



KATHERINE JOHNSON

A RELAUNCHER SUCCESS STORY

ABOUT

Born in White Sulphur Springs, WV Katherine Johnson is a historical and empowering member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Being one of three black students to integrate West Virginia's graduate programs, she was destined to have a major impact on society. At age 18, Johnson quickly found her passion for math and befriended a mentor and another pioneer in the field; W.W. Schiefflin Claytor the third African American to obtain a PhD in mathematics. Years later Katherine graduated top of her class in 1937 at West Virginia State University

In 1939 Johnson enrolled into graduate school however after the first semester she decided to un-enroll and start a family. Although in 1952, when her children were older, Katherine was approached with the opportunity to work (Relaunch) as a data analyst at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, which today is known as NASA. While being there Katherine displayed her talents and swiftly became an essential asset to the committee playing a role in each of the programs key projects. Katherine Johnson's work has served as an excellent source for teaching young women that the sky is the limit as long as you are consistent and focused.

WHAT DOES KATHERINE'S LEGACY TEACH US TODAY?

Katherine Johnson's legacy is extraordinary and powerful. She was the prime example that women are capable of doing everything men are capable of doing, sometimes even exceeding the goal. Throughout her career she faced countless challenges testing her patience, mental strength and also her skill-set. However Katherine exhibited perseverance and grace to her adversaries, needless to say she conquered things that are worthwhile followed by a smile. We thank Katherine for being a true pioneer for the African American community at NASA and for being of service to all mankind.

WHY ARE WE FEATURING KATHERINE JOHNSON?

While her professional and academic accomplishments are nothing short of spectacular, a lesser known season in Katherine's life was her decision to take a career break in 1939 to start her family and raise her daughters, thus earning her the title of relauncher. While we haven't been able to confirm the specifics of Katherine's career break, we believe her career break lasted for 13 years: from 1939 until her husband fell ill in 1952 and Katherine presumably needed to resume teaching, one year prior to the chapter of her career at NACA and eventually NASA that she is so well-known for.

Sources: *Katherine Johnson Biography* and *Katherine Johnson: A Lifetime of STEM*

CAREER TRAJECTORY

1937 Pre-Break
Occupation

Teacher

1939 Career Break to
Start a Family

1952 Occupation at Point
of Relaunch

Teacher

**1953-
1957** Computer

Guidance and Control
Division of Langley's Flight
Research Division, National
Advisory Committee for
Aeronautics' (NACA)

**1958 -
1986** Final Employer and
Occupation

Aerospace Technologist

Spacecraft Controls Branch,
NASA