



Professor Kendall Thomas

Class of 2022

Kendall Thomas graduated from Oroville High School (OHS) in three years, entering with the class of 1975 and earning his diploma in 1974. He was a member of the California Scholastic Federation (CSF), the National Honor Society and Top Ten. He was awarded a Bank of America Scholarship, the National Achievement Scholarship, a PG&E Scholarship and an academic scholarship to Yale University. Kendall gave the commencement address at his graduation.

At OHS, Kendall played tennis and wrestled and was active in numerous Associated Student Body activities including the student council, Key Club, choir and the drama program. Under the tutelage of his beloved mentor Bob Young, Kendall competed in and won several speech contests. He was his sophomore class president.

Kendall was equally involved in our community. He was the pianist and musical director of the Community Gospel Choir and of the Oro Vista Baptist Church (where his late grandfather, Rev. P.C. Harrison, was the senior pastor), soloist in the Christmas Mass at St. Thomas Church and organist at Trinity Presbyterian Church. In 1974-1975, he won first prize in the California and second in the national rounds of the National Baptist Convention speech contest.

Kendall earned his BA degree *cum laude* in English Literature and Theatre Studies from Yale University in 1978. He was accepted from OHS into Yale College's competitive English Early Concentration Program for entering students. At Yale, he was director-arranger-pianist for the Yale Gospel Choir, and a member of the Battell Chapel Choir, the Yale Alley Cats and the Whiffenpoofs, an internationally known, invitation only, a *cappella* singing group founded in 1909. After spending a year working for a community organization in Oroville, Kendall returned to Yale, where he received his Juris Doctor degree from Yale Law School in 1983.

Kendall was appointed Assistant Professor of Law at Columbia University in 1984, at age 26. He was awarded tenure as a Professor of Law in 1992. In 1994, he was named the Nash Professor of Law, a chaired professorship he holds to this day.

Kendall has been a visiting professor at Stanford University, Princeton University and the University of Maryland in the United States and at Federal University, Parana and Fundaçao Getulio Vargas in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He has lectured in many countries, including France, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Germany, Haiti, England, Ireland, Italy, Russia and The Netherlands.

In November, 2020, Kendall delivered the Annual Lecture on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Law Faculty of the University of Oxford in England. In November of this year, Kendall will return to Oxford to participate in a debate hosted by the Oxford Union, whose previous American guests have included Presidents Nixon, Carter and Reagan.

Kendall has published a number of books, countless articles, essays and reviews. The founding director of the Studio for Law and Culture at Columbia, he has been a board member of numerous professional organizations including the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies of the City University of New York and the Advisory Board of Editors of the CU Press, and faculty member and Program Director of the Columbia-Leyden-Amsterdam Summer Program in American Law. Kendall is a past Chair of the Jurisprudence and Law and Humanities Sections of the American Association of Law Schools, and was an Inaugural Berlin Prize Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin, Germany.

A resident of the historic Harlem neighborhood, Kendall has been very active in the civic and cultural life of New York City. He has served on the boards of Gay Men's Health Crisis, the New York City AIDS Memorial and Film Forum. He was a Minister of Music for the Philadelphia Baptist Church of Christ, a composer, pianist and vocal soloist for the Jerriese Johnson East Village Community Gospel Choir and a member of the Consistory at Middle Collegiate Church. In February of this year, Kendall presented his fourth solo show as a jazz and blues vocalist at Joe's Pub, the cabaret venue of the prestigious Public Theater.

Kendall writes, “In **Brown v. Board of Education**, former California Governor and Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote that education is the very foundation of good citizenship in our American democracy. As a scholar-citizen, I will always be grateful for the excellent education I received in the Oroville public school system.”

Kendall is the proud brother of Pastor Kevin Brown, also a member of the OUHSD Hall of Fame Class of 2022.