

University of Delaware Honorary Degree

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN
DOCTOR OF
HUMANE LETTERS

Incisive, accomplished broadcast journalist, you began your career as an associate producer and news writer at WBZ-TV in Boston and moved on to NBC affiliate KRON in San Francisco, where you were a local reporter and bureau chief. Your work at KRON earned the attention of the network, and you were invited to join NBC News in New York in 1991.

You worked as a field producer for *Nightly News* and *TODAY* before moving on to anchor MSNBC's award-winning technology program *The Site*. Your successes there earned you a spot anchoring the network's Weekend Today, a show with millions of viewers. While at NBC you covered major news stories such as the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* and the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

In 2003 you joined CNN as co-anchor of *American Morning*. Today you are anchor of the CNN morning show *Starting Point* and special correspondent for CNN/U.S., covering political news and many other topics. During your time at CNN you have distinguished yourself by reporting from the scene on stories such as the Hurricane Katrina disaster, the tsunami in Thailand, and the Japanese earthquake and tsunami.

Your many reporting awards include an Emmy for your live coverage of Haiti's devastating hurricane and the Gracie Allen Award for your reporting from Cyprus on the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict as well as your reports from the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina. You have been honored by the National Association of Black Journalists, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, and the NAACP.

Acclaimed documentarian, in your memoir *The Next Big Story*, you noted that when you were growing up you felt invisible as "a light-skinned black girl in a white town." America today, you added, may be a "kaleidoscope of people" but there is still a need "for thoughtful conversation about race and ethnicity and identity." You have helped to move that conversation along through your multiple Black in America and Latino in America documentaries as well as your special report on Muslims in America and religious freedom protections. Your exhaustively researched and compellingly reported documentaries also have included specials on female rescue workers of 9/11, public education in America, and children in Haiti.

Generous mentor and educational sponsor, grateful for those men and women who have mentored you throughout your career, you have paid it forward by mentoring hundreds of girls in journalism. A proponent of education, with your husband you started the Soledad O'Brien and Brad Raymond Foundation. Not only does the Foundation provide scholarships for young women who face obstacles in earning their degrees, but it also provides one-on-one mentoring to help them accomplish their goals.

Your journalism, too, is a way of practicing humanitarianism, as you have shown your viewers time and time again with your compassionate reporting and your drive to report on the overlooked people in our society. That work has earned you honors from the Morehouse School of Medicine, which recognized you as "a catalyst for social change" and the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, which gave you its Goodermote Humanitarian Award.

The great artist Vincent Van Gogh said, "Your profession is not what brings home your paycheck. Your profession is what you were put on earth to do. With such passion and such intensity that it becomes spiritual in calling." Soledad, whether you are reporting live on breaking news, hosting your own show, or creating a documentary, you do so with passion and intensity that both enlightens and enriches your viewers. You truly have found your calling.

Therefore, under the authority of the Board of Trustees of the University of Delaware, I have the pleasure and honor of conferring upon you, Soledad O'Brien, the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters and do declare you entitled to all the rights, honors, and privileges to that degree appertaining throughout the world. In testimony thereof, I am pleased to present to you this diploma.

A. Gilchrist Sparks III
May 26, 2012