



# INAUGURATION OF

*Morakinyo A.O. Kuti, Ph.D.*

## TENTH PRESIDENT OF CENTRAL STATE UNIVERSITY

Thursday, the Sixth of March

Two Thousand Twenty-Five

Central State University

Paul Robeson Cultural & Performing Arts Center, Auditorium

# The Legacy of Central State University: History, Excellence, and Commitment

Central State University is deeply rooted in the rich history of Wilberforce University, established in 1856 at Tawawa Springs, Ohio, in honor of William Wilberforce, a renowned abolitionist and co-founder of the Anti-Slavery Society. Wilberforce University, the nation's oldest private Historically Black College and University (HBCU), was a prominent stop on the Underground Railroad. Founded by the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church as a "refuge from slavery's first rule: ignorance," it laid the foundation for what would become one of Ohio's most significant centers of higher education for African Americans. Today, we continue this proud legacy, preparing young people to lead and uplift the world.

In 1887, the Ohio General Assembly enacted legislation to create a Combined Normal and Industrial Department at Wilberforce. This marked the founding of Central State University. The mission of this department was twofold: to provide teacher training and vocational education while establishing a permanent funding source akin to other state-supported institutions. According to state statute, the department was "open to all

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**...in 1965, it achieved University status, becoming Ohio's only publicly supported HBCU.**

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applicants of good and moral character," signifying inclusivity regardless of race, color, sex, or creed. However, it was evident that the department primarily aimed to address the educational needs

of African American citizens. Although it operated under Wilberforce University's auspices, a separate Board of Trustees oversaw the state-financed operations.

Central State University has a history of resilience and perseverance. Even after a devastating tornado in 1974 destroyed most of the campus, the University emerged with its spirit unbroken. This determination to overcome adversity and advance academic excellence has defined Central State as a leading Historically Black University in the Midwest. Today, Central State stands proud as an 1890 Land-Grant University, with its eyes firmly set on the future.


## Growth and evolution

In 1941, the Combined Normal and Industrial Department expanded from a two-year to a four-year program, marking a significant milestone in its development. By 1947, it had legally separated from Wilberforce University to become an independent College of Education and Industrial Arts. Four years later, its name changed to Central State College, and in 1965, it achieved University status, becoming Ohio's only publicly supported HBCU.

Since its inception, Central State University has educated thousands of individuals who proudly represent the Institution. Over the years, nine distinguished presidents have guided the University, each contributing to its legacy. On July 1, 2024, Dr. Morakinyo A. O. Kuti, an alumnus, became the 10th President, ushering in an exciting new era for the University.

## A vision for the future and a commitment to excellence

Dr. Kuti's leadership embodies the University's mission of transforming lives through education. From his roots as a proud alumnus to his distinguished career as an educator, he represents a vision centered on expanding academic opportunities, embracing innovation, and enhancing the University's regional and global impact. As an 1890 Land-Grant Institution, Central State University is committed to academic excellence, research, and community engagement.



*Dr. Kuti's leadership embodies the University's mission of transforming lives through education.*

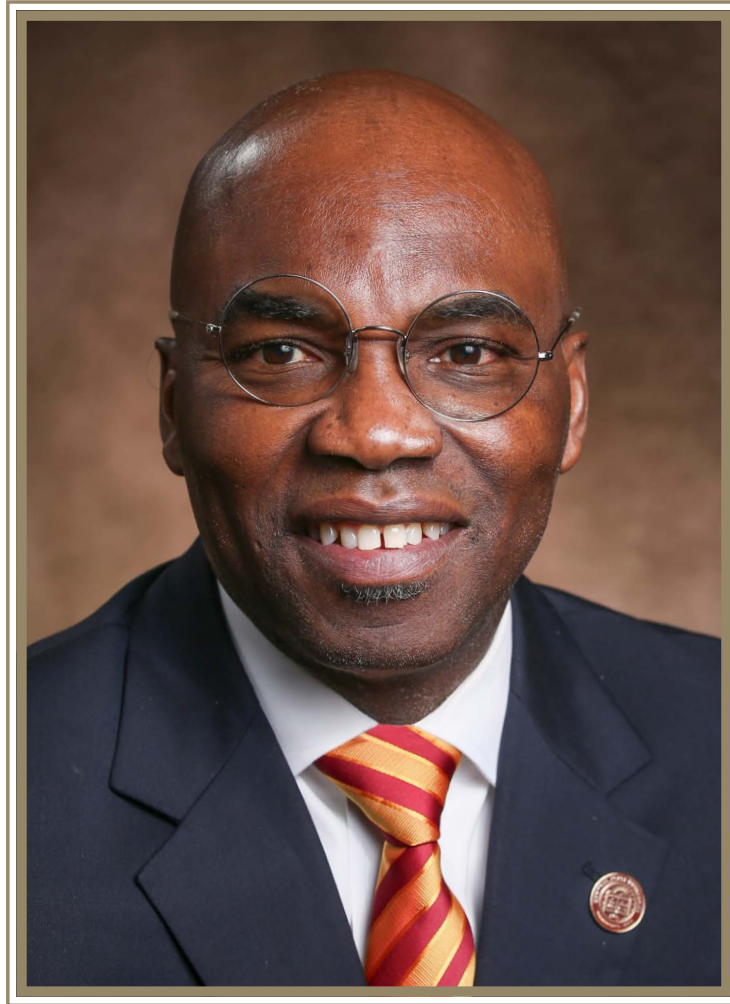
Under Dr. Kuti's transformative leadership, Central State University is poised to achieve new heights of academic distinction and societal impact. His focus on enhancing educational opportunities, fostering innovation through research, and promoting diversity and inclusion reflects a vision grounded in community, excellence, and collaboration.

President Kuti's message to the Central State community is both inspiring and resolute: "Together, we will build upon our strengths, address challenges, and seize opportunities to ensure a brighter future for Central State University."

## 138 Years of Service and Excellence (1887-2025)

Central State University stands as a beacon of history, legacy, and excellence, committed to educating students at the highest level and preparing them to lead and innovate in an ever-changing world. With a steadfast focus on its mission and values, the University continues to honor its past while shaping a brighter future.

## Dr. Morakinyo A.O. Kuti



**D**r. Morakinyo A.O. Kuti, an alumnus of Central State University's Class of 1985, proudly serves as the 10th President, a role he assumed on July 1, 2024. With over three decades of experience in research, education, and economic development, Dr. Kuti is a visionary leader devoted to shaping the future of Central State University (CSU) while honoring its rich legacy as one of the nation's premier Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Dr. Kuti aims to position Central State University as a destination learning environment. Dr. Kuti is dedicated to fostering student success through academic excellence and career readiness initiatives.

Dr. Kuti is focused on ensuring that Central State fulfills our mission as a Land-Grant university by improving the lives of individuals and communities we serve through impactful teaching, research, and extension activities.

# A Legacy of Leadership and Innovation

With over three decades of service at the University, Dr. Kuti has held numerous pivotal roles including Vice President for Research and Economic Development and Director of Land Grant Programs. Dr. Kuti led a transformation in Central State University's research capabilities which dramatically increased CSU's external awards by 227% from \$20.1 million to \$50.5 million in three years. His leadership was pivotal in enhancing CSU's ranking on the National Science Foundation's survey of Higher Education of Research and Development (HERD) Expenditures from 42 to 21, making CSU the highest-ranked predominantly undergraduate HBCU in the 2023 HERD Survey. Further, he secured significant funding, including \$3.9 million from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to establish a Workforce Training and Business Development Center, and an additional \$3 million from the U.S. Department of Commerce to boost broadband access for CSU and surrounding communities. Central State University earned designation as a Research College and University in 2025 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Through his strategic leadership in the Land-Grant programs, Dr. Kuti has significantly expanded participation and diversity at Central State University. His achievements include securing U. S. Department of Agriculture approval for constructing a \$16 million research facility and a \$4.1 million farm storage facility, enhancing the University's research infrastructure. These achievements underscore Dr. Kuti's focus on advancing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education and research. Dr. Kuti has secured more than \$25 million in public and private funding, strengthened student

success, expanded CSU's infrastructure, launched new academic programs, and advanced research initiatives.

**President Kuti is deeply committed to enhancing the student experience.** He has prioritized initiatives that connect students with career pathways, leadership opportunities, and real-world experiences. Through his leadership, students have secured internships at renowned organizations, including national laboratories, federal and state organizations, research universities, and private entities. Dr. Kuti has led programs that have positively impacted over 1,800 students through academic and non-academic support programs with 320 entering the workforce or graduate studies. Beyond the University, President Kuti is a well-respected community leader, serving on boards including the Dayton Development Coalition, the Dayton Business Council, and others. Dr. Kuti has also served on the boards of research administration organizations including the National Association of Sponsored Programs Alliance and the Grants Resources Center. Dr. Kuti has actively participated in national and international research and public service initiatives.

Dr. Kuti is married to Bridget Archie-Kuti, and they are proud parents of Akintoye Kuti, a 2024 graduate of Central State University. Dr. Kuti is actively involved in the community, including as a member of Egbe Omo Yoruba of Greater Miami Valley, Nigeria United of Dayton and Miami Valley, and St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Trotwood. Dr. Kuti's passion for his beloved Alma Mater reflects his lifelong belief in the power of education to transform lives, build communities, and inspire the next generation of leaders.

# Inaugural Order of Ceremony

**PRELUDE** ..... **Robeson Chamber Winds**  
**Dr. Alvin Level**, *Director, Bands*

**WELCOME** ..... **Justyn Fry**  
*Director, Residence Life*

**PROCESSIONAL** ..... “War March of the Priests” by Felix Mendelssohn  
**Robeson Chamber Winds**  
**Dr. Alvin Level**

**INTRODUCTION OF ORDER OF PROCESSION** ..... **Justyn Fry**

## ORDER OF PROCESSION OF THE UNIVERSITY

Chief Marshal  
Faculty Marshals  
Color Guard  
Student Delegates  
University Delegates  
Faculty  
College Deans  
Administration  
Former President  
Emeriti Presidents  
Board of Trustees  
Platform Guests  
President

**POSTING OF THE COLORS** ..... **Central State University Army ROTC Marauder Battalion**

**NATIONAL ANTHEM** ..... Marvin Gaye

**INVOCATION** ..... **Rev. Dr. Benjamin E. K. Speare-Hardy, II**  
*St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, Trotwood, Ohio*

**MUSICAL SELECTION** ..... “Lift Every Voice and Sing” by James Weldon Johnson  
**Central State University Chorus, Dr. Jennifer Cruz**, *Accompanist*  
**Jeremy Winston**, *Director*

**INTRODUCTION OF THE PLATFORM GUESTS** ..... **Jacqueline Y. Gamblin**  
*Chair, Board of Trustees*

**MUSICAL SELECTION** ..... “Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior” by Fanny Crosby  
**Central State University Chorus**  
**Jeremy Winston**

**GREETINGS**

Ohio Department of Higher Education **Chancellor Mike Duffey**  
Board of Trustees Chair **Jacqueline Y. Gamblin**  
National Alumni Association President **Anthony E. Gardner**  
Faculty Senate Chair **Dr. Kenneth Hayes**  
Student Trustee **Asia Brown**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ..... **Jacqueline Y. Gamblin**

**U.S. CONGRESSIONAL PROCLAMATIONS** ..... **Justyn Fry**

**MUSICAL SELECTION** ..... “Through All the Changing Scenes of Life”  
(Ninu Gbogbo Ayida Aye)  
**Central State University Chorus**  
**Jeremy Winston**

**INTRODUCTION OF  
PRESIDENT MORAKINYO A.O. KUTI** ..... **Dr. Amy Hobbs Harris**  
*Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs*

**OATH OF OFFICE AND PRESENTATION OF  
THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDALLION** ..... **Jacqueline Y. Gamblin**

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS** ..... **Dr. Morakinyo A.O. Kuti**  
*10th President of Central State University*

**ALMA MATER** ..... **Central State University Chorus**  
**Jeremy Winston**

**BENEDICTION** ..... **Rev. Dr. Benjamin E. K. Speare-Hardy, II**

**RETIRING OF THE COLORS** ..... **Central State University ROTC Marauder Battalion**

**RECESSIONAL** ..... “Pomp and Circumstance” by Sir Edward Elgar  
**Robeson Chamber Winds**  
**Dr. Alvin Level**

*The audience will please stand in reverent silence for the  
Processional, Posting of the Colors, Retiring of the Colors, National Anthem, Invocation, and Recessional.*



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Dr. Jack Thomas .....	2020-2023
Dr. Morakinyo A.O. Kuti .....	2024-Present

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## **1850 — University of Dayton**

**Dr. Eric Spina**, *President*

## **1856 — Wilberforce University**

**Dr. Vann Newkirk**, *President*

## **1870 — The Ohio State University**

**Dr. Ravi Bellamkonda**, *Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs*

## **1886 — Kentucky State University**

**Dr. Koffi Akakpo**, *President*

## **1886 — Shorter College**

**Dr. Jeffery Norfleet**, *President*

## **1887 — Sinclair Community College**

**Michael E. Carter**, *Chief Diversity Officer and Senior Advisor to the President*

## **1901 — Grambling State University**

**Theodore B. Callier**, *Vice President of Research and Sponsored Programs*

## **1962 — Clark State College**

**Dr. Jo Alice Blondin**, *President*

## **1963 — Cuyahoga Community College**

**Dr. Alex B. Johnson**, *President Emeritus*

## **1964 — Cleveland State University**

**Dr. Laura Bloomberg**, *President*

## **1966 — SUNY Polytechnic Institute**

**Dr. Winston Oluwole Soboyejo**, *President*

## **2009 — Academic City University**

**Dr. Fred McBagonluri**, *Provost and President*

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**Alcorn State University**

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**Hampton University**

**Kentucky State University**

**Langston University**

**Morehouse School of Medicine**

**North Carolina Central University**

**Ohio University**

## Alma Mater

—I—

O Central dear, we sing of thee,  
Maker of Men who're free.  
We build in deeds thy greater name,  
We spread thy lasting fame.

—CHORUS—

O Central mine, we'll sing of thee,  
Truth and Right our song shall be.  
Our Alma Mater guides us and it's great  
For God, For Central, For State!

—II—

O Alma Mater, Hail to thee,  
Builder of Women to be.  
We build for thee in heart and mind.  
We seek thy grace divine.

—CHORUS—

—III—

O speak to us and we shall hear  
Thy voice so near, so clear.  
And as we sail the future's sea,  
Through the years we'll sing of thee.

—CHORUS—

Lyrics by Dr. Charles H. Wesley  
Music by Mrs. Annys R. Dawson '47

## Lift Every Voice and Sing

—I—

Lift every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the  
dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present  
has brought us.  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won.

—II—

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears  
has been watered,  
We have come, treading our path through the  
blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

—III—

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by Thy might  
Led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God,  
where we met Thee,  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world,  
we forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand.  
True to our God,  
True to our native land.

Lyrics by James Weldon Johnson

# The Symbols of Learning

## THE MACE

The University Mace is a ceremonial staff carried by the Chief Marshal, who is selected from among the faculty to assist in leading the procession for the Commencement and other formal University events. The Mace is capped with a replica of the Central State Presidential Seal, which is based upon the Great Seal of the State of Ohio. The CSU Presidential Seal has in the center an open book with the University motto *Veritas et Lux, Recta et Honor* (Truth and Light, Right and Honor).

## UNIVERSITY COLORS

The University's official colors may also appear in the gown or its decorations. Members of the Central State University Board of Trustees, honorary degree recipients, and administrative officers may wear distinctive attire in the University's colors of maroon and gold. The color maroon connotes the fierce, unbroken spirit of those Africans who escaped slavery and established their communities, typically in remote, inhospitable areas throughout the Americas. These Maroons, as they were called, were at the forefront of the resistance to slavery. Gold is the universal color of wealth.

## THE GOWN

The flowing gown dates back to the 12th century. Many think it was worn as protection against the cold of unheated buildings. It has become symbolic of the democracy of scholars, for it completely covers any dress of rank and social standing. It is, with few exceptions, black for all degrees. Pointed sleeves indicate the bachelor's degree; long closed sleeves with a slit in the arm, the master's degree; and round open sleeves, the doctor's degree. The gown for bachelor's or master's degrees has no trimmings; the gown for the doctorate is faced down the front with velvet

and has three bars of velvet across the sleeves, in the color distinctive of the faculty or discipline to which the degree pertains.

## THE CAP

The freed slave in ancient Rome won the privilege of wearing a cap, and so the academic cap is a sign of the freedom of scholarship and the responsibility and dignity with which scholarship endows the wearer. Old poetry records the cap of scholarship as a square, symbolizing the book, although other authorities claim that it is a mortarboard, the symbol of masons, a privileged guild. The cap is made of a material to match the gown, with the exception of the doctor's degree, for which velvet is typically used.

## THE TASSEL

The tassel is fastened to the middle point of the cap: By tradition, Central State candidates for degrees wear the tassels of their caps on the right front side before their degrees are conferred and shift them to the left after the President confers the degrees.

## THE HOOD

Central State University graduates wear hoods matching the robes with decorations in the University's colors. Traditionally, the hoods for the bachelor's degree and the master's degree vary in length. The doctoral hood is the most distinctive, with the binding and edging of the hood in velvet or velveteen five inches wide. The color indicates the subject to which the degree pertains, with the exception of the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), for which the dark blue color is used to represent the mastery of the discipline of learning and scholarship in any field that is attested to by the awarding of this degree, and is not intended to represent the field of philosophy.

## With Gratitude and Appreciation

As we gather to celebrate this historic moment in Central State University's journey, I want to express my deepest gratitude to each of you — our generous sponsors, donors, alumni, faculty, staff, students, and friends. Your unwavering support and belief in our mission make this Institution stronger every day.



To our sponsors and donors, your generosity ensures that Central State University continues to thrive as a beacon of excellence and opportunity. Your contributions fuel our commitment to student success, academic excellence, and community impact. Because of you, we are strengthening our destination of learning where our students can achieve their dreams and leave their mark on the world.

To our alumni, faculty, staff, and friends, thank you for carrying forward the legacy of resilience and leadership that defines Central State. Your dedication inspires us to uphold our mission with integrity and purpose.

A special thank you to the Inauguration Committee for your dedication, hard work, and attention to every detail in making this celebration a reality. Your efforts reflect the very spirit of excellence and commitment that define Central State University.

As we strive towards our brighter future together, let us remain united in our commitment to advancing Central State University's legacy. The best is yet to come.

**For God! For Central! For State!**

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Morakinyo A.O. Kuti".

**Dr. Morakinyo A.O. Kuti**

10th President, Central State University