

APSA Remembers Mae C. King

Read APSA's official statement on King's passing, listen to an interview with Dr. King, and review career highlights here: <https://politicalsciencenow.com/ap-sa-remembers-dr-mae-c-king-trailblazing-political-scientist-and-first-african-american-senior-staff-associate/>.

ELSIE SCOTT, HOWARD UNIVERSITY

In Memoriam tribute to Dr. King

Dr. Mae Coates King, professor emerita of political science at Howard University passed in Montgomery County, Maryland on November 4, 2002. Born in Arkansas on June 24, 1938, she earned her BA in social studies from Bishop College in Marshall, TX where she was taught nonviolent protest methods and used the methods to participate in nonviolent sit-ins. She received her MA and PhD in political science from the University of Idaho with a focus on international studies and African politics.

She was the first Black person, and the first woman, senior staff person at the American Political Science Association (APSA). Along with her friend, Dr. Jewel Limar Prestage and others, she was a founding member of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS). She was a trailblazer, opening doors and providing leadership and mentorship for Black women and others who came behind her.

Her long-held interest in Africa led her to accept a one-year sabbatical from APSA to work in Nigeria in 1975. The one-year stretched to a 14-year stay with a professorship at the University of Benin and marriage to Alade Akesode. When she returned to the United States, she joined the political science faculty at Howard University where she stayed until she retired in 2013.

Her publications include *Localism and Nation Building* (Spectrum Books, 1988) and the *Basic Currents of Nigerian Foreign Policy* (Howard University Press, 1996). She also authored "Oppression and Power: The Unique Power of the Black Women in the American Political System," published in the *Social Science Quarterly* in 1975 and other scholarly articles.

I met Dr. King through my mentor, the late Dr. Jewel Prestage, when I was a graduate student at the University of Iowa. I came under Dr. King's tutelage when I joined the faculty of Federal City College in Washington, DC, and she was on the staff of APSA. She introduced me to Black political leaders and activists such as Rep. Charles Diggs, first chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus and Attorney Wiley Branton, a prominent civil rights lawyer who was a native of Arkansas. She created the Washington Liaison Committee of NCOBPS, a group of members who taught political science, worked for the federal executive or executive branch, or for an organization with interest in federal or African politics. Under her leadership we conducted research, participated in Congressional hearings, and engaged in national meetings.

Her interest in the Congressional Black Caucus expanded from assisting with the first Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) dinner in 1971 to conducting research about the CBC. When the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation decided to publish a 40-year retrospective on the impact of the CBC on public policy, Dr. King was one



Pictured above: Dr. Mae C. King, 1984. Lagos, Nigeria. Source: Kafayat Aylesworth, daughter of Dr. King.

of the persons I invited to write a chapter. Her article, "The Struggle for Change: the CBC and US Foreign Policy" can be found in *The Conscience of the Congress: How the Congressional Black Caucus Change America*, Stephanie J. Jones, editor, 2012.

Her interest in African politics helped to connect NCOBPS with African diplomats and African scholars. African and Caribbean embassies opened their doors to host fundraisers for the NCOBPS Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP). She was a founder of the African Studies Association, a former vice president of the African Heritage Studies Association, and a former president of the International Association of Black Professionals in International Affairs.

During her tenure at Howard University, she was known for her "exemplary teaching and student mentoring". Outside the classroom, she was engaged in professional and community organizations including the NAACP. In 1994, she was part of the delegation of Howard University faculty and students who served as observers for the first free election in South Africa.

Dr. Najja A. Baptist, a Howard University graduate and current faculty member at the University of Arkansas, shared this memory:

"We, the children of Ralph Bunche, mourn the passing of our beloved matriarch, Dr. Mae King. No words can suffice to express the joy and nurturing she gave every time she saw us." "At every conference [NCOBPS], she sat in the front row at our panels, offering robust critique." "Not many words can describe the gaping hole left in the pantheon of the Howard Political Science Department; in the National Conference of Black Political Scientists; in the discipline of Political Science."

Dr. King is survived by her daughter, Kafayat (David) Aylesworth and granddaughters Ariel and Faith, three sisters, one brother and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, and professional associates. ■

SHELBY F. LEWIS, THE LEWIS FOUNDATION

Excerpt of a video tribute for Dr. King's funeral

Condolences to the Mae King family, friends, former colleagues, students and professors. I am honored to share my thoughts and memories about this amazing scholar-activist. My first meeting with Mae King was at Southern University in 1968. I was on the faculty and she was attending a Jewel Limar Prestage organized meeting on Black political scientists with PhDs. Mae King turned out to be the youngest of the five African American women with PhDs in political science. The number of Black males with PhDs was much higher but it was clear that we needed to do something about increasing these numbers for both males and females. Over two days, the discussion [was] about the best ways for increasing the number of PhDs among African Americans and we then talked about the need for organizing an association of our own. That was done in 1969 (the National Conference of Black Political Scientists—NCOBPS). The African American Studies Association was also founded in 1969 and since both Mae King and I were members of both associations, we worked together on a lot of projects in many countries and cities. In 1973 we were at a conference on African International Studies Ethiopia. In 1975 and 1976 I was in Zambia and Mae was in Nigeria. I visited her in 1977 at the University of Benin and was surprised to see how well Mae was maneuvering her

Volkswagen with the horn-blowing and fast-driving heavy traffic in Nigeria. It was surprising because she had been a very careful driver in DC, but Nigeria changes people.

When AHSa (African Heritage Studies Association) organized programs and NCOBPS organized programs, at some point we had two meetings jointly and Mae was at both of those. In addition we did research on Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. We also worked together on an Africana women studies program. I think that when AHSa was experiencing problems in 2013, she flew to Atlanta to work with me, Lin Jefferies and many other scholars on a renewal project she served as vice president for AHSa during the renewal period and pulled together an excellent program for our 2014 conference in Atlanta that set the tone for the AHSa renewal. I could give a lecture about Mae King, but my time is limited. So I will end this, with this statement: Dr. Mae Coates King was a wonderful person. She was an excellent scholar with progressive ideas and she was not afraid to stand her ground. I trusted Mae and I admired her diplomacy and her willingness to help others. I will say that Adolph Reed describes Mae better than anybody I know and this is what he said: "She is a first class human being." I think she is a very, very wonderful person, as well as being first class. We will miss Mae because she livens up a lot of things that we do and she's there to help whenever there are needs. Mae King will be missed. Thank you. ■

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK POLITICAL SCIENTISTS (NCOBPS)

Statement on Dr. King's passing (also available at <https://mailchi.mp/28df6df4626b/kingstromilestatementnovember2022>)

The National Conference of Black Political Scientists mourns the loss of Dr. Mae King, a founder of NCOBPS and a prominent Black political scientist. We extend our reflections, meditations, and prayers to her family, friends, and colleagues.

Dr. Mae King was an African American political scientist who, for more than six decades, engaged in innovative teaching, mentorship, and advocacy in the field of political science. She was a professor emerita of political science at Howard University in Washington DC. In addition to an illustrious career as a Howard University professor, King taught political science for fourteen years while an Associate Professor at the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, and served as a Visiting Scholar at The Johns Hopkins University's School of International Studies. Early in her career, she was on the faculty of Texas Southern University. As the first African American Senior Staff Associate at the American Political Science Association, Dr. King led numerous initiatives that transformed institutional conditions for more impactful research in African Foreign Policy and Development, Nigerian local government, Black Women in Politics, Third World Politics, and Comparative Politics.

Dr. King attended Bishop College where she earned a BA in Social Studies. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, she was trained by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in nonviolent direct action taking her own courageous stance in the civil rights movement and was active in the national Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). She also earned an MA and PhD in Political Science from the University of Idaho. In 1969 she joined forces with several other Black political scientists, most notably Dr. Jewel Limar Prestage, to found the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. King

helped found the African Studies Association. She was a former President of the International Association of Black Professionals in International Affairs and Vice-President of the African Heritage Studies Association.

Dr. King is the namesake for an award given by the Association for the Study of Black Women in Politics. Each year, the Mae C. King Distinguished Paper Award on Women, Gender, and Black Politics recognizes "the best paper presented by a political scientist on women, gender and Black Politics at a national or regional Political Science conference in the past academic year". Dr. Sherri L. Wallace, et al. noted that Dr. King "paved the way for a generation of Black political scientists generally, and Black female political scientists particularly."

Dr. King produced a distinguished legacy of pioneering scholarly publications including, *Localism and Nation Building* (Spectrum Books, 1988); *Basic Currents of Nigerian Foreign Policy* (Howard University Press, 1996); "Oppression and Power: The Unique Status of the Black Woman in the American Political System," published in the *Social Science Quarterly* in 1975, and "The Politics of Sexual Stereotypes" published in the *Journal of Black Studies and Research* in 1982.

Dr. Mae King was a treasured woman scholar and an effective institution builder. Dr. King's early familial lessons about African antiquity and her early connections to Liberia, the Elaine (Arkansas) Rebellion of 1919, Negro Spirituals as songs of liberation, and her reflections on the Newsom Training Elementary School where she was taught about Sojourner Truth and Denmark Vesey anchored her ethical commitment to the philosophy that, "you have to look after each other."

Dr. Mae King's death marks a major loss to Political Science as a discipline and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. In remembering Dr. King, Dr. Georgia Persons writes, "Mae King was a marvelous woman, and she supported me in my early years of applying for graduate school. Mae was a close friend of my mentor, Dr. Jewel Prestage. Mae helped me to get a Ford Foundation Fellowship,

and she had a hand in my getting admitted to MIT for grad school. Mae King once worked at the APSA headquarters, and she worked tirelessly on behalf of Black folk! The passing of Dr. Mae King is a major loss!" Dr. Alvin Thornton writes, "For many years, I was a colleague of King's in Howard University's Political Science Department. Her footprint on the discipline as a Black scholar is large with Dr. Jewel L. Prestage, Diane Pinderhughes, Shelby Lewis, Paula McClain, and many others. She helped carve a path for Black women in the disci-

pline, especially in areas of African and foreign affairs and Comparative Politics. May she rest in peace from her service and leadership," Dr. Sekou Franklin writes, "She taught a course on "Third World Ideology," this was before we started using the words "Global South." It was very good. I still have books for the course. She was an OG—a disappearing group of elders who were committed to liberation, serious scholarship, and well-traveled. She will be missed." ■

AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Resolution: a tribute to and in recognition of Dr. Mae C. King

Whereas Dr. Mae C. King, Professor Emerita of Political Science at Howard University, joined the American Political Science Association as a member in 1963; she earned her PhD in political science in 1968 from the University of Idaho and joined the American Political Science Association (APSA) as a Professional Staff Associate from 1969-1975, becoming the first African American Individual and the first Woman to work on the APSA staff.

During her time at APSA, Dr. King supported multiple newly formed programs and committees, including the APSA Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession, the APSA Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, the Black Graduate Fellowship (currently the Diversity Fellowship Program), the Teaching and Learning Committee, the National Science Foundation's Pre-Collegiate Education Project, the Federal City College Project, and orientation sessions for the APSA Congressional Fellowship Program. She also staffed council meetings and attended the first conference on Black Politics organized by the association in 1970.

Whereas Dr. Mae C. King, conducted groundbreaking field research in Ghana, Nigeria and at the United Nations, producing innovative scholarship on African politics, Ghanaian and Nigerian foreign policy and politics, US foreign policy, and Black Women in politics; She made her first trip to Ghana in 1972 while she was an APSA staff member. Her published scholarship includes the pioneering 1975 article entitled "Oppression and Power: The Unique Status of the Black Woman in the American Political System" and a 1996 book entitled: "Basic Currents of Nigerian Foreign Policy". And a 2010 article entitled "Race and US Foreign Policy: Reflections on West Africa." During an APSA-Pi Sigma Alpha Oral History interview, King stated that she acquired her interest in Africa from her Grandfather and her college professors.

Whereas Dr. Mae C. King's teaching and mentoring had a global reach, teaching courses in African politics, Race and Foreign Policy, American Government, and Political Theory at multiple prestigious colleges and universities, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Virginia State, Texas Southern, and Howard

University and internationally at the University of Benin.

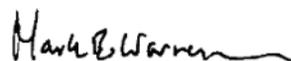
Therefore, the American Political Science Association hereby recognizes Dr. Mae C. King for her innovative, exemplary and outstanding leadership and contributions to the advancement of the professional association, the discipline of political science and its members, as well as to the numerous professional associations in which she held leadership positions such as the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS) of which she was a co-founder, and the Nigerian Political Science Association, and the African Heritage Studies Association, among others.

During her career, Dr. King made outstanding professional contributions to the international political science community. She served with honor, dignity and professionalism and was a model for young political scientists of all backgrounds, but especially for women and scholars of color. She served as a trusted liaison between APSA and Black political scientists during a time when the profession was not welcoming to Black Scholars or the study of Black and African politics. She, along with Dr. Jewel L. Prestage, who at the time was the Vice President of the APSA Council and member of the Committees on the Status of Blacks and the Status of Women, and other Black Political Scientists, helped to change that. In 2009, at the 40th anniversary Minority Fellowship Program celebration, APSA honored Dr. King and presented her with a plaque to mark her contributions during the formative years of the Black Graduate Student Fellowship Program.

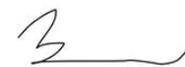
Dr. King contributed greatly to the foundations of APSA's Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession and the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession. Her contributions established a lasting foundation for many APSA programs that continue to thrive today, leaving a legacy that includes the Teaching and Learning Program, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program, demographic data collection, and the APSA Status Committees. Dr. King embodied the hopes, dreams, and expectations of those who were marginalized and who fought for inclusivity, equity, and recognition in their profession. She leaves an enduring legacy of excellence in leadership, civil and human rights, research, teaching, service, and mentoring—impacting countless students, scholars and communities around the world. ■



Lisa Martin
President



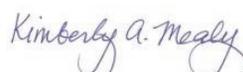
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