

ALL AMERICAN

The Walter Gordon Story

ALL AMERICAN is the untold story about one of America's forgotten civil rights activists who broke pioneering ground in sports, law enforcement, and government.

As the grandson of a former slave in Georgia, and growing up in Riverside, California the son a police officer, Walter Gordon was as tough as they come. He played football for the University of California Berkeley during an era when very few if any blacks were allowed to play at major universities. From 1916 to 1918, the rugged line-man played almost every down on both sides of the ball for legendary Cal Bears Coach Andy Smith. The muscular 6' 200 pound multi-sport star, was also the collegiate champion in boxing and wrestling in California. After his senior season in 1918, he would become the Pacific Coast's first ever college football All American.

After earning his undergraduate degree, the trajectory of Walter's life spiraled into that of a scripted Hollywood action movie. Later down the road, Gordon's stellar life would be featured for all of America in a 1950 episode of Ralph Edwards' NBC radio show "This Is Your Life". When examining Walter Gordon's storied life, one can draw an extremely close parallel to that of the great Paul Robeson. Both were born in the 1890s, and each were college football all americans for their respective schools in 1918, that both become assistant coaches. The two were also Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity brothers that both entered law school in 1919, and became lawyers. Lastly, they both were champions of America's early civil rights movement.

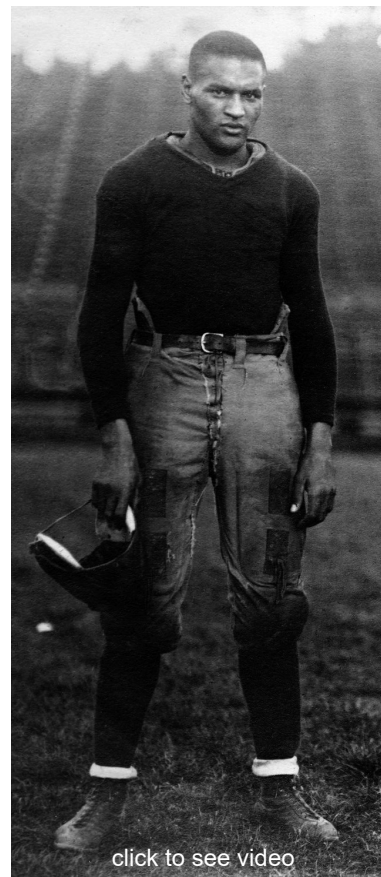
ALL AMERICAN is a documentary film being produced to raise awareness about the significant impact Berkeley's Walter Gordon made as an early 20th century activist for civil rights and social justice in California. His story is one of historic proportions starting with his career in law enforcement as Berkeley's first black police officer in 1919. From the onset, Gordon faced opposition from his Berkeley police colleagues, but garnered full support from Berkeley Chief August Vollmer, who's progressive demeanor revolutionized the field of policing in America.

Gordon studied law and coached football at the University of California by day, then moonlighted as a police officer at night around the mean streets of the waterfront in West Berkeley. Stories in the Oakland Tribune newspaper from the 1920s detail accounts of Gordon's crime fighting exploits with hardened criminals, with descriptions of street gun battles he was engaged in. He retired from the force after 10 years in the streets, and began practicing law at his Berkeley law office in 1930. A short time later, he was elected president of the Oakland/Berkeley chapter of the NAACP, where he worked closely with civil rights activist C.L. Dellums to develop and implement strategies to help address the myriad of problems black people in the Bay Area faced with racial discrimination.

Described by many friends and colleague's as man's man with unquestioned integrity and a judicious temperament, Governor Earl Warren selected Walter Gordon to lead a group in the investigation of the Los Angeles Zoot Suit riots in 1943, which involved ongoing violent clashes between Mexican gangs and U.S. servicemen. Governor Warren would next appoint Walter Gordon to the California Adult Authority, the state's parole board in 1944. He would become chairman in 1946 and directed the board for the next nine years. "The California Adult Authority, one of the most forward looking steps in prison reform, oversees adult parolees, our purpose is rehabilitation, and not punishment," stated Walter Gordon in an interview with host Ralph Edwards for "This is Your Life".

The pinnacle of Walter Gordon's career in government took place in 1955, when he was selected governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Gordon would serve a three year term before being appointed Federal Judge of the District Court in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He served in that capacity on the bench for ten years before retiring in 1969. When Ralph Edwards asked Chief Justice Earl Warren why he selected Walter Gordon to head the California Adult Authority, Warren replied, "Because he was not only an attorney with an honorable record, and an excellent police officer for many years in a fine police department, but he was a humanitarian as well."

ALL AMERICAN is being produced by award winning filmmaker Doug Harris, who has brought stories of Berkeley pioneers to life through historical television documentaries that include: [BOUNCE: The Don Barksdale Story](#), [OUT: The Glenn Burke Story](#), [Basketball Guru: The Pete Newell Story](#), and [FAIR LEGISLATION: The Byron Rumford Story](#). (click links to view trailers)



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