

2026 Bennie Trailblazer Award Recipient

James L. Hudson '61, Esq.

Attorney, Academic Lecturer, and Venture Capitalist; Chairman Emeritus, Morehouse College Board of Trustees

James L. Hudson '61 stands in that distinguished lineage of Morehouse Men whose lives testify to the College's highest ideals—scholarship, integrity, leadership, and service to something larger than oneself. Formed in the era of President Benjamin E. Mays, Hudson came of age when the campus was both classroom and crucible, pressing young men to marry intellectual rigor with moral responsibility. Those lessons would follow him well beyond the red clay of Atlanta, shaping a career that would reach from local communities to global centers of power.

After graduating from Morehouse, Hudson pursued legal training and entered the world of finance with a conviction that capital, law, and public policy could be harnessed in the service of the common good. Over decades, he has distinguished himself as an attorney and investment executive, navigating complex transactions and advising major institutions with a steady hand. His work in banking and international finance placed him at the intersection of markets and missions, where decisions made in boardrooms could translate into roads, schools, businesses, and jobs across continents. In those spaces, he became known not only for his technical expertise but also for his insistence that economic development must ultimately serve people, not just profit.

Hudson's leadership reached a global stage through his service as a United States director at a major multilateral development bank. In that role, he engaged with some of the most pressing economic and social challenges of our time—supporting efforts to expand infrastructure, stabilize emerging markets, and broaden opportunity in communities often overlooked by traditional investment. Whether the work involved large-scale projects or targeted initiatives, he brought to the table a Morehouse-shaped understanding that progress is measured not only in numbers, but in lives improved and futures expanded.

Yet, for all his international reach, Hudson has never lost sight of his responsibilities closest to home. A steadfast supporter of Morehouse College, he has given generously of his time, talent, and treasure. He has served on boards and advisory bodies, lent his experience to presidents and senior leaders, and remained a visible, engaged presence in the life of the institution. To students and younger alumni, he has offered mentorship and example—demonstrating that it is possible to move with ease in the corridors of power while staying grounded in humility, faith, and community.

Hudson's life also speaks to a broader story about Black excellence and institution-building. At a time when access to the highest levels of finance and global

policy was limited for African Americans, he helped to widen the path, showing that Morehouse Men could not only enter those rooms, but shape the agenda within them. In doing so, he has served as both trailblazer and bridge—honoring the sacrifices of those who came before him and clearing space for those who will follow.

Tonight, as the “A Candle in the Dark” Gala honors those whose light has helped guide the way, we lift up James L. Hudson '61 as a statesman of finance, a servant of the public good, and a faithful son of Morehouse. His journey reminds us that true greatness is not found solely in titles or positions, but in the enduring impact one has on institutions, communities, and individual lives. In celebrating Hudson, we affirm a legacy of disciplined mind, courageous heart, and unwavering commitment to leave both Morehouse and the world better than he found them.