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Lewis Walker Institute Fundraiser
John M. Dunn
March 15, 2013

Good evening and thank you all for being with us this evening. We are here to celebrate both a wonderful initiative and the man for whom that initiative was named.

Timing is everything, and ever so often, a community is in the fortunate position to have the right person in the right place with an important body of work to be accomplished.

This community and this university were in that position in 1989 when Western Michigan University began the work of establishing an academic research, teaching and service center to promote:

- an understanding of race and ethnic relations, with a special emphasis on the causes of disparities and the contexts in which conflicts as well as shared purposes and perspectives arise;
- appreciation of the diverse peoples and cultures of the United States, with special emphasis on the peoples and cultures of Michigan; and
- more equitable and inclusive communities and institutions, especially in this region of the state and throughout Michigan.

If those three goals sound like the life's work of Dr. Lewis Walker, there's a reason for that. It was Dr. Walker to whom then-President Diether H. Haenicke turned to help design and launch that center.

What was then the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations began first with a focus on teaching and campus diversity. Over the years, it has expanded its outreach into the community to focus on issues of poverty, neighborhood development, tutoring

and sports camps for young people and campus service--service learning--in the community.

The center Lewis Walker helped launch was named for him by a grateful university in 2000, shortly after his 1999 retirement. In truth, this was before I was a member of this community, but I think that naming was also a subtle nudge to keep him involved and active in the center and the work at which he excels. It worked. He even served as interim director of the center in 2007 when I first had the pleasure to meet him.

Lewis Walker

Dr. Walker joined the WMU faculty in 1964, fresh from earning his doctorate at Ohio State University. He became our first African-American faculty member with a Ph.D. He served as chair of the Department of Sociology from 1989 to 1999, the year he retired from the University after 35 years of service. A specialist in race relations, criminology, juvenile delinquency and social psychology, he has written seven books and many scholarly articles.

He grew up in Selma and Birmingham, Ala., during the Jim Crow era and has devoted himself to studying race, ethnicity and poverty, and the struggle for justice and civil rights. Among the chief beneficiaries of his work are the 20,000 WMU students he has taught and the citizens of Kalamazoo and other Michigan communities where he worked to promote justice and understanding.

A leader on and off campus, Dr. Walker has been a member of or consultant to a wide variety of boards. His knowledge in the area of social justice led city officials to utilize his extensive expertise to conduct the first police-community training for police, and he chaired the task force that ultimately led to the creation of the city's Citizens' Public Safety Review and Appeals Board.

Dr. Walker has received numerous honors, most recently a 2012 Humanitarian Award from the Metropolitan Kalamazoo Branch of the NAACP. His WMU accolades include a teaching excellence award in 1971, a Distinguished Service Award in 1989 and being named the WMU Alumni "W" Club's Man of the Year for 2007.

Despite the fact he has been honored so many times, I am willing to speculate that Lewis Walker regards those generations of students who benefitted from his teaching and the communities he helped make whole as his true legacy. I am also willing to speculate that Lewis Walker treasures a lifetime of friendship above any honor a grateful community might bestow.

That's why I'm so pleased this evening to have the opportunity to introduce our guest speaker. His visit to us is testament to both the power of friendship and the ties that bind people together in lifelong dedication to similar causes.

Dr. William Julius Wilson, a friend and former undergraduate classmate of Lewis Walker is our special guest this evening. He is here to honor the classmate he met some 55 years ago at Wilberforce University.

Dr. Wilson is one of only 20 named University Professors, the highest professional distinction a faculty member at Harvard can receive. He teaches in the Kennedy School of Government and also is affiliated with the Department of African and African American Studies. His current research focuses on the increasing concentration of poverty in many large central cities.

A Harvard faculty member since 1996, Dr. Wilson previously served as a professor at the University of Chicago and director of that university's Center for the Study of Urban Inequality. He was a MacArthur Prize Fellow from 1987 to 1992 and has been

elected to such august bodies as the National Academy of Sciences, American Academy of Arts and Sciences and British Academy.

Dr. Wilson is the first and only noneconomist to receive the Seidman Award in Political Economy. In addition, he was named one of America's 25 Most Influential People by Time magazine in 1996 and received the 1998 National Medal of Science, the United States' highest scientific honor.

His many books include "The Truly Disadvantaged" and "When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor." Editors of the New York Times Book Review named the former work one of the 16 best books of 1987 and the latter work a notable book of 1996. His latest book, "More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City," was published in 2010. The title of this evening's event is taken from that important work.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming a scholar of great accomplishment and a man who truly knows the meaning of friendship, Dr. William Julius Wilson.