

# The Clerk's Black History Series



## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## Ruth Ella Moore

First African-American Woman in the U.S. to Earn a Ph. D.  
First African-American to Earn a Ph. D. in Bacteriology  
First Woman to Chair or Lead a Department at Howard University  
(May 19, 1903 - July 19, 1994)

**Ruth Ella Moore** was born May 19, 1903, in Columbus, Ohio.

Not much is known about her early life, but in college she attended The Ohio State University and earned her Bachelor of Science degree in 1926 and her M.A. in 1927.

After earning her master's degree, she immediately started teaching English and Hygiene at Tennessee State College (now Tennessee State University) until 1930 when she returned to Ohio State to complete her Doctorate degree. Her dissertation on tuberculosis earned her a Doctorate degree in Bacteriology from The Ohio State University in 1933, making her the first African-American Woman to earn a Ph.D., as well as the title of the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. in Bacteriology.

After earning her Ph.D., Moore moved to Washington, DC and began teaching at the Howard University College of Medicine.

Ruth Ella Moore spent her entire teaching career, with the exception of her time at Tennessee State, at the Howard University College of Medicine. During those 40 years she rose through the teaching ranks, first as an instructor, then as an assistant professor, then to the acting head of the Bacteriology Department until finally being promoted to the Head of the Department of Bacteriology, Preventative Medicine and Public Health in 1955. In 1960, at the age of 57, Moore stepped down as the department head to continue work as a researcher and associate professor until her retirement in 1973 at the age of 70. Moore remained in Washington, D.C., until the age of 88 when she was moved to Rockville, MD.

After all her accomplishments and contributions to our history and to her field, her obituary simply read:

**Ruth E. Moore, 91, a retired professor of microbiology and chairman of the department of microbiology at the Howard University College of Medicine, died of heart ailments July 19 at the National Lutheran Home for the Aged in Rockville. She leaves no immediate survivors.**

