

A FILM BY GLORIA RESPRESS-CHURCHWELL

LIMITLESS

The Dr. Chester Pierce Story

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Title

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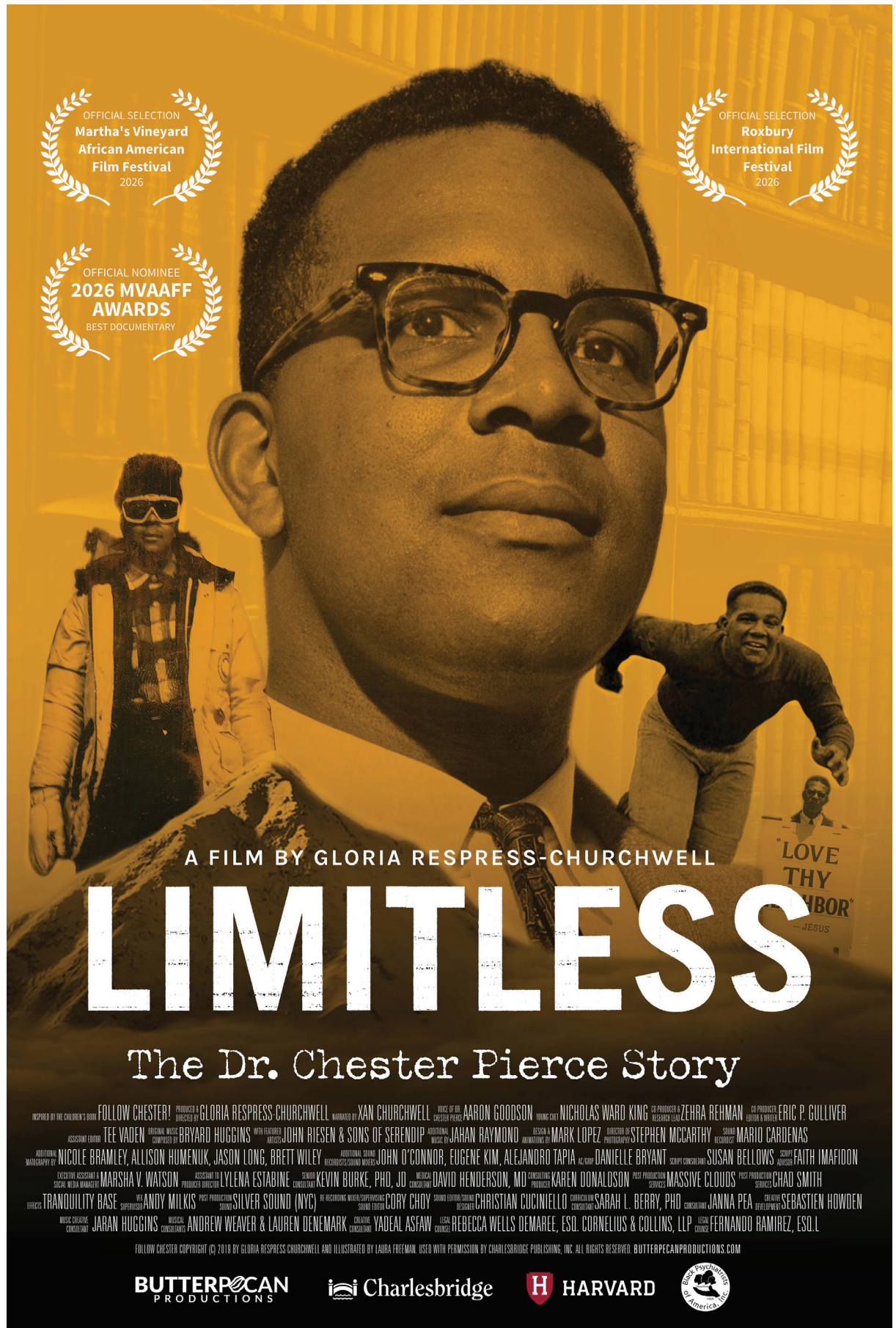
Short Synopsis

Discover the compelling real-life journey of Dr. Chester Pierce in *Limitless: The Dr. Chester Pierce Story*, an inspirational documentary inspired by the award-winning children's book *Follow Chester!* Witness a remarkable story of triumph over racism as this innovator shaped the world—a must-watch for all seeking a story of inspiration and resilience.

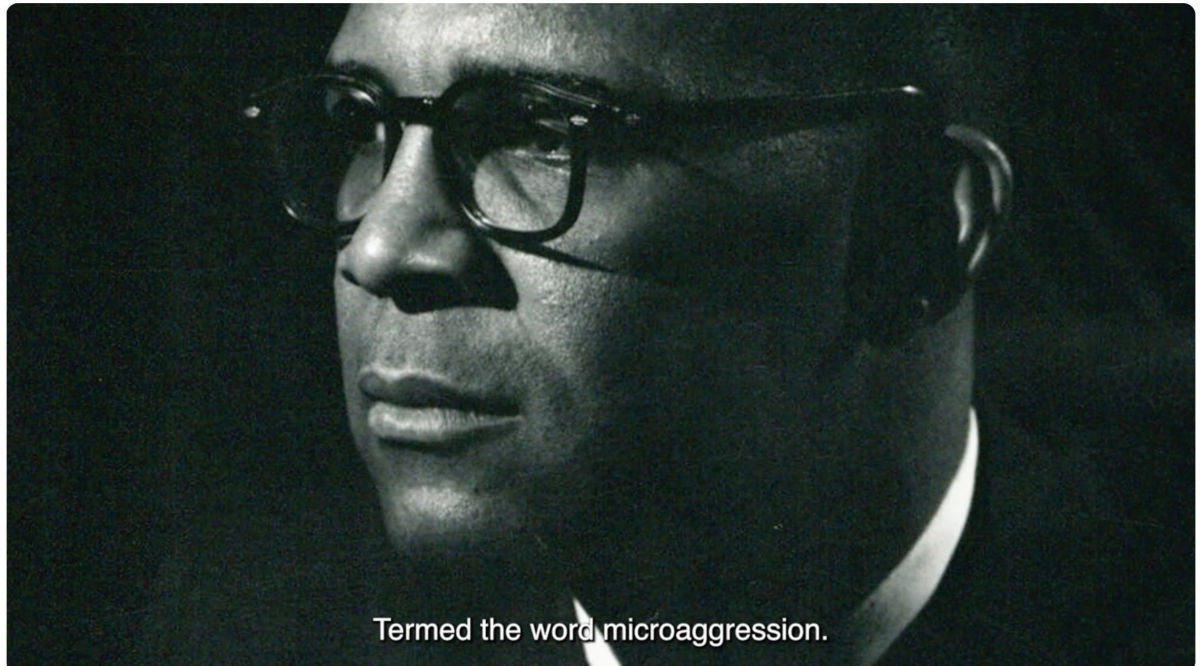
Long Synopsis

Limitless explores the life of a man who made extraordinary strides nationally and globally. From the beginning, Chester Pierce broke barriers by becoming his high school's first Black student president and the first African American to play inter-collegiate football against a white team in a former Confederate state. His work as a psychiatrist saw him going to Antarctica to carry out research, to NASA to help select astronauts, and to *Sesame Street* to help educate a new generation of preschoolers. This documentary commemorates the contributions of this Renaissance man and uncovers the steps which formed this exceptional individual.

Poster



Trailer



Youtube

<https://youtu.be/H81nZfTfbTg?si=jDR7tTHC9hq9gF5P>

Website

<https://butterpecanproductions.com/limitless>

Director's Statement



Gloria Respress-Churchwell, MA MFA **Director, Producer & Writer**

As a filmmaker and children's author, I must compel the audience to want more of my story. Most importantly, I want to inspire why someone should care about what happens to the protagonist. Being in the business for over ten years motivates me to create. I love making stories that especially turn the unknown character into someone revered for crossing the finish line, despite the obstacles. The more complicated the climb, the stronger the 'you got this' refrain. This is why I make nonfiction films, each with a unique storytelling approach that sets them apart. Traveling across the country to talk about my work, I've had people of all ages open up about their challenges. Most of the time, they aren't looking for a solution but just an entry point to share.

That's why I'm creating *Limitless: The Dr. Chester Pierce Story*. It's a story that transcends time and place, a story that resonates with anyone who has ever faced adversity. Chet, a man whose father supported his family while working at a country club where Blacks were denied access to the front door, had to relive that unspeakable pain in 1947, when he traveled with his Harvard football team to play the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia during Jim Crow era. It's a story of triumph as the young Chet becomes a remarkable man respected in unlimited places where he was the first in many spaces. His story is a beacon of hope, a testament to the power of resilience and determination, and a reminder that no obstacle is insurmountable.

Limitless: The Dr. Chester Pierce Story is important to me because, like my other two documentaries, *Robert Churchwell: The Jackie Robinson of Journalism* and *From Sag to Swag: The Power of Dress*, it's a story that needs to be told. It's a story that will inspire.

Director Filmmakers Team



Karen Donaldson, Consulting Producer

Karen Donaldson is an award-winning communication and peak performance expert, recognized globally as a trusted advisor to high-profile leaders, executives, and performers. Grounded in neuroscience, her work focuses on communication, presence, influence, peak performance and decision-making in high-stakes environments. She extends this precision into documentary work, contributing to project direction, pacing, and timelines that guide a film from concept through completion. Karen serves as Consulting Producer on *Limitless*, supporting its overall direction and impact. Karen and her expertise is featured across major networks including NBC, ABC, FOX, CTV, KTLA, and in publications such as *Business Insider*, *Marie Claire France*, *Entrepreneur*, and *The Huffington Post*.



Zehra Rehman Co-producer & Research Lead

Zehra's work has focused on programming that explores historical events, issues related to race and religion, and telling the stories of marginalized groups. She co-produced the acclaimed PBS series *Finding Your Roots* with *Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* She also researched and wrote a series of short films for the Webby-winning online documentary series *Black History in Two Minutes (or so)*. Her other work includes PBS's *The Bigger Picture* with *Vincent Brown* and *Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery*. She has also been developing and co-producing a series exploring the history of Muslims in America, scheduled for release by PBS Digital Studios.



Eric Gulliver Co-Producer, Editor & Writer

Eric is a documentary producer and editor and founder of CRTL media. In his 12+ years at GBH, Eric helped national PBS brands such as *FRONTLINE* & *AMERICAN EXPERIENCE* reach new audiences with television broadcasts and streaming. He crafted over 20 short films and created hundreds of digital videos that garnered awards and recognition. As an editor, he has crafted three feature-length films, the most recent of which, "*Her Socialist Smile*" premiered at the 2021 New York Film Festival



xan Churchwell

Production Consultant

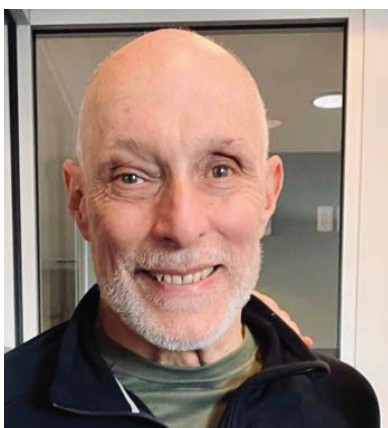
xan (they/them) is an actor, writer, and creator based in Los Angeles, CA. A graduate of New York University Tisch School of the Arts, xan holds the title of Disney Imagineer, having worked for their Live Entertainment and Marvel VFX sectors. They are the founder of the production company, a thoughtful method; LLC. As a trans nonbinary creator, their goal in life is to collaborate on art that represents queer and trans communities of color. When they're not working, they're usually singing show tunes in the car or making a cup of tea.



Stephen McCarthy

Director of Photography

Stephen is a director of photography whose thirty-year career has spanned the width and breadth of non-fiction filmmaking. His work appears regularly in prime-time documentary series including PBS's *American Experience*, *American Masters*, *Frontline*, *Nova* and *P.O.V.* as well as HBO's "YoungArts Masterclass". He has served as cinematographer for Emmy-nominated PBS series: *Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies* and *Your Inner Fish*. He has also photographed the Peabody- and Emmy-award-winning series *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*, HBO Family's Emmy-nominated *Masterclass* and PBS's *Finding Your Roots* with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.



Mario Cardenas

Sound Recordist

Mario has been a sound recordist for motion pictures for almost forty years. His work has ranged from major news organizations—BBC, NBC, CBS—to corporate, documentary, commercial, and narrative projects. His work has taken him to Europe, Africa, South America, and Mexico as well as almost half of the 50 states in the USA. He particularly enjoys collaborative smaller projects where his contributions of expertise and sense of humor are valued beyond the job description. He is both fortunate and grateful to have those clients.



Marsha V. Watson

Executive Assistant & Social Media Manager

Marsha is an author, coach, speaker, and Executive Virtual Assistant to celebrities and influencers; she empowers individuals to reach their goals. Marsha's role as a social media and online business manager further showcases her versatility and dedication to helping others succeed. With a motto of "Dream Big, Write the Vision & Build Your Empire," she encourages others to pursue their dreams with passion and determination. Her expertise in goals and time management makes her a sought-after resource for those seeking personal and professional growth. Marsha V. Watson embodies the spirit of ambition, inspiration, and success.

Consultants



Kevin Burke Ph.D Senior Consultant

Kevin is a historian, journalist, and documentary film producer. His film credits include working as a producer on the popular PBS series *Finding Your Roots*; *Making Black America: Through the Grapevine* (PBS, 2022); the Emmy-nominated series *The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This is Our Song* (PBS, 2021); and *Reconstruction: America after the Civil War* (PBS, 2019), winner of the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award. With Henry Louis Gates Jr., Burke is the coauthor of *And Still I Rise: Black America since MLK* (2015) and co-editor of the Norton Critical Edition of Solomon Northup's 1853 memoir, *Twelve Years a Slave* (2016).



David C. Henderson, MD Medical Consultant

David Henderson currently serves as Psychiatrist-in-Chief at Boston Medical Center and Professor and Chair, Department of Psychiatry, at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine. He is also the co-founder and co-director of the Africa Global Mental Health Institute. He previously served as Director of the Chester M. Pierce, MD Division of Global Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), Director of the MGH Schizophrenia Clinical and Research Program, and Medical Director of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma. He has worked internationally for the past 30 years in resource-limited settings and areas impacted by mass violence, disasters, and complex emergencies.



Janna Pea Consultant

Janna is a seasoned communications executive specializing in public relations and social impact campaigns. Janna partners with clients to not simply fight for a seat at the table of representation, but to create new rooms, venues, and movements, where diverse change makers can transform dominant impact narratives. From the Women's March to the #MeToo movement to the racial reckoning of summer 2020, Janna has helped shape and define some of the highest-profile national and global events in recent history. Previously, Janna was an Executive Vice President at the top-ranked firm BerlinRosen and worked at Sunshine Sachs, partnering with a number of entertainment and advocacy clients.



Sarah L. Berry PhD, Curriculum Consultant

Sarah Berry is the founder of Sarah L. Berry, PhD Consulting, offering educational content and programming. She specializes in the field of Medical and Health Humanities. She is co-president of the Health Humanities Consortium. Her 25-year career in higher education has focused on narrative, health disparities, health equity, and social justice. She is active in advancing Medical and Health Humanities as an academic field, leading institutional data collection on medical and health humanities education, survey projects, curriculum design, program assessment, and creating toolkits for educators. She is working on a book titled *Patient Revolutions: Health and Social Justice in America from Abolition to Black Lives Matter*.



Bryard Huggins Music Composer & Music Supervisor

Bryard is a composer, record producer, and contemporary jazz piano recording artist. He is also founder/CEO of Muse Entertainment, a music production company and indie record label. He has also toured with Gladys Knight as her featured guest artist. A former child prodigy, he has released 5 studio jazz albums, an instrumental gospel album, and various singles. Through his company Muse Entertainment, Bryard composes and produces musical content for diverse clientele nationwide in the styles of film/TV, commercials, music for podcasts, stage plays, and more. Bryard has performed as a featured artist at the Ryman Auditorium, the Walt Disney Theatre, the Hollywood Bowl, and London's Royal Albert Hall.



John Riesen Featured Musical Artist

John Riesen's growing career boasts a variety of roles in which he excels and includes significant work in opera, musical theater, studio recording, and concert. He has released over 75 studio recordings that have over 7 million streams on Spotify and Apple Music. This past season, John performed with the Pacific Symphony, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, Virginia Symphony, the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra, the Flint Symphony Orchestra, the Brevard Music Center Orchestra, Intermountain Opera Bozeman, Nashville Opera, Opera Roanoke, and Opera Las Vegas. John was also seen on NBC's *America's Got Talent* as part of the Finalist group Metaphysic.



Sons of Serendip Featured Musical Artist

Sons of Serendip won the hearts of fans and judges alike as finalists on *America's Got Talent* (NBC) with their ethereal and emotionally stirring interpretations of pop music, arranged with a unique blend of vocals, harp, piano, and cello. With four successful albums and soulful live performances, Sons of Serendip has lifted audiences both nationally and internationally. Their most notable performances include collaborations with Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops, the Plymouth Philharmonic Orchestra, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Cynthia Erivo, as well as a performance for the Creative Arts Emmy Awards. In 2019, Sons of Serendip returned to *America's Got Talent* to compete in the first ever *America's Got Talent: The Champions*. In 2020, the group performed for Oprah Winfrey's 2020 Vision Tour's closing celebration in Denver, CO, and most recently in 2022, they were invited to be one of the artists representing the United States in Dubai at EXPO 2020.

Music



Andrew Weaver Music Consultant

Andrew is a seasoned music supervisor and co-founder of music supervision company Triple Threat Music Supervision. Throughout his career, he has built an impressive and diverse resumé of music supervising films, TV shows, video games, and more through his time at Format Entertainment and Electronic Arts. Through his time learning under veteran music supervisors Anastasia Brown and Steve Schnur, he worked on studio-based TV shows and notable video game franchises. With experience on ‘the other side’ pitching music at various companies such as Round Hill Music and Visionary Media Group, he’s also secured placements for artists in Jack Daniels, Netflix, Hulu, FX, ESPN, CBS Sports, Ford, NBC, Hallmark, and more.



Lauren Denemark Music Consultant

Lauren is a music supervisor with almost a decade of experience in music supervision, music licensing, and score supervision. She co-founded and music supervises for Triple Threat Music Supervision based out of Nashville, TN. Lauren has a vast array of experience in music supervision, production management/film production, music editing, SFX design, and post-production. She has worked in a variety of different film studios on TV shows, films, commercials, video games, and other forms of media. She has been on set for over 30 major TV and ad productions.

“I learned about Dr. Pierce’s truly awe-inspiring story shortly after arriving in Boston; I especially felt his story was relatable to children. After writing a well-received children’s book about him, and after much encouragement from those wanting to know more, I was compelled not to look around, but lean into creating a documentary that further expands this much-needed story.”

Gloria Respress-Churchwell

Quotes

“long overdue”

“I feel very, very strongly that this (documentary) was long overdue for Chet. I, feel he brought a great, great deal of honor to the city of Glen Cove, to New York State, and to our country.”

Marc Martone
(High School)

“trailblazer”

“At the end of the day, I think that the real groundbreaker, the real trailblazer, and real heroic person was this very dignified, quiet and brilliant young black kid in 1947, breaking the color barrier.”

Tim Murphy
(Former Harvard Football Coach)

“great courage”

“In terms of his accomplishments, I would hope that young people and people in general would be able to take that away as a story of great courage.”

Bernie Corbett
(Veteran Sports Broadcaster,
Historian & Author)

“able to overcome”

“He was able to overcome a number of things, especially being born at the time in which he was born, prior to the Civil Rights movement. He was able to achieve all that he wanted to do.”

Allen Hudson III
(Principal, Glen Cove High School)

“an inspiration”

“...Doctor Pierce was an inspiration for me, and played a role in my deciding to become an astronaut and to pursue that pathway.”

Dr. Robert “Bobby” Satcher
(Associate Professor &
Former NASA Astronaut)

“he loved”

“He loved all humans and wanted that everyone start out in the same way with love and appreciation...”

Jocelyn Pierce
(Dr. Chester Pierce’s widow)

Participants

Participants include:

The Pierce Family
American Psychiatric Association
Black Psychiatrists of America
Sesame Street
Dr. Joan Y. Reede, Harvard Medical School
Harvard Athletics
Dr. Eliot Sorel, George Washington University
Dr. Derald Wing Sue, Columbia University
Dr. Carla Williams, University of Virginia
Dr. Gloria Washington, Howard University
Oxford English Dictionary
Harvard University Students
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

and many more...



The Pierce Family



Charlesbridge publishes high-quality books for children, with a goal of creating lifelong readers and lifelong learners. Our books encourage reading and discovery in the classroom, library, and home. We believe that books for children should offer accurate information, promote a positive worldview, and embrace a child's innate sense of wonder and fun. To this end, we continually strive to seek new voices, new visions, and new directions in children's literature.



Chester "Chet" made history, a standout tackle on the Harvard football team who became the first Black student-athlete to play intercollegiate football against a white team in a former Confederate state when Harvard played at University of Virginia on October 11, 1947. Chet graduated from Harvard University in 1948 and Harvard Medical School in 1952.



Contact



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follow Chester on

