



2021 Mary Mildred Sullivan Award Sheila McMillan '73

Each year, Winthrop recognizes an alumna for selfless dedication of time, energy and talent in service to others. The Mary Mildred Sullivan Award captures this high honor.

Attorney Sheila McMillan '73 is the first Black alumna recipient of the Mary Mildred Sullivan Award.

McMillan was the first female Black Senate attorney with the South Carolina Legislature (1980s-2000s) and was a managing attorney with Palmetto Legal Services (late 1970s). During her 20 years at the Senate, she became the first female president of the South Carolina Black Lawyers Association. She currently holds South Carolina Bar and South Carolina Funeral Director licenses.

McMillan entered Winthrop in 1970 as a graduate of Pageland High School, where she was amongst the first class of Black students to integrate the school. She earned a history degree in three years from Winthrop. She went on to obtain a master's degree in history from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 1975. McMillan was among the first Black students to integrate UNC-Charlotte. She completed her Winthrop practice teaching in Lancaster. While residing in Charlotte and Monroe, she taught at Carmel Middle School, Garinger High School and Independence High School.

She earned a juris doctorate degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1979 and became the first female president of the University of South Carolina's Black American Law Student Association (BALSA). She was a very active member of Women in Law and the first Black person to intern in the law school's administration. Other firsts include: first Black attorney in Lexington County and the first Black attorney to direct two standing legislative committees at the South Carolina Senate for the late Donald H. Holland of Camden, who guided her during her time in the Senate. McMillan was appointed to the Senate in 1981 by Jim Fields, Clerk, and Frank Caggiano, Assistant Clerk of the Senate. In 1981, McMillan established common law marriage in the state of South Carolina as case law with a fellow attorney.

As a Winthrop student, McMillan served as fourth president of the Association of Ebonites, the first Black student organization on campus. Through the years, McMillan has been a steadfast champion of Black students at Winthrop. In the 1980s, she became the first African-American to serve on Winthrop's Board of Trustees. She is a former member of the Alumni Association's legislative advocacy committee and also a charter member of the black alumni advisory committee of the Alumni Association. *The Roddey McMillan Record*, Winthrop's monthly student newspaper geared toward uplifting minority voices and issues, is named in honor of McMillan and Cynthia Plair Roddey '67, one of Winthrop's civil rights trailblazers.

A former president of the largest Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Chapter in Greater Midlands, McMillan has also held regional positions and is currently a member of the Upsilon Omega Omega Chapter of the sorority in Irmo, S.C. She is an active member of the Central South Carolina Chapter of the American Red Cross board of directors and a former member of Rotary International.



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McMillan also participates in Leeza's Care Connection, created by Emmy Award winning TV and radio reporter Leeza Gibbons, which helps family caregivers cope with Alzheimer's and other chronic illness through tips, strategies and support.

McMillan has championed civil rights since the 1960s and been recognized with the Community Leader Award from the National Council of Negro Women and the "Ten for the Future" recognition from the Columbia Record, which is the former evening newspaper of The State newspaper.