CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
STILL MAKING HISTORY

EBENEZER D. BASSETT HALL
NAMING CEREMONY
MARCH 20, 2019
Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett  
Distinguished Scholar, Educator, Civil Rights Leader, Humanitarian, and Diplomat

Born on October 16, 1833, in Litchfield, Conn., Mr. Bassett was the son and grandson of Black Governors, elected officials that held significant roles in African-American communities. He grew up in Derby where he attended school at the Birmingham Academy. Later, he attended Wesleyan Academy (now known as Wilbraham & Monson Academy) in Wilbraham, Mass., the first coeducational college-preparatory boarding school in the United States.

In 1852, Mr. Bassett was accepted into the junior class at the State Normal School in New Britain (now Central Connecticut State University). Mr. Bassett became the first African American to attend (1852) and graduate (1853) from the State Normal School. He graduated with honors and delivered his final paper, “The True Teacher,” at the commencement ceremony.

In 1854, Mr. Bassett moved to New Haven and began his teaching career, instructing students of color at the Whiting School. His scholarly pursuits inspired him to advance his education at Yale College where he attended classes in mathematics, literature, and the classics. While in New Haven, Mr. Bassett established a lifelong friendship with Frederick Douglass. The two men worked together to promote the abolition of slavery, Black Suffrage, and international civil rights.

In 1855, Mr. Bassett married Eliza Park. Later, they moved to Philadelphia where he became an acclaimed educator, principal, and librarian at the Institute for Colored Youth (parent institution of Cheyney University, the first historically black college in the U.S.). Mr. Bassett continued to speak and write in support of civil rights and actively recruited African-American men to serve in the Civil War.

In 1869, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Mr. Bassett as Minister Resident (the current equivalent of a U.S. Ambassador) to Haiti, making him the first African-American appointed as a U.S. diplomat. Mr. Bassett served with distinction for many years. Customary for the time, he resigned from his appointment at the end of the Grant Administration in 1877. For 10 years, Mr. Bassett served as the American Consul General for Haiti in New York and, in 1889, Mr. Bassett returned to Haiti as the secretary, cultural advisor, and interpreter for Frederick Douglass who had been appointed the Minister Resident to the Island of Hispaniola.

Upon returning from Haiti, Mr. Bassett was appointed as Vice-Consul General to Haiti in New York by the Haitian government.

Mr. Bassett died in service in 1908 and is buried with his family in the historic Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven.
Ebenezer D. Bassett Hall
Naming Ceremony

**Processional**
From Elihu Burritt Library to Bassett Hall

**Libation Statement & Drum Call**
Joanne James  Leonard Epps ’99 M.A., ’08

**Invocation**
Reverend Thomas Mills
Grace Church, New Britain

**Welcome**
Dr. Chris Galligan
Vice President for Institutional Advancement

“In the words of Ebenezer D. Bassett”
Jean St. Simon, CCSU student, Man Enough Support Initiative

**Presentations**
Dr. Zulma R. Toro
President, Central Connecticut State University

William Fothergill
Chair, Ebenezer D. Bassett Memorialization Committee

Connecticut Freedom Trail Designation
Todd Levin, Connecticut Historic Preservation Office

**Remarks**
Mark Ojakian
President, Connecticut State Colleges & Universities

Rep. Jahana Hayes
Conn. 5th Congressional District

Mayor Erin Stewart
City of New Britain

**Salute**
Connecticut 29th Regiment
Kevin Johnson and others

**Closing**

(Directly following the ceremony, guests are invited to a reception in the Student Center’s Alumni Hall.)
Ebenezer D. Bassett Reception  
Alumni Hall, Student Center

Welcome
Dr. Jesse Turner  
Professor and Bassett Memorialization Committee

Remarks
Kyle Leonard  
Recipient, 2011 Bassett Student Achievement Award

Anthony Vinci  
Recipient, 2015 Bassett Scholarship

Dr. Chris Galligan  
Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Performance
Queen Nzinga’s Daughters

Student Presentations
“In the words of President Ulysses S. Grant”
Anas Alomari  
CCSU student, Man Enough Support Initiative

“In the words of Frederick Douglass”
Patrick Dwyer  
CCSU student, Man Enough Support Initiative

Performances
Cultural Dance  
Myrria-Tahisha Lyncee  
Haitians & Americans For Tomorrow Foundation

CCSU Drill Team

Closing Remarks
Elise Brown  
Bassett Family Spokesperson
Bassett Memorialization Committee

Formed in 2009, the Bassett Memorialization Committee set out to recognize the achievements and inspirational life of Mr. Bassett. The committee’s plan and subsequent achievements include:

**Accomplished**

✅ 2010 Establish the Ebenezer D. Bassett Student Achievement Award to support student retention and success;

✅ 2014 Institute annual Bassett Day commemoration on campus (October 16);

✅ 2015 Create an endowment fund for the Bassett Scholarship for students who exemplify Mr. Bassett’s character and values;

✅ 2019 Seek the state’s formal recognition of Mr. Bassett (Connecticut Freedom Trail Designation); and

✅ 2019 Pursue the naming of a CCSU academic building in honor of Mr. Bassett.

**Committee members:**

Mr. William Fothergill, Chair  
Ms. Janet Woodruff, Vice Chair  
Mr. Joshua Bouchard  
Dr. Daniel Broyld  
Dr. Kathy Hermes  
Dr. Sherinatu Fafunwa-Ndibe  
Mr. Kevin Johnson  
Dr. Paul Karpuk  
Mr. Joseph Kierwiak  
Rev. Thomas Mills  
Ms. Tracy Nixon-Moore  
Mr. Willis Moore, Sr.  
Ms. Elizabeth Nkonoki-Ward  
Dr. Warren Perry  
Dr. Evelyn Newman Phillips  
Ms. Marian O’Keefe  
Dr. Jesse Turner  
Mr. Alonso Velasquez  
Ms. Renata Vickrey  
Mr. Anthony Vinci
To help continue Mr. Bassett’s legacy, this scholarship recognizes the humanitarian spirit. It is awarded to CCSU students who have demonstrated their commitment to improving and advancing civil rights and equality in their communities.

Recipients come from underrepresented, non-traditional, underprivileged groups with proven financial need and a drive for outstanding academic achievement. For additional information about the Bassett Scholarship, please check the web page: www.ccsu.edu/BassettScholarship.

Scholarship recipients include:

2016-17: Daniel Hebert – Physical Education Major
          Anthony Vinci – Public History Major
2017-18: Dominick Daniels – Communication Major
          Joshua Bouchard – History Major
2018-19: Connor DeLaney – Marketing Major
          Brandon Palma – English Major

THANK YOU!

The Bassett Memorialization Committee is appreciative of the support of President Toro and the many members of the Central Family who have helped organize and orchestrate the Bassett Naming Ceremony and Reception. We especially wish to thank the CCSU Foundation, Department of Facilities, the offices of Event Management and Marketing & Communications, and the Center for Africana Studies.

We also would like to recognize the following students for their assistance in tonight’s presentation:

Tanae Arnold          Khamari Peters
Taelor Arnold         Makel Peters
Zyhir Brown           McKenzie Snell
Onyae Hill