

# **Dr. Walter Smith, Former FAMU President**

**Dr. Walter L. Smith, the former second President of Roxbury Community College in Boston, Massachusetts, and the seventh President of Florida A & M University, which was his undergraduate alma mater, was born in Tampa, Florida and grew up in Cairo, GA, Tallahassee, FL, and Harlem, NY. Dr. Smith completed high school as a stellar athlete in track, basketball and baseball. In 1951, Dr. Smith won several competitions while attending the 4-H Short Course at Savannah State College, and was elected Vice President of the 4-H Clubs of the State of Georgia.**

**Dr. Smith spent his young adult years in Harlem, NY where he found work as a messenger, and racks pusher in the New York Garment center until the age of twenty-three, after that he served in the U.S. Army for thirty months during the era of the Korean War. After discharge from the army, Dr. Smith enrolled at Gibbs Junior College in St. Petersburg, Florida where he became the first President of the Student Government Association.**

**Because of his many accomplishments, Dr. Smith was recognized by the National Education Association to assist in breaking racial barriers in teacher organization in the southern and border states. His programs in Human Relations in the State of Florida received the National Rosena Willis Awards at the 1971 and 1972 NEA**

**Conventions. This effort won him an African American Institute Scholarship and opportunity to study in West Africa. In 1993, Dr. Smith was asked to return to South Africa and later became the founding president of South Africa's first American style two year college. Dr. Smith was a United States monitor for the 1994 election that brought Nelson Mandela to power as President of the RSA.**

**Today Dr. Smith is retired and lives in Tampa with his wife Barbara W. Smith enjoying their family of five children, U.S. Army Colonel John L. Smith, Attorney Salesia V. Smith-Gordon, Andre Smith, Walter L. Smith II and Tracy**

**Abrams Butler. They have seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. In 2002, Dr. Smith opened Dr. Walter L. Smith Library located at 905 N. Albany Street in**

Tampa, it is library/museum dedicated to enhancing the educational development of the people in his boyhood community.

Dr. Smith has received numerous awards and accolades throughout his colorful life, these are a few notable awards received by him:

- Keynoted the “Unveiling of the Magnificent Twelve” by the Association of Florida Colleges;
- IBM Kennedy Space Center Red-X Award;
- Tampa Urban League Scholarly Distinction Award;
- National Conference of Black Mayors President Award;
- Academic Specialty Award to the Country of Malawi;
- Inducted into the FAMU Sports Hall of Fame;
- FAMUN of the Century Award;
- Florida Association of Community Colleges President’s Award; • First Chairperson of the Florida Statewide Committee on the Education of Blacks; • Apple Gate Doris Award;
- Anheuser-Bush Association Great Kings Award;
- Inducted into the FAMU Gallery of Distinction in Education;
- National Education Association of the Rosa Parks Human Rights Award.