



Gerald R. Ford

President Gerald R. Ford Medal for Distinguished Public Service

Colin L. Powell, R.I.P.

For more than 50 years, General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.) has devoted his life to public service. Having held senior military and diplomatic positions in four presidential administrations, he demonstrated an unwavering commitment to democratic values that resonated throughout the world.

The son of Jamaican immigrants, Gen. Powell was born in New York City in April 1937 and raised in the South Bronx. As a member of the Army ROTC program at the City College of New York, he discovered his calling and launched his distinguished military career. Commissioned as an Army second lieutenant in 1958, he served in the United States Army for 35 years, rising to the rank of Four-Star General.

From 1987–1989 Gen. Powell served as President Ronald Reagan’s National Security Advisor. He served from 1989–1993 as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. He was not only the youngest officer and first ROTC graduate to serve in the position, but also the first African American to do so. During his time as chairman, he oversaw 28 military interventions including the successful Panama invasion in 1989 and Operation Desert Storm in the victorious 1991 Persian Gulf War.

President George W. Bush nominated Gen. Powell to be the 65th U.S. Secretary of State. He was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. As Secretary of State, he led the State Department in major efforts to address regional and civil conflicts. He used the power of diplomacy to build trust, forge alliances, and help transform unstable regions into areas where countries and cultures have the potential to prosper.

Among his many awards and decorations, Gen. Powell has received the French Legion of Honor, an honorary knighthood bestowed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and two Presidential Medals of Freedom.

Throughout his long and illustrious career, Gen. Colin L. Powell has demonstrated the personal and professional qualities President Gerald R. Ford embodied—integrity, strength of character, courage, patriotism, sound judgment—and that the Gerald R. Ford Medal for Distinguished Public Service honors.

Washington, D.C.
July 14, 2021

/S/ Mike Ford

Chair

/S/ Roger Porter

Trustee