



*In
Loving Memory*

Bonita C. Spence

1961 - 2013



Order of Service

Monday, September 23, 2013 - 11:00 a.m.

CHRIST CHURCH - EAST CAMPUS

68 Church Street • Montclair, New Jersey

Pastors David and Marlinda Ireland, Founders

Musical Prelude

Prayer of Comfort Rev. Ron Gonzalez

A Word of Encouragement Rev. David D. Ireland, Ph.D.

Musical Selection.....Ryan Faison

Scripture Readings:

Old Testament (Psalm 23) Leslie Celeste Sekou

New Testament (John 14:1-6) Torkwase Sekou

Personal Reflections

Resolution Freeholder Carol Clark

Obituary Sandra Bugg

Musical Selection Ryan Faison

Eulogy Rev. David D. Ireland, Ph.D.

Benediction

Family and friends are invited to the repast immediately following the service:

The Loft at the Wilshire Grand Hotel

350 Pleasant Valley Way • West Orange, NJ 07052

Ph (973) 731-7007

Interment

Atlantic City Cemetery • Pleasantville, New Jersey



The Obituary

“My spirits get lifted, when I sing a gospel songbut somehow I can still find a song to sing.” Rev. James Cleveland



On a steamy day, August 5, 1961, **Bonita Celeste Spence** was born to Arline and Archie Spence. Little did the mother and father know then, that this little life would grow up and touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of people around the world. But touch them she did. In a span of just fifty-two years, Bonita was able to touch the hearts of many with her wisdom and generosity of spirit.

Bonita's Christian education began at Asbury United Methodist Church where she was nurtured in Sunday School, Youth Fellowship, Youth Choir and in the Asburyans Gospel Choir. She accepted Christ for herself at age fourteen. These years defined who she would become; however, the greatest effect on her was the gospel message she learned while singing in the Asburyans Gospel Choir. A gospel song by Rev. James Cleveland was one of her favorite songs and brought her comfort throughout her life. In essence, the song simply says, “yes there will be trials, but even in the midst of trials I can still find a song to sing.”

Much to her mother's consternation, our Bonita was not a girlie girl, but more of a strong athlete, out-running, out-bicycling, and even out-dunking all of her male counterparts. All of these outdoorsy things she loved, but the love of basketball stole her heart. In junior high she excelled in basketball, as well as in high school where she was second team all state star, Atlantic City 1000 point scorer, led the team in assists and steals, was listed in Who's Who Among High School Students, and won a full scholarship to Monmouth College. Atlantic City High School's Girls Basketball Program prepared her so she could play on the collegiate level at Monmouth College where she was a point guard and in 1982 set the school's assist record, a mark that still stands today! While at Monmouth, she led Monmouth to compete in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in the school's history. In addition, she was voted Metropolitan Athlete of the Year. She then matriculated at Montclair State College where she graduated with a degree in Criminal Justice. After which she became a graduate assistant. During 1984-1985, she coached Plainfield High

School's girls basketball team. Thereafter, she commenced her career as an Investigator for the New Jersey Office of the Public Defender in Newark, where she remained for over twenty-five years. While serving as a referee at the high school level, she honed her referee skills, becoming an NCAA referee, a career she held for twenty-seven years. In 1993, she became the first woman to referee in the US Basketball League. She also distinguished herself by refereeing in the WNBA from 1999-2009. She served in every NCAA tournament since 2000 and two Final Four Tournaments, 2001 and 2005. She worked for the Big East, Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten and Southeastern Conference, to name a few.



Bonita's careers are a testament to her tenacity, intelligence and character. Her accomplishments stand as encouragement for young women who aspire to achieve. She became a wonderful woman who generously shared herself with anyone in need.

In her lifetime, Bonita had great loves: GOD, her family, her friends and basketball. She was faithful to all of them, until her death.

She leaves to cherish her memory: her daughter, Leslie Celeste Sekou; her sister friends, Torkwase Sekou and Pamela Jackson; her closest confidants, Michelle Grazel, Violet Palmer and Denise Brooks; her grandmother, Mrs. Deshields; her father, Archie Spence, Sr. (Barbara); her sister, Cathy Woody-Rabb; her aunts, Mary Dobson and Rev. Alma Y. Dobson who helped raise her along with her children; cousins, Andrea Bryant (Michael), Sherryl Blackwell, Major Byron Dobson (Cornelia) and Artie Dobson; and a host of uncles, aunts, cousins and friends. She was preceded in death by her mother, Arline Idella Braithwaite, her stepfather, Oscar Braithwaite, as well as her brother, Archie Spence, Jr.

It's Cool Down Here By the Banks of Jordan

It's cool down here by the banks of Jordan,

It's cool down here by the banks of Jordan,

And the world can't do me no harm.

I heard the voice of Jesus say ;

"Come unto me and rest,

Lay down thy weary one lay down,

Thy head upon my breast.

It's cool down by here by the banks of Jordan

And the world can't do me no harm.



My Dearest Nene



My Dearest Nene, you will always be
My second mother so loving and so loved by me
For God has taken you to be by his side
Now in Heaven is where you will reside



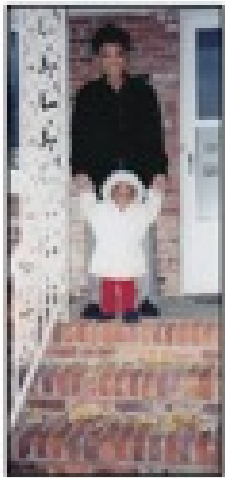
You have blessed my life in so many ways
I will cherish our memories until the end of my days
You left me too soon and this was not part of our plan
But God's wishes always come before those of man



I know I have Mommy and Auntie Pam, so I am not Alone,
But my heart will ache when I call, as we did every day,
and you don't pick up the phone.

No longer here to guide me, I will still show the world,
that like her Nene, I am a strong Girl.

I will work hard at my education as I promised I would do,
The world will see I will grow up strong like you!



For your loving embrace I will always long. I may not see your face but you
will never be gone. Your good heart, your giving spirit and most of all your
love for me, shall always live on.



God sent you to me as a special gift from above
To teach me life's lessons and shower me with your love
I will always remember your beautiful and smiling face
In my heart you will always have a very special place



A special bond we shared like no other
For this is possible for only Daughter and Mother
I thanked God for each day we were able to share
But without you in my life some days seem too difficult to bear

Being with God, I hope you will find joy and peace
In this I can find comfort and some happiness at least

For Dearest Nene you will always be
My Mother so loving and so loved by me



~ *Love Leslie* ~

*When tomorrow starts without me,
And I'm not there to see
If the sun should rise and find your eyes,
All filled with tears for me.
I wish so much you wouldn't cry,
The way you did today,
While thinking of the many things,
We didn't get to say.
I know how much you love me,
As much as I love you,
And each time that you think of me,
I know you'll miss me too.
But when tomorrow starts without me,
Please try to understand
That an angel came and called my name,
And took me by the hand
And said, "my place was ready,
In heaven far above
And that I'd have to leave behind,
All those I dearly love."
If I could relive yesterday
Just even for a while
I'd say goodbye and kiss you
And maybe see you smile
So when tomorrow starts without me,
Don't think we're far apart.
For every time you think of me,
I'm right here in your heart.*

-Author unknown

When Tomorrow Starts Without Me



A support fund has been established by Bonita's colleagues for her daughter, Leslie; please send donations payable to:

The Leslie Celeste Sekou Fund
c/o Citizens Bank
Bank by Mail
P.O. Box 42006
Providence, RI 02940

*Please reference # 23074086 in the memo section on your check or money order to ensure a proper deposit into Leslie's account.
Please provide your contact information for proper acknowledgment. Thank you.*

Professional Services Provided By

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130 Main Street
Orange, NJ
973-675-6400

1025 Bergen Street
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COTTON-PARKER FUNERAL HOME
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