



# DR. PATRICIA JAMES JORDAN

Pat recalls how racial discrimination affected her life. When her 5th grade teacher told a Black boy “there would never be a Negro president,” she was so upset that she told her father who said, “no one thought there would ever be a Catholic president” (before President John Kennedy).

A year later, Pat had to re-take the 6th grade placement test for the Special Progress (SP) class because school officials didn't believe a Black girl could score so well. As one of the few Blacks attending the Bronx High School of Science in the 60s, police in the subway station would often ask Pat to show her train pass while never questioning her white classmates. Those early slights fueled Pat's passion for a career in education to prepare the next generation to take on the world without fear of exclusion or discrimination.

She also instilled the same drive for excellence in faith and education that she learned from her parents in her daughter Alexis, who passed through Blue Nile in 2008 with Linda Thompson as a mentor: Alexis became a Sunday School Teacher and youth choir member.

Although Pat maintained a very long association with Abyssinian, she had not actually joined the church until her daughter's growing involvement in the youth programming. She is now an en

thusiastic member of the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Memorial Ministry, believing that much of her life was shaped by legislation sponsored by or built upon Rev. Powell's legacy. The Harlem Youth Employment Act funded Pat's first summer job as a teaching assistant and her sister's after-school typing job with Langston Hughes, who later joined her family for Christmas dinner at the Melrose Projects in the Bronx.



Pat says “thank you” to Rev. Powell Jr. each time her bus passes his statue on 125th Street, remembering Congressman Powell's legislative accomplishments: free lunch programs, Head Start, Higher Educational Opportunities Program and National Direct Student Loans, which provided college loan discounts and forgiveness for teachers of underprivileged children.

Pat's legacy is giving back. In their mom's memory, the James sisters administer the Juanita James Memorial Scholarship Foundation for youth in the Bronx public housing. She also works with Rev. Itang Young as a math partner with Abyssinian students, their parents and their teachers.

**This is Dr. Patricia Jordan's story. She is an Abyssinian.**

**“One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.”**

-malala yousafzai



## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

A SERIES DEVELOPED BY THE ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH ARCHIVES AND HISTORY MINISTRY TO INTRODUCE MEMBERS WHO ARE THE “STORY” OF OUR CHURCH.

### WELCOME TO THE PEOPLE OF ABYSSINIAN.

**E**ven in the first grade, Dr. Patricia James Jordan knew she wanted to be a teacher. Armed with a BA from Vassar College and later, a Masters and PhD, Patricia Jordan's 30-year career as an educator has taken her from schools in New York to the White House, where she was inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame in 2015, meeting then President Barack Obama.

It has been quite a journey for Dr. Jordan. The high school math teacher went on to become the first dean of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. High School in New York City in 1974. She completed her 30-year career in education in Nassau County schools.

Dr. Jordan spent her early childhood years attending Abyssinian, where her father, Clifford James was an usher. Rev. David Licorish performed the marriage of Mr. James to Juanita Dixon at the church and in 1951, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. blessed Pat.

She holds vivid memories of Rev. Powell Jr. lifting his hands and spreading his black robe when he preached, often admonishing the congregation that he didn't want to hear any noise when the collection plate was passed – meaning no coins! She also remembers being impressed one Sunday by a young visiting minister, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

