Arthur M. Walters
(1918-2010)

Arthur Meredith Walters was a social services administrator who is most recognized for his role as the Louisville Urban League executive director from 1970 to 1987. Known as a "bridge-builder" and one of Louisville, Kentucky's most effective leaders for justice and opportunity, he was among the inaugural inductees of the Kentucky Human Rights Commission Hall of Fame in 2000.

Walters was born Nov. 6, 1918, in Magnolia, Ky. He graduated as valedictorian of his class from Bond-Washington High School. He was attending Kentucky State College when he entered the U.S. Army in 1945. A veteran of World War II and the Korean War, he was one of the first African American officers to lead integrated troops. Walters earned the U.S. Army Bronze Star for valor and the Soldier's Medal. He retired as a lieutenant colonel after serving 20 years. He later earned his Master's of Education degree from the University of Louisville.

He joined the Louisville Urban League, an affiliate of the National Urban League, in 1963, as its industrial relations secretary, and from 1963 to 1987, he worked tirelessly in creating employment, housing, and educational opportunities previously denied minorities. He wrote the nationally recognized on-the-job training program for the League to assist the under-skilled in finding employment and to help persuade Kentucky and area companies to hire, train, and recruit black workers. In 1969, for example, he led efforts to place 345 workers in jobs, which paid them a combined paycheck of more than $2 million, according to Urban League statistics. He told *The Louisville Times* in 1970, "We have convinced the 'doubting Thomases' that disadvantaged people can be good employees, and the only way to determine if they can perform is to put them on jobs."

Arthur Walters' hard work gained him the respect of many, statewide and nationally. His achievements earned him an impressive list of honors, including Adult Black Achiever of the Year, Freedom Award, and Doctor of Humane Letters from Bellarmine University, where there is a scholarship named for him. The annual Louisville Urban League Arthur M. Walters Champion of Diversity Award is also named in his honor. He died Oct. 16, 2010, at the age of 91.







Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians

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