

IN MEMORIAM
John Lamont Peterson (1949–2021)
American Psychologist, in press.



John Lamont Peterson, born April 22, 1949, in Orlando, Florida, died unexpectedly of natural causes May 23, 2021, in Atlanta, Georgia, at the age of 72. He was the only child of John Sheppard Peterson and Maggie Peterson, now deceased. His domestic partner, Lupin Loughborough, died in 1993. He is survived by his cousins Tracy Anderson and Julia Diggle and other relatives in Florida, Georgia, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey.

Dr. Peterson graduated with honors from Jones High School in Orlando, Florida, and attended the Harvard-Yale-Columbia Intensive Summer Studies Program. He received his BA from Florida A & M University in 1970 and earned his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1974. His mentor was James Jackson, one of the most eminent African American psychologists of the last half century, known for his studies on the impact of racial disparities on minority health.

After teaching at Claremont's McKenna College and Graduate School in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and realizing in particular the growing impact of the early AIDS epidemic on African American men, Dr. Peterson joined the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS), a key program of the AIDS Research Institute at the University of California, San Francisco, where he served as a Research Scientist from 1986 to 1993. In 1994 he joined the Department of Psychology's Community Program at Georgia State University, first as an Associate Professor, then as a full Professor from 2003 until his retirement in 2015, and then as Professor Emeritus until his death. At the University of Michigan, he was a Rackham Prize Fellow; subsequently he was inducted into Florida A & M University's Gallery of Distinction. He was a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and of the Society for Community Research and Action and a member of the National Academies of Science-Institute of Medicine's Committee on LGBT Health Research.

Known for his many contributions to understanding the predictors of HIV/AIDS risk reduction, the effects of behavioral interventions to reduce this risk behavior, and the social determinants of racial disparities in HIV infection, primarily among Black men who have sex with men, Dr. Peterson leaves a record of over 70 publications, nearly 20 books and book chapters, and over 100 conference presentations—many with students he mentored. He collaborated widely, not only with his colleagues at CAPS, but also with colleagues at the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, and on projects with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He was an active mentor of Black social and behavioral scientists and was among the most respected researchers on the Black HIV experience, including how to reduce infection rates among African American men.

Dr. Peterson leaves behind a wide circle of friends in the academic research community nationally; friends in the HIV/AIDS and gay activist community in Atlanta; and friends in Black and White Men Together, especially the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Atlanta chapters. The National Association of BWMT had planned to present him its Lifetime Achievement Award at its 40th Convention in New Orleans this July; it will now do so posthumously. He also leaves behind all those who loved Leontyne Price, spirited conversation, and an orderly, kempt desk.

Roger Bakeman
Georgia State University