

Yale Law Women Alumni Achievement Award
Briana Clark
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Good afternoon,

Today I have the immense pleasure and greatest honor of introducing a fellow Georgian Stacey Abrams. Stacey Abrams is the purest example of passion, strength, and excellence. As the second of six siblings, and the daughter of Methodist ministers, she grew up in Gulfport, Mississippi. Her family then moved to the great state of Georgia, which she has since called home. From a young age, Stacey Abrams was a high achiever. In 1995, she graduated magna cum laude from Spelman College, where she earned a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies. She was later named a Harry S. Truman Scholar and earned a Masters of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. In 1999, she earned her law degree from this very Law School.

Stacey Abrams has staunchly protected the rights and interests of women and people of color throughout her career. Her fight for justice and equal rights in the political arena officially began in 2002 when she was appointed the Deputy City Attorney for the City of Atlanta. In 2006, Stacey Abrams was elected to the Georgia General Assembly. Five years later she became the House Minority Leader, making her the first woman to lead either party in the Georgia General Assembly and the first African-American person to lead in the House of Representatives. In 2018, Representative Abrams became the first Black woman in the United States to be a major party nominee for governor. Her ascension inspired women, especially Black women across the country to pursue our professional dreams. In 2019 the country was reminded of her powerful presence when she became the first Black woman to give the rebuttal to the State of the Union address. I know from personal experience and from speaking to friends here and back home in Georgia that this was the first time that many of us, especially Black women from Georgia felt seen and taken seriously on the political stage. In her, we saw a reflection of ourselves, our community, and our future as major players in the political process.

Representative Abrams has received numerous awards and recognition for her public service, including the John F. Kennedy New Frontier Award and the Stevens Award for Outstanding Legal Contributions. She has been recognized as Public Servant of the Year, one of 12 Rising Leaders to Watch, one of 25 Power Women to Watch, and one of the 100 Most Influential Georgians All of these honors are just a small sampling of her exceptional accomplishments.

Stacey Abrams is an inspiration to us all, especially women and Black women. As a Black, FGP, Woman from the state of Georgia, having the ability to watch another Black, FGP, Woman from the state of Georgia, seeing her passion, learning from her sense of justice, and studying her conception of equality and fairness has given me a renewed sense of purpose and hope for the future. As another Georgia native, Andre 3000 once said the "South got something to say" and I am so happy that Stacey Abrams is the one that it saying it for us.

As a current student at YLS, her impact and success has affected how I view myself in this immediate community. Witnessing the truly phenomenal work that Stacey Abrams has done and continues to do finally allows me to see someone in government and truly be able to say she represents me, she understands me, and she is fighting for me. Her strength and determination has had a profound impact on the Black community, particularly for Black women who through her gained confidence, voice, and a sense of belonging in a space that has frequently excluded us.

She didn't just set the blueprint and raise the standards for what Southern Black Georgian Women can do, she set the blueprint and raised the standards for all of us, especially here at YLS. Stacey Abrams' continued and fervent fight to protect the rights of all voters illustrates her commitment to justice for each and every person regardless of their identity. Her powerful response to the State of the Union address inspires all people committed to democratic values to remain steadfast in their convictions. Her resilience provides hope for a brighter future.

Election night 2018 in the Novella movie room, was the first time in my life that I have seen so many non-Georgians be truly invested and care about a Georgia State election. This proved what I have always known, that Stacey Abrams doesn't just make us Georgians proud, she makes in the entire country proud. It is my deepest and greatest honor to welcome her here today.