

## **Astrobiology News February 2020: Celebrating a Noted Climate Scientist during Black History Month**

In light of this year's theme for Evolution Weekend, along with events around the U.S. celebrating Black History Month, I thought I'd combine the two and feature prize-winning climate scientist, Warren Washington, in this month's news. Washington was the second African American ever to earn a doctorate in atmospheric science. Last February, Washington, who has advised six presidents (Jimmy Carter through Barack Obama) during his long career, received the 2019 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement (commonly referred to as "the Nobel Prize for the environment").<sup>1</sup>

Now 83 years old, Washington began his work in the early 1960s, at a time when computers were first being applied to the study of Earth's climate. Recently retired, Washington worked for the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) for 54 years.<sup>2</sup> He was one of the first developers of atmospheric computer models that used physics to predict future states of the atmosphere. As his research progressed, Washington improved these models by adding the effects of oceans and sea ice.

Washington is the recipient of many awards for his outstanding research, and he has also been honored for his efforts mentoring students and fostering diversity in science. His atmospheric models were used extensively in the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,<sup>3</sup> for which NCAR scientists (including Washington) and colleagues around the world shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. In 2010, President Obama awarded Washington the National Medal of Science, *"for his development and use of global climate models to understand climate and explain the role of human activities and natural processes in the Earth's climate system and for his work to support a diverse science and engineering work force."* May Washington's lifelong efforts to understand climate change, and to promote diversity in science and engineering, continue to inspire others to progress and action!

Although I've been promoting *Zooniverse* citizen science projects such as [SnapshotWisconsin.org](http://SnapshotWisconsin.org), [FloatingForests.org](http://FloatingForests.org), [NotesfromNature.org](http://NotesfromNature.org), and [PenguinWatch.org](http://PenguinWatch.org) to complement this year's theme for Evolution Weekend, I also encourage you to check out projects like the [Zooniverse African American Civil War Soldiers Project](http://Zooniverse.org/projects/zooniverse-african-american-civil-war-soldiers-project) or the [Zooniverse Antislavery Manuscripts Project](http://Zooniverse.org/projects/zooniverse-antislavery-manuscripts-project). These projects are improving our knowledge of the brave African Americans who fought in the American Civil War, and documenting the anti-slavery movement through the end of the war and the abolition of slavery. If you are participating in these or any other *Zooniverse* projects, could you please send me a brief email to let me know why you chose a particular project, and whether you're using the project as an individual or in a group venue? This will be enormously helpful to me and the *Zooniverse* team in evaluating our efforts to reach new audiences – thanks so much!

Until next month,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/pioneering-black-climate-scientist-honored-top-prize-field>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cgd.ucar.edu/staff/wmw/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/>