

Honorary High School Diplomas and College degrees

Many institutions grant honorary high school diplomas or degrees to veterans who gave up their education to serve or who have made great contributions to society using their veteran status. These are often awarded to recognize the sacrifices made by veterans throughout their lives due to military service.

In fact, Tennessee Law (TCA 49-2-119) gives veterans of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War the option to apply for an honorary high school diploma. It applies to veterans who went into service before they graduated high school and were later honorably discharged.

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, offers up to three honorary degrees per year. Recently, in February of 2024, Robert J. Booker received an honorary doctorate from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for his lifetime of service, including his time in the US Army and his significant contributions to the Civil Rights movement and the Knoxville community.

Robert J. Booker

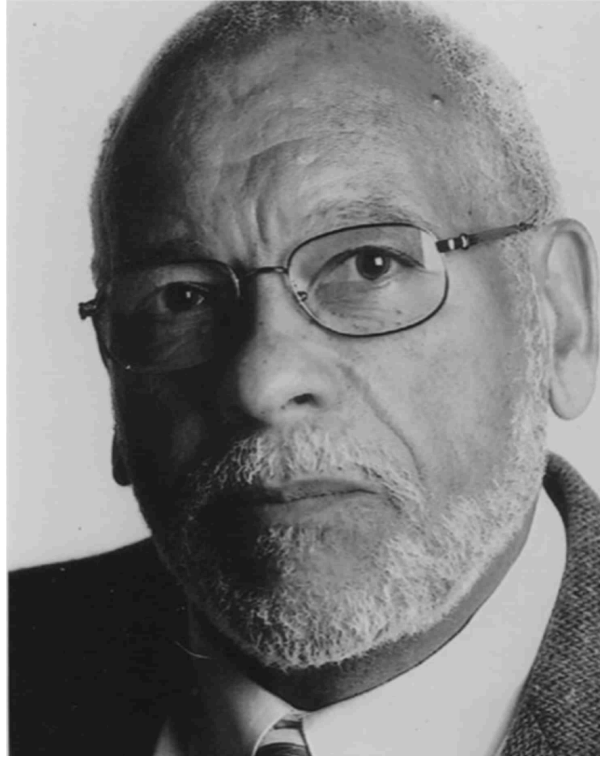
Born on April 14, 1935, Robert J. Booker grew up in East Knoxville in a working class family. His mother worked as a maid, and his father repaired cars. Despite his limited opportunities, Booker graduated from Austin High School in 1953. Immediately after he enlisted in the U.S. Army, where he served a three year tour stationed in England and France.

After his return home Booker pursued higher education through the G.I. Bill, attending Knoxville where he became two-time student body president. His time there broadened his horizons and increased his leadership skills as well as his commitment to the civil rights movement. During the height of the movement, he took it upon himself to organize sit ins in Knoxville and push for desegregation.

Booker made History in 1966 becoming Knoxville's first African American Tennessee State Representative. He remained devoted to public service and in the 1970's he became the administrative assistant to Mayor Testerman. Soon after he served on the Tennessee Civil Service Committee and then became the Executive director of the Beck Cultural Center, a position he held for 11 years.

Providing lasting contributions to the historical development of Knoxville, Booker authored three books: *Two Hundred Years of Black Culture in Knoxville, Tennessee, 1791 to 1991*, *And There was Light! The 120-year History of Knoxville College, Knoxville Tennessee, 1875-1995*, and *The Heat of a Red Summer*.

He devoted his life to making the world around him a better place and The University of Tennessee recognized that. On February 17, 2024, Booker was awarded an honorary doctorate degree in humanities by the College of Arts & Sciences. He then unfortunately passed away on February 22, 2024.



Works Cited

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