



IN MEMORIAM

Robin M. Williams, Jr.
Distinguished Visiting Professor of Sociology
UC Irvine
1914 – 2006

Robin M. Williams Jr., sociologist, died on June 3, 2006 at Irvine Regional Hospital in Irvine, California; the cause of death was complications from emergency surgery. He was 91.

Robin Murphy Williams was born on October 11, 1914 in Hillsborough, NC, son of Robin M., Sr. (a farmer) and Mabel (a homemaker). He received his B.S. in 1933 from North Carolina State College; his M.S. in 1935 from N.C. State and the University of North Carolina; his M.A. in 1939 from Harvard University; and his Ph.D. in 1943 from Harvard University.

Robin's career spanned much of the 20th century, beginning in 1946 with his appointment as a member of the Sociology Department at Cornell University in 1946. He served as chair of that department from 1956 through 1961, and was appointed the Henry Scarborough Professor of Social Science in 1967. After becoming professor emeritus in 1985, Dr. Williams continued to teach at both Cornell University and the University of California, Irvine. Beginning in 1991, he split his time between Ithaca and Irvine, but only taught at Irvine. At Irvine, he became a key supporter for the expansion of the Sociology Department, regularly meeting with upper administrators in the early days of the Department to extol the importance of both the field and the promise of the Irvine Sociology Department. He remained a staunch benefactor of the department until his death.

Robin's research fostered understanding of some of the most difficult problems of American society. He devoted much of his career and writing to studies of intergroup tensions, race relations, war and peace, ethnic conflict, and altruism and cooperation. His best-known works include *The American Soldier* (Vols. 1-11, 1949); *Schools in Transition* (1954); *What College Students Think* (1960); *The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions* (1947); *Strangers Next Door* (1964), *American Society: A Sociological Interpretation* (1st edition, 1951; 2nd edition, 1960; 3rd edition, 1970); *Mutual Accommodation: Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation* (1977); and most recently, *The Wars Within: Peoples and States in Conflict* (2003). He was also a co-editor of *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (1989). He was the author, as well, of some hundred and fifty articles, monographs, and chapters in edited volumes that contributed to research and policy. As an Army researcher on the frontlines during World War II, he was a contributor to the classic work, *The American Soldier*. He was also key contributor to the amici briefs that supported the 1954 Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*. His last article – which charted the past, present, and future of American sociology – appeared in the prestigious *Annual Review of Sociology* three months after his death.

Robin was a member of the American Philosophical Society, the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Science, the National Research Council, and the Pacific Sociological Association, among others. He was a Past-President of the American Sociological Association, Past-

President of the Eastern Sociological Association, Founding Editor of Sociological Forum, and the Co- Chair of the Committee on the Status of Black Americans.

Robin was renowned and highly respected for his love of teaching; wit and humor; treasure trove of anecdotes and one- liners; indefatigable attention to and insightful writing about and research into global affairs, intergenerational conflict, and social justice; and inspirational and kindly mentoring of innumerable students and colleagues. He is survived by his beloved wife and life partner, Marguerite, whom he married in 1939; his daughters Nancy Elizabeth O'Connor and Susan York Williams; his sister Helen Coble; and grandchildren Julia, Tara, Tyler, and Robin O'Connor.

He adored and was adored by his family; he enriched the lives of his wife, children, and grandchildren. His memory will continue to inspire those who knew him.

Nancy Elizabeth O'Connor
Calvin Morrill
Department of Sociology
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