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Walter Williams Dead: Prominent Economist Remembered as ‘an Important Voice for Liberty’

Jessica McBride

December 2, 2020

Dr. Walter E. Williams, the prominent economist and believer in capitalism, has died, and his death has launched passionate tributes from conservatives and others, who remembered him for his “ferocious” defense of free markets and “enormous influence” on liberty.

Don Boudreaux, a George Mason University economist, confirmed the news on his blog, writing, “Devastating news: Walter Williams died last night (or early this morning). Walter has been my colleague and friend for more than 35 years. He is one of my few heroes. I will write more later, but I am now in no condition to say more.”

Prominent conservatives posted tributes to Williams on social media.

“Walter Williams was an American hero,” the Heritage Foundation wrote on Twitter. “Born in poverty, raised by a single mother in the projects of North Philadelphia, a college drop-out, he overcame all types of adversity to become a nationally renowned professor, economist and columnist.”

Walter E. Williams, Economics Professor, George Mason University Our guest is the John M. Olin Distinguished Professor of Economics at George Mason University, syndicated columnist and author Walter Williams. Williams discusses his libertarian views and tells the story of how he came to be a substitute host for the nationally syndicated Rush Limbaugh radio show. 2012-03-27T15:48:54Z

According to an editorial in the Orange County Register, Williams was raised in the Richard Allen housing projects in Philadelphia but “never allowed himself to be a victim of his circumstances. Williams always believed in the value of hard work and the fundamental promise of America.”

He argued that racism was furthered by government over regulation and laws on things like business licensing and minimum age, according to the newspaper, which wrote that Williams argued those laws “systematically discriminate against the employment and advancement of people who are outsiders, latecomers and poor in resources.”

He believed in capitalism and self-ownership.

Here’s what you need to know:

One Top Conservative Called Williams’ Death a ‘Punch in the Gut’ & a Senator Labeled Him an ‘Important Voice for Liberty’

Wow, what a punch in the gut. I am told that one of my heroes, Dr. Walter Williams, passed away. Walter had an enormous influence on me, from the time I was 13-years old; he was my first guest on Life, Liberty & Levin. I'll discuss more tonight on radio.

— Mark R. Levin (@marklevinshow) [December 2, 2020](#)

U.S. Senator Rand Paul tweeted, “I first met Walter Williams when I was 17. I’ll never forget his speech about conservation, that there is rarely a shortage of things privately owned! RIP to a brilliant and important voice for Liberty.”

“Wow, what a punch in the gut. I am told that one of my heroes, Dr. Walter Williams, passed away. Walter had an enormous influence on me, from the time I was 13-years old; he was my first guest on Life, Liberty & Levin. I’ll discuss more tonight on radio,” talk show host Mark Levin wrote on Twitter.

Texas Senator Ted Cruz wrote on Twitter, “Very sad news. Walter Williams was legendary. He was brilliant, incisive, witty, and profound. I grew up reading him, and he was a ferocious defender of free markets and a powerful explainer of the virtues of Liberty.”

The wisdom of Walter Williams.... pic.twitter.com/Ao03AJTyZu

— judy morris (@judymorris3) [December 2, 2020](#)

Conservative writer Ben Shapiro tweeted, “Walter Williams was an amazing person and thinker. RIP.”

Thomas Sowell wrote, “There was a time when the black conservative community would have consisted of me and Walter Williams. I know Walter used to say the two of us should never fly on the same plane otherwise the whole movement will disappear if the plane goes down.”

Williams, Who Held Many Degrees, Authored Dozens of Publications Over His Lifetime

Walter Williams DESTROYS Myth that Minimum Wage Prevents Poverty No economist of modern times has challenged and overturned more wrong-headed economic thinking than Walter Williams. For forty years he’s argued against the illogic of the minimum wage, racial quotas, occupational licensing as well as the welfare state. What drives his liberal critics crazy is his provocative argument that these government interventions hurt the very...2020-10-06T17:38:14Z

According to his website, Williams was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He held many degrees: “a B.A. in economics from California State University, Los Angeles, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in economics from UCLA. He also holds a Doctor of Humane Letters from Virginia Union University and Grove City College, Doctor of Laws from Washington and Jefferson College and Doctor Honoris Causa en Ciencias Sociales from Universidad Francisco Marroquin, in Guatemala, where he is also Professor Honorario.”

Dr. Williams “served on the faculty of George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, as John M. Olin Distinguished Professor of Economics, since 1980; from 1995 to 2001, he served as department chairman. He has also served on the faculties of Los Angeles City College, California State University Los Angeles, and Temple University in Philadelphia, and Grove City College, Grove City, Pa.,” his bio says.

He authored more than 150 publications in various scholarly journals over his lifetime, according to the website. He wrote 10 books, including, *America: A Minority Viewpoint*, *The State Against Blacks*, *All It Takes Is Guts*, *South Africa's War Against Capitalism*, which was later revised for South African publication, *Do the Right Thing: The People's Economist Speaks*, *More Liberty Means Less Government*, *Liberty vs. the Tyranny of Socialism*, *Up From The Projects: An Autobiography*, *Race and Economics: How Much Can Be Blamed On Discrimination?* and *American Contempt for Liberty*.

The bio notes his many radio and television appearances and says he occasionally filled in as host on the Rush Limbaugh show. He also wrote a nationally syndicated column and was part of a documentary.

“Dr. Williams serves as Emeritus Trustee at Grove City College and the Reason Foundation. He serves as Director for the Chase Foundation and Americans for Prosperity. He also serves on numerous advisory boards including: Cato Institute, Landmark Legal Foundation, Institute of Economic Affairs, and Heritage Foundation. Dr. Williams serves as Distinguished Affiliated Scholar at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University,” continues the bio.