Dr. Howard was born in a 3-room wooden shack that lacked indoor plumbing to parents facing abject poverty. Lonnie’s mother, having a 5th grade education, scrubbed floors as a maid, and his father was an illiterate sharecropper (barely completing 3rd grade). Obviously, they could not provide any guidance about college or how to pay for it.

Having few options, Lonnie enlisted, served proudly, and was honorably discharged from the US Army. Afterwards, he worked as a janitor, had no reliable transportation, and some days ate only a half can of sweet peas in the morning and the other half that evening. Yet, he remained honest, law-abiding, and remembered his mother’s inspiring saying...“It doesn’t matter where you start from in life; the important thing is where you finish.”

Despite not graduating until age 36 with his first degree (associate in welding), less than 12 years later, Dr. Howard had earned an AAS, AGS, BS, MS, and PhD. Remarkably, his leadership experience includes the Community College, Technical College, and Tier One Research University models. He progressed quickly from faculty, department chair, researcher, educational consultant, associate vice president of instruction, interim vice president of academic affairs, director of university outreach, executive director of the school of professional studies, to college president.

As a single parent, Lonnie adopted a toddler who had been sold for drugs. His son Matthew is now 23 years old, graduated with a MA, and will be pursuing a PhD.

Dr. Howard affirms, “My mother was right! It doesn’t [really] matter where you start. With hard work, integrity, and education, anyone can achieve some measure of the American Dream.”