculty of SUNYA's Department of African-American Studies, I extend greetings and congratulations and heartfelt thanks to you for organizing and honoring the 40th Anniversary of our Department. I'm proud and pleased that you have "kept the faith" of the vision we had in 1969. I speak for the legacy established by our first faculty: Professor Fred Harris, Professor Jerome Dukes, Professor Edoho B. Edoho, Dr. Seth Spellman, Professor Theresa Ware, and the many colleagues who followed us.

Times were certainly different in 1969. Protests filled the air. Many of our communities were in flames. Racial tension was in the halls of academe. Our job and responsibility as professional educators was to introduce serious analysis and examination of our history and culture into the total university environment for the very first time. We brought high academic standards and pride to the classroom. Importantly, we also brought rigorous discipline and scholarship to the University faculty and Administration which approved formal departmental status and our varied course offerings. Those offerings and our program were among the first in the nation to achieve departmental status. As evidenced by this weekend's program, you have maintained and built upon that legacy. You have maintained a tradition of service and excellence. You have helped build the awareness and consciousness that helped make possible our continued economic and political advancement.

I'm proud to have been a small part of this story and, again, I offer my thanks and congratulations to you for this weekend's acknowledgement and celebration of the historic department we built together.

REGINALD E. GILLIAM, JR.

EXECUTIVE BIOGRAPHY

Reginald E. Gilliam, Jr., HLS Class of 1968 is Senior Vice President - Government Affairs for Sodexo USA, one of the world's largest facilities management and food service companies. He is widely recognized as one of the pre-eminent African-American lobbyists in Washington and as a national expert in transportation policy.

In October 1967, Mr. Gilliam was one of the founders of the Harvard Black Law Student Association and served as its first Chairman. A native of New York City's Harlem, he earned his undergraduate degree at historically Black Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. After graduating from HLS, he served as professor and administrator at the State University of New York and Williams College in Massachusetts. In 1975, he accepted an appointment as Legislative Counsel to freshman Democratic Senator John Glenn of Ohio. As one of the first African-Americans to achieve senior staff status in the U.S. Senate, Gilliam distinguished himself by developing significant legislative initiatives in education, economic development and urban arson, all of which were enacted into law. In 1979, Gilliam was nominated by President Jimmy Carter to be the second African-American Member in the history of the nation's oldest regulatory agency, the U.S. Interstate Commerce Commission, the regulatory body for the surface transportation industry. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 1980 and sworn into office in an emotional ceremony by his father, an original member of A. Phillip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and longtime employee of the rail industry regulated by the ICC. As Commissioner and Vice Chairman, he aggressively promoted the inclusion of minorities throughout the transportation industry.

Following his term as commissioner and another brief stint in academics (at George Washington University where he completed his second and third books), Gilliam served for three years in the sub-cabinet of New York Governor Mario Cuomo as his chief official in charge of surface transportation. He then returned to Washington to become Chief of Staff to the Dean of Ohio's Congressional delegation and senior member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Louis Stokes.

In 1992, he became Senior Managing Director at Hill and Knowlton Worldwide Public Affairs in Washington, D.C. He represented a broad range of clients including the Republic of Botswana, the City of Cleveland and many private sector corporations on matters of legislative and regulatory policy. In 2002, Gilliam became chief lobbyist for Sodexo USA, the leading food and facilities management services in the U.S. with over 120,000 employees.

Gilliam describes his career as characterized by "external activism". While in law school, he worked on the legal defense for Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, served as Voting Rights Act poll watcher in the South, served on neighborhood safety patrols in Harlem and wrote as his final thesis a legal defense of the Newark riots. Throughout his career he has served as an advocate and activist for young African-Americans seeking opportunity in the public and private sectors. He has developed internships in the public and private sectors and is especially known for his willingness to mentor and advise young people.