



GLORIA KATRINA BRADFORD:

Images from the Life and Legacy
of a Texas Legal Pioneer

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2021





A TEXAN GIRL

Gloria Katrina Bradford was born on February 19, 1930, and grew up primarily in Houston. She was the oldest of three daughters in a family that strongly believed education was a priority. As a child, Gloria dreamed of either being a chemist or a lawyer.

Gloria attended school during a time when black and white students were segregated and attended separate schools. She graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in Houston in 1946. She attended Prairie View A&M College (now Prairie View A&M University) and graduated in 1949.



A LAWYER IN THE MAKING

In 1949-50, while working at the Library of Congress and the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C., Gloria lived in an apartment with her childhood friend Charlye O. Farris*, a law student at Howard University. Charlye would frequently invite her Howard law school classmates to their apartment for lively “bull sessions” about law and legislation. When Gloria matched them point for point, they encouraged her to apply to law school.

*Charlye Farris would later become the first African American woman admitted to practice law in Texas and the first African American to serve as a judge in any capacity in the South since Reconstruction.



BREAKING BARRIERS AT UT LAW

Gloria began classes at the University of Texas School of Law in 1951, just a year after the U.S. Supreme Court decided the landmark *Sweatt v. Painter* case and ordered UT Law School to admit qualified African American applicants. It would be another three years before the highest court in the land would rule in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

Gloria was impressed with the quality of the program at the law school, but believed her professors graded her harder than her white classmates, ensuring that she and other African American students would not make the grades required to become members of law school honor societies. Nonetheless, the white and Hispanic students at UT Law treated her well. There was “camaraderie” that “went past the segregation problem,” she said.

Gloria graduated from UT Law in May 1954, becoming the first African American woman to graduate from the law school. She passed the Texas bar exam that same summer, with a passing score of 77 out of 80.



The Gloria Bradford Society

A LASTING LEGACY

In 2004, the University of Texas School of Law created the Society Program to foster a sense of community for first-year students. Law students are assigned to one of eight societies and remain with the group for their entire time at law school. Recognizing the significant legacy of Gloria Bradford, the law school has named one of its eight societies in her honor.

Gloria died in 2013 at age 82. Her legacy lives on in the law society that carries her name and all the African American women attorneys who have followed in her wake.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jasmine Wynton is a Dallas partner with Thompson Coburn LLP. Jasmine is an experienced litigator who focuses her practice on high-stakes business litigation, employment law, and white collar criminal defense. She serves in leadership capacities for a number of civic and charitable organizations, and is currently on the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society.

This publication is based on Jasmine's article, "**A Profile in Courage: Gloria Katrina Bradford**" which appeared in the Fall 2020 Journal of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Adanma Ojukwu is a St. Louis-based Illustrator, Graphic Designer, and Frontend Web Developer. She is focused on creating modern and socially conscious digital and print experiences, often tied to her community. Adanma is a 2020 graduate of Webster University in St. Louis, where she obtained a B.A. in Interactive Digital Media and Graphic Design. You can find more of Adanma's work on Instagram at [@adanmacreates](https://www.instagram.com/adanmacreates).



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