Herman Branson

- Herman Branson was born in 1914 in Virginia.
- He received his B.S. from Virginia State College in 1936 and his Ph.D. in physics from the University of Cincinnati in 1939.
- Branson joined the faculty at Howard University, an HBCU (Historically Black College and University) in Washington, D.C., in 1941.
- In 1948, he spent time working with the Nobel-laureate chemist Linus Pauling at the California Institute of Technology on the mathematical modeling of helical structures. According to some sources, Branson actually came up with the alpha helix model for the structure of proteins that Pauling would later win the Nobel Prize for.
- After his time at Caltech, Branson returned to Howard University where he remained until 1968 when he went on to serve as the president of Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio.
- In 1970, he became president of Lincoln University until his retirement in 1985.
- Throughout his life, Branson was outspoken about the need for equal opportunities for African Americans in the sciences, having helped found the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education in 1969 and meeting the President Richard Nixon about the disparity in financing for higher education.

Tannie Stovall

- Tannie Stovall received his B.S. from Morehouse College and his Ph.D. in physics from the University of Minnesota in the early 1960s.
- In 1964, Stovall moved to Paris with his family to work as a research assistant at the École Normale Supérieure. He eventually became an associate professor at the Université de Paris.
- He spent several years in Nigeria as a physics professor at the University of Ife before returning to Paris.
- In 1966, he was working at the Laboratoire de l’Accélérateur Linéaire d’Orsay (Linear Accelerator Laboratory in Orsay) when he penned a response to Branson’s 1966 interview in which he discussed African Americans in physics.