In Memoriam

Ted Becker

Theodore Lewis "Ted" Becker passed away at the age of 92 after a long illness at his home in Opelika, Alabama on November 4, 2025. He was born in Newark, New Jersey and received his BA and JD degrees from Rutgers University. Ted went on to receive his MA from the University of Maryland and his PhD from Northwestern University. Prior to entering academia, Ted served as an intelligence analyst with the US Army and worked in the New Jersey Attorney General's office.

Beginning in 1964, Ted spent nearly 25 years teaching in the University of Hawaii's Department of Political Science, later serving as its chair. During that time, he also received visiting professorships at New York University (where he was named the first Walter Meyer Professor of Law), City College of New York, Brooklyn College, San Diego State University, and Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand.

He went to Auburn University in 1988 to chair its Department of Political Science and spent the rest of his career there. Ted won numerous teaching awards at Auburn and was named both an Auburn Alumni Association Distinguished Professor and an Alma Holladay Professor of Civic and Community Engagement.

Ted developed a scholarly reputation in two completely different areas. In the early part of his career, he was one of the pioneers in the field of judicial behavior and earned national recognition for his work on both the US Supreme Court and comparative judicial politics. He later focused on citizen empowerment through new forms of democracy. He was the co-inventor of the first scientific deliberative poll (Televote); one of the early practitioners of Electronic Town Meetings; and co-organizer of the first two International Congresses of Direct Democracy in Prague and Athens. He gave presentations on this topic around the world including in Austria, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, South Korea, and Sweden. He authored 15 books and more than 50 scholarly articles on judicial behavior, law and politics, American government, global geo-politics, and conflict resolution.

Ted's influence extended far beyond the ivory tower. He was a professional mediator who co-founded the first university-based community mediation center in Hawaii. He also served as the executive coordinator of Honolulu's Neighborhood Mediation Network, and was co-founder and vice president of the Asia-Pacific Organization of Mediators in Manila, Philippines. Until the end of his life, he actively sought ways to create and implement new approaches to global conflict resolution. Upon his retirement, Ted continued to share his knowledge locally with members of his Osher Lifelong Learning Institute classes in Auburn.

For all of the national and international acclaim Ted received, he was most happy at home with his dear companion, coauthor, and muse, Patricia Lantz, who was a saint in caring for Ted for many years.

—Steven P. Brown, Auburn University

Paul Johnson

Paul Marshall Johnson passed away in Auburn at sunset on October 1, 2025, at the age of 79, after sudden complications from a long illness. His wife Peggy and his children, Charles and Laura, were at his side holding his hands as the sun went down over the water.

Paul was born on March 14, 1946, in Tulsa, Oklahoma to the late Charles Woodson Johnson and Frances (Ebbs) Johnson. His earliest memories were of Boerne in the Texas Hill Country where his father established his first medical practice, making house calls to farms and ranches throughout Kendall and Kerr Counties. He then spent most of his childhood and high school years in the city of San Antonio, graduating as valedictorian of Thomas Jefferson High School and making lifelong friendships. He enrolled in Rice University in 1963, where he studied political science and economics, graduating summa cum laude in 1967. He was selected for Phi Beta Kappa and went on to pursue graduate study in political science at Stanford. After completing his MA, he was drafted into the Army in 1969. Paul served a year at Fort Bliss and a year overseas in Vietnam at Cam Ranh Bay, where he received the Bronze Star for meritorious service. In 1971 he returned to Stanford, where he married his college sweetheart Dr. Armanda "Peggy" Sittig in 1972.

The next year, Paul was appointed Fellow and Resident Director of the Stanford-Warsaw University student exchange program. Paul and Peggy spent a year in Warsaw, a memorable experience that would furnish a wealth of stories over the years–including the time the censors for the University of Warsaw Library, out of an excess of caution, forbade Paul access to a copy of his own published work. After returning to the free world, Paul completed his graduate studies at Stanford in 1976 and was awarded a PhD in political science in 1978.

The couple moved across the US to New Haven in 1976, where Paul accepted a lectureship at Yale, and continued teaching as assistant professor of political science until 1981. He was a scholar of comparative political systems, political economy, and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Between Yale and his new position at Florida State University, he and Peggy welcomed their first child, a son; during his seven years in Tallahassee, they welcomed their second child, a daughter, in 1986. Later he taught at the University of Houston and Rice University, and UC Santa Cruz before joining the Department of Political Science at Auburn University in 1991, settling down permanently with his family in "the loveliest metropolitan statistical area on the plains." He taught courses on political economy, intelligence, and political science research methods, helped to inaugurate Auburn's chapter of Phi Beta Kappa in 2001, and served as department chair from 2001-2006. He retired in 2012, returning to teaching one course a semester as associate professor emeritus until 2016.

A proud Texan, a dedicated teacher, and a thoroughgoing

© AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION 2026

https://doi.org/10.1017/psj.2026.10164 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dad, Paul loved San Antonio and the Hill Country, gardening, and doling out detailed investment advice to anyone who asked. He was curious about everything, an inveterate researcher, and had warm opinions on Mexican food and barbecue. He was a font of both wry humor and the corniest jokes in the world –always seeking to make conversation easy. A highlight of each year was the annual fig harvest, when far-flung in-laws and cousins arrived to help pick ripe figs from his growing collection of Brown Turkey fig trees and turn them into homemade jam. An avid genealogist with contacts all over the country, he never tired of recounting the stories of his reputable and disreputable ancestors, including his father's family in Mississippi and his mother's family in western North Carolina.

He is survived by Armanda, his children Charles and Laura, their spouses, beloved nieces, nephews, in-laws and cousins in Texas, Tennessee, Colorado and Washington DC, and many friends and students in Auburn and throughout the country.

—Charlie Johnson, Laura Breitenbeck, Laura Johnson, and Peggy Johnson

Kimuli Kasara

Kimuli Kasara, associate professor of political science at Columbia University, passed away aged 48 in November 2025 in New York City, following a long illness. She is survived by her siblings Mbabazi, Hoche, and Tendo in the United States; extended family in Kenya and Uganda; and many, many friends around the world. She was a beloved colleague and mentor around the discipline and a leading scholar of taxation, identity, diversity, voting, and political violence which she approached with great care, creativity, and modesty.

Kimuli grew up in Canada, Kenya, India, and the U.K., before receiving her BA in philosophy, politics, and economics from St. Peter's College, Oxford University, in 1999 and her PhD in political science from Stanford University in 2006. She started at Columbia University as an assistant professor in 2006 and spent her entire career there, holding fellowships at the University of Goethenberg, Wissenschafts Zentrum Berlin (WZB), and the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

In her academic work, Kimuli was guided by a keen feel for the practice of politics and repeatedly forced us to look at received wisdom in a new light. In "Tax Me If You Can: Ethnic Geography, Democracy, and the Taxation of Agriculture in Africa," she took advantage of overlaps in ethnic identity and crop type across 30 African countries to show that governments taxed co-ethnic farmers at higher rates instead of favoring them with lower rates, as conventional wisdom held. She explained this outcome by noting that leaders could better monitor and target co-ethnics who, like core voters in other settings, had weaker incentives to defect-an argument that is obvious ex post, but only ex post.

Similarly, in "When Do the Rich Vote Less than the Poor and Why: Explaining Turnout Inequality Across the World," she and her former student, Pavithra Suryanarayan, showed that the prevailing view that the wealthy vote at higher rates than the poor is largely confined to industrialized democracies where bureaucratic capacity is high and redistribution is politically salient. However, in many developing countries where, without these conditions, the tax exposure of the wealthy is more limited, the wealthy have weaker incentive to participate in politics through voting. This work upended canonical tax and transfer models of politics, reoriented our attention to why the wealthy vote, and changed how we think about state capacity and participation.

Kimuli's attention to big questions was matched with careful data collection in her research on diversity, violence and trust. In "Separate and Suspicious: Local Social and Political Context and Ethnic Tolerance in Kenya," she created an original data set of local ethnic diversity and spatial segregation in Kenya by coding the ethnicity of the names on voter registers at the polling station level. She found that people living in more diverse communities expressed higher levels of interethnic trust, even when political competition was high–a finding at odds with expectations and one that prompts further investigation of non-material sources of ethnic animosity.

Kimuli's creativity and deep attention to details were also on full display in how she addressed some of the measurement and endogeneity issues that complicate our understanding of the consequences of ethnic diversity. In "Does Local Ethnic Segregation Lead to Violence: Evidence from Kenya," Kimuli used an original dataset of colonial-era cadastral maps to construct an instrument for contemporary segregation at the local level to show that local segregation eroded interethnic trust and contributed to post-election violence as measured through satellite images of fires in the Rift Valley. Kimuli also wrote several working papers and what she modestly called "resting papers" that are discussed by Macartan Humphreys in the Spring 2026 APSA-CP newsletter.

Beyond her academic research, she was a superb teacher with high standards and great empathy. For many years, she taught Introduction to Comparative Politics and was a devoted leader of the senior honors thesis seminar. She worked with top students and those who needed more help with equal care and was especially proud of the "repeat customers" who took multiple classes with her. To relieve the tedium of teaching African politics on Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic, Kimuli encouraged students to scour the internet for election campaign songs and awarded prizes to videos that received the most and fewest votes from the class. For her efforts, in 2019 she received a Lenfest Distinguished Faculty award–Columbia's highest honor for teaching.

Her greatest contribution to Columbia was her work in the Comparative Politics Research Workshop, which she co-organized for many years. Page Fortna captured her usual role when we opened the floor for questions: "Everyone in the room knew that Kimuli would make clear the most essential point of concern, and, unnervingly, she would do so with gentleness and even a sense of humor. Then we would all sigh and think to ourselves, "Humm, why didn't I think of that..." To honor her memory, the workshop has been renamed the Kimuli Kasara Workshop on Comparative Politics.

Kimuli held many service roles at Columbia, and in every meeting was a voice of moral clarity. She was committed to the

© AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION 2026

https://doi.org/10.1017/psj.2026.10164 Published online by Cambridge University Press