Dear Dr. Ronald W. Walters...

A collection of tribute letters celebrating political scholarship and activism.

April 2011
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Dr. Ronald Walters was internationally known for his expertise on the issues of African-American leadership and politics, his writing and his media savvy. Serving 15 of his 25 years at Howard University as the Chariman of the Political Science Department, he later left Howard to join the University of Maryland College Park, where he was a Distinguished Leadership Scholar and Director of the African American Leadership Institute at the James Mac Gregor Burns Academy of Leadership and a Professor in Government and Politics. Walters retired from the University in June of 2009. Dr. Walters had recently formally rejoined the Howard academic community as a Senior Research Fellow. In his career, he also served as Assistant Professor at Syracuse University; Assistant Professor and Chair, Black Studies Department, Brandeis University; Visiting Professor, Princeton University; and Fellow, Institute of Politics at Harvard University.

Beginning in 1971, Dr. Walters also advised members of the newly established Congressional Black Caucus and was a member of its Political Participation and Foreign Affairs Brain Trusts as well as the Action Alert Network. He subsequently served as Senior Staff to Rep. Charles C. Diggs, Jr. (D-MI) and Rep. William Gray (D-PA).


Dr. Walters is the winner of many awards, including an Honorary Doctorate from Fisk University; Citation from the Governor of Maryland; The Distinguished Faculty Award from Howard University; "Alumnus of the Year" by the School of International Service of the American University; and Distinguished Faculty Award from the University of Maryland. He also served as Faculty Trustee at Howard University.

Dr. Walters was 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 *Charlie Rose Show*, *Bill Moyers Journal* and many local and national radio shows. Dr. Walters also wrote a weekly syndicated opinion column for the National Newspaper Publisher's Association News Service.

Dr. Walters is survived by his wife, Patricia Turner Walters; his brothers Duane, Terry and Kevin; sisters Marcia and Sharon; a host of relatives; and cherished friends and colleagues.
March 23, 2011

Dear Ron:

Thank you for taking the Long Walk with the Howard University community, and playing a pivotal role in its development as one of our nation’s premier universities. In my addresses to the Howard community, I always stress that the essence of the university is found in faculty members who create its intellectual and cultural identity and shape the academic program.

Since I assumed the presidency of Howard, I have had an opportunity to reflect on your life and legacy with your faculty colleagues and many others whose lives you touched through your diverse and sustained scholarly, leadership and service activities. The awareness that I had of you and your scholarship was enriched as a result of the many conversations with your associates and friends. There is broad and deep appreciation for you and the contributions that you made to Howard University, the African American community, our nation and the global community.

During your long tenure at Howard, you helped define its future and enhance its academic programs through your exemplary scholarship, mentorship of undergraduate and graduate students, leadership of university initiatives, and public service and advocacy. You joined the Howard family in the early 1970s when the university was entering a renaissance period and enriching its faculty with young scholars who would assume leadership of the major academic units and ensure their continued development in the higher education community. You joined the Political Science Department, became chair, and helped develop an impressive cadre of doctoral, masters and bachelors degree recipients. Today, these individuals hold professorships in our nation’s top research universities, occupy senior executive, legislative and judicial positions, and are leaders in private corporations and non-profit agencies. I thank you for leaving a legacy and scholarly profile that we can model for current and future members of the Howard University community as we implement Howard’s unique mission in response to the critical needs of our community.
We will do our best to continue in the tradition that you left for us – striving for excellence in all that we do; asking the great questions whose answers advance the human condition; ensuring that our scholarship has practical applications and serves the needs of the under-served and under-represented; helping to mature organizations and institutions that advance the democratic character of our nation, and mentoring students and preparing them to assume leadership roles.

I thank your wife Pat and your family for the sacrifices that they made with you as you developed your scholarship and did the community’s essential work. You were part of our nation’s greatest generation that led the Civil Rights Movement, redefined our nation’s political, economic and social systems, and liberated oppressed nations and peoples. It was important that other members of that generation, such as former President William Jefferson Clinton, the Honorable John Conyers, Jr., Maxine Waters, and Eleanor Holmes-Norton; Vernon Jordan; and Reverend Jesse Jackson, Jr.; spoke eloquently of your unique contributions over more than 40 years of service. Pat reminds us that through it all, no matter your location on local, national or international stages, you always reminded audiences of your connection to Howard University and how much it meant to you.

Thank you dear son of Howard for all that you did for so many.

In unity,

Sidney A. Ribeau
President
March 22, 2011

Each of us in our lifetime can say we have come across interesting people, but few of us can say we have had the pleasure of knowing extraordinary people who exemplify true brilliance coupled with everyday common sense – that when brought together, creates a person of substance, character, integrity and humility.

That is the person I found in Ron Walters. Ron was a true Servant Leader.

Ron was an exemplary scholar and social and political strategist. It was not unusual to find Ron debating a provocative political or social issue with some of the most astute political minds on “Meet the Press,” or watching him discuss the rudiments of grassroots community organizing on a local cable television program. He was not only comfortable, but well versed in the company of political scientists or a gathering of social workers.

One of Ron's greatest strengths is that he was “everyman” and that he could juxtapose his life and professional experiences with anyone, anywhere in any political or social arena in which he found himself. Most importantly he loved to teach and share with others especially the students.

I became acquainted with Ron when he was a political scientist at Howard University. His visionary approach to addressing social, racial and political matters led him to create the framework for a national discussion on Black Issues. I was inspired by the paradigm he designed and his unwavering determination to make a difference. Walter Fauntleroy and I adopted his model and developed Black Issues conventions, particularly in my home state of New Jersey. These conventions facilitated conversations and strategic planning for African American community empowerment at the local level. Some communities continue to convene today. That was Ron’s concept of change, using a national stage to address Black issues applicable to every community in America.

Ron was also instrumental in establishing the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation...for that we are all truly grateful. It is through his vision that we continue our work as public servants and for me as Chairman of CBCF continuing the legacy of Developing Leaders that was so important to Ron.

I am so honored and humbled to have met, conversed, and help chart a course for a different America as seen through his eyes, mine, and others. It is upon his shoulders so many of us stand. His legacy of democracy and justice for all is enshrined in the annals of history. He left his imprint on America. America is a better place, because Ron Walters passed through.
April 5, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters:

On election night, November 2010, I found myself saying, “WWRS—What Would Ron Say”. For so many years, we relied on your wise counsel and intellect to help us decipher and analyze political events. Suddenly, one day you were no longer here, and there was no one to fill the empty space. I am certain I am not alone in feeling that your leaving left a big void in the black political world.

I am pleased that I had the opportunity to know you and call you my friend. I grew professionally as a result of our friendship. Thank you for taking the time to work with the CBCF interns and fellows and for your service as chair of our Council of Academic Advisors. You would respond in the affirmative when we asked you to conduct a session, review a document, or speak to a group. I could also depend on your sage advice, which you often sent through emails to alert me of things I should do or things I should know.

In our last email correspondence, you were so excited about your return to Howard University. You stated that you were looking forward to participating in the Town Hall at our conference because it would be your “coming out as a ‘new’ member of the Howard University faculty.” You said, “I am traveling slow, but still traveling.” I am sorry you did not make it back to the classroom, but Pat brought you back to Howard for your homegoing.

Some of us have talked about who will fill the void, but we have concluded that no one person can fill your shoes. Nevertheless, I can hear you saying to us, “the work must be done and someone has to do it.” I am certain I speak for my fellow black political scientists when I say, we have learned so many valuable lessons from you, and we will work to both preserve and build upon your legacy.

Sincerely,

Elsie L. Scott, Ph.D.
President & CEO
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
March 11, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters:

As Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, I am humbled to pay tribute to you, a trailblazer whose efforts helped shape our beloved Caucus. Your life-long crusade for social justice has personally inspired and empowered me. You were the epitome of a social engineer and model of personal and professional success that we can only hope to emulate.

You served our nation with excellence from the front lines of sit-ins and rallies. As an activist, you organized desegregation efforts during the civil rights movement. As a scholar, you were a model of academic excellence and a distinguished faculty member at some of our nation’s most esteemed colleges and universities. As an author, you tackled difficult issues and injected your unique perspective into the national political discourse.

Your professional accomplishments were many, and you never lost sight of your objective—to empower the African American community, and provide a different voice in politics and government. Dr. Walters: you were the epitome of a social engineer, as well as a model of personal and professional success that we all can only strive to one day emulate.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and community that mourn the loss of a tremendous legend and an amazing legacy.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Chairman
Dear Dr. Walters,

You were both a dear friend and colleague, and like many in the Congressional Black Caucus, I was privileged to have been touched by your life and work. I write this letter to pay tribute to the amazing vision and monumental work you brilliantly displayed throughout your life.

Your contributions to our society were numerous and varied. Your intellectual brilliance and activism reached far and wide. Although we will not have your physical presence, your legacy will live on through your many writings and teachings.

You have been described in so many ways; a "public intellectual, writer, civil rights activist, and political guru," as Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton has articulated; "a reliable and brilliant mentor;" as Congressman Elijah Cummings stated; and "the W.E.B. DuBois of our time," as Congressman Bobby Rush has written.

But, there really is no one appropriate way to sum you up, Dr. Walters. You are one of the few activists and scholars I know who served his community and country as a true life’s calling coupled with an insatiable passion to uplift the African American community.

It was because of your passion and your stalwart efforts that allowed Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr.’s presidential campaign to showcase to the world the strength and legitimacy of African American leadership. Reverend Jackson once described you as "the tallest tree in the forest of activists, political scientists."

And now that you are gone, among other things, your once highly-anticipated, regular participation on our Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference Judiciary Braintrust panels will be greatly missed. The annual “conversation” on criminal justice reform and its profound impact on African Americans that my colleagues and I once shared with you will never be the same without your brilliant insight and perspective.

You taught and consistently reminded us all about the unreserved fortitude one must have in the fight for civil rights. And as such, Dr. Walters, you will be greatly missed. With these lessons learned, we can only hope to continue your work and ultimately bring your vision for equal justice to complete fruition.

Sincerely,

John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress
Tribute to Dr. Ronald "Ron" Walters, the Great Leader and Scholar

Dear Dr. Walters,

It is an honor for me to reflect on the life you led and the impact you had on mine.

From an early age, it was clear that your destiny would alter the lives of so many others and would improve the welfare of countless individuals and families throughout our country.

As the organizer of one of the earliest lunch counter sit-ins in Wichita in 1958, your demonstration set a precedent for civil rights activism and laid a significant mark on the civil rights movement.

Your true impact on the civil rights struggle and movement for equality in our country can not be contained in just one action some years ago, however. As an author, an advisor, an activist, a commentator, and perhaps most importantly, a teacher, the impact that you had on blacks throughout our nation carries on in the hearts and minds of so many today.

As one of the founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus in the early 1970s, I know your leadership laid a foundation for the establishment of our caucus. Where our caucus originally formed with a group of only 13 members, we now boast over 40. And one of our former members now serves as President, the first African-American to do so. Our accomplishments as a caucus and as a prominent voice for African-Americans in Congress are a testament to your unrelenting mission to secure greater representation and equality for our people.

While it is difficult for me to contain within the confines of a page the total impact you had, I take solace in knowing that your vision and tireless ethic fueled the achievements of so many black leaders throughout our nation and will continue to serve as a source of wisdom for our posterity.

Sincerely Yours,

CHARLES B. RANGEL
March 4, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters,

I want to personally thank you for the many outstanding contributions you made to the American society through your research, knowledge and work in the field of political science. When I tell people about you, I tell them that you are a man who had the uncanny ability to make otherwise complex issues seem as plain as day. I am certain there are thousands of your students and people who have read your books who possess a richer understanding of American politics because of you.

We in the Congressional Black Caucus can never forget the work you did that helped to provide a framework for our organization. But more importantly, your political insights and the hands-on training you provided to many young black political operatives had much to do with increasing the numbers of people of color who now serve in the United States Congress as anything else.

Dr. Walters, your imprint on society will be a lasting one. Your contributions to the hopes and aspirations of African Americans will endure for years to come. If there is anyone who deserves to rest on their laurels, you certainly are one. Thank you for a life well lived.

Sincerely,

Edolphus "Ed" Towns
Member of Congress
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

March 4, 2011

Ronald Walters
c/o Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.
1720 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Walters:

The human and personal qualities of my friend, Ron Walters, so complemented his brilliance that he became sought after as an analyst because many found him persuasive and admirable in spite of themselves. For me, though, Ron was a bellwether who always helped me clarify my own thinking and ideas whenever I heard him speak or read his work. I saw Ron’s human qualities on display not long before he passed, at my Roundtable entitled, Black Men & Employment: What Black Men Need to Do in the Toughest Job Market in History. Ron had called to decline because he was not feeling well, but I prevailed on him to come and lead the forum. There was simply no one who could do it as well. Ron generously agreed to come, and he did not disappoint. He stayed throughout the Roundtable to answer questions from the panel that he led and to hear from the audience. Ron was too compassionate and responsive to others to leave after his own remarks. That evening, I saw the full man who so many of us loved, not only the public intellectual, writer, civil rights activist and political guru. Few have been able to play all these roles so credibly at the same time.

When I learned of Ron’s passing, we were in the process of setting a date for me to speak at the launching of a book he co-edited that demonstrated the breadth of his scholarship, entitled Democratic Destiny and the District of Columbia, for which I wrote the introduction. Ever the social and political critic, this collection of essays is a critique of the District’s struggle for democracy in the post-home-rule era of self-government. This volume is further evidence that Ron’s searching mind knew no limits.

The American public, which often looked to Ron Walters for guidance on how to think about the tough issues of our time, has lost a wise guide and crusader for justice. With deep personal sadness, I have lost a good and unforgettable friend.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress
April 5, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters:

Oh, how you are missed. I often find myself looking for your informed, insightful, and inspiring voice as I represent my constituents, work toward the nation’s wellbeing, and advocate for people who are struggling everywhere. Of course, I can’t pick up the phone and call you anymore, but your words, writings, and teachings have stayed with me and contributed to the work I’ve championed throughout my career.

We forged a fast and lasting friendship when we met during Rev. Jesse Jackson’s groundbreaking run for the presidency of the United States in 1984. Rev. Jackson would often have us join hands and gather in a circle of prayer to reflect on the tough path ahead as we worked to build a true ‘Rainbow Coalition’. But you were always one step ahead of us, always had it figured out, always had the strategy, the implementation, and the written materials ready to go.

That campaign, and our work again in 1988, didn’t go the way we wanted, but it gave us a sense of hope about how far we had come, and what was possible for the future.

You were a first-class civil rights activist, journalist, scholar, writer, and thinker. You had this amazing ability to take complex issues, break them down, and let our community know why they were important. As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Congressional Black Caucus, your legacy is especially recognized and appreciated.

But of all the things you accomplished in your life, for everything I and the many people whose lives you touched and inspired learned from you, I will remember you most as ‘friend’.

Like I said at your homegoing service, I continue to look for your voice. And even though we can’t be together right now and speak like we used to, I know I’ll hear from you, for your words, as they did during your lifetime, transcend time and speak to what’s right for our community and right for our country. May you continue to rest in peace.

Sincerely, your friend,

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress
March 11, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters,

Our country finds itself at a critical juncture in its quest to become a more perfect union. At similar points in our history, we relied on thoughtful, incisive leadership from great thinkers to could guide us forward. From that day when you stood up for justice and equality at a Wichita drug store 53 years ago, our nation drew on your courage and intellect to see us through some of its darkest days. Today, we find ourselves yearning for that type of leadership.

Growing up in Wichita, Kansas, you learned from an early age how the United States often failed to live up to the ideals inscribed in our founding document. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were not always available to a young African American growing up in America’s heartland. Despite the great odds against a young black man from Wichita changing the country, you did exactly that, and left a legacy that many will cherish.

Two years before the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-ins that many credit as starting the civil rights movement, you organized the local N.A.A.C.P. chapter to sit-in at a Wichita drug store, forcing the owner to serve black customers for the first time. This would be the first of many moments where you made a difference in the world.

After graduating from Fisk University and earning an M.A. and Ph.D. from American University, you taught at some of the most prestigious universities in the country, helping generations of Americans develop an understanding of the connection between race and politics. And without you, we may not have the first black President in the White House today.

Your work helping to found the Congressional Black Caucus and management of Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaign in 1984 proved that there was a role for African Americans on the national political landscape. You helped remind the country that we are our brother’s keeper, and that the well-being of the African American community is important not just to black Americans, but to all Americans.

I hope that your writings and teachings will inspire future generations of Americans to speak out when they see injustice, stand up for what is right even in the face of insurmountable odds. We will not forget the indelible mark you left on America, and I hope we do not have to wait long for the next Dr. Ron Walters to emerge and move the country closer to perfection.

Sincerely,

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

bishop.email@mail.house.gov  •  www.house.gov/bishop
Dr. Ronald Walters passing was a true loss to our community and nation. I was deeply saddened by this loss. He was an individual who touched many people's lives, he also contributed a great deal to his community and the Congressional Black Caucus. Dr. Ronald Walters served as director of the African American Leadership Institute and Scholar Practitioner Program which clearly displayed his years of hard work, persistence and determination. He was able to put his knowledge and forthcomings to work for a great cause. He was a political analyst, but also a teacher, mentor and author. Dr. Ronald Walters published more than 100 academic articles and authored several award-winning books.

Dr. Ronald Walters was the example of success, and where hard work and determination can get you, not only a political analyst but a friend and a colleague. We have all lost a great deal in the passing of Dr. Ronald Walters but his legacy will live on through his work, friends, family and the CBC

With kindest regards, I am

Corrine Brown
Member of Congress
Dear Dr. Walters,

It is my great honor to join the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and Howard University in this much-deserved tribute to your life and work. In every aspect of your career as a civil rights leader, academic, author, commentator, and political advisor, you ably promoted the causes of fairness, justice, and equal opportunity, and it is fitting that you are being honored today by these two great institutions.

In virtually every aspect of your life, you were a pioneer. You organized the first sit-in in the country at the Dockum Drug Store in Wichita in 1958, which successfully desegregated Wichita drugstores and became the model for non-violent resistance across the country. You advocated health care reform and a two state solution to the Middle East conflict before the former became a reality and the latter became the accepted end goal of the peace process. As the campaign manager of Rev. Jesse Jackson’s two presidential campaigns and the author of Black Presidential Politics in America: A Strategic Approach, which won the Ralph Bunche Award, you laid the groundwork for a successful African American presidential candidacy. As an advisor to Congressmen Charles Diggs and William Gray, one of my predecessors as Majority Whip, you laid the groundwork for the Congressional Black Caucus, which has done so much to advance the interests of African Americans and other underserved communities in Congress.

Now more than ever, we need thoughtful and passionate leaders like you to help ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to get a good education, maintain a well-paying job, and have the chance to live the American Dream. Your legacy of service and scholarship will endure.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely,

James E. Clyburn
Assistant Democratic Leader
March 3, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters,

Words can not express my gratitude for your trailblazing leadership, resilience, and selfless devotion to public service and our nation. As an activist, scholar, professor, political analyst, mentor, and friend, you epitomized the best of what I strive to be daily—an American who is fully committed to democracy, equality, and justice, unapologetically.

As a champion for the progress and advancement of people of the African Diaspora, you approached racial issues with courage and vehemence. Helping to lay the groundwork for the formation of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1970, you charged us to go push beyond the rhetoric and actually implement policies that would change the landscape and future of the African American community.

While changes in discriminatory laws and racial ideologies have increased socioeconomic and educational opportunities for people of the African Diaspora, the African-American community continues to face ongoing systematic inequalities in the 21st century, reminiscent of our nation’s past. It is through the gallant work of historians, teachers, and advocates, like you, that the next generation is equipped with the knowledge and tools to combat persistent disparities which will result in a stronger African-American community and nation.

It is on the shoulders of giants like you that all Americans are forever indebted to. Thank you for your service to our country. With warm personal regards, I remain,

Sincerely,

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress
March 3, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters:

For many years, you have toiled tirelessly in the vineyard. Your level of commitment to all peoples of the African Diaspora is without measure. It was early in your career that we gave due credit for your leadership in desegregating the Dockum Drug Store in Wichita, Kansas more than five decades ago. This selfless act was the 2-year precursor before the sit-ins at Greensboro, North Carolina; which received far more publicity but nonetheless, originated from a movement that you began.

Well before you became a reputable scholar with vast expertise in African-American politics, you were a masterful strategist who made a significant mark on the American civil rights movement. But it was through your empirical research that led to advancement on sensitive issues such as race, politics, and the economy that will carry us into perpetuity. Through these writings, our nation has been left a roadmap for hope on racial restoration and reconciliation.

What fond memories come to immediate recollection is your commitment to work alongside the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus. You have faithfully participated in the Annual Legislative Conference Workshops since its 1970 inception - imparting wisdom with those seeking to better understand the legislative process. Rarely can you find an individual who has devoted his life to the betterment of helping others. Without a doubt, you set the bar for such standards of others to follow.

Whether or not the history books will write the untold story of your contribution to enriching the lives of all Americans, let this letter reflect how I believe you have done just that. Your personable touch of serving as a resource for fellow CBC Colleagues and me will not be forgotten. We shall never forget your helpfulness in guiding the direction for redistricting, civil rights, as well as carrying the mantel for social justice. And, you did so in the energetic way for which we will always remember Ronald Walters.

Sincerely,

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress
Dear Dr. Walters:

What a bittersweet privilege it is to pen my last letter in tribute to you, my friend, as I’m overwhelmed with a wealth of rich memories of our time together. I remember our joy in sharing stories about our families’ triumphs and challenges and I, also, remember those uncomfortable moments when an issue we fought hard for didn’t come to pass—at least as quickly as we thought it should. But, now, as I harken back to the numerous experiences that I have shared with you over the course of the last two decades and beyond, my heart settles on the moments that I benefitted from your sage counsel as my friend and political mentor.

I’ll never forget the thrill and the passion of those of us who watched your brilliant political skills play out on the national stage during the historic presidential run of our friend, Rev. Jesse Jackson. In many ways, I will always believe that the vision that you, me and others have for what African American leadership can do in our nation to move our country forward helped lay the groundwork for the historic campaign, and victory, of President Barack Obama.

Ron, as I think of those ‘big’ moments I also think of the small but important ones, too, as I recall the counsel and support you gave me shortly after I was elected to serve in Congress in January, 1993. Likewise, as a CBC member and a former and current board member of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, your kind outreach and support was always a cherished and invaluable gift.

As Christians, we know that while our temporal lives on Earth are numbered, our spirits will live on, at the right side of our Heavenly Father, for eternity. Brother Ron, I know that’s where you are right now. And while I and so many others miss your loving guidance, I rest in the comfort of knowing that you are at peace and that your legacy will live on.

My wife, Carolyn, and I are forever available to your family, especially your wife, Patricia Ann, as they carry on the rich legacy the two of you have left our nation. I love you, my friend. You meant the world to me and I will never forget you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress
April 5, 2011

Mrs. Patricia Turner Walters
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mrs. Walters:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to offer my comments on the legacy of your late husband’s work as a scholar and participant in the political life of our country.

Dr. Ronald William Walters’ influence on political thought was valued by both politicians and intellectuals. He was intimately involved in history and not just an observer. As a leader in the youth council of the Wichita, Kansas NAACP, he helped organize one of the first sit-ins at a lunch counter in the United States. He was instrumental in developing the framework for the Congressional Black Caucus following the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, when large numbers of African Americans began winning seats in Congress. As Senior Advisor to the Rev. Jesse Jackson in his Presidential campaigns, he learned more about our nation’s struggle with race and politics. His analysis in *White Nationalism, Black Interests: Conservative Public Policy and the Black Community* was sadly proven in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

His legacy continues in the lives of the scholars, community activists and politicians he shaped and molded and in the ideas he so eloquently expressed concerning race, politics and social justice in America. His contributions to the work of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies helped establish this organization as the premier think tank for the concerns of African American and other communities of color. He will be sorely missed but his work continues in the actions of each of us honoring his memory today.

Very truly yours,

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress

RCS/mk
March 30, 2011

Dr. Ronald Walters
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
1720 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Dr. Walters:

I am extremely pleased that during the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation/Howard University symposium to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), we are paying tribute to the enduring legacy of Dr. Ronald Walters as an internationally known scholar and author. It is fitting that we celebrate the indelible mark Dr. Walters made on the CBC. I was blessed to be mentored and advised by him and to have his friendship.

Sincerely,

Melvin L. Watt
Dear Dr. Walters;

It is indeed an honor to write and share reflections upon your life, legacy and the influence you had in the lives of countless Americans.

Dr. Ronald Walters, as a man of superior intellect you never shied away from sharing your knowledge with others – be they students, colleagues, politicians, friends or family. Your keen understanding of national and world events allowed you to see beyond the headlines and delve deeper into the issues at hand. Your comprehension of the political landscape proved to be invaluable to people who sought your expertise. And this in turn made you a much sought-after commentator.

Like many of your inquisitive students, admiring colleagues and the rising politicians who sought your counsel, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be schooled – though from a distance – by you. The lessons you taught - and which I learned – continue to influence and inform my career in public life.

Please know Dr. Walters, that your legacy is reflected in the lives of those who have chosen the path of education and public service. Your life itself is indeed a gift for generations to come.

Thank you for sharing yourself with those who sought a mentor and role model to help us navigate the politics of race. Your critical analysis of Black politics proved particularly invaluable to us as members of the Congressional Black Caucus. We heard a lot and we learned a lot. The success we enjoy today can be traced directly to your influence in our lives.

Very truly yours,

Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress
March 4, 2011

For the past seventy two years, our country has been blessed by the contributions to it from Dr. Ronald Walter. As an educator, a civil rights activist, and as a mentor to the citizens and leaders of this Nation, Dr. Walter left a lasting impact on the development of our country. Dr. Walter, through his work and his impact, was a fighter for justice and equality.

Whether it was in the classroom, on a campaign, or in conversation, Dr. Walter was at all times a teacher in the purest sense of the word. He was a true advocate for social justice, and it was from that commitment upon which he built his entire life. His teachings captivated those who knew him and millions across America that never met him.

It was the courage and conviction from the early civil rights leaders, like Dr. Walters, that led to the triumphs of a Nation and changed the mindset of generations. Along with many of my colleagues, I am eternally grateful for not only his words and teachings, but also for the opportunities that his example and accomplishments provided for African Americans.

Thru his words, his accomplishments, and teachings, Dr. Walter continues to live on in the hearts and minds of an entire Nation, and it is one of the great honors of my life to be able to say: my friend, Dr. Walter.

With the passing of Dr. Walter, America lost one of its most remarkable scholars, but through his life, our country benefited from one of its most extraordinary teachers.

Very Truly Yours,

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress
March 4, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters,

When you made your homegoing last year, our country lost a moral and intellectual giant. Your quiet, humble nature belied the scope of your mind and the breadth of your interests. I was saddened to see you go, but so honored to know you. However, I am comforted by the fact that you will not suffer any more from the cancer that took your life.

And what a life it was. You were that rare combination of activist and academic. You were as comfortable discussing the most complex aspects of policy and culture as you were laying out the nuts-and-bolts tactics of a political campaign - equal parts street-corner-strategist and ivory-tower-theorist.

In that vein, the greatest testament to your work is the extent to which your ideas and pursuits have manifested themselves in changed realities and beliefs in our country. You were a champion of comprehensive health care for all Americans and for a two-state solution in the Middle East before either proposal was accepted by the mainstream. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, yours was a clear voice for the poor and left-behind citizens of the region, calling on our government to live up to its promise by looking out for the least of those among us.

On the political side, you were one of the chief architects of my father's presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988. While Reverend Jackson ultimately did not win the presidency, the campaigns literally changed the face of American electoral politics by inviting millions of new voters into the process and inspiring a generation of political leaders, strategists and activists.

In your role on my father's campaigns, you were the driving force behind the adoption of proportional allocation of delegates in the Democratic primary system. That shift made our nomination process fairer and more "small-d" democratic, and laid the groundwork for 2008's epic, historic contest between then-Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama.

Indeed, President Obama's ascent from the Illinois State Senate, to United States Senator, to the first African-American Commander-in-Chief would not have been possible without the pioneering work of so many who came before him, with you at the head of that class.
Throughout your long career, you never forgot the practical, everyday work that needed to be done on behalf of all Americans to make our country a better place. Early in your life, you participated in one of the very first lunch-counter sit-ins at the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement, in your hometown of Wichita, Kansas. Later, you were a key confidant of Rep. Charles Diggs of Michigan, the first chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. Until your final days, you were in constant contact with CBC members and our staffs, and we were so very grateful for your wise counsel and deep insights. If the CBC is the conscience of the Congress, as many have said, then you were our moral, spiritual and intellectual backbone.

I will miss your friendship and guidance, and our country will miss the prophetic role you played in our political and intellectual life. I only wish there were more giants like you to lean on.

With deepest regard and profound respect,

[Signature]

Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress
April 5, 2011

Mrs. Patricia Ann Walters

Dear Mrs. Walters:

I am writing in tribute to your late husband, Dr. Ronald Walters, an internationally renowned and respected political scientist, educator, writer, commentator and activist.

Dr. Walters loved his family, politics, intellectual pursuits and helping others. He was a distinguished, accomplished, educated gentleman who, by his personal example, encouraged a love of learning and demonstrated the importance of uplifting others. His work as an educator was exceptional. In addition to his work as an educator, his leadership, vision and passion for excellence motivated those whose lives he touched.

Dr. Walters, my professor at Howard University, was a mentor to me and many other students. He challenged us, demanded the best from us and was a hard grader. He saw in me qualities that I did not see in myself; and he consistently told me what I needed to hear, not just what I wanted to hear. I am grateful and honored that this brilliant and caring man was a part of my life.

Dr. Walters leaves a legacy of integrity, excellence in education, hard work, active participation in the political process and dedicated service to the public. You may be assured that his absence is being felt by countless persons - family, friends, colleagues, former students, government and business leaders, and ordinary citizens - who had the privilege of knowing and being inspired by him. Dr. Walters has left this world a better place than the one that existed when he was born.

Sincerely,

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress
March 7, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank you for all of your years of guiding legislators, policymakers and advocates across our nation and beyond. Your contributions and service in scholarship and politics have enhanced the lives of African Americans, indeed all Americans, as well as people of African descent all over the world.

We first met when you chaired the first Presidential campaign of Reverend Jesse Jackson and I was honored to be one of your lieutenants as chair of the Virgin Islands campaign. Your strong and visionary leadership, long known to many of us, impressed the world. In a very real sense it was your leadership that paved the way for the swearing in of Barack Obama as the 44th president of our nation.

Because of your fierce determination to ensure that we were prepared to lead our nation as racism and conservative extremism raised their ugly heads to cast a shadow over the presidency of the first African American President, Barack Obama, we did not realize just how ill you were. Your leaving us was untimely, but your legacy is timeless.

Your legacy lives on as we see and continue to walk in the footprints that you have left in education and politics. I thank you for all that you have done. We are better for your having walked our way.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Donna M. Christensen
March 4, 2011

Dr. Ronald Walters
C/O Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.
1720 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Walters:

I know as you read these tributes you must be experiencing very mixed feelings. Your concerns about the uneven and sometimes even retrograde pace of history have proven once again prescient. Luckily your life has set an example of how the actions of ordinary Americans set the long-term direction for the development of our democracy.

Your vision for the CBC envisioned the blending of analysis and action, advocacy and strategy, education and experience, unity and diversity. We are still striving toward that vision and the Caucus continues to make progress towards many of the goals you advocated: directly addressing the great persistent disparities faced by African Americans, universal health care and a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Your legacy is felt in every corner of America today, and I am proud to say that there is a little piece of Ron Walters in my heart and my being – to which I strive to be true. More importantly I take great strength from the fact that new generations of Black America continue to study your works and follow your example of political action and empowerment.

We miss you, please keep on smiling down on us Ron!

Sincerely,

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

DKD:ic
Dear Ron:

From sit-in protests in 1958 to becoming one of the leading scholar activists to manage two presidential campaigns for Rev. Jesse Jackson, you have dedicated your life to the “liberation of Black people” as you would say, and for that, I am grateful. We all are grateful. America is grateful.

As a former chair and longstanding member of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), I understand and deeply appreciate your many years of hard work to help build a solid foundation from which the CBC could thrive and advocate for the interests and concerns of people of African descent. It was a distinct privilege to place a resolution in your honor for your many personal and professional accomplishments aimed at advancing the cause of liberation for people of African descent in the United States and across the globe. The CBC remains the conscience of Congress and I thank you for your consistent and wise counsel.

I especially want to thank you for helping Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick and myself come up with the theme for the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference in the 110th Congress. As co-chairs of that weekend, we wanted a meaningful and progressive framework and you helped us come up with “Change Course, Confront Crisis, Continue the Legacy.” For that, we are deeply grateful.

Your invaluable insight and scholarly activism have contributed significantly to our understanding of the intersection of race, politics, and policy. As a professor, your several books on African American politics will forever shape the discipline. As an activist, your legacy of grassroots engagement and protest for civil rights will continue to guide our push for peace, equality, and freedom. As an organizer, you have used your power to create the National Congress of Black Faculty and the National Black Independent Political Party as well as actively participate in several other organizations with a mission of unrelenting advocacy for justice.

Ron, we will always be indebted to you for your unequivocal leadership and uncompromising character in standing up for oppressed communities. You are our hero, our scholarly giant who stood tall and strong for those who needed a lift. We now stand on your shoulders and will continue the journey for peace and justice.

Thank you for your friendship and support throughout the years. I miss you tremendously. You and your legacy will never be forgotten.

Sincerely,

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress
Dr. Ron Walters  
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation  
1720 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Walters:

No letter can capture all you have done for your country, but I can express my highest appreciation and admiration for your work and leadership. You have been a devoted advocate and leader in issues that have greatly affected the African American community, and broader society. In your quest to seek equal rights and empower under-served communities you have become a notable activist in the fight for civil rights while shaping Black politics and the minds of young scholars.

America is forever indebted to you for being one of the original creators of the Congressional Black Caucus. Your ideas have facilitated African American members to work collectively to advance critical issues that greatly impact our community.

What is more, your leadership is not confined to the African American community, but instead your intellectual contributions have helped engineer the good conscience of contemporary America. As an educator you have made notable contributions to Georgetown, Syracuse, Brandeis Universities, the University of Maryland and my alma matter, Howard University. Your more than 100 publications will inspire students, law-makers, and communities for years to come.

You have made a significant impact that will never be forgotten and you have been an example for many generations. No words can convey my appreciation, I can only say, “thank you.”

Sincerely,

Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress
March 4, 2011

Mrs. Patricia Turner Walters
c/o The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
1720 Massachusetts Avenue – NW

Washington, DC  20036

Dear Mrs. Walters:

It is my honor to join in the tributes to your late husband, my friend and mentor, Dr. Ron Walters.

As a proud alumnus of the University of Maryland, I am especially thankful for Dr. Walters’ tremendous contributions as a historian, lecturer and prolific author who brought great honor to our university’s acclaimed African American Research Institute.

Dr. Walters also provided invaluable assistance to my father, former Congressman Bill Clay, and the 12 other founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971. He was a true visionary, who foresaw the possibility of advancement to the highest levels of power for persons of color and helped lay the intellectual foundation which made that possible.

From his courage as a young civil rights protestor, to his eminence as a scholar, Dr. Walters lived a life full of purpose and long-lasting achievements. His legacy among the other giants of our movement is secure for all time. And I will always be thankful for his friendship.

May God bless you and your family, and may your dear husband’s memory continue to inspire generations of Americans to come.

Sincerely,

Wm. Lacy Clay

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress
March 8, 2011

Tribute to Dr. Ronald Walters Legacy

I want to extend to you my deepest condolences on the passing of our beloved colleague, Dr. Ronald Walters. The loss of an acquaintance is difficult under any circumstance, but more so when the personality and causes he fought for loom larger than life. I am delighted to have had the opportunity to know Dr. Walters and saddened that his life has ended, depriving us all of his wisdom, and integrity.

The dedication to his cause to right the injustices he witnessed in life by sharing through education and teaching our youth, put these events in the minds of his students and into our history. The lives he changed through his courage during the segregationist era, and his generosity will long be remembered.

We as a Nation, thank him for his dedication and contributions in the political arena. He shall continue to be acknowledged and appreciated because he made a tremendous difference. Few, if any of us, have not shared or benefited from his selfless legacy.

I will keep Dr. Walters’ family in my prayers, and may God guide them through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David Scott
Member of Congress

DS:sas
March 7, 2011

Dr. Ronald Walters  
o/o Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.  
1729 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Dr. Walters:

Last fall, our entire nation suffered a great loss with you passing. For more than four decades, you served the African-American community, our country and citizens around the world as a teacher, mentor and public servant.

Without question, you have been one of our most brilliant and dedicated activists, and your lifetime of work has helped change our country for the better. And while you may be best known for teaching and mentoring at Howard University and at the University of Maryland and for advising the Rev. Jesse Jackson and members of the Congressional Black Caucus, you touched many other people in very meaningful ways.

We can all be proud of your travels around the world as part of the efforts to end apartheid and to bring peace to Haiti.

Your powerful personality, great intellect, humble nature and clear voice will truly be missed. All Americans have been blessed by your strong and resilient spirit and the many social progressive changes you helped bring about. You were a true public servant with an enormous legacy that will certainly live on through the many people you inspired.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress
Dear Dr. Walters:

When I was working as a VISTA volunteer in Milwaukee and forming a community credit union, I clearly remember clipping a newspaper article about your work in helping create the TransAfrica Forum.

Years later, I was cleaning the attic to sell the house, and I found this clipping. I was reminded of how significant it was to me at the time – with no idea of ever meeting you or coming to Washington – to know that there was a think tank to help address foreign policy issues from our community’s perspective. You saw what was missing and went to work.

And today you are missed. Just as your work was needed then, we need someone to fill the clear gap made by all of these so-called think tanks that have such a narrow view of the role of government.

Sincerely,

Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress
March 8, 2011

Dear Dr. Ronald Walters,

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your contributions as an influential scholar, public servant and well respected political figure in our nation. With courage and vision, your advocacy for stronger communities has improved the quality of life for many African Americans. Your scholarly work and sound advice has shifted the dynamic of the nation, and we are better, stronger, and more progressive as a result.

Your political and academic influence has greatly inspired many members of the Congressional Black Caucus and other political and civic leaders around the country, including myself. In 1984 serving as campaign manager and consultant for Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., during his two presidential bids and serving as the senior policy advisor for Congressmen Charles Diggs Jr. and William Gray forever changed the tone of politics. As one of America's most insightful political analysts, your impact and impression on history is immeasurable. You are a true advocate for justice, scholar of truth and a champion of equality.

You published well over 100 academic articles and seven books. One book, Black Presidential Politics in America, won the Bunche Prize. As one of the most visible advocates of defending and promoting the interest of Black people your commitment and dedication to the community remain catalysts to the goals and aspirations of future generations.

As one of the most visible advocates of defending and promoting the interests of Black people, your commitment, and dedication to the community serve as the foundation for our collective advancement and security. I cannot think of a more fitting tribute to your legacy, than to continue this work to ensure that every American can live a healthy and fulfilling life, absent of the oppression of inequality. Together we will preserve and enhance your legacy. Your life of selfless service lives on and it is undeniable that you will be greatly missed. I thank you for your unyielding devotion to your people, your country and to mankind.

Respectfully,

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress
CONGRESSMAN HANK JOHNSON
Georgia's Fourth District

March 7, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters:

You are an intellectual giant and a paragon of calm and reason. Your thoughtful, studious approach to the big issues of our day and your mentorship of many in the realms of academia and public service are legacies of great worth.

You never failed to provide thoughtful, meaningful commentary in diverse public settings through media appearances, writing and lectures. You are the textbook definition of "a gentleman and a scholar." You stand tall as one of the most effective pillars of meaningful civic engagement and interracial understanding in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Your foresight and political acumen helped to launch and sustain the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). A wise counselor and friend to many CBC members throughout the past 40 years, today we all proudly stand on your broad shoulders.

You left us too soon, but you will be long, admired, loved and remembered! It is with grateful hearts that we say "thanks and thanks... and ever thanks!"

Sincerely,

Hank Johnson
Dear Dr. Walters,

Thank you for a lifetime of service to our nation. Because of your work, America is a better place. You devoted your life to educating students, expanding political and economic opportunities for all Americans, and working for social and political change around the world. You had a consequential life lived to the fullest. We will not soon look upon your life again.

What you accomplished made it possible for me to serve in elected office. When you organized the Dockum Drug Store sit-in in 1958, you helped ensure a future America that would be inclusive to all. You put your personal safety at risk not for publicity or personal gain, but to speak truth to power and challenge injustice. The courage you have exhibited in the struggle for civil rights made it possible for me to represent the 37th Congressional District of California in the U.S. House of Representatives. For your bravery, I thank you.

You went on to prove that not only is it possible for men and woman of all backgrounds to be elected to public office, but that they could be successful. In forming the Congressional Black Caucus, you used your training as a political scientist and theoretician to devise the strategies that made the CBC a powerful force on Capitol Hill and the conscious of the Congress. As if that wasn’t enough, in helping Reverend Jesse Jackson in both of his presidential campaigns you showed thousands of young people that they should reach for the stars. For that inspiration, I thank you.

As if helping change America wasn’t enough, you fought against apartheid in South Africa, for the release of Nelson Mandela, and for making Africa a focus of America’s Attention. For your commitment to human rights and justice, I thank you.

Thank you for everything that you have done to make our country better. Your actions will inspire the American public for generations, and your legacy will be one of civility, equality, and progressive change. Your life reveals the truth of Margaret Mead’s saying: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” May you rest in peace.

Sincerely,

Laura Richardson
Member of Congress
Dear Dr. Walters:

I write at this time to thank you for all of the contributions you made in your lifetime. You were a dedicated public servant even in your final days. Only a man of your character could achieve all that you did during your time.

As a pioneer for other African-Americans and political scientists, your work left an indelible mark on the landscape of the Congressional Black Caucus. You gave so much of yourself by spreading your knowledge and wisdom to your many students. You were an inspiration to us, and we will keep your life's work in mind as we strive to ensure equality for all Americans.

Again, I thank you for dedicating a lifetime of service to others. You are truly missed by your community, peers, students and family.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

André Carson
Member of Congress
Wednesday, March 02, 2011

Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.
1720 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to extend my warmest welcome to everyone attending the 40th anniversary of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). I appreciate this opportunity to recognize and celebrate 40 years of achievement and legacy, as well as pay tribute to the late Dr. Ronald Walters.

Dr. Walters was an essential driving force behind the founding of the CBC, as well as a distinguished scholar, political scientist, and author. A true intellect and strategist, Dr. Walters’ involvement with the CBC was essential to its development, and his assistance to many members has contributed to the success of the CBC over the four decades since its inception.

As a representative for Maryland’s 4th Congressional District comprising Prince George’s County and Montgomery County, I am honored by the efforts of my colleagues and individuals like yourself and appreciate your work to further the interests of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Sincerely,

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress
Dear Dr. Walters,

With your passing, the world has lost an eminent scholar, teacher, mentor, author, and political activist. As others have undoubtedly noted, your integrity and intellect were unparalleled.

You were always a pioneer, charging ahead in the fight for civil rights. Your role in the first lunch-counter sit-in, in the town of Wichita in 1958, ushered in a new era of black empowerment. The significant roles you played in the presidential campaigns of the Rev. Jesse Jackson and as a confidant of Rep. Charles Diggs of Michigan, the first chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, demonstrated your devotion to affecting political and social change around the country.

The many prestigious academic, publishing and service awards you earned do not fully convey the monumental impact you had on your students. As a professor since the early 1970s, teaching at institutions such as Georgetown, Syracuse, Brandeis and Howard universities and the University of Maryland, you stood your ground, intellectually and morally, and served as a guide for many generations.

Be assured that your legacy will live on through the students you mentored, the questions you raised, and the important conversations you started. Your advice, intellect, honesty, and yearning for knowledge will be missed. We all mourn your passing, yet we find comfort in the hope you inspired.

Thank you for your courage and conviction, for demanding truth and justice, and for guiding all of us with your intellectual and moral grace.

Sincerely,

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress
March 4, 2011

Dr. Ronald Walters
c/o Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
1720 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Walters:

As a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, representing the 33rd District of California, I want to honor you for your admirable leadership. Not only were you a visionary for the African American community but you have left a legacy that will shape the lives of many to come. You have been a powerful example of what it truly means to be an innovator and outstanding contributor to society.

Through your contributions as a political activist and scholar you became a prime example of how to fully dedicate your life to serving others. Through these roles, you have shaped a better future for my colleagues in the CBC and generations of students that will follow in your footsteps.

I am forever grateful for you as a champion pioneer in solving the systemic issues of race, social injustice, and civil rights. I am proud to have seen such a great man of your stature in my lifetime. Your dynamic leadership has advanced the African American community, empowered our voices, and inspired us all to make the world a better place.

You will never be forgotten and will be forever missed.

Sincerely,

Karen Bass
Member of Congress
March 7, 2011

Dr. Ronald Walters
C/o Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
1720 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Walters:

It is an honor to write this letter to recognize your life-long leadership and activism as a champion for human rights and justice.

Your heart to serve, mentor, and teach is motivating to me and to many others. Your legacy continues to effectuate change in the United States and the world.

September 10, 2010 marks a day we lost a great servant. Your spirit lives through your works and through the countless individuals you’ve inspired.

Thank you,

Hansen Clarke
Member of Congress
March 8, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters,

It is with great joy that I am writing to thank you for your dedication to the advancement of political science and this Nation. As a student of political science, I have great respect for your many articles and books exploring public policy and its implementation. You have been a remarkable inspiration for many scholars who continue to represent your legacy in academia. It is ever so relevant to have political scientists in this day and age to study the extraordinary advances that are being in electoral politics. As a new Member of Congress, I find it very helpful to learn about historical events. Those events provide insight and help us as we pave the way for future generations.

Several Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and I are returning from the Faith and Politics Institute “Bloody Sunday” pilgrimage, which commemorates the actions of the Selma to Montgomery march that led to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I, in conjunction with many Americans across this Nation, am working towards, "[cashing the] check of justice that would allow all of us to invest in the great project of democracy," as you so eloquently charged millions of readers. Until we begin to work in unity across this Country, we will continue to be divided by the differences that make our Nation the land of the free and the home of the brave.

You and your humble spirit are truly missed, but know that you have left a legacy that will continue to inspire students, academicians, politicians, and political junkies for decades and decades to come. Thank you for being a living example of true selfless service.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

TERRI A. SEWELL
Member of Congress
Dr. Ronald Walters
1720 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036-1903

Dear Dr. Walters:

It brings me great pleasure to take this moment to recognize the outstanding work you have accomplished in your tenure. I would like to say thank you for the contribution you have given to my generation, the African-American community, our children, and leading them into what is to be a promising future.

Your undying fight for civil rights, pursuance of higher education, and social justices speaks volumes toward your work ethic and due diligence. You were the key to ensuring that our young adults received a first-class education and possessed the necessary skills and knowledge to compete in an ever-expanding global economy.

You lived a multi-dimensional life that few people in history have even attempted. I will remember you as a renowned academic but also as an intellectual, writer, and civil rights activist.

I am sure your legacy will keep progressing and will make a positive difference in the lives of every individual you have come in contact with.

Very Respectfully,

Allen B. West
Member of Congress
To Mrs. Patricia Ann Walters,

When I heard of your husband’s passing, I immediately thought of the countless individuals touched, motivated, and moved by his years of persistent hard work and dedication to his community and the Congressional Black Caucus. He earned the utmost respect from his colleagues and friends alike and possessed the rare versatility to distinguish himself in the realms of academia and politics. He was not only a progressive political commentator, but also an influential scholar, professor, author and mentor.

Dr. Walters was nothing less than a pioneer when he created a framework for the Congressional Black Caucus that focused on “achieving greater equity for persons of African descent in the design and content of domestic and international programs and services.” I am deeply saddened that his life has now come to an end, yet am comforted that his work will continue to live on through the workings of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Our community has lost a friend and colleague whose impact will not be soon forgotten. Dr. Ronald Walters was a pillar of guidance, as many looked to him for advice and mentorship on the tough issues of our time. As a fellow alumnus of Fisk University I stand firm in my belief that his friends, family and the CBC will carry on his legacy.

Sincerely,

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress
March 8, 2011

Dear Dr. Walters:

It is an honor for me to pay tribute to the memory of Dr. Ronald Walters. As a member of Congress I interacted with him for many years while he was a professor at Howard University. As a member of the Congressional Black Caucus I often consulted with him on political matters.

He was a noted scholar on black history and was often quoted on matters in newspapers, magazines and other media. He was also an author.

When he joined the faculty at the University of Maryland I continued to follow his outstanding career.

Dr. Walters was one of America’s most respected political scientists. His work will live on and be a part of America’s black history forever.

Sincerely,

Louis Stokes

LS/pa
Dear Dr. Walters:

As a former student, my initial impression of you was formed during my graduate studies at Howard University. You provided a clear-eyed analysis of our political system both in its accomplishments as well as its flaws. You also stressed the importance of African Americans becoming engaged in the political process from voting to running for office.

Later as a young state representative, I had the opportunity to watch your own political involvement expand from the halls of academia to the real world of Presidential politics as you served as political advisor to Rev. Jesse Jackson and many others. I was very impressed with your willingness to test political theory in the much more complex world of the political arena. You made major contributions in your role as an advisor to a Presidential campaign that far exceeded expectations and in many ways laid the groundwork for the belief that one day there could be a Barack Obama.

Your departure from Howard University was met with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it was a major loss to the Political Science Department of one of the Nation’s preeminent historically black colleges and universities. However, on the other hand, I was very proud that my state’s flagship university, the University of Maryland, had brought on board such a noted African American scholar, adding both diversity and intellectual heft to its faculty.

What I call the third phase of your career as a nationally renowned political analyst and commentator was in my view the most important. As a black pioneer in television, radio and newspaper political commentary, you brought much needed perspective on African American politics in America, erased many of the stereotypes about so-called black politics, and clearly established that the African American community was not a monolithic entity.

Your service may be unheralded in some quarters, but for those of us who have had the pleasure of observing and benefiting from your work over several decades, you are surely one of the giants in American politics.

Thank you for your contributions as educator, motivator, activist, commentator and political philosopher.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Albert R. Wynn
U.S. House of Representatives 1993-2008
Dear Ron,

It has been nearly forty years since we first met; we were both young scholars at Howard University. This was a very exciting period when Howard was undergoing unprecedented growth under the leadership of James E. Cheek, Sr. His vision to transform the institution into a comprehensive research university, while remaining faithful to its mission and the hopes of the Founders, was both audacious and bold at the time. We were fortunate to be among the host of men and women attracted to the University as a result of this new vision.

Ron, over the years I have followed admiringly your career trajectory, celebrating your manifold accomplishments and respecting your remarkable analytical powers. You have foreseen trends, events and new developments long before others. In the academy, while inspiring numerous students and colleagues, you have produced a significant body of scholarship and prepared numerous scholars who will ensure that your work will continue. Outside the academy, I remember many of your endeavors and activities: organizing political conferences; participating in electoral politics; serving as a resource for small community organizations; standing up for justice, civil rights, freedom and liberation; and speaking “truth to power.”

In the mid 1990s I was deeply saddened by the news that you were leaving Howard to become a member of a neighboring institution’s faculty. My old friend, having known you then for many years, I deduced that you, as so many others who have contributed mightily to Howard, could never leave; although your body might be elsewhere, your soul would remain at Howard, and subsequently, this deduction was confirmed. Last summer, we all rejoiced upon learning that your body would be reunited with its soul at Howard as the result of the approval of the recommendation of the College of Arts and Sciences that you be appointed Senior Distinguished Research Scholar.

Ron, finally, I am thankful. I thank you for your advice and encouragement over the years. I thank you for your tremendous work in preparing young people for purposeful lives in a rapidly changing world. I thank you for your example that in one person a life of the mind and a life of service can coexist and reinforce each other. I thank you for being a good and decent person. And last, but not least, I thank you for being my friend.

Peace,

James A. Donaldson
Dean and Professor of Mathematics
March 1, 2011

Dear Ron:

You were my colleague and brother in the struggle for African American liberation. We first met in 1972 at the founding meeting of the National Black Political Assembly in Gary, Indiana. Seventeen years later, you were selected to serve as the chair of the Department of Political Science at Howard University. With your support, I later joined the department as an assistant professor. During your tenure as chair, the inaugural issue of the departmental newsletter, Government & Politics, was published. As editor of the newsletter, which later became a referred journal, I received your strong support and mentorship. I was deeply honored when you agreed in 1991 to author the lead article in the initial edition of the journal entitled, "Afrocentric Concept ... At Howard University."

During your tenure as chair, at the start of each academic year, your family hosted a picnic luncheon for faculty, students, alumni and staff. The event was always well attended and provided an environment for reflections about the history of the Political Science Department and hopes for its future development.

We deeply appreciate your role in mentoring generations of students that proceeded to earn their masters and doctoral degrees and advancing the parameters of scholarship in the discipline of Political Science, especially the Black Politics concentration. You helped our community, the nation and the global community understand injustice and racism, and served as a lead architect in the development of solutions to them. Perhaps your greatest contribution to African American life and culture can be found in your sustained scholarship and commentary, which is a legacy worthy of preserving.

Ron, you were a man of integrity who often publically called the wicket man wicket to the wicket man’s face. You were not a racist, but pro-Black and a “Race Man” in the tradition of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jessie Louis Jackson, Thurgood Marshall, Ronald Brown and others who were willing to stand up against intolerance by the larger society.

Sleep well my brother; your legacy will endure and continue.

Michael Frazier, Ph.D.
Director, MAPA Program and Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
Howard University, Washington, D.C. 20059
Just like a tree: Thoughts of Dr. Ronald Walters

It was not at all uncommon for Black graduate students in the early 1970’s to be deeply concerned with the relevance of their disciplines to the forward movement of African people. Sage advice authored by scholars who had struggled with the same questions years or generations earlier gave many of us the guidance we sought. Among those giving council was Dr. Ronald Walters, and the voice that came through in his writings was so wise, warm, rich and clear that I was hardly aware of the impact that it was having on my thinking.

For the last several months I have tried my best to remember where I first encountered the work of Dr. Walters. I thought I had found him initially in the Black Scholar, in an issue on health that came out in May of 1974. “...much of what black people suffer from and react to in the society can be defined as a ‘frustration complex’ of variables which are derived from the general socio-economic and cultural status of the group to which they belong” (p. 47). Then, looking through the October 1973 issue of Black World, I located his prophetic article, “African-American Nationalism.” My frequent underscoring and marginal notes on the yellowed pages now nearly forty years old suggest that Dr. Walters was making a significant impact on my thinking. He was doing so subtly, however, with the gentle and careful touch of a sculptor or surgeon. I hardly heard him enter.

By 1980 when I joined the Howard University Psychology Department faculty, I was much more aware of the formative role Dr. Walters was playing in my life. Now, however I was local, with an office in Douglass Hall which at that time housed a number of departments in the College of Arts and Sciences including Political Science. Our conversations in the hallways, his comments on panels sponsored by students or academic departments, and his statements in the area media bore a marked similarity to his writings. Their cogency was borne of his remarkable scholarly vision and his unrelenting respect for an African perspective. Of course many of us smiled broadly when, in televised debates, Candidate Jesse Jackson, advised by Dr. Walters, showed his mastery of complex national and international political matters.

Still, the written words from Dr. Walters were relentless in their quiet way and they continued to have their impact on me. I have a copy of The Howard University Journal of Philosophy, 1990, volume 1, number 1. Dr. Walters penned the lead article, “Action research and the Black paradigm.” I found I had highlighted virtually every other line and it is hard to read around the notes his thoughts had stimulated me to write in the margins some twenty years ago. “The researcher may examine the existing literature dealing with the subject matter...But it is equally important that the analyst have some direct acquaintance with the subject matter either by direct observation or by participation” (p. 16). The training of graduate students of African descent should begin with a review of this article.

While Dr. Walters was continuing to fight the good fight at the University of Maryland, Howard University students always had the good sense to invite Dr. Walters to speak on campus. The Kwaame Ture Society hosted him several times after he joined the Maryland. On one occasion in the spring of 2007 I congratulated him on his continued scholarly productivity. During the first decade of this century he produced some remarkable books and I had three of these in my library. I asked him how he managed to be so productive and still shoulder considerable administrative duties at Maryland. He told me that he wrote best in the peace found very early in the morning. I was back in graduate school again, being guided by an immense and gentle wisdom. He reminded me that our work as African scholars should be central enough in our lives to cause us to find quiet moments each day during which we push it forward.

The twentieth century brought triumphs and tragedies for Black people, but historians will most likely list the 1980’s with the nadirs. In the late part of that decade I remember attending a gathering in rural Mineral Virginia where we talked of creating a rites of passage training program that might rescue our Black boys
from the lure of the deadly, drug-driven thug life. We gathered in an open field and Dr. Walters spoke to us that day, standing between two massive silent oak trees that must have been three hundred years old. At one point he hesitated and gazed at the enormous twins. His tone became almost hushed but his words were firm and powerful. He told us to keep in mind as we struggled to lead our young men out of that troubled time, the history that those trees had witnessed. They had seen our people endure horrendous hardships and they watched as we rose up time and time again. Oaks will forever bring thoughts of Dr. Walters to my mind—of the enormity of his work and the wisdom and breadth of his vision. His writings will guide future generations of thinking individuals who are willing to hear a voice that speaks courageously about the serious work confronting the African world.

March 2, 2011

Camara Jules P. Harrell
Psychology Department
Howard University
Dear Dr. Walters

While I am saddened by your departure from this nation of ours, I am heartened to know and experience your remarkable contributions to humanity's journey to freedom, social justice, and goodness. As a matter of fact, I count myself among your many descendants because the range and depth of my understandings about Black political phenomena are connected to the intellectual and educational philosophy you espoused. Your life, in word and deed, is an extraordinary testimony of courage, intelligence, and character. This is why I pause to hold you in the highest regard as you make your way to the land of the Ancestors. I should say that in my silent pause of praise to you, I can hear and feel heaven's hosts making thunderous applause of approval for you. They are witnesses, as were we, of the calm acumen you always exuded.

Truly, you are counted among the Black freedom fighters whose courage charted new openings for expanding our nation's democratic vision. For instance, during those frigid years of American apartheid of the 1950s and 1960s, you were one of the young pioneer insurgents who stood up and resisted bigotry and oppression. Those early bouts against anti-Black oppression served only to strengthen your resolve ever so more to work to free the world Black community. Ever the visionary, in your tireless and steady work as activist and scholar you showed us the interconnectedness of African realities—in South Africa, Brazil, Britain, the Caribbean, and the United States. I should hasten to say, moreover, that the vision you espoused was the antithesis of hollowness; to be sure, it was overflowing with intention aimed at liberation.

Your intellectual and scholarly acuity merits special recognition for a number of reasons. Alongside its liberatory purposes, your intellectual perceptiveness always delivered clarity on the topics you explored. In this regard, I am especially mindful and appreciative of your role in helping to establish and then extend our understandings in the field of study we know as Black Politics. From the august institution, Howard University, you have bequeathed to humanity's posterity impressive tomes on Pan-Africanism, Black Electoral Politics, Black Leadership, Public Policy, Nationalist Theory, Social Movements, and Reparations, among other areas. Also, in your political analyses, you correctly and forthrightly applied some of the essential and longstanding cultural tenets—Blackness, Black interests, identity, and historical memory, for instance—of Black experience. What this means, of course, is that you were unequivocally asserting the primacy of Black experience as the source-place for exploring and explaining Black political phenomena.

I could go on about your outstanding work, but I would be remiss were I not to comment on your disposition. I know I am right in saying that you were a towering exemplar of humility and good character. Your steady calm and intellectual gentleness excited all who were fortunate enough to grace your way; somehow or another, you made us feel better and appreciated (smarter, too). You did all of this without self-absorption. This, no doubt, is a mark of good character. And so, I am reminded of our true measure when I think of an African proverb that says, character is what we are looking for, character.

By Dr. Daryl B. Harris (Howard University: Department of Political Science)
Dear Ron,

I just want to share some of my recollections about our relationship. You and I were colleagues and friends for just over forty years. We met during the heady years of the Black Studies Movement, following the Annual African Studies Association (ASA) conference in Montreal, 1969. We often chatted about that moment as clarifying the route our careers would take. Blacks from across the Diaspora challenged the ASA leadership at that conference for its refusal to recognize African-American studies or Diaspora studies generally as part of the African experience. Montreal 1969 thus became the defining moment for black scholars specializing in African and Diaspora Studies, and you, Ron, were a key leader who neverdeviated from commitment to the legitimacy of those fields. You joined in clarifying the issues and stood tall in the trenches of protest as one of the founders and subsequently a president of the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA) that a number of us organized after we withdrew from the ASA.

Looking back at your career, I remain impressed by the consistency of your engagement in struggles for freedom and equality. From the sit-ins for desegregation of lunch counters in Wichita, Kansas, to demonstrations demanding that white academia hire black faculty, recruit black students and introduce African and African-American courses. In all cases you stressed leadership that became your professional hallmark, culminating in your expertise in African American leadership, a field you longed to establish at Howard University when you became professor and chairman, Department of Political Science. Ultimately, however, you helped to establish a competitive leadership program at the University of Maryland.

Your influence extended to the Congressional Black Caucus and Trans-Africa Forum where you helped to shape the policy and actions that guided those organizations during their early years. And along the way you served as adviser/consultant to a number of Congressmen, and served effectively as Jesse Jackson’s Presidential campaign manager and consultant in 1984 and 1988. And of course Jesse gave a superb tribute to you.

Ron, I continue to acknowledge your positive impact at the First and Second African Diaspora Studies Institutes at Howard and the University of Nairobi, Kenya. Those seminal conferences owe much to you for your incisive critiques and recommendations for the future. Your numerous publications will occupy students throughout the world for years to come.

You also gained international recognition for your perceptive and sustained anti-apartheid leadership and as an adamant protagonist of Pan-Africanism. In international as well as domestic politics, you consistently advocated freedom and equality for the disadvantaged. Your numerous articles and books on African and Diaspora issues will continue to inform students and others throughout the world for years to come.

You truly were a dedicated activist scholar who freely shared your knowledge in and out of the classroom. Several of your colleagues and I often speak about your extraordinary ability to hold an audience and in fact dominate a heated conversation with “quiet fortitude.”

Ron, you were a friend, a colleague and humanist I shall always admire.

Joseph E. Harris
March 1, 2011

March 1, 2011

Department of Political Science
Howard University
Washington, DC 20059

Dr. Ronald Walters
Professor of Political Science

Dear Ron,

In the past few months, I have had the chance to join with many others in academic and political centers around the country to celebrate your innumerable contributions to scholarship and leadership in the African American community and to the larger nation. Since I expect that acclaim for your work will continue for many years to come, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the things that may have escaped the attention of the larger world.

First, I am grateful for the reassuring moments in nearly every important Howard U. seminar on election analysis, on black voter participation or on compelling issues in African Diaspora when you would suddenly appear. With your formable schedule of presentations and interviews, you frequently evoked fear from those who did not know you that the “star” in the program would be too late or failed to show. I knew never to doubt you because you always came through with the intellectually inspiring impact of a real star.

Second, I would like to thank you for guiding the center of black political analysis toward recognition of the conceptual and moral value of progressive politics among activists and black nationalists – a recognition that extends and deepens our understanding of ordinary race relations. In this context, you also helped to keep open
the lines of communications between elected leaders and disenchanted scholars and students during periods of heightened radicalism.

Third, I am grateful for your work with the political left and black nationalists among black scholars in helping them to bridge the gaps in communication with elected officials. Through your writings, young scholars who were disenchanted with the electoral process learned to rely on the black leaders in Congress and administrative offices whose contentious work has been largely ignored by mainstream media and academia.

Since this list is too long to complete, I will close by thanking you for your bold vision in violating one of the dicta of politics and scholarship. At a Congressional Black Caucus event last September a speaker quoted you as having said “if something is morally right, it must be politically right.” From my university experience with you, Ron, I would add that you seemed to be saying that if something is good for scholarship, then it is good for the society. Ron, you were certainly good for the university, for the political analysis and consequently for the rest of our world.

Always,
Lorenzo
Lorenzo Morris, Ph.D.
Professor
March 2, 2011

Dear Ron:

An institution and people's legacy and hopes for the future are carried through time by the good works of their sons and daughters who labor to document their origins and contributions, and expose artificial barriers to the realization of their mission and dreams. Each generation is succeeded by individuals who stand on the shoulders of their ancestors, informed by their wisdom and grounded by their cultural and organizational connections with their community. For your generation, you played a unique role and performed at the highest level of intellect and professionalism. As a national and internationally recognized scholar and activists, you developed a sustained and unbroken record of activities designed to bring dignity to the Black community and enhance humanity generally.

I was honored to have been exposed to you as a student, colleague and friend. In each capacity, you enriched my life and carved paths that enhanced my development. I thank you for your mentorship during my doctoral studies and the opportunity that I had to work with you as director of undergraduate studies during your tenure as chair of the Political Science Department.

I was honored to succeed you as chair of the Political Science Department. You ably carried out your duties as chair following in the tradition of Ralph Bunche, Emmett Dorsey, Vincent Browne, and Charles Harris. As chair of the Political Science Department, you led the production of some of the nation’s most productive African American political scientists who now occupy professorships at major research universities. I thank you for the opportunity to publish with you and work together to develop conferences and symposia.

Your friends and colleagues will remember you for many reasons. I will hold dear the memories of your contributions to the development of scholarship and advocacy designed to enhance the cultural, economic and electoral position of the African American and Diaspora communities. You were at the cutting edge of the struggles to liberate the African continent from colonialism and neo-colonialism, especially in South Africa; the institutionalization of congressional Black politics through the development of Congressional Black Caucus; and the strategic positioning of the Black community in presidential politics through informed strategic and timely leveraging politics. These activities earned you a rightful place among the men and women that have enhanced humanity and made the world a better place.

My hope is that we will ensure that your scholarship and service are available to our youth to be modeled as they decide how to carry out the immense responsibilities of the current generation.

May God bless and keep you.

Sincerely,

Alvin Thornton, Ph.D.
Advisor to the President for Academic Affairs
Howard University