



Dr. Jewel Limar Prestage Best Paper Award

(Born Aug. 12, 1931 – Departed Aug. 1, 2014)

Award Description:

This award was established in 1999 and is presented at the Southwestern Political Science Association Annual Meeting for the best paper on the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and political behavior with a monetary prize of \$250.

Award Selection Criteria:

1. Does the paper topic/subject specifically address the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and political behavior?
2. Is the paper hypothesis/argument well developed and give visibility to issues that address the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and political behavior?
3. Does the literature review appropriately address the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and political behavior?
4. Do the findings and conclusion contribute to research focusing on the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and political behavior in the discipline overall?

Award Background:

Dr. Jewel Limar was born in Hutton, Louisiana on August 12, 1931. Her family relocated to Alexandria, Louisiana, where she received the majority of her education, graduating as **valedictorian** from Peabody High School. She attended Southern University where she earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science and graduated **summa cum laude** in 1951. While at Southern University she became a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and met her life partner, Dr. James Jordan Prestage. They married in 1953. She attended graduate school at the University of Iowa, earning her master's degree and her Ph.D. in 1954. **It is believed that she became the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. in Political Science.**

Dr. Prestage accepted a teaching position at Prairie View A&M University. After two years at Prairie View, she returned to her alma mater, **Southern University** as a **faculty member, subsequent department chair and dean of the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs** until her retirement in 1989. In recognition of her contributions, Southern University conferred upon her the status of Distinguished Professor Emeritus. After retiring from Southern University, Dr. Prestage returned to **Prairie View A&M University as professor of political science and dean of the Benjamin Banneker Honors College** until her retirement in 2002.

During her career, under her leadership and mentoring, a generation of students received academic preparation that led them to graduate and professional schools. Those students represent numerous Political Science Ph.D.'s and lawyers, judges, elected officials, administrators, commissioned military officers, and business executives. In efforts to increase the pipeline of people of color in Political Science, **Dr. Prestage was instrumental in developing and sponsoring at Southern University** the first two classes (1987 & 1988) of the **American Political Science Association (APSA) Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI)**, an annual five-week program designed to introduce undergraduate students from under represented racial/ethnic groups or students interested in broadening participation in political science and pursuing scholarship on issues affecting underrepresented groups to the world of graduate study and to encourage application to PhD programs.

Dr. Prestage was also actively involved in the political activities in the community. While at Southern

University, she was **instrumental in the establishment of the Louisiana Center to Assist Black Elected Officials and served as its director**. She also directed her citizen activism toward the critical issue of the poor quality of civic education in elementary and secondary schools of Louisiana. Through programs that she implemented, over 500 Louisiana teachers improved their teaching methodology in civic education.

Dr. Prestage focused her academic research on the involvement of black women in the political process and gave visibility to their invaluable contributions. She was the first person to pursue research that focused on African-American women legislators and her **co-authored book, *A Portrait of Marginality* (1977, with Dr. Marianne Githens) has been described as a classic study in the area of women and politics**. Recognized for her outstanding service and publications on women and higher education issues, she was appointed by President Jimmy Carter and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve on the **National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs, U.S. Department of Education**. She later was named chair of the Council, becoming the first minority woman to hold the position.

Throughout her academic career, Dr. Prestage presented her research findings at the various annual meetings in political science and professional organizations, often serving as an officer and leader within the organizations. In recognition of her service and achievements, these organizations have honored Dr. Jewel Limar Prestage with the establishment of awards in her name:

- Southwestern Political Science Association (SWPSA) in 1999 for the best paper on the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and political behavior.
- National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS) in 2002 as a founding member with the establishment of **Jewel Limar Prestage Faculty Mentorship Award**, for her dedication and service at historically black colleges and universities.

Dr. Prestage departed this life on August 1, 2014.