



# Gen. Colin Luther Powell, U.S. Army, Retired

*5 April 1937–18 October 2021*

*Military Review* and the Army University Press remember Gen. (retired) Colin Luther Powell, who died on 18 October 2021 at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, of complications from COVID-19. He was eighty-four years old. Powell was a role model for generations of officers as he attained the highest levels of military and civilian leadership.

Powell was born 5 April 1937 to Jamaican immigrants and raised in the South Bronx. He received his commission through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps in June 1958 City College of New York.

As a captain, Powell served in Vietnam as a South Vietnamese Army advisor from 1962 to 1963, where he was wounded while on patrol when he stepped on a punji stick. As a major, he served a second tour from 1968 to 1969 as an executive officer and the deputy G-3 with the 23rd (Americal) Division. During his second tour, Powell earned a Soldier's Medal for rescuing the passengers of a burning helicopter (including the division commander) that had crashed with Powell aboard.

He was soon recognized as a rising star in the Army. He was assigned as the senior military assistant to

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and he assisted Weinberger during the 1983 invasion of Grenada and the 1986 airstrike on Libya. Then Lt. Gen. Powell subsequently served as V Corps commander in 1986.

Powell served as fifteenth National Security Advisor under Ronald Reagan from November 1987 to January 1989. He was the first Black American to serve in that position. Powell continued his trailblazing when he was appointed as the first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton. He served in this position from October 1989 to September 1993, during which time he oversaw the U.S. invasion of Panama and the defeat of Iraq during Operation Desert Storm. He retired from the Army in 1993.

He continued serving his country as a civilian. From January 2001 to January 2005, he served as the first Black U.S. Secretary of State under George W. Bush.

Powell wrote his autobiography, *My American Journey*, in 1995, and *It Worked for Me: Lessons in Life and Leadership* in 2012.

He is survived by his wife, Alma Powell, son Michael, and daughters Linda and Annmarie. ■

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR  
FOR PRESIDENT  
RONALD REAGAN 1987-89  
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CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF  
STAFF FOR PRESIDENT  
GEORGE H. W. BUSH 1989-93  
\*\*  
PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON 1993-97  
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SECRETARY OF STATE 2001-05





**Clockwise from top left:** Then Secretary of State Colin Powell convenes with others in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center in Washington, D.C., after the attacks of 11 September 2001 took place. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration) Then Brig. Gen. Colin Powell served as the deputy commander of the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, from August 1982 to June 1983. (Photo courtesy of the Fort Leavenworth Historian's Office) A bust of former U.S. secretary of state and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, retired Gen. Colin Powell, was unveiled 5 September 2014 during a ceremony honoring Powell at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. It was given a place of honor in the Circle of Firsts at the Buffalo Soldier Monument. (Photo by Scott Gibson)

AMERICAN  
SON



BORN 05 APR 1937  
HARLEM, NEW YORK  
GRADUATED ROTC CITY COLLEGE  
OF NEW YORK 1958  
MARRIED  
ALMA VIVIAN JOHNSON 25 AUG 1962  
PARENTS  
LUTHER AND MAUD POWELL  
★★★★  
— FIRST BLACK —

AMERICAN  
SOLDIER



COMMISSIONED ROTC 09 JUN 1958  
RETIRED 30 SEP 1993  
MAJOR COMMANDS  
CDR 1st BATTALION, 32D INF, 1973-74  
CDR 2D BRIGADE, 101ST  
AIRBORNE DIV (A/A), 1976-77  
ASST DIV CDR 4TH INF DIV, 1981-82  
DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL  
COMBINED ARMS CENTER,  
FORT LEAVENWORTH, 1982-83