

David E. Purpel



GREENSBORO — Author, scholar, and educator Dr. David E. Purpel died peacefully early Monday morning at his home surrounded by his family and by the love of many others.

Dr. Purpel was born in Cambridge, MA to immigrant parents. He received a doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he was later the head of the Master of Arts in Teaching program. He joined the UNCG School of Education in 1972 where he served as chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations. With colleague James Macdonald, he created the nationally recognized doctoral program in Education and Cultural Studies. In 2001, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Educational Research Association.

He was the author of many books and articles stressing the centrality of moral and spiritual concerns in education. His teaching and writing inspired a generation of scholars and teachers to re-envision the purpose of education in our society. His strong belief in the need for a world of greater justice and compassion was grounded in the Jewish tradition.

As he wrote, "Problems surely can and should be ameliorated, suffering and pain reduced, justice and equity increased, peace furthered, violence lessened, meaning strengthened. To accomplish even limited gains is exalting and exhilarating for as the Talmud teaches, 'It is not for us to finish the task -- but neither are we free to take no part in it.'"

He will forever be remembered for his playful wit, his gentle wisdom, and his fierce commitment to an ethical life by his many students, colleagues, and especially by his family. He is survived by his wife Elaine; children Mark Purpel, Rachel Purpel, and Nancy Gore; grandchildren Gabriel Gore, Joseph Gore, and Emma Landman; brother Nathan Purpel and sisters Marilyn Marcus and Esther Scott.

A graveside service will be held Thursday, at 11 a.m. at the Greensboro Hebrew Cemetery followed by a gathering of friends and family for a meal of condolence at 1 p.m. at Friend's Homes in Hinshaw Hall. Donations to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) in lieu of flowers.

Offer condolences at www.news-record.com/nr/obits/