



David William Schwartzman

October 31, 1943 - July 1, 2025

David William Schwartzman - 1943-2025

David William Schwartzman, aged 81, passed away on Tuesday, July 1st in Washington, DC, following a subdural hematoma that was preceded by months of serious illness. David lived in Washington DC since 1973

Born in Brooklyn, New York on October 31st, 1943 David reminded friends it was exactly nine months after the Battle of Stalingrad. His father Max and mother Miriam conceiving David in celebration of the Soviet Union's victory over the Nazis meant that from even from his embryonic beginnings, David was cosmically tied to the victory of socialism over fascism. David had a lifetime commitment to racial and economic justice, locally and globally.

He grew up among a thriving community of largely leftist working-class Jews in the 1950's, where his passion and curiosity for science and the natural world was encouraged. He attended the prestigious Stuyvesant High School, followed by City College, New York B.S, 1964 (chemistry, geology), and Brown University: M.S., 1966 Ph.D., 1971 (geochemistry). David began teaching at Howard University in 1973, became Chairman from 1973-to 1985 and held various positions retiring on June 30, 2012 as Professor Emeritus, but retirement didn't mean a quiet life him.

David ran for office for the DC Statehood Green Party on three occasions, advocating for many years as a candidate and activist in the struggle for DC Statehood. His focus on hiking DC income taxes on our wealthy residents was realized last year when the DC Council passed this hike with revenue going to childcare, affordable housing and an increase in the DC Earned Income Tax Credit benefitting low-income workers. He had a lifelong commitment and felt passionately that his role was to improve the lives of others and not focus on himself, this was instilled in him from his culture, to do good in his community. He enriched and guided many peace and social justice activists in the city and his involvement in demonstrations and protests will be greatly missed.

His civic activities included the Nuclear freeze and Bottle Bill initiatives, Justice for Janitors, Local 25 campaigns, Coalition for Lead Control, Fair Taxes for DC, Tax & Budget and Legislative, Metro DC Science for the People. David was a leader in the DC Statehood Green Party, he was involved in Empower DC, One DC, Claudia Jones School, Fair Budget Coalition, Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America, DC for Democracy, the International Steering Committee and Eco Action of the Green Party, DC Public Banking Center.

David authored hundreds of scientific and political articles, including two published books, "Life Temperature and the Earth" 1999 (The Self Organizing Biosphere), and "The Earth is Not for Sale" (A Path out of Fossil Capitalism to the Other World that is Still Possible). He had not quite finished his final book "Solar Communism".

His research interests included Biogeochemistry, geochemistry (isotope, environmental), astrobiology, environmental studies/policy, philosophy of science, cryptozoology, MUFON, SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence), and research on the origin of life. His work on lead in the environment was an important contribution in the banning of lead in gasoline.

He regularly contributed testimony for the Fair Budget Coalition, advocating against cuts to social services and communities of color, and to the DC Council, pressing for a more just society, taxing the rich, ending childhood poverty, and exposing injustice when he saw it to those in power.

David leaves behind his wife Joanne; his sons Peter and Sam; Sam's mother, Emilie, his grandchildren, and nieces and nephews, and a home in DC where he lived for almost fifty years. His loved ones are planning a memorial and celebration of his life on 2nd August at the Josephine Butler Center, Washington DC.

Tribute Wall

MC

“ *Rest in power David! David was an academic mentor whose work inspired my own research into mineral weathering by lichens and mosses. I deeply admired his campaigning and his clear love for the people of DC, a city I too have come to love through visits from England. I recognise so much in the tributes below. My thoughts are with David's family and friends. May his memory be a blessing.*

Michael Crouch - July 15, 2025 at 05:33 PM



“*David Schwartzman passed today after a struggle with cancer and related heart problems. David was no stranger to struggle as he engaged in civil rights and anti-war protests when we were ten years old. Tom Ehrlich, David and I met 71 years ago at Nature Friends./Camp Midvale in Ringwood NJ. We've been best friends all the way through the thick and thin of personal and political events of our lifetimes.*

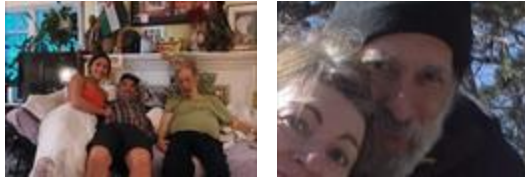
David was born with a scientific mind and he catalogued the rocks, insects and animals we encountered in our childhood exuberance and thirst for knowledge that's been unquenchable for David until his dying day. Vast collections of butterflies and insects that were preserved and ready to serve the educational needs of his fellow campers. David was proud of his red diaper and never hid his roots while always questioning them with an open mind. At age 11 he put himself in charge of a YCL group that had only three members. That bond is everlasting and throughout his lifetime he contributed to the formation and life of many groups. A Green Party candidate for DC council on many occasions his home would host all of the important figures as they passed through DC on many occasions. David stood tall and tried to convince the Greens to work for Trump's defeat in 2016, 2020 and 2024 and stand down in swing states because the threat of the current fascist frenzy loomed into the fabric of daily life. With this he had no success but held no grudges and continued to work with those who have much to contribute despite this grave error imo.

After receiving his PhD from Brown majoring in bio-geo-chemistry he was a sought after commodity of the oil and gas conglomerates. Instead he taught for 39 years at Howard University and was the chairman of his department for a time. David's published essays, articles and books will continue to be a resource for his chosen field. David was most proud of the book co authored with his son Peter "The Earth is Not For Sale". Peter is a full professor at Knox College in Galesburg Illinois with extensive research into climate change. Peter is also starting his second term as Mayor of Galesburg. Son

Sam is contributing as a clinical social worker focusing on substance abuse issues in Portland. Both doing the good in very bad times.

David showed me the light in my darkest days. David believed in me and supported me when I felt lost in an angry sea. He helped me up when the waves knocked me down and he catalogued my accomplishments for me to see, scientifically and emotionally. We prized our friendship.

A wonderful picture of a true giant of a mind and man with two of his favorite beanstalks, son Peter and grand daughter Juniper. The picture of David's wife and companion of the last 25 years Frances Woodville (Joanne Fleming) shows the beauty of a couple in synch with each other and the universe. David was proud of his greatest gift to the world which is his two children Peter and Sam and his four grand children. David's voice for justice and his extensive research on climate change will carry on in his published articles and books on climate change..



Steve Greenfield - July 08, 2025 at 11:46 AM

“ By Bryan Weaver, DC Activist, ANC Commissioner, July 2025

*Rest in Power, David Schwartzman
Beloved teacher, tender warrior, DC original*

Some people move through the world like a whisper. David was more like a song—loud when it mattered, off-key sometimes, but always heartfelt and true. In a time when so many men choose comfort and quiet, David showed up—with a bullhorn in hand and a deep love in his chest.

He was a Howard professor, yes. A scientist. A scholar. But the real curriculum David taught was one of presence. Of standing with people when it was hard. Of lifting your voice when silence was easier. He believed that justice wasn't something you admire from afar—it was something you walked toward, even if your legs were tired.

I once joked with him that he might get more votes if he didn't look so much like Walt Whitman. Years later, when he saw me with my post-COVID beard, he smiled and said, “So... who's Walt Whitman now?” That was David—quick-witted, warm-hearted, always seeing the joke and the joy in things.

DC is a little less itself tonight. One of its true characters—one of the rare ones who made this city feel like a living, breathing place—is gone. He gave this gin joint life. Not just through his politics, but through his presence. Through the way he kept showing up. For the Earth. For the people. For a city he believed could be more just, more kind, more whole.

He didn't need to be the smartest in the room, even though he often was. He just wanted to be useful. He wanted his days to matter. And they did.

David was a kind of elder you don't see much anymore. Fierce, yes

—but also tender. Grounded. Unafraid to hope. The kind of man who reminded you that doing the right thing doesn't need to be perfect. It just needs to be done.

So tonight, we let the silence sit a little longer. We remember his laughter. His bullhorn. His stubborn, radical love for this city.

You did good, David. We'll carry the flame. And we'll miss you something fierce.

joanne - July 08, 2025 at 10:37 AM