

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of an inspirational and beloved North Carolinian, Dr. LeRoy Walker. Coach Walker, as most of us knew him, passed away on Monday at the age of 93 in Durham, the North Carolina community he made his home for six decades. He achieved many firsts during a lifetime dedicated to excellence in athletics, character-building, and service to the community.

Coach Walker was born in Atlanta in 1918. He was the youngest of 13 children and went on to become the first from his family to graduate from college, earning eleven letters in athletics and All-American honors in football at Benedict College. After earning a master's degree at Columbia University, he came to North Carolina Central University in Durham, where he would serve as track coach for 38 years.

At NCCU, Coach Walker trained All-Americans, National Champions and Olympians. In 1976, he was the first African-American to coach the United States Olympic track team, helping American athletes bring home over 20 medals. This is a remarkable record of achievement, but for Coach Walker it was not merely about athletics; what made him happiest, he said, was seeing his former athletes succeed as strong citizens in their communities.

While serving as track coach, Coach Walker worked his way through a doctoral program at New York University, becoming the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. in biomechanics. He went on to serve as NCCU's Chancellor and as the President of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. According to the Associated Press, even though he'd earned other titles—Doctor and Chancellor—Coach Walker still asked people to call him "Coach." "When you call me that, it means you're my friend," he said.

Having touched so many lives in our state, Coach Walker went on to touch lives across the world. After retiring from NCCU, he served a distinguished term as the head of the U.S. Olympic Committee, extending through the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. He was the first African-American to fill this post. As he brought the games to the city where he was born, Coach Walker reflected that his life—from a childhood spent in the segregated South to a professional life of great distinction—seemed like a Hollywood movie. But his was also a story that embodied the ideals of the Olympic Games—competition paired with sportsmanship, perseverance, universal respect, understanding and peace between peoples. The Committee could not have chosen a better leader.

Statement for the Record - Tribute to Coach LeRoy Walker

April 27, 2012

We mourn the loss of Coach Walker, but we give thanks for the generous and exemplary life he lived. I extend the condolences of this House to Coach Walker's family, to the NC Central community and to all across the world who called him "Coach." And I request, Mr. Speaker, that the fuller accounts of his life and work contained this week in the [Raleigh News and Observer](#) and the

[New York Times](#)

be included at this point in the record.