



In memoriam: Walter E. Williams, 84, economist, educator, author and professor

Walter E. Williams, a prominent conservative economist, educator, author and political commentator who expressed profoundly skeptical views of government efforts to aid his fellow African-Americans and other minority groups, died on Tuesday, December 1, 2020 on the campus of George Mason University in Virginia, where he had taught for 40 years. He was 84.

As a public intellectual, Mr. Williams moved between the classroom and public forums that gave him wide reach. He wrote a syndicated column, lectured across the country and frequently appeared on the radio as a substitute host for conservative Rush Limbaugh.

The author of a dozen books, including "The State Against Blacks," Mr. Williams was the subject of a 2014 [PBS documentary](#), "Suffer No Fools," in which he maintained that antipoverty programs were subsidizing "slovenly" behavior.

In his autobiography, *Up From the Projects*, he discusses many of the challenges he faced growing up in mid-20th century America. Williams would overcome a number of challenges before starting his undergraduate education, such as the overt racism of Jim Crow, a military draft, and the general challenges of his upbringing. After graduating high school, he moved to live with his father and attend Los Angeles City College for a semester before returning to Philadelphia to work as a taxi cab driver. In 1959, he was drafted as a private into the US Army where he would make the first of his many historical contributions to the ideas of individual freedom.

Returning to California after his discharge, Mr. Williams enrolled at what is now California State University, Los Angeles. Intending to study sociology, he switched to economics after encountering the work of W.E.B Du Bois, who argued that capitalism was a major source of racism. Mr. Williams later said that he came to see economics "as a struggle for liberty."

After receiving his bachelor's degree, Mr. Williams moved on to the University of California, Los Angeles, where he collected master's and doctoral degrees. He began teaching at Temple University in 1973 and wrote a syndicated newspaper column in the early 1980s that was carried by 205 newspapers and websites.

