

A Life of Service: Alumnus Finds Mission Through Medicine and Politics



When Ewart F. Brown, M.D., attended Howard University as an undergraduate and a medical student between 1964 and 1972, two interests dominated his life: medicine and politics. Today, at 60, Brown says the exposure Howard gave him in those two areas has helped him to shape a career that encompasses both fields of expertise as the Minister of Tourism and Transport for Bermuda and medical director of that island's largest private medical practice.

"Howard was just a mind-blowing experience," Brown says of his first days at the University. "I had no idea about the cultural enrichment that I was about to experience and the political exposure that was available on the campus. I immersed myself into Howard and by the end of the first year, my political fire was lit."

Though he was born and raised in Bermuda and Jamaica, Brown was familiar with Howard. The University had been somewhat of a family tradition. Bison alumni included a great-great

aunt, who had been one of the first graduates of Howard's Dental School, and a physician uncle who inspired Brown to pursue a career in medicine.

During his undergraduate years, in which he earned a Bachelor of Science in chemistry, Brown was a political activist and even helped to organize the student occupation of the Administration Building in 1968. At medical school, his activism continued when he was elected president of his class. Two months later his class staged a boycott of the Department of Anatomy, which grew into a month-long boycott of the medical school.

A Political Storm

Some faculty members thought politics and medicine shouldn't mix. "There were some professors who made the case in a faculty meeting once that I should be expelled from medical school because I was really a wolf in sheep's clothing," he recalls. Other faculty members came to his defense, including LaSalle D. Lefall Jr., M.D. who went on to become the Charles R. Drew

Professor of Surgery in 1992, and Jack E. White, M.D. who in the 1950s started the Tumor Clinic and Cancer Teaching Center that evolved into the Howard University Cancer Center.

Brown never saw anything contradictory about his interests in both medicine and politics. In fact, he saw a correlation. "I made the connection between racism and the health status of our people and pointed out that it was no accident that Black people then and now suffer from a disparity that's painful," he says.

After graduating from medical school in 1972, Brown sought to lessen that disparity by becoming a family practitioner in Los Angeles. Within five years, he was recognized by residents of the Watts neighborhood of L.A. for his medical work in that community.

"Out of the blue I got a letter one day saying I had been selected to receive this award," he says. "I was overwhelmed that here I was having come in from D.C., I didn't really know that many people, and just started to work and somebody recognized what I was doing." Brown was also recognized twice by the Howard College of Medicine for distinguished service to the college.

No Place Like Home

For nearly 20 years, Brown practiced in Los Angeles, while at the same time helping to set up a family practice center at Charles Drew University and working toward a master's degree in public health from UCLA. Yet, he never cut his ties to his homeland of Bermuda and his political leanings were still strong, setting the stage in 1991 for a phone call that would change the direction of his life.

"I received a phone call from the leader of the opposition at the time — the Progressive Labour Party. He called me and said 'I know you have an interest and I think there's going to be an election soon and if you're interested in the leadership, you should come home.'"

He accepted the offer in October of 1993, and won a seat in Parliament. When his party won control of the government in 1998, he was named Minister of Transport. In 2003, he was once again named Minister of Transport and in 2004, Tourism was added to his portfolio.

So far, Brown has continued to mix medicine with politics. In 1991, he formed Bermuda Healthcare Services, a clinic that provides efficient and cost-effective health care. While also serving in government, "I was practicing medicine and making rounds at the hospital every morning."

He aspires further to "establish a private hospital in Bermuda," and "ultimately to seek the leadership of this country." Meanwhile, Howard continues to play a major legacy role in his life. Brown's son Kevin graduated from the College of Medicine in 1992, and his son Ewart is a freshman.

When Brown is not busy with his medical profession or his political ambitions, he enjoys traveling with his wife, Wanda, and golfing. But even in his spare time, he stays true to his mission of service. "I think that's what I was really put here to do as my first duty — to serve. I don't take that lightly." **H**

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"I still have in mind the establishment of a private hospital — that's still on my list for Bermuda," he says. "And in politics, I always wanted to seek the leadership of my country and I'm still in that process."



Entertainer Steve Harvey stands with Deputy Premier and Minister of Tourism and Transport Ewart F. Brown, Ph.D., as they announce Harvey will host the 11th Annual Bermuda Music Festival.