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Civil Rights Leader and Social Justice Advocate to Receive Honorary Doctorate from Rust College

HOLLY SPRINGS, MS - On May 6, 2023, Rust College will award posthumously the honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters to Willie (Wazir) Peacock. The award will take place on the Rust College campus at the one hundredth and fifty-seventh Commencement Convocation which begins at 11:00 a.m. (CST).

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

A 1962 Rust College graduate, Peacock led Rust students in a boycott of Holly Springs' segregated theater and in efforts to increase voter registration and participation. Peacock's work alongside the likes of Bob Moses, Amzie Moore, Frank Smith, Fannie Lou Hamer and fellow Rust College alum, 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.

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.

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