

# Ben Carson

Benjamin Solomon “Ben” Carson, Sr. (born September 18, 1951) is an American politician, author, and retired Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon. He was the first surgeon to successfully separate conjoined twins joined at the head. In 2008 he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush.

After delivering a widely publicized speech at the 2013 National Prayer Breakfast, he became a popular conservative figure in political media for his views on social and political issues.

Carson is running for the Republican nomination for President of the United States in the 2016 election.

## Early life

Carson was born in Detroit, Michigan, the son of Sonya (née Copeland) and Robert Solomon Carson, a Seventh-day Adventist minister.

Both his parents came from rural Georgia.

A DNA test on the television series *African American Lives* stated that he is of 80% African and 20% European ancestry.[

His parents divorced when he was eight, and he and his ten-year-old brother Curtis were raised by their mother.

In his book *Gifted Hands*, Carson relates that in his youth, he had a violent temper. Once, while in the ninth grade, he nearly stabbed a friend during a fight over a radio station, instead breaking the knife blade.

After this incident, he began reading the Book of Proverbs, applying verses on anger and thereafter “never had another problem with temper”.

Carson attended Southwestern High School in Southwest Detroit where he excelled in JROTC. He quickly rose in rank and was offered an appointment to West Point.

Carson graduated from Yale University, where he majored in psychology.

He received his M.D. from the University of Michigan Medical School.[

He completed his residency in neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

## Medical career

Carson was a professor of neurosurgery, oncology, plastic surgery, and pediatrics, and he was the director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

At 33, he became the youngest major division director in the hospital's history as director of pediatric neurosurgery. He was also a co-director of the Johns Hopkins Craniofacial Center.

Carson specialized in traumatic brain injuries, brain and spinal cord tumors, achondroplasia, neurological and congenital disorders, craniosynostosis, epilepsy, and trigeminal neuralgia.

Carson believes his hand-eye coordination and three-dimensional reasoning made him a gifted surgeon.

After medical school, he became a neurosurgery resident at Johns Hopkins Hospital. He began his career as a neurosurgeon, but also developed an interest in pediatrics.

In 1987, Carson successfully separated conjoined twins, the Binder twins, who had been joined at the back of the head (craniopagus twins). The 70-member surgical team, led by Carson, worked for 22 hours. Both twins survived.

Carson figured in the revival of the hemispherectomy, a drastic surgical procedure in which part or all of one hemisphere of the brain is removed to control severe pediatric epilepsy. He refined the procedure in the 1980s, encouraged by John M. Freeman (neurologist),<sup>[20]</sup> and performed it many times.

Carson has served on the boards of the Kellogg Company, Costco, and the Academy of Achievement.

He is an emeritus fellow of the Yale Corporation.

In March 2013, Carson announced he would retire as a surgeon, stating "I'd much rather quit when I'm at the top of my game".

His retirement became official on July 1, 2013.<sup>[27]</sup>

As is normal during medical and academic careers, Dr. Carson participated and cooperated with a variety of professionals in research. They organized their findings into journal articles published in peer-reviewed professional journals. A sample of journals that published his works:

Political affiliation and views Carson had said he was not a member of any political party.

However, he joined the Republican Party on November 4, 2014, the day the 2014 midterms took place, as "truly a pragmatic move" because he was considering running for president in 2016.

In his book *America the Beautiful*, he explained his decision to enter politics: "I believe it is a very good idea for physicians, scientists, engineers, and others trained to make decisions based on facts and empirical data to get involved in the political arena".

**Criticism of health insurance companies** In a 1996 interview, Carson said that he found the "concept of for profits for the insurance companies" absurd. He continued, "The first thing we need to do is get rid of for-profit insurance companies. We have a lack of policies and we need to make the government responsible for catastrophic Healthcare".

In 2014 Carson wrote, ". . . we need to remove Healthcare from the political arena and recognize that any government proposals affecting the health of all citizens should be free market-based and should be so appealing that it would not be necessary to force citizens into the program."

**End-of-life care** In 1992, Carson wrote that aging and technological advancement will eventually lead to many people surviving their 100th birthdays. He questioned the merits of prolonging life, citing the fact that "up to half of the medical expenses incurred in the average American's life are incurred during the last six months of life". He discussed the "dignity of dying in comfort, at home, with an attendant if necessary" and stated, "Decisions on who should be treated and who should not be treated would clearly require some national guidelines".

In January 2015, Carson countered that his views have evolved since then.

National Prayer Breakfast speech on social and fiscal issues Carson was the keynote speaker at the February 7, 2013 National Prayer Breakfast.

In his speech, he commented on political correctness ("dangerous", because it goes against freedom of expression), education, Healthcare, and taxation. Regarding education, he spoke favorably about graduation rates in 1831, when Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States, and when "anybody finishing the second grade was completely literate". He espoused the idea of a tax-exempt health savings account created at birth, that can be bequeathed at death, along with an electronic medical record and birth certificate. He supports a flat tax, which he calls the "proportional tax" in reference to the biblical tithe.

The speech was magnified because Carson's views were generally interpreted to be politically conservative, and President Barack Obama was sitting just feet away.

Conservative commentators from Rush Limbaugh to Sean Hannity and Neil Cavuto of Fox News praised the speech as an example of speaking "truth to power". The Wall Street Journal titled one of its op-eds "Ben Carson for President".<sup>[80]</sup> Columnist Star Parker wrote that he "owes no apology for honest talk".

Fox contributor Cal Thomas and commentator Bob Beckel, however, found his comments inappropriate.

At White House in 2008 for award In an interview with Neil Cavuto, Carson defended himself, "Somebody has to be courageous enough to stand up to the bullies".

On February 8, he appeared on Hannity, and said that he would run for president "If the Lord grabbed me by the collar and made me do it".

After the speech, Carson said: "I don't think it was particularly political...You know, I'm a physician".<sup>[86]</sup> Regarding the policies of President Obama, he said: "There are a number of policies that I don't believe lead to the growth of our nation and don't lead to the elevation of our nation. I don't want to sit here and say all of his policies are bad. What I would like to see more often in this nation is an open and intelligent conversation".

In the National Review, Jonah Goldberg compared Carson to Booker T. Washington, while David Graham compared him to Herman Cain without the "personal skeletons" in The Atlantic.

Carson's sudden popularity among conservatives led to him being invited as a featured speaker at the 2013 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC). He tied for seventh place in the Washington Times/CPAC 2013 Straw Poll with 4% of the 3,000 ballots cast.

In the 2014 CPAC straw poll, he came in third place with 9% of the vote, behind senators Ted Cruz of Texas (with 11%) and Rand Paul of Kentucky (31%).

Carson had a strong showing in the polls at the 2013 and 2014 Values Voter Summits: in 2013, he tied with former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum for second place with 13%, behind Ted Cruz's 42%. In 2014, he took 20% of the Values Voter Summit vote to Cruz's 25% and came in first place for the vice presidential poll.

Marriage and homosexuality In March 2013, Carson described his views about same-sex marriage on Hannity, saying: "Marriage is between a man and a woman. No group, be they gays, be they NAMBLA,

be they people who believe in bestiality, it doesn't matter what they are. They don't get to change the definition.”

Carson's comments drew criticism for using “gays” in the same sentence as pedophiles and practitioners of bestiality. A group of Hopkins students petitioned that he be replaced as the university's commencement speaker.

Several days later, Carson withdrew as Hopkins's commencement speaker and apologized, saying that “the examples were not the best choice of words”, adding that the Bible “says we have an obligation to love our fellow man as ourselves, and I love everybody the same—all homosexuals”.[95][96] He said on CNN that he loved all people, whether gay or straight.[94] Carson added, “I was trying to say that as far as marriage was concerned, it has traditionally been between a man and a woman and no one should be able to change that.”

In October 2014, Carson was added to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)'s extremist watch list because of his association with groups considered by SPLC to be extremist in nature, “linking gays with pedophiles”, and his comparison of Healthcare and liberal government to slavery and totalitarianism.

In February 2015, the SPLC removed his name and apologized to Dr. Carson, stating: “In October 2014, we posted an 'Extremist File' of Dr. Ben Carson. This week, as we've come under intense criticism for doing so, we've reviewed our profile and have concluded that it did not meet our standards, so we have taken it down and apologize to Dr. Carson for having posted it. We've also come to the conclusion that the question of whether a better-researched profile of Dr. Carson should or should not be included in our 'Extremist Files' is taking attention from the fact that Dr. Carson has, in fact, made a number of statements that express views that we believe most people would conclude are extreme.”

In a March 2015 interview with Chris Cuomo, Carson stated that homosexuality was “absolutely” a choice, claiming that “a lot of people go into prison straight, and when they come out, they're gay”.

In a Facebook post, Carson apologized, saying that he “[does] not pretend to know how every individual came to their sexual orientation.”

In a Facebook post, Carson said that he supports civil unions for gay couples and that he has “for many years”.

Evolution Carson's views on evolution and creationism have also been controversial.

In a 2006 debate with Richard Dawkins, Francis Collins, and Daniel Dennett, Carson stated: “I don't believe in evolution...I simply don't have enough faith to believe that something as complex as our ability to rationalize, think, and plan, and have a moral sense of what's right and wrong, just appeared.”[112] In 2012, nearly 500 professors, students, and alumni of Emory University wrote a letter expressing concern about his views in advance of his commencement speech (there was no request to rescind the invitation). They cited a quote in an interview with the *Adventist Review*: “By believing we are the product of random acts, we eliminate morality and the basis of ethical behavior”. Carson clarified that “Those of us who believe in God and derive our sense of right and wrong and ethics from God's word really have no difficulty whatsoever defining where our ethics come from. People who believe in survival of the fittest might have more difficulty deriving where their ethics come from. A lot of evolutionists are very ethical people.”

Affordable Care Act On October 11, 2013, Carson spoke at the conservative Values Voters Summit in Washington, D.C., where he called the Affordable Care Act (ACA) “the worst thing that has happened

in this nation since slavery". He claimed that the ACA originated with Vladimir Lenin, and quoted Lenin as saying that "socialized medicine is the keystone to the establishment of a socialist state".

There is no evidence that Lenin actually said this, but the purported quote appears on a number of conservative websites.

After an onslaught of criticism, Carson denied that he was "equating Obamacare with slavery" in an October 15 Washington Times column and denounced the "PC police" for attempting "to discredit and...silence" him.

During the National Prayer Breakfast, Carson said about the ACA: Here's my solution. When a person is born, give him a birth certificate, an electronic medical record and a health savings account [HSA]."

Cannabis legalization Carson is against the legalization of recreational cannabis. He believes it to be a gateway drug that leads to "hedonistic activity".

Gun control Carson stated in a 2013 interview with Glenn Beck that semi-automatic firearms should be better regulated in large cities and high-crime areas.[121] This statement has caused some with conservative views on gun control to question if his views were at odds with most conservatives. Later, clarifying that "This isn't any evolution of my views, just that I've learned how to express myself," he stated that he is strongly in favor of the Second Amendment and that while guns being used on innocent people "is horrible," it "is not nearly as horrible as having a population that is defenseless against a group of tyrants who have arms. And that is what we have to bear in mind." [122] He also said that if in a position of national authority, he would allow citizens to own any weapons, including automatic and semi-automatic guns, that they could buy and that he would not support any efforts to restrict the Second Amendment.

2016 Presidential campaign Main article: Ben Carson presidential campaign, 2016 In January 2015, The Weekly Standard reported that the Draft Carson Committee had raised \$13 million by the end of 2014, shortly after Carson performed well in a CNN/ORC poll of potential candidates in December 2014, coming in second in two different versions. He came in second with 10% behind Mitt Romney's 20%, but in the same poll with Romney removed from the list, Carson closed the gap with 11% to Jeb Bush's 14%.

The Wall Street Journal mentioned that the Draft Carson Committee had chairmen in all of Iowa's 99 counties, and that Carson had recently come in first place in two separate Public Policy polls for the state of Pennsylvania.

On May 3, 2015, Carson confirmed his candidacy for President in an interview with a local television station in Cincinnati, Ohio. He officially announced he was running for the Republican nomination in the 2016 Presidential election at a rally in Detroit, his hometown, on May 4, 2015.

Carson Scholars Fund In 1994, Carson and his wife started the Carson Scholars Fund, which gave scholarships to students in grades 4–11 for "academic excellence and humanitarian qualities".

They founded it after reading that U.S. students ranked second to last in terms of math and science testing among 22 countries. They also noticed that schools awarded athletes with trophies whereas honor students only received "a pin or certificate".

Recipients of the Carson Scholars Fund get a \$1,000 scholarship towards their college education. It has awarded 6,700 scholarships.

In recognition for his work with the Carson Scholars Fund and other charitable giving throughout his

lifetime, Carson was awarded the William E. Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership in 2005.

Personal life Carson and his wife, Lacena "Candy" Rustin, met in 1971 as students at Yale University. They married in 1975 and have three sons: Murray, Benjamin Jr., and Rhoeyce. They live in West Friendship, Maryland, and are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Carson was baptized at Burns Seventh-day Adventist Church on Detroit's eastside. A few years later he told the pastor at a church in Inkster, Michigan he was attending that he had not fully understood his first baptism and wanted to be baptized again, so he was. He has served as a local elder and Sabbath school teacher in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.[134] His mother is a devout Seventh-day Adventist.

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