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A PROFILE OF ONE INSTITUTE PRESIDENT

WALTER WILLIAMS

The longtime director of the ONE Institute Center for Advanced Studies, Walter L. Williams is also professor of anthropology at the University of Southern California, where he teaches classes on American Indian Studies, on Prejudice, and on Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual-Transgender Studies. In 1996 he was elected president of the ONE Institute.

A native of Atlanta, Williams began his professional career in museum development, then moved into academia by earning his Ph.D. in history and anthropology from the University of North Carolina. He was hired at the University of Cincinnati, where in 1979 he founded and edited southern Ohio's first Gay newspaper. A year later he was elected executive director of the Greater Cincinnati Gay Coalition. He also co-founded and chaired the Committee on Lesbian and Gay History for the American Historical Association, and was an officer of the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists.

In 1981 he moved to Los Angeles, teaching American Indian Studies at UCLA and later at USC. In the late 1970s he began doing research on homosexuality in Native American cultures, using the resources at ONE Institute and at the International Gay and Lesbian Archives. After being invited to join the board of directors of the Archives, he later served as its president. In 1986 he published his fourth book, *The Spirit and the Flesh*. This book won the Gay Book of the Year Award from the American Library Association, the Ruth Benedict Award from the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists, and the Award for Outstanding Scholarship from the World Congress for Sexology.

Due to the success of this book, Williams was invited to join the board of editors of the Journal of Homosexuality and several other journals. In 1987 he won a Fulbright Scholar professorship in Indonesia, where he did research on the socially-accepted role of homosexuality in traditional Southeast Asian cultures. He later expanded this research on non-homophobic cultures, interviewing Gay Native Polynesians while he was a visiting scholar at the University of Hawaii's East-West Center.

After coming back to USC he worked closely with ONE Institute's Gay pioneer W. Dorr Legg, to co-edit Legg's book *Homophile Studies in Theory and Practice*, published by ONE Institute Press. Williams' most recent book is co-edited with James Sears, *Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies That Work* (Columbia University Press, 1997).

At USC, Williams was the founding Chair of the Task Force in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies. He has also been a consultant to the Los Angeles Board of Education, advising them on policies relating to Gay/Lesbian youth and staff; and for the Honolulu Gay and Lesbian Community Center, suggesting strategies for reducing homophobia in Hawaii. His research on the social acceptability of same-sex marriages in non-Western cultures was used by the attorneys for the Hawaii same-sex marriage Supreme Court case.

Besides his books, Williams has published widely, with over a hundred chapters, articles, and reviews in many academic journals and books like the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*. He is often quoted in the media on Gay topics, and has given major addresses at conferences and universities around the world. In 1994 he was on the team that spearheaded negotiations resulting in the merger of ONE Institute with the International Gay and Lesbian Archives, and arranged for USC to offer this merged collection a building to house the Archives. In 1995, he was faculty advisor for a major national conference held at USC in Gay and Lesbian Studies, with over 170 presentations by researchers from several countries. Professor Williams worked closely with San Francisco pioneer Gay activist Hal Call to establish the Hal Call Mattachine Scholarship Fund. His hard work has laid the basis for ONE Institute's recent flowering as a research center of international importance and stature.