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Civil rights legend [Willie “Wazir” Peacock](#) to receive posthumous honorary doctorate from Rust College

Rust College will recognize 1962 alumnus Willie B. “Wazir” Peacock with a posthumous honorary doctorate degree at the college’s 157th commencement exercises scheduled for 11 a.m. Saturday, May 6, 2023 at its campus located at 150 Rust Ave. Holly Springs, Miss.

Willie B. “Wazir” Peacock, a civil rights leader and social justice advocate from Charleston, Miss., is known for his work with the Student Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the 1960s.

In the early '60s Peacock led Rust students in a boycott of Holly Springs’ segregated theater and in efforts to increase voter registration and participation. His work alongside the likes of Bob Moses, Amzie Moore, Frank Smith, Fannie Lou Hamer and fellow Rust College alumnus, Dr. Leslie-Burl McLemore, resulted in him being a target of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission. It even resulted in him being beaten at a Lowndes County jail in 1964.

McLemore lobbied to have Peacock receive this honor and encouraged others to do the same. A close friend and mentor whom he admired, McLemore said not only was Peacock a pivotal organizer in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee(SNCC), but Peacock also used his lovely voice to sing with the SNCC Freedom Singers on many occasions.

“Willie B. “Wazir” Peacock impressed me with his knowledge, quiet dignity, and passion to help liberate our people,” said McLemore, 1964 Rust College graduate. “A brilliant man who decided to forgo medical school to work in the Movement. Indeed, he was a role model for me and so many other students at Rust College. To be sure, I wanted Rust to recognize and honor one of its greatest sons. Credit to Rust College that it decided to honor a person who made a major contribution to society before he passed away.”

In later years, Peacock continued his civil rights efforts while working with Brown Berets in California, where he sought to bring together Blacks and Latinos. He worked with the University of Mississippi Medical Center on advocacy projects, Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaign and

was a frequent speaker for the Fannie Lou Hamer National Institute on Citizenship and Democracy in Jackson. Peacock died on 17 April 2016.

Peacock's life's work should be remembered by those who now benefit from his efforts.

"Willie B. "Wazir" Peacock's work was so significant because he helped to liberate people in Mississippi and the American South," said McLemore, founding director of the Fannie Lou Hamer National Institute on Citizenship and Democracy & Jackson State University political science professor emeritus. "As the consummate organizer, he went into some of the most dangerous parts of Mississippi and the South. He put his life on the line to make our state and the rest of the country a better place. Long live the legacy of Mr. Willie B. "Wazir" Peacock!"

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