

Professor Blackwell: A Mathematical Genius Who Helped Shape the Age of AI

By Dolores Watson



Professor David H. Blackwell (1919-2010) exhibited exceptional skills in mathematics from an early age. He was unaware at the time of how his genius would shape the future of technology. Blackwell's brilliance as a mathematician and statistician contributed significantly to game theory and probability theory.

President Barack Obama presented a National Medal of Science award posthumously to two of Blackwell's children at a White House ceremony on November 20, 2014.

Nvidia, an American multinational technology leader in Artificial Intelligence, announced in March 2025, the Blackwell Super chip, a graphic processing unit (GPU) the fastest processor on the market. Microsoft, Google and Amazon have placed massive orders for the Blackwell chips. It allows AI to use less time in training and learning.

Like the heroes portrayed in *Hidden Figures*, Blackwell's mind power operated in the shadows for decades, even as his work transformed the fields of game theory, probability, and modern computing. Today he is honored as a forefather of Artificial Intelligence, a visionary whose insights laid the groundwork for decision theory and machine learning. Blackwell often reminded young scholars, "don't let your race be a handicap," a philosophy he lived by as he broke barriers and redefined what was possible. His legacy stands as both a scientific triumph and a testament to resilience, brilliance, and quiet revolution.