



ALABAMA ACADEMY OF HONOR
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Alabama Academy of Honor Inducts New Members in Montgomery Ceremony

Montgomery, AL (12/09/2021) - The Alabama Academy of Honor inducted nine new members in a ceremony today at the Renaissance Hotel in Montgomery. The Academy welcomed members into the classes of 2020 and 2021. The 2020 ceremony was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Established in 1965, the Academy bestows honor and recognition upon living Alabamians for their outstanding accomplishments and service to the state and the nation. Membership is limited to 100 distinguished Alabamians and all of Alabama's living governors. In the course of the Academy's history, more than 260 members have been elected, recognizing men and women from a wide variety of backgrounds and areas of achievement.

The inductees comprised an outstanding group of Alabama leaders. Class of 2020 honorees are former U.S. Congressman Jo Bonner, Maj. Gen. J. Gary Cooper, USMC (ret.), and Equal Justice Initiative founder Bryan Stevenson. Class of 2021 honorees are U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Huntsville attorney Julian Butler, the Honorable John England Jr., former Lockheed Martin CEO Marillyn Hewson, Grammy-award-winning recording artist Lionel Richie, and UAB's Senior Vice President of Medicine Dr. Selwyn Vickers.

The ceremony included remarks by Gov. Kay Ivey, an invocation by Montgomery Mayor Steven Reed, and an address by inductee Bryan Stevenson. Mr. Stevenson was introduced virtually by fellow Academy member, Tim Cook, CEO of Apple.

Brief biographical information about the inductees follows.

CLASS OF 2020:

Josiah "Jo" Robins Bonner: Bonner represented Alabama's 1st Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives for five terms. He devoted a significant part of his tenure in Congress to reviving south Alabama's economy, securing several significant economic development projects that continue to benefit the state today. From 2013 to 2018, Bonner served as Vice Chancellor for Economic Development at the University of Alabama System. He most recently served as chief of staff to Gov. Kay Ivey and will soon begin service as president of the University of South Alabama.

J. Gary Cooper: Cooper is a decorated Vietnam veteran and the first Black officer in the Marine Corps to lead an infantry company into combat. He earned many recognitions for heroism including the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. Cooper was elected to the Alabama House of

Representatives in 1974 and later served as Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Human Resources. In 1994 he was appointed Ambassador to Jamaica by Pres. Bill Clinton. Cooper held this position until 1997.

Bryan Stevenson: Stevenson is the founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a human rights organization in Montgomery. He is a widely acclaimed public interest lawyer who has dedicated his career to helping the poor, the incarcerated, and the condemned. Stevenson led the creation of the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, which opened in Montgomery in 2018. These national landmark institutions chronicle the legacies of slavery, lynching, and racial segregation, as well as their connections to mass incarceration and contemporary issues of racial bias.

CLASS OF 2021:

Lloyd J. Austin III: Austin was sworn in as the 28th Secretary of Defense on January 22, 2021. He is the principal assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department of Defense and serves on the National Security Council. The Mobile native had a 41-year career in the U.S. Army that included command at the corps, division, battalion, and brigade levels. Austin was awarded the Silver Star for his leadership of the 3rd Infantry Division during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Seven years later, he assumed the duties of Commanding General of United States Forces – Iraq, overseeing all combat operations in the country. After a tour as the Army's Vice Chief of Staff, Austin concluded his uniformed service in 2016 as the Commander of U.S. Central Command, responsible for all military operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Julian Butler: Butler has practiced law in Huntsville since 1966. Exemplifying his core belief that attorneys should give back to the community, Butler has devoted his life to serving others. He was Madison County's attorney for 35 years, where he contributed to the remarkable growth of that region of Alabama. He was a founding member and the first Chairman of the Center for Public Law and Service at the University of Alabama. Butler was also a founding member and the second Chairman of the Environmental Law Section of the Alabama State Bar. Active in political affairs on the local, state, and national levels, he has chaired statewide Democratic campaigns and has served as the attorney for the Alabama Democratic Party. Butler serves on numerous boards and was chair of the Huntsville-Madison County Bicentennial Committee.

John H. England Jr.: England began practicing law in Tuscaloosa in 1974 and served two terms on the Tuscaloosa City Council. He was appointed by Gov. Jim Folsom to the Tuscaloosa County Circuit Court in 1993. England served on the Alabama Supreme Court from September 1999 until January 2001. Following his tenure on the Court, England returned to the Tuscaloosa County Circuit Court and served there until his retirement in January 2021. England served on the Board of Trustees for the University of Alabama Systems for twenty-three years. A strong community and public service advocate, he has held leadership positions in numerous civic, professional, and social organizations on the local and state level. In 2018, the University of Alabama named a new campus dormitory in his honor.

Marillyn A. Hewson: Hewson is former Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of Lockheed Martin Corporation, one of the world's leading aerospace and defense technology companies. As CEO, Hewson instilled a customer-focused culture across the business, strategically reshaped the company's portfolio to align with future growth opportunities, and significantly increased international sales. Outside her roles at Lockheed Martin, Hewson has lent her experience and expertise as a board member for several publicly traded companies, charitable organizations, and U.S. government advisory bodies. She is a strong supporter of her alma mater, the University of Alabama.

Lionel Richie: Richie is a music icon and one of the best-selling musical artists of all time. His career began at Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) in 1968 when he and several fellow students formed the Commodores. Richie launched a solo career in 1982 with a debut album that sold more than four million copies. The recipient of four Grammy awards, Richie is known for mega-hits such as “Endless Love,” “Lady,” and “All Night Long.” For the past four seasons, he has been a judge on ABC’s *American Idol* and is set to return for the upcoming season. Richie’s *Back to Las Vegas* residency will resume in the fall of 2021.

Selwyn M. Vickers, M.D.: Vickers is an internationally recognized pancreatic cancer surgeon, pancreatic cancer researcher, and pioneer in health disparities research. He is Senior Vice President of Medicine and Dean of the UAB Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine. Vickers leads the medical school’s main campus in Birmingham as well as the regional campuses in Montgomery, Huntsville, and Tuscaloosa. On January 1, 2022, Vickers will become CEO of the UAB Health System and the UAB/Ascension St. Vincent’s Alliance. He is currently President of the American Surgical Association, the nation's oldest and most prestigious surgical organization.

For more information about the Alabama Academy of Honor, visit www.alabamaacademyofhonor.org or call (334) 242-4441.

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