

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION GEORGE M. FREDRICKSON

(1934-2008)

George M. Fredrickson, the Edgar E. Robinson Professor of American History, Emeritus, died of heart failure at age 73 in his campus home on February 25, 2008. He was born in 1934 in Bristol, Connecticut, but called Sioux Falls, South Dakota home.

One of the great American historians of his generation, George leaves behind a tremendous legacy -- pioneering scholar of comparative history, internationally renowned author on the subject of the origins of racism, mentor to dozens of Ph.D.s who followed in his intellectual path, and co-founder of Stanford's Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity. He was a man of enormous integrity, someone whose deep devotion to principles of fairness, equity, justice, and freedom was reflected both in his intellectual work and in the way he conducted his life as a citizen of the nation.

Fredrickson graduated from Harvard in 1956 and completed a doctorate in history in 1964. He taught both at Harvard and Northwestern before moving to Stanford in 1984, where he remained for the rest of his life. His stellar career included the publication of numerous books, journal articles, and essays in the *New York Review of Books*. Several of his publications are classics in the field of white-black relations both in US and in South Africa: *The Black Image in the White Mind* (1971), *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (1981), which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, *Black Liberation* (1995), and *Racism: A Short History* (2002) are among the many of his books that are standard reading for anyone interested in the history of race and its influence in the U.S. and elsewhere. A testament to his productivity, George's final two books -- *Big Enough to Be Inconsistent: Abraham Lincoln Confronts Slavery and Race* and *Diverse Nations: Explorations in the History of Racial and Ethnic Pluralism*-- have been published posthumously. He received several prestigious fellowship awards in support of his research including a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. He was also a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and at the Stanford Humanities Center. He served as President of the Organization of American Historians in 1997-98.

George Fredrickson was a man who practiced in his life what he preached as a professor. As a student he traveled to the South during some of the most violent years of the civil rights struggle for African Americans. As a faculty member at Northwestern in the late 1960s he supported the rights of students to demonstrate peacefully against the war in Southeast Asia and advocated for the development of Black Studies on campus. Soon after joining the Stanford faculty, Fredrickson participated in a teach-in on university divestment in South Africa. In the mid-1990s he and other colleagues established the intellectual foundations of what became the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity when they launched a Mellon Foundation supported Seminar on Race and Ethnicity. He served as founding Co-Director of CCSRE's Research Institute.

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In the classroom, Fredrickson possessed that enviable ability to convey to students complex histories in concise and clear ways. He was dedicated to introducing both undergraduate and graduate students to his love of history. Appropriately, he was honored in 2000 with the Allan V. Cox Medal for Faculty Excellence in Fostering Undergraduate Research.

At an event on campus last spring to honor the memory of George Fredrickson, members of his family were joined by former students and dozens of colleagues who paid tribute to him as scholar, activist, and devoted father and husband. His intellectual legacy lives on through his books and articles, through the institutions he helped build and through the generations of students that he taught. George M. Fredrickson will long be remembered at Stanford as a brilliant historian, a caring mentor, an advocate for equality and justice, and a dear friend to colleagues and students alike.

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