

*2023 Distinguished Alumna and Alumnus Award recipients*

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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**James W. Clark, Jr., BA 1965**

English Professor Emeritus, North Carolina State University  
Raleigh, North Carolina

James W. Clark, Jr. has distinguished himself in the humanities by combining exceptional knowledge of North Carolina's literary and cultural history with a deep commitment to public service and scholarship. He grew up in Warren County, North Carolina, where he participated in 4-H, attended public schools, and became a lifelong advocate for public education and the state's rural communities. He majored in English at Carolina, then earned a Ph.D. from Duke University. During his 38 years as a faculty member at N.C. State University, he led the Humanities Extension and Publications Program, which developed materials that helped generations of North Carolina public school students in 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grades learn about their state's multicultural history, writers, and conflicts.

Dr. Clark currently serves as president of the North Caroliniana Society, an organization founded in 1975 to promote knowledge of North Carolina's culture and history. Under his leadership, the Society has provided generous financial support to the William Friday Teacher Retreats, which give teachers information and pedagogical strategies needed to teach North Carolina's "hard history," from slavery and the Jim Crow era to more recent struggles for civil rights. He is also a member of the advisory board of Carolina Public Humanities and an active participant in many UNC events.

Dr. Clark has made important contributions to the historical study of our state's literature. He wrote an insightful introduction for the UNC Press edition of Thomas Wolfe's novella, *The Lost Boy*, whose original manuscript Dr. Clark found and edited. He has also published articles and other interpretations of Wolfe's work and has served as president of the Thomas Wolfe society. He is the author of *Clover All Over: North Carolina 4-H in Action*, a valuable history of that youth service organization.

Dr. Clark's numerous honors include the R. Hunt Parker Memorial Award of the NC Literary and Historical Association for contributions to NC literature; the John Tyler Caldwell Award for the Humanities for exceptional contributions to the educational, cultural, and civic life of North Carolinians; the Alexander Quarles Holladay Medal for Excellence, NC State's highest faculty award; and induction into the National 4-H Hall of Fame in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

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**Thomas F. Darden, J.D. (UNC-CH B.A. 1976, M.R.P. 1992)**

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Cherokee

Tom Darden is the founder and chief executive officer of Cherokee, a Raleigh-based company that invests in the acquisition, cleanup, development, and sale of environmentally contaminated real estate assets in the United States, Europe, and Canada. A successful entrepreneur, he is renowned for applying his business acumen toward philanthropy by serving in leadership roles on various Triangle boards and donating to educational and environmental causes.

Mr. Darden began his career as an environmental planner for the Korea Institute of Science and Technology and later worked as a consultant with Bain & Company in Boston. From 1984 to 2000, he served as the chair of the Cherokee Sanford Group. He is also the founding partner at Cherokee Ventures LLC.

Mr. Darden began investing personal capital in environmental companies before raising institutional private equity funds. He founded or co-founded approximately 25% of his early stage investments. Since the 1980s he has invested in more than 100 companies including Cherokee Environmental Risk Management (environmental insurance), Brownfield Revitalization (new markets tax credits for brownfield development), Tethis (fracking brine desalination), Living Homes Atwater (prefab green buildings), Cherokee Biotechnology (biological remediation), Cherokee Solar (landfill solar farms), Eco-Site (urban brownfield cell towers), Consert (demand-side smart grid), PGSI (supply-side smart grid), and Industrial Health (fusion energy).

Attending Carolina as a Morehead Scholar, Mr. Darden graduated with highest honors with a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and City and Regional Planning in 1976. In 1977, he was a Luce Scholar with the Korea Institute of Science and Technology serving as an environmental planner. He went on to earn a Juris Doctor from Yale University in 1981 and a Master of Regional Planning from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1992.

Many outstanding alumni feel the call to serve the University throughout their lives, and Mr. Darden is no exception. He currently serves on the Chancellor's Philanthropic Council and the Institute for the Environment's Board of Visitors. He is a former member of the UNC Board of Visitors, Honors Carolina Advisory Board, Morehead Alumni Carolina First Campaign Committee, and Carolina First Campaign Regional Steering Committee.

Mr. Darden also served two terms on the N.C. Board of Transportation through appointments by the Governor and Speaker of the House.

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## **Amy Greeson, BPharm 1990**

Executive Director, Healing Seekers  
High Point, North Carolina

Amy Greeson is an award-winning documentarian, an accomplished author, a dedicated pharmacist, a world explorer, and an avid volunteer. A native of High Point, she earned her bachelor's degree from UNC's Eshelman School of Pharmacy. While at UNC, she served as President of the School's Academy of Students of Pharmacy and was awarded a prestigious National Pharmacy Internship in Research and Development at Burroughs Wellcome. After graduation, she served an externship with the Public Health Service in Alaska before returning home to North Carolina to join her family's business, an independent pharmacy that she ran successfully until its sale in 2010.

Ms. Greeson has traveled extensively to study indigenous healing methods and plant-based medicine around the world. In 2006, she founded Healing Seekers, a non-profit organization that works to raise awareness of indigenous cultures while preserving them and the environments in which they exist. Healing Seekers has created award-winning educational videos from around the world that can be incorporated into curricula on biology, physiology, ecology, geography, social studies, and more. Ms. Greeson has appeared in a full-length documentary following her work and is the author of *And the Silent Spoke*, a collection of stories reflecting on her decades of world travel.

In addition, Ms. Greeson founded Natural Discoveries, Inc., which identifies novel compounds and medicinal plants with the potential for advancing medicine. Some of those plants are now being used in research by Carolina pharmacy faculty.

An active volunteer at the University, Ms. Greeson currently serves as past-president of the UNC Pharmacy Alumni Association. She has participated in the Eshelman School's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Alumni Committee and helped launch a Building Task Force to address updates to pharmacy school facilities. As a result of her leadership, the school is in the process of installing a medicinal garden in the Beard Hall courtyard that will both enhance student learning and beautify the space. Ms. Greeson has devoted countless hours to planning meetings, walkthroughs, gardening, and pulling weeds in the courtyard, as well as greeting and providing tours for vendors, alumni, and school personnel to encourage their involvement. She embodies generosity and inspires it in others, having raised thousands of dollars by encouraging others to join her in this work.

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## **Jennifer Han, BA 2002**

Novelist and Producer

Brooklyn, New York

Jenny Han is a best-selling author of young adult novels whose work has touched the hearts of young people worldwide, while simultaneously raising the popular profile of Carolina—the university her most famous literary heroine chooses to attend. Her body of work to date has experienced remarkable literary and filmmaking success and inspired many, while demonstrating deeply compassionate insight into a new generation.

Ms. Han's novel, *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*, a New York Times bestseller, was named in TIME's list of the 100 best young adult books of all time and has been translated into thirty languages. The book is the first of a trilogy that describes the travails of a mixed-race family from the perspective of a high school-aged daughter following the unexpected death of her mother. The Netflix adaptation, co-executive produced by Ms. Han, was watched by 80 million viewers and generated a spin-off series. Her next trilogy, *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, also appeared on the New York Times bestseller list and the first novel in the series has been adapted for television by Amazon, with Han as both creator and showrunner. While Ms. Han is successful by any measure, her massive mainstream success had made her a particular trailblazer and an inspiration to writers and filmmakers of color.

In October 2021, Carolina's Asian American Center hosted Ms. Han for an evening of Q&A. Hundreds of students filled the Stone Center auditorium, laughing along with delight at her wry reflections on her career and life experiences. Students had the opportunity to submit questions and to write about Ms. Han's impact on them. In their statements, students described how important they found it to see themselves in the characters in her books, and some even credited her with their decision to attend UNC.

Ms. Han's books are deeply compassionate to the emotional struggles of today's young adults, who are navigating complex economic, social, and familial struggles with the scrutiny of social media. Her warm narratorial voice offers candor and reassurance at the same time. The depiction of characters of color as complex, multifaceted individuals is part of an important growth in a genre of literature, as well as a renewed scholarly focus on Asian American history in K-12 education.

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## **Adolph Reed, Jr., BA 1971**

Professor of Political Science Emeritus, University of Pennsylvania  
New Orleans, Louisiana

Adolph Reed is a renowned political scientist and scholar whose work has been described by other eminent scholars as offering “counterintuitive insights and wit” while inspiring readers to “think anew about the prospects for building a more humane world—and the steps, in thought and action, that will be required to bring it about.”

Much of Dr. Reed’s work has focused on the social inequality and economic insecurity experienced by the Black American working class and understanding the mechanisms that create and sustain inequality. During his time on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, he taught courses in race and 20<sup>th</sup> century political thought; power, culture, and American cities; and labor in postwar American Politics. He also held faculty positions at several other universities including Emory, Howard, Northwestern and Yale. Throughout his career he published numerous books and essays on race, class, politics, and culture, and he has continued to be a prolific writer in retirement, with two recently published books—*No Politics but Class Politics*, a co-authored collection of recent essays, and *The South: Jim Crow and its Afterlives*, a narrative account of the Jim Crow era as people experienced it—and at least three more books currently in progress.

Dr. Reed’s awards include the Norton Long Career Achievement Award from the Urban and Local Politics Section of the American Political Science Association, and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists’ Outstanding Book Award, for *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*.

As an undergraduate at Carolina, Dr. Reed majored in political science with an additional concentration in sociology. During that time, he was involved in the anti-war and civil rights movements on campus and supported the University food workers’ strike of 1968-69. After graduating, he attended Atlanta University where he earned his master’s and doctorate in political science.