

Ronald W. Walters: In Memoriam

Ronald W. Walters (1938-2010) was internationally known for his expertise on the issues of African American leadership and politics, his writing and his media savvy. He was director of the African American Leadership Institute, a Distinguished Leadership Scholar at the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership, and a professor in government and politics at the University of Maryland.



He received his B.A. in History and Government with honors from Fisk University (1963), his M.A. in African Studies (1966), and a Ph.D. in International Studies (1971) from American University in Washington, D.C. He served as professor and chair of the political science department at Howard University (25 years), assistant professor and chair of Afro-American Studies at Brandeis University, and assistant professor of political science at Syracuse University. He has also served as visiting professor at Princeton University and as a fellow of the Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is a former member of the governing council of the American Political Science Association. Walters has also served as the senior policy staff member for Congressman Charles Diggs, Jr. and Congressman William Gray.

In 1984, he served as deputy campaign manager for issues of the Jesse Jackson campaign for president, and in 1988, he was consultant for convention issues for the Jackson campaign directed by former Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown. He also served as board member of the Black Leadership Forum, the National Coalition of Black Civic Participation, and other organizations.

As a scholar, Walters was the author of over 100 articles and ten books. His book, *Black Presidential Politics in America* (SUNY Press, 1989) won the Ralph Bunche Prize given by the American Political Science Association and the Best Book award from the National Conference of Black Political Scientist (NCOBPS). *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Wayne State University Press, 1993) also won the NCOBPS Best Book award. His most recent books are *White Nationalism, Black Interests: Conservative Public Policy and the Black Community* (Wayne State University Press, 2003), *Freedom is Not Enough: Black Voters, Black Candidates; American Presidential Politics* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), and *The Price of Racial Reconciliation* (University of Michigan Press, 2008).

In his book *The Price of Racial Reconciliation*, Walters suggested that the impact of enslavement is still with us today and has been reinforced by forms of post-enslavement oppression, and that the objective of racial harmony in the United States will be disrupted if post-enslavement oppression is not recognized with the solemnity and amelioration it deserves. Thus, he interestingly concludes that the grand narrative of Black oppression in the United States prevents racial reconciliation as long as some substantial form of racial restitution is not seriously considered.

Walters was the winner of many awards, including a distinguished faculty award from Howard University (1982), Distinguished Scholar/Activist Award, *The Black Scholar Magazine* (1984), W.E.B. DuBois/Frederick Douglas Award, African Heritage Studies Association (1983), the Ida Wells Barnett Award, Association of Black School Educators, (1985), the Fannie Lou Hammer Award, National Conference of Black Political Scientist (1996), Distinguished Faculty Contributions to the Campus Diversity, University of Maryland (1999), and the Ida B. Wells-W.E.B. DuBois Award for Distinguished Scholarship from the National Council for Black Studies (March 2000), and he was awarded the honor of "Alumnus of the Year" by the School of International Service at American University in April 2000. And notwithstanding, he was an activist during the era of Civil Rights, proud of his role in what was to be become the first lunch-counter sit-in, in the town of Wichita in 1958. As a leader of the youth council of the local NAACP, he and his cousin Carol Parks organized a sit-in protest at the Dockum Drugstore wherein young African Americans sat at the drugstore's lunch counter day after day while being refused service as they sat in silence in protest of white racial bigotry, enduring taunts from white customers.

Walters was also a frequent guest on local and major media as an analyst of African American politics. He appeared on CNN, CBS News Nightline, NBC Today Show, C-Span, the Jim Lehrer News Hour and Think Tank, radio shows such as All Things Considered (NPR), Living Room (Pacifica), and many others. Dr. Walters also wrote a weekly opinion column for the National Newspaper Publisher's Association News Service and Web sites. Walters was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1938. He lost his battle with cancer at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland on September 10, 2010. He is survived by his wife, Patricia Ann Walters.