

**Ovatio Laudatioque Funebris: Annette Eaton (1908-1985),
CAAS President 1968-1969**

Hodie, tandem, collegam praeclarissimam beatae memoriae recordemur, propugnatricem strenuissimam pro causa nostra, causa artium alenti scientiam,¹ primam feminam stirpis Africanae quae societatem nostram duxit.² Ab atavo libertino orta,³ proles urbis praebentis iustitiam omnibus,⁴ gradum Baccalaureae artis est adepta apud universitatem illustrem sapientia virtuteque.⁵ Multos annos antequam postque consociationem turpiter divisorum discipulorum discipularumque, magistrarum magistrorumque, docuit linguam Latinam in academiis suae communitatis natalis.⁶ Postquam illuminavit in quibus modis opera Publii Ovidii Nasonis resonarent in scriptis posteris poetae Claudii Claudiani, gradum Doctoris Philosophiae meruit apud universitatem proclamantem deum esse lucem eius.⁷ Post unum lustrum, incepit non solum scribere libros de lingua Latina erudienda⁸ sed etiam partiri suos labores et ingenia sua cum universitate promulganti veritatem utilitatemque.⁹ Servivit multis aliis societatibus faventibus discendo docendoque de Graeco Romanoque mundo, praecipue illam quae sapientiam pulchritudinemque coluit;¹⁰ summa cum diligentia moliebatur ut adjuvaret statum feminarum generumque diversorum.¹¹ Quomodo studium linguarum Latinae Graecaeque temporis praeteriti et in posterum, et in omnibus partibus nostrae regionis, maneret erat sibi maximae curae.¹² Apud nos potentissime semper honos nomenque suum laudesque manebunt.¹³ Honoremus Annette Elizabeth Hawkins Eaton.

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Today, at long last, let us recall an extremely outstanding colleague of blessed memory, a most energetic champion of our cause, the cause of the arts fostering knowledge, the first woman of African ancestry to have led our association (and any society for classical studies in our nation). Descended from a former slave, offspring of our nation's capital, she received her BA from Smith College in 1929. She taught Latin in the Washington, DC public schools for many years both before and after they were racially integrated owing to the 1954 US Supreme Court Brown vs. Board of Education decision. In 1943 she received her PhD in classics from the Catholic University of America, from which she had earlier earned her MA, submitting her doctoral dissertation on the influence of Ovid's work on the poetry of Claudian. Five years later, she not only began to write and publish textbooks and manuals about Latin learning, but also joined the Howard University faculty as Associate Professor, sharing her labors and talents with its Classics Department for the next several decades. She was involved in many other classics professional organizations, devoting special energies to Eta Sigma Phi, the national classics undergraduate honor society; she worked assiduously to pioneer the efforts of our national professional classics organization toward equity for women and minority groups. She was especially concerned with the future of classics, and with promoting classical studies throughout the CAAS region. In our organization her honor and name and merits will most powerfully remain. Let us honor Annette Elizabeth Hawkins Eaton.

¹ *Causa Artium Alit Scientiam* is the Latin motto of CAAS, the first letters of its four words creating the same acronym as do the four words of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States. It means, “The cause of the arts nourishes knowledge.”

² Eaton was the first Black female president not only of CAAS, but also of any North American professional classics association; although organizations such as the American Philological Association (APA: now the Society for Classical Studies) had earlier elected women presidents, many of them from the CAAS region).

³ Eaton traced her lineage to Walter Hawkins (born ca. 1809), born a slave in Georgetown, Washington, DC; he escaped via New York and New England, to Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

⁴ *Iustitia omnibus*, “Justice for all,” is the Latin motto of Washington, DC.

⁵ The Smith College motto, Ἐν τῇ ἀρετῇ τὴν γνῶσιν in Greek, is translated as "In Virtue [One Gains] Knowledge" in English. The motto is based on 2 Peter 1:5. The distinguished Black classicist Helen Maria Chesnutt (1880-1969) was also a Smith alumna.

⁶ Prior to joining the Howard University faculty, Eaton taught in the then-segregated Washington, DC public schools. After the school system was racially integrated in the wake of the 1954 historic Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, she continued to work there as a consultant, rigorously assessing the qualifications of aspiring and current K-12 Latin teachers through the 1970's.

⁷ Her dissertation was published in 1943 as *The Influence of Ovid on Claudian*, Catholic University of America Patristic Studies No. 69. *Deus Lux Mea Est*, “God is my Light,” is the Latin motto of the Catholic University.

⁸ In 1948 Eaton co-authored a Latin textbook entitled *A Year with the Classics: First Year Latin for Junior and Senior High Schools*, with Lorraine R. Heathcock of Virginia Union College, now University (a private historically Black Baptist University in Richmond, VA); in 1966 she co-authored *A Latin Text and Teacher's Manual for Students in Grade 6* with Sylvia Wigdor Gerber, a distinguished Jewish educator as well as a Latin teacher at Howard and in the DC Public Schools.

⁹ *Veritas et Utilitas*, translated as “Truth and Service”, is the Latin motto of Howard University, where Eaton taught from 1943-1976, first as a visiting instructor in 1943-1944, then appointed Associate Professor of Classics in 1948 and rising to the rank of Professor of Classics in 1968. Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts from 1968-1971, she also served as a Howard University Trustee from 1973-1976.

¹⁰ Among the professional classics associations in which Eaton was active were the Archaeological Institute of America, the Washington Classical Club, and Eta Sigma Phi,

whose “Gamma XI” chapter at Howard she successfully labored to launch in 1956. The Greek motto of Eta Sigma Phi is φιλοσοφοῦμεν καὶ φιλοκαλοῦμεν · “We love both wisdom and beauty” (*sapientia* and *pulchritudo* in Latin).

¹¹ Her service to the American Philological Association, now the Society for Classical Studies, includes her membership on its 1972 Committee on the Status of Women, which evolved into the Committee on the Status of Women and Minorities, and later into the Committee on Diversity and the Committee on Gender and Diversity in the Profession.

¹² Her CAAS presidential address in 1968, entitled “The Future of Classics” was published in *Classical World* 62.1 (September 1968); her presidency was noteworthy for launching the “CAAS Regional Plan” “To renovate and extend the teaching of Classical Studies at all levels in CAAS territory.” She worked closely with Dr. Rudolph Masciantonio of Philadelphia on producing Latin materials for the Washington, DC public schools (FLES).

¹³ Vergil, *Aeneid* 1. 609: *semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt*, “Your honor and name and merits will always remain.” These words are spoken by Aeneas to the African queen Dido of Carthage.