
William Alexander Darity Sr.(1924 - 2015)

NORTHAMPTON - William Alexander Darity, Sr., Emeritus Professor Public Health and founding Dean of the School of Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst died Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015, at Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton. He advanced the fields of public health and advocacy as well as tobacco control. He was preceded in death by his wife of 44 years, Evangeline Royall Darity, who died in 1994.

A native of North Carolina, Dr. Darity was a leader and pioneer in the fields of international health inequities and the health status of marginalized populations. He advanced the fields of public health and advocacy as well as tobacco control.

William Darity, Sr. was born Jan. 15, 1924, in East Flat Rock, North Carolina, the son of Aden Randall Darity and Elizabeth Smith Darity. Neither of his parents had had the opportunity to complete schooling beyond 6th grade but, nevertheless, managed to send three of their four children to college. Darity completed a bachelor of science degree from Shaw University and a Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH) degree from North Carolina Central University. In 1964 he became the first black recipient of a doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, taking only two years to complete his doctorate in public health.

After working for two years with the anti-poverty agency the North Carolina Fund, Darity accepted an associate professor appointment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1965. At that time, the small department of public health, which offered a bachelor of science degree and a master of science degree with a concentration in environmental health, had three full-time faculty members. He was appointed head of the department in 1968 and then dean in the school of health sciences in September 1973. In addition to the Division of Public Health (an accredited School of Public Health) and a Division of Nursing (an accredited School of Nursing), this newly created School of health sciences included a department of communications disorders, which offered majors and graduate study in audiology and speech and language disorders. At his urging upon his retirement, the division of public health became a school of public health with its own dean, and the division of nursing became a school of nursing with its own dean.

His last major responsibility at the University of Massachusetts was to serve as principal investigator of a \$3.4 million, five-year research study on smoking and cancer in black populations, funded by the National Cancer Institute. This important investigation explored the factors affecting smoking adoption and accompanying health risks among middle-income and low-income blacks. After retirement, he served as senior associate and deputy director for the Asia and the Near East for the Population Council of New York and a consultant on several research projects at University of Maryland's School of Medicine in Baltimore.

Prior to pursuing his doctorate degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Darity's international experience included 10 years with the World Health Organization (WHO). During his tenure at WHO, the American University of Beirut's School of Public Health in Lebanon and the University of Alexandria's Higher Institute of Public Health in Egypt. Darity also served as a health consultant with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Arab Refugees and as a WHO Regional Advisor for 17 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, which included 11 Arab countries, as well as Israel, Cyprus, Iran, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Pakistan and West Pakistan (now Bangladesh) with an emphasis on malaria eradication.

Darity served as a member of the board of trustees at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill between 1985 and 1991. He was honored as an outstanding alumni by Shaw University in March 2015 and inducted into the Golden Rams Society at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in November 2014. Earlier he was named a Distinguished Alumnus by the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill in October 1996 and received the Alumni Achievement Award from Shaw University in 1997. He also received an Honorary Doctor of Science Degree from Shaw University in 1990 and was given a Distinguished Service Award from the University of North Carolina's School of Public Health Alumni Association in 1977.

He is survived by his wife Trudy Whisonant Darity; his daughter Janki Evangelia Darity; his son William Darity, Jr.; daughter-in-law Kirsten Mullen; and grandsons Aden Lowell Mullen Darity and William Otis Mullen Darity.

The family is grateful for the love and support of friends and the expert care provided by the medical teams at Bay State Medical Center and Cooley Dickinson Hospital over the course of many years.

Calling hours with the family were held Thursday, Dec. 3, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Douglass Funeral Home in Amherst. Funeral services were held Friday, Dec. 4, at 10 a.m. also at Douglass Funeral Home, Amherst. Burial followed in Wildwood Cemetery, Amherst.