

Barrington D. Parker
Remarks at the Memorial Service for Ronald R. Wilmore
Washington, D.C. February 2, 2019

We gather this afternoon to bid farewell to our beloved friend Ronald Richard Wilmore.

As your presence here this afternoon attests, he meant a great deal to a great many people.

The range of friends on this podium and in this audience illustrates how Ron's life intersected with the lives of so many and was such a positive force in the lives of so many for so very long a time. And I say to you this afternoon what a privilege it has been to be able to call Ron my dear friend.

Ron and I entered each other's lives nearly 60 years ago. In the fall of 1961 we first set foot together on the freshman quadrangle at Yale. He was from a fancy prep school in New Haven. I was from public school in Washington D.C. The Yale of those day differed in many significant ways from the University that now exists. It was stayed and conservative and male and white and preppy. There were barely fifteen African Americans in the entire College and Ron and I were 2 of 5 in our class. I can't really remember how I actually met him but within the first few weeks of freshman year we had formed a friendship, one that endured --without a mean word ever being exchanged between the two of us --over the next sixty years. At college we lived near each other and shared all the experiences that made college challenging and frustrating but which also

made college fun and exciting and formative. Through those years one could always count on Ron's determination, kindness, keen sense of responsibility and good humor. Through those years, we leaned on each other and we made the experience of Yale in the old days positive. We both developed and have harbored great affection for the place and I don't think either of us has ever missed a reunion.

Ron went out from college into the world and he took with him a great deal. He knew who he was. He knew where he had come from. He knew what he wanted to accomplish. He knew what made him fulfilled and he knew what made him happy. Just about the first thing he did after college was to get married. He was the first in our group to marry. He met Sandy and I think it was about the end of their first date that he found himself hopelessly in love and that was the start of a relationship that lasted more than 50 years. He adored her and she adored him.

After college Ron had many opportunities open to him. He was smart and hardworking and engaging. White collar, white shoe New York was open to him and beckoned. He deliberately chose another path. He went into teaching. He knew how much good teaching meant to him and so he knew what good teaching could do for others. He loved what he did. He once told me that he could not remember ever having a bad day in the class room. Who else do we know who could make such a proclamation? After teaching he ran with remarkable success the Northwest Settlement House, where my father served for many years as Chairman of the Board. He worked as hard as he could in a community

that was in such need of people like Ron. And so at the end of the day Ron leaves behind the greatest of legacies: a life in service to others. Were we all so fortunate.

Just a few short days ago, Ron said goodbye to his beloved Sandy and to us and the Lord took back his soul. The lives they lived together were ones full of love and achievement and sacrifice and effort. A lifelong adventure. A marriage that was a model to so many. And so, Sandy, as you are disconsolate take satisfaction in the fact that you and Ron had the best of times over so many years. Few are as fortunate as you two were.

*Bye and bye when the morning comes
And all the Saints of God are gathered home
We'll tell the story of how we've overcome
And we'll understand it better bye and bye*