



Ronald W. Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center News and Notes October 2019 – March 2020

Bethel 21 Project

The Ronald Walters Center is a part of the “**Reviving the Bethel Literary and Historical Association in the 21st Century**” project. The project, directed by Interim Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr. Dana Williams, involves digitizing the archives of the Bethel Literary and Historical Association, an important early African American literary and cultural society, and carrying forward its legacy through interdisciplinary public lectures and forums. Other collaborators are Moorland-Spangarn Research Center (MSRC), the Department of Afro American Studies, the Department of English, and Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church.

“Bethel 21” consists of lectures and literary and cultural arts. The work is underwritten in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Topics covered by the project to date are School Choice, Genetic Ancestry Testing, Reparations, and Black Women and Politics. The Walters Center organized the Black Women and Politics session on March 6, 2020, which featured Dr. Wendy Smooth, Associate Professor in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the Ohio State University as the speaker. The speech was combined with the Black Women’s Roundtable’s Annual Summit which attracted about 400 women.



U.S. Representative Elijah Cummings

On October 17, 2019, the Walters Center staff members were stunned to receive the news of the passing of Advisory Committee member, Rep. Elijah Cummings. Rep. Cummings had served on the Committee from its inception. He was one of the featured speakers for the Ronald Walters Legacy Conference in October 2013, and he participated actively, giving ideas for promoting the Center.

Dr. Elsie Scott, Director of the Ronald Walters Center, was interviewed by NBC News concerning his death, and was quoted in this article: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/elijah-cummings-remembered-eloquent-militant-voice-democracy-n1068446>.

The Center had anticipated holding a forum on the legislative legacy of Rep. Cummings this spring, but with the physical shutdown of the university, the forum is not being held.

U.S. Department of Justice Grant

The Center is in the final phase of the Engaging Black College Students in 21st Century Law Enforcement project. A stand-alone report on focus groups conducted at Howard University, Dillard University, Chicago State University and Merritt College was completed and submitted to the Office of Community Policing Systems (COPS). A draft of the final report has also been completed and submitted, and staff is working on a deliverable on the convening sessions.

Dr. Scott presented a paper on the findings from the focus groups during the annual conference of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists.

National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS)

As part of the Walters Center's engagement in developing the next generation of leaders, Dr. Scott was asked to develop and conduct a Webinar on Career Opportunities for persons with political science degrees. The webinar, sponsored by the NCOBPS, was held on October 29, 2019 with students from Howard University and other universities around the country in attendance.



The Walters Center helped plan a Tribute to Dr. Mack H. Jones, founder of the Ph.D. program in political science at Clark Atlanta University. The Tribute was held during the annual meeting of NCOBPS in Atlanta on March 13, 2020. Dr. Jones, one of the foremost scholars on Black Politics, was a former professor at Howard University.

Black Women's Roundtable Exchange Program to Colombia, South America

The Solidarity Center, the largest U.S.-based international worker rights organization, invited the Black Women's Roundtable to select four women to travel to Colombia to meet with Afro-Colombian labor leaders. Dr. Scott was among the women chosen who traveled to Bogota, Cumaral and Veracruz, Colombia from November 10-16, 2019.

One of the objectives of the trip was to help improve the civic engagement of Afro Colombians. They were interested in hearing about methods used to promote civic engagement in the United States. Meetings were held with labor union officials and workers, community leaders, youth, and other members of the community to gain their perspectives on the problems and solutions to gaining empowerment for Afro Colombians. A meeting was also held with U.S. Embassy officials to hear about the problems from their perspective and the work they are doing in Columbia.

It was agreed that the lines of communication and information exchange should be kept open as a decision is made concerning the best way to assist them. Director Scott will be speaking to other Howard University entities that are engaged in Colombia to discuss collaboration opportunities.

Students Working at the Walters Center

Briana Hyman, a Ph.D. student in political science, is a graduate assistant working on the U.S. Department of Justice grant. She is a 2nd-year doctoral student in Political Science. A native of Tarboro, North Carolina, she earned her BS in Communication from the University of Louisville and her MPA from the University of Arkansas. She is conducting research on women in law enforcement and diversity and recruitment in law enforcement.



Kayla Morrow, a California native, is a 1st-year doctoral student in the School Psychology Program in the School of Education. She earned a BA from Fisk University in Psychology and an MS in Counseling Psychology from Tennessee State University. Her projects at the Center include research on the impact and challenges of progressive Black women & men prosecutors; work on the Five-fifths Agenda for America project and research on the Congressional Black Caucus and public policy.



Samaad Smith, a senior English major and Economics minor from Montclair, New Jersey, hopes to attend law school after graduating from Howard University.



His work at the Walters Center has included research on African Americans running for political offices, the impact and importance of the Census on the African American community, and the history of political activism at Howard University. In addition, he works on social media and website improvements.

Donation of Art Collection from Mrs. Patricia Turner Walters

In January 2020, it was announced that Mrs. Patricia Turner Walters, was gifting Howard University with her collection of African American art, valued at over \$2.5 million. It was also announced that the University will establish the Ronald W. Walters Endowed Chair for Race and Black Politics.

The Walters Center is pleased that the Chair will be housed at the Ronald Walters Center to continue Dr. Walters' legacy of scholarship in the field of Black Politics. The Center will pass along information on the Chair as it is developed by the University.

Other Activity

The Center continues to administer and raise funds for the Ronald Walters Scholarship. A scholarship was not awarded this academic year, but plans are to award a scholarship in the fall semester.

Director Scott continues to be invited to serve on panels, make presentations and respond to media inquiries. For example, she organized and served on a panel during the annual conference of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. She authored an article for the Black

Women in the United States, 2020, report published by the Black Women's Roundtable. Download the report: <https://www.ncbcp.org/assets/BWR-Report-2020.pdf>

The Walters Center was asked to help plan and execute a tribute to the late Rep. John Conyers, one of the founders of the Congressional Black Caucus. The Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee agreed to host the tribute in the Judiciary Committee hearing room where Mr. Conyers' official chair's portrait hangs. The tribute, held on January 15, the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King remembered Mr. Conyers for his work on the MLK Holiday Bill and for his many legislative contributions.

Upcoming Activity

The Center had confirmed the participation of the Honorable Raz Baraka, Mayor of Newark, New Jersey as the second Edgar Kemler Lecture on March 31, 2020, but the lecture had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. Once the University reopens, a new date will be selected and Mayor Baraka will be contacted concerning his availability to speak.

Dr. Winslow Sargeant has made a gift to the Walters Center for the creation of a Winslow Sargeant Doctoral Fund to support doctoral students affiliated with the Walters Center. Dr. Sargeant is a former neighbor and friend of Dr. & Mrs. Ronald Walters and is a friend of Dr. Michael Fauntroy, who served as acting director during Director Scott's sabbatical. The first award is scheduled to be made for the 2020-2021 academic year.



Rep. Hank Johnson and the Rep. John Conyers Tribute Planning Committee