

# **Dolores Cooper Shockley Biography**

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# Biography

Dolores Cooper Shockley is the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. from Purdue University and the first African American woman in the United States to receive a Ph.D. in pharmacology. In 1977 she became chair of the department of microbiology at Meharry Medical College.

Shockley was born in Clarksdale, Mississippi, on April 21, 1930. She enrolled at Louisiana State University in 1947, intending to pursue a major in pharmacy with the goal of eventually opening her own drug store. During her college years, however, Shockley's interests shifted from retail business to research. When she earned her bachelor of science degree in 1951, she decided to continue her education in the field of pharmacology at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana. She was awarded her M.S. at Purdue in 1953 and then her Ph.D. in pharmacology two years later. After graduation, Shockley used a Fulbright Fellowship to do postdoctoral research at the University of Copenhagen.

When Shockley returned to the United States, she accepted an appointment as assistant professor of pharmacology at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. She was greeted in her new job with a certain amount of suspicion, she later told an interviewer for *Ebony*, because "some men thought that I was just working temporarily." She soon put those doubts to rest and became a valued and respected member of the faculty. In 1967 Shockley was promoted to associate professor, and ten years later she became head of the college's department of microbiology. She has since served also as Meharry's foreign student advisor and its liaison for international activities to the Association of American Medical Colleges. Shockley's research interests have focused on the consequences of drug action on stress, the effects of hormones on connective tissue, the relationships between drugs and nutrition, and the measurement of non-narcotic analgesics (pain killers). She was visiting assistant professor at the Einstein College of Medicine in New York City from 1959 to 1962 and was a recipient of the Lederle Faculty Award from 1963 to 1966. Shockley is married and the mother of four children.