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# FSU remembers eminent psychologist and National Academy member Norman B. Anderson

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Norman B. Anderson

Dr. Norman B. Anderson, clinical psychologist and well-known leader in the behavioral and social sciences, passed away on March 1, 2024. Dr. Anderson was born on October 16, 1955, in Greensboro, NC. His parents were the late Drs. Charles W. and Lois J. Anderson, who were co-pastors of United Institutional Baptist Church in Greensboro. He is survived by his wife of more than 37 years, Elizabeth Anderson, and his extended family.

Dr. Anderson attended public schools in Greensboro, North Carolina, and graduated from Grimsley Senior High School. He received his bachelor's degree from North Carolina Central University, and his master's and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology from UNC Greensboro. Anderson served as a clinical resident at Brown University School of Medicine and as a post-doctoral research fellow at Duke University School of Medicine.

Dr. Anderson had a wide-ranging career as a national leader, first as a scientist and tenured professor studying health equity issues and mind/body health, and later as an executive in government, nonprofit, and higher education contexts. He began his career as an assistant professor at Duke School of Medicine, where he was among the first scientists to study and write about the role of stress in the development of hypertension in African Americans. In collaboration with his former student, the late Dr. Rodney Clark (and others), he developed one of the first bio-psycho-social models of racism as a stressor for African Americans, which was published in 1999 and was awarded the 2023 Scientific Impact Award from the Society of Experimental Social Psychology. Anderson continued to make contributions in collaboration with others to understanding the potential connection between racism, discrimination and health throughout his career.

Dr. Anderson left Duke to become an Associate Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and was the first director of the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR). At NIH, he facilitated behavioral and social sciences research across all the Institutes and Centers of the NIH. Under his purview was behavioral and social research in such areas as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, children's health, mental health, minority health,

aging and oral health. His special interest at NIH was in sociocultural determinants of health, and in advancing an integrated, transdisciplinary, bio-psycho-social approach to health science, health promotion, prevention and health care.

Following his tenure at NIH, and after serving for a short time as a professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, Dr. Anderson became Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Executive Vice President of the American Psychological Association (APA), a position he held for 13 years. He was the second-longest serving (and first African American) CEO since the organization's founding in 1892. Among APA's numerous accomplishments during his tenure, the organization was named one of the top places to work in the Washington, D.C. area in 2014. Dr. Anderson retired from APA in 2015.

Dr. Anderson returned to academia in 2017 as Assistant Vice President for Research and Academic Affairs and Professor of Social Work at Florida State University. In these roles, he worked with faculty and administrators to advance the research mission of the university and to facilitate the success of emerging academic leaders. He created and directed the FSU Faculty Leadership Development Program, which is designed to offer leadership training to faculty across the university at different stages of their professional journeys.

For his research, service and leadership, he received several significant awards from scientific societies and universities. Among his numerous honors, in 2012 Anderson was elected to membership in the prestigious National Academy of Medicine of the National Academies of Science. In 2013, he was inducted into the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame for his work in science. Anderson also received four honorary doctorate degrees.

Dr. Anderson was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Psychological Association, the Association for Psychological Science, the Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research, and the Society of Behavioral Medicine. He was a Past-President of the Society of Behavioral Medicine and was President-Elect of Federation of Associations in the Behavioral and Brain Sciences (2024 – 2025; Presidential term was to be 2026 – 2027).

In addition to publishing dozens of scientific articles, Dr. Anderson was the author and editor of several books, including serving as editor-in-chief of the two-volume *Encyclopedia of Health and Behavior* (2003) and as co-editor of *Interdisciplinary research: Case studies from health and social science* (2008). He was editor-in-chief of APA's flagship journal *American Psychologist* for over 12 years. He also was senior editor of the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Global Public Health*.

Later in life Dr. Anderson pursued his longstanding interests in contemplative practices and spirituality. After over 40 years of personal meditation practices, he began offering workshops and retreats in mindfulness meditation, following his teacher training at UCLA. He also discovered and was fascinated by the ancient Christian contemplative tradition, which was connected to his own faith tradition. Following training from the Shalem Institute, Dr. Anderson began offering workshops on contemplative meditation and prayer.

Anderson's Christian faith was rooted in the progressive, justice and radically inclusive and welcoming wing of the church (as exemplified by Christ), especially as it connected to the African American faith tradition. Models of this tradition are leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Dr. Howard Thurman, Dr. Pauli Murray, Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, Dr. Howard-John Wesley, and many others. He also connected strongly with the ancient contemplative, mystical traditions of Christian, believing that the more we intentionally turned inward toward stillness to connect with the Divine, the more we are connected to that part of us "made in the image and likeness of God," and the more we connected with our fellow humans, who are also made in that image and likeness. Although rooted in the teaching of Christ, Dr. Anderson had a strong interfaith and inter-spiritual orientation, believing that the diversity of our religious and spiritual practices were expressions of our inner yearning to connect with "that" which is deeply within us and but also beyond us, whether we call that God, Spirit, the Universe, Creator, Ultimate Reality, Divine Mother, or some other name.

In 2024, at age 68, Dr. Anderson entered the San Francisco Theological Seminary to pursue training the art and practice of spiritual direction/companionship.

Dr. Anderson was a member of the Washington (DC) Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

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