



## **Lillian Elaine Fishburne**

### **First African-American Woman to Become a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy**

Lillian Elaine Fishburne's first naval assignment was at the Naval Air Test Facility, Lakehurst, New Jersey, as a Personnel and Legal Officer. From August 1974 to November 1977, Fishburne was an Officer Programs recruiter in Miami, Florida. For the next three years, 1977 to 1980, Fishburne was the Officer in charge of the Naval Telecommunications Center at the Great Lakes, Illinois Naval Base. Fishburne then went back to school for another two years, earning her Master of Arts in Management from Webster College in St. Louis, Missouri. She spent the next two years at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, graduating with a Master of Science in Telecommunications Systems Management in 1982.

After becoming Chief of the Command and Control Systems Support Division in Washington, D.C., and commanding the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station, Eastern Pacific, in Hawaii, Fishburne made history by being the first African-American woman to attain the rank of Rear Admiral on February 1, 1998, and was promoted by President Bill Clinton.

She was born into a naval family in Patuxent River, Maryland, on March 25, 1949 - just one year after the integration of minorities and women in the military. She was raised in Rockville, Maryland, where she attended Richard Montgomery High School. In 1971, she graduated from Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. In February 1973, Fishburne became an Ensign after graduating from the Women Officers School at Newport, Rhode Island.

She retired in February 2001, with a long list of decorations that include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, two Meritorious Service Medals, two Navy Commendation Medals, and the Navy Achievement Medal.

Fishburne is part of a group of women who have opened doors for other women in the military forces. The same year that Fishburne was promoted to the position of Rear Admiral, former Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, referred to her as "a woman whose story helps us to understand the truth that women are an indispensable part of today's military."

Fishburne currently resides in Rockville, Maryland.