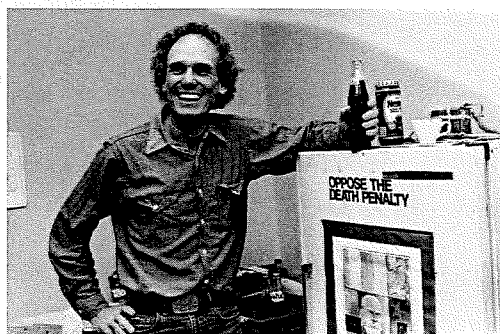


News Brief — Crusading Capital Defense Lawyer Millard Farmer Dies at 85

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RACE REPRESENTATION GEORGIA



NEWS (3/20/20): Georgia — Crusading civil rights and death-penalty defense lawyer Millard Farmer (pictured, left, in 1980), age 85, has died. Farmer, a relentless fighter against racism and discrimination, developed a controversial style of litigation he called “conflictioneering,” in which he took direct aim at judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials whose bigotry he believed was promoting or protecting unjust application of the criminal laws.

Farmer’s successes included the case of the “Dawson Five,” five young black men and teens charged with murdering a white customer in a Dawson, Georgia convenience store in 1976. Prosecutors dropped all charges after Farmer presented evidence of systemic abuses against the black community by Terrell County police and convinced a local judge that police in “Terrible Terrell” had coerced a false confession by holding a gun to the head of one of the defendants.

The legendary New York Times reporter Tom Wicker described the sound of Farmer’s Southern drawl as that of “a bullfrog with laryngitis,” a label Farmer and his supporters affectionately embraced. He was regarded as a mentor to a generation of capital defense lawyers who entered the field in the 1980s.

Towards the end of his career, the combative Farmer ran afoul of the legal establishment one time too many. He was disbarred in November 2019 for what the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* described as “scorched-earth litigation” in a divorce and child custody case.

Tags

 Millard Farmer  Dawson Five