



[Dr. Debra Stern '87, P'27](#)

Dr. Debra Stern is a passionate educator, researcher, social worker, devoted wife, and mother, dedicated to advancing educational equity and creating opportunities for all students to thrive.

Debra Stern is a lifelong Westchester, New York resident. Married to her husband Charles for over 30 years, she takes great pride in their three adult children, Veronica, Ella, and Quincy (a current Cornell student).

With over two decades of multidisciplinary expertise, Debra founded Amani Public Charter School in Mt. Vernon, NY, a high-performing institution designed to combat the effects of school segregation on Black children. Amani has been open for 13 years and exemplifies her unwavering commitment to providing a nurturing and empowering educational environment for all students.

Debra's dissertation, "Forty Acres and a School: How Black Charter School Founders Can Disrupt the Impact of Segregation on Black Children," reflects her life's work and passion for educational equity. Her research offers a roadmap for establishing schools as vehicles for racial empowerment and highlights the practices of successful Black charter school founders.



As an engaged alumna, she is a long-time volunteer with Cornell University having held various positions within the Cornell alumni community, including serving on the board of Cornell MOSAIC, the Cornell Alumni Advisory Board, and in multiple roles with the Cornell Class of 1987 including President, Reunion Co-Chair and Class Correspondent. She currently serves as the chair of the Cornell University Council. In this role, she is dedicated to fostering meaningful connections, strengthening ties with current students, and deepening the collective connection to Cornell.

Beyond her work and alumni engagement, Debra finds joy and inspiration in reading and attending Broadway shows, indulging in her love for theater.

Debra's life's work is rooted in the belief in the transformative power of learning. She believes that every child deserves access to a high-quality education that affirms their identity and prepares them for success. She has a desire to create opportunities for all students to thrive.