

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

CHRISTINE DARDEN

teacher, analyst, researcher,

"I was able to stand on the shoulders of those women who came before me, and women who came after me were able to stand on mine."

Page | 1



Background Information

Born: September 10, 1942

Darden received a Bachelor of Science degree in math and a teaching certificate from Hampton Institute, Master's of Science in applied math from Virginia State College, and a Ph.D. from George Washington University in engineering in 1983.¹

Darden's Resistance

Darden worked as a math teacher for five years before accepting a position as a data analyst for NASA at Langley in 1967. Darden realized her preparation from her education and asked to be moved to an engineering position, but she was denied. After two months, she approached a high-level director and questioned the seemingly sexist, unequal trend between positions and pay among male and female staff. Afterwards, Darden was transferred and promoted to an engineering position where she worked to minimize the sonic boom of aircrafts.

After receiving her Ph.D., Darden became the leading expert on supersonic boom analysis and authored numerous papers on the topic. By the end of her career at NASA, Darden was the first Black person appointed to the highest rank level at the Langley Research Center.²

Achievements

In 1985, Darden received the Dr. A. T. Weathers Technical Achievement Award, and in 1994 she received the Senior Executive Career Fellowship from Simmons College. In 1987, Darden received the Candace Award for Science and Technology from the Coalition of 100 Black Women. Darden received the Black Engineer of the Year Award in 1988. She was recognized by NASA for outstanding performance ten times between 1973 and 2003. She has received the NASA medals for equal opportunity and achievement in the sonic boom program. Darden used her position and voice to pave the way for women to move forward in the science field.

¹ Christine Darden's Biography. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/christine-darden>.

² Gentry, C. (n.d.). Christine Darden. Retrieved from <https://www.obap.org/christine-darden>.

Essential Questions

1. How did Darden act as an activist within her space? What negative stereotypes did she resist in her career as a NASA scientist?
2. Darden used her voice to advocate for herself. When have you used your voice to advocate for yourself or others? What motivated you to do so?
3. *“I was able to stand on the shoulders of those women who came before me, and women who came after me were able to stand on mine.”*
 - a. Whose shoulders do you stand on and why these particular shoulders?