

Homegoing Celebration of
Barbara Ann Brown

Sunrise
July 2, 1949

Sunset
May 29, 2020



Thursday, June 11, 2020 - 1pm

Canaan Baptist Church
132 W. 116th Street, New York, NY 10026
Rev. Dr. Thomas D. Johnson, Pastor
Rev. Tyrone J. Richardson, Officiating

The Book of Barbara Brown

Barbara Griggs-Brown was born on July 2, 1949 in Cleveland, Ohio and was the first child of Ovela Mae Griggs-Cole. She was a: Beautiful, Happy, Robust, Precocious, Intelligent Black Queen; who was one of the great loves of her Mama's life.

Barbara's early childhood was loving and stable. She was deeply supported by a stellar group of elders, which included: her grandparents, her aunt, and mentor, Dorothy Scott. By the tender age of 10 years old, Barbara understood she had a "Spiritual Calling" over her life. Always obedient to the Holy Spirit that same year she received Christ as her Lord and Savior. Barbara would become a fixture at her church home, Gethsemane Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio. This was a place where she was able to showcase her gifts and talents such as: Singing on the choir, being a Quick Learner in Sunday School, and later a Teacher and Role Model as she was promoted to Youth Choir Director by the Minister of Music. It is said that once Barbara took on the role of Youth Choir Director, the choir was set on fire with zeal, they had a mission to draw people to Christ and they never sounded better.

Barbara's anointing caught the watchful, loving eye of fellow church member, Sister Dorothy Scott. Under Ms. Scott's mentorship Barbara flourished in Christ and traveled across the nation attending numerous National Baptist Conventions.

Barbara's intellectual gifts and other musical talents were revealed early in her life, while in elementary school she scored over 140 on her IQ testing and was placed in her respected classes. She also studied the violin and was selected to perform a solo at her elementary school promotion ceremony; and it was flawless. Barbara continued to play violin on the orchestra and sang on the choir all throughout middle school. While in middle school she also started to develop her love for business, sales, and customer service. When tasked with business challenges for school assignments Barbara would always win the most awards of any of her classmates. She was now bitten by the, "Entrepreneurship Bug" that would later serve her well as the Sole Proprietor of her very own beauty salon, "Ms. B's" in The Village Harlem, New York City. Barbara completed her Cleveland, Ohio education at John F. Kennedy High School. Before leaving Cleveland, Ohio to leave her mark on New York City, Barbara cultivated her talents in beauty and fashion. She was a self-taught seamstress without a sewing machine and repurposed business suits by hand. Although Mama celebrated her daughter's talents, she was not always happy that it was her suits that Barbara repurposed (It's ok to laugh). Barbara had a passion for Black hair care and she excelled at: wigs, press and curls, relaxers, color, cuts, and styling. And just when you thought she had learned all she could you must include her wealth of knowledge of nail care to her impressive resume of talents and creativity.

There is a story about Barbara that tells of her dedication to Beauty and Fashion. It is well known back home in Cleveland that Barbara once took her entire paycheck and bought false nails from Woolworth and a leather turquoise skirt and yes, "She Slayed"!

At the young, but "Wise beyond her years" age of 17, Barbara met and married the love of her life, "Sundown". "Down" as she always affectionately called him would take her on "The Road" for a journey of a lifetime that would ultimately bring her to the Village of Harlem a place that in her own words she states: "We've been here a long time, we have laid some bricks in the pavement of New York City".

Barbara was Godly proud of the strides she made during her time on this Earth. Through her struggles of life: losing a child, carrying Tiffany while battling and beating brain cancer, raising children in the inner city, battling the trappings of the secular world, pursuing multiple degrees as an adult learner, and battling MS for over 15 years. Through it all Barbara remained a Solid "Black Queen". It is no wonder why she was an avid reader, educational activist, and health conscious way before it was mainstream. Who remembers in the 80's, if you stayed at Barbara's house you had to make your own soda from fruit juice and seltzer?

Enduring all that she had, she thought is not robbery to leave this place a better place then she found it. She added value to the community, to the educational system, the basketball community, the beauty industry of Harlem, the church community, most importantly her children, and children she took in as her own. Barbara was a person who didn't complain, she got involved! If she saw a need she didn't look around she looked within and she always found the solution inside her. So when Famous' school wasn't doing the best by our Black children of Harlem, Barbara instituted the first PTA at P.S. 76 in Harlem, so that her last-born child "Famous" and children after him could have parental representation to fight on their behalf. Or how about the time she became a full-fledged basketball coach to many children in Harlem. Barbara was a lover of all things sports and could have easily been an ESPN Commentator due to her wealth of sports knowledge. At every family event she would spend hours talking shop and challenging the sports IQ of: Chris, Famous, and the other men in the family. I dare you to find another person more passionate about, "The Game".

Barbara loved spreading knowledge, but what she loved more than that was holding people accountable for their proper application of the wisdom gained. This practice would lead her to become the president of her building, 235 West 116th Street. She taught residents how to demand change in their living conditions. In her tenor as building president, Barbara was able to successfully demand a total building rehabilitation, rent stabilization for seniors, affordable housing for families, and an elevator and ramp for the disabled tenants. This is what she did in her everyday life she elevated those who had the privilege to know her and even those who will never meet her in the physical will benefit from her great deeds. What a legacy! These "Community Activism" traits are visible in her children: Wilma, Chris, Tiffany, and Famous as they all work in some capacity to make the lives of New York families better everyday.

But wait....

She went a step further when she reopened the iconic beauty salon on the corner of 123rd Street and 7th Ave. in Harlem named, "The Shalimar" she even employed some of the original Master Barbers. While being the contemporary Queen she is, Barbara didn't forget to bring her very own brand of: beauty, customer service, and black business. Which led her to appropriately rename the "Shalimar" to the well-known "Ms. B's". Ms. B's was a full service hair and nail salon, which helped to keep black dollars in the black community. She was ahead of the curve here again. Barbara retired from Ms. B's after 7 years of service.

Not ever wanting the grass to grow under her feet, in 2005 Barbara would begin to search for a Spiritual Home and upon the guidance of her sister-in-law, Lerine Reynolds, Barbara went onto join St. Lukes Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Johnnie G. McCann, Sr. At St. Lukes Barbara sang on the choir, of course. She also was a dedicated member of the Worship on Wednesdays Ministry, New Disciples Team, and volunteered her time to various other ministries. As part of her missionary duties she traveled locally and as far as Alaska to help other churches build their ministries. The trip to Alaska was one of her finest church moments because she took the journey with her loving mother. We must point out that Barbara accomplished all of this while being a full-time student at the College of New Rochelle in Harlem, NYC. In 2009, Barbara obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts from the College of New Rochelle.

In 2012, Barbara again answered the call of the Heavenly Father to become a Minister. This new journey led her to attend the prestigious Drew University in Madison, New Jersey under the guidance of Rev. Dr. J.G. McCann, Sr. and in 2014, she graduated from Drew University with her Masters Degree in Ministry.

In 2016, Barbara again looking for a new adventure took her talents to her first church home in New York (Yes a fitting "Lebron" reference), Canaan Baptist Church also in Harlem, under the Leadership of Rev. Dr. Thomas D. Johnson, Sr. While at Canaan Barbara was a dedicated member of two ministries: The Missionary Committee and Worship on Wednesdays. Even through declining health Barbara remained a dedicated church disciple, and advisor to many. She even opened her home to friends in need of shelter and became a full-time foster parent to her great grand niece in 2018. Barbara took on these some time's arduous tasks because she was a philanthropist at her core.

Barbara did the very best she could from wherever she was at in life and she lived this way until her last breath on May 29, 2020 at St. Lukes Hospital in Harlem, New York.

Among the many lessons Barbara acted out in life, she will be best remembered as a woman who encouraged other women (especially young women), men, and children. She could talk to anyone and was always down for healthy solution based debates. She had a way of making you feel as though you had something great to say especially when she would insert her signature, "WOWWWW" at the end of your statement, that was her way of letting you know she heard you. She wanted people to be themselves, be your entire self. And if that meant rock your shaved head or your pink hair so be it but whatever you do, "Be Yourself". If you fall get up and trust the process but most importantly trust "God"! Everybody won't like you but never stop being true to you. Keep God and family first and never give up!

Barbara is preceded in death by: daughter, Marvelous One; brother, Edward Griggs; sons, Dijuan "Poppa" Whatley and Darryl Jones; husband, William Otis "Sundown" Brown; and her mother, Ovela Mae Griggs-Cole.

Barbara leaves to cherish her precious memory: her siblings, Barthemla Adams (James), Sheila Parker (Daniel), Vanessa Windham (Harold), Melissa Griggs, Latonya Griggs, Robin Taliaferro (Daniel), Eugene Griggs (Mia) and Toni Ivezzy (Hank); her oldest living elders, Uncle Curtis Griggs (Daisy) and Aunt Golden Croone; her brother-in-law, Ernest Reynolds (Lerine); her sister-in-laws, Gloria Brown and Fannie Rose Reynolds; loving children, Wilma Brown-Phillips (Paul), Christopher Brown (Christina), Tiffany Brown-Michie (Robert), and Famous (Vicky), Sandra Faye Carmichael, Letha Childress (Wayne), Monica McGee (Mike), William Brown (Pat), John Brown (Pat), Kenny Anderson (Tasha), Marcus and Toress Whatley; one god daughter, Tiera M. Richardson; two grandsons, Christian and Orion Brown in New York City; and a host of grandchildren, great grandchildren, in-laws, nieces, nephews, cousins, Church family, friends, and neighbors.



Order of Service

Processional
Clergy & Family

Hymn
"When We All Get To Heaven"

Scripture

Prayer of Comfort
Rev. Tyrone Richardson

Selection
Dr. Andrea Gurley-Richardson

Acknowledgements

Reflections
Rev. Marsha Watson
Family

Obituary

Selection
Sis. Tisha Hunter

Eulogy
Rev. Tyrone Richardson

Final Viewing

Benediction

Recessional

Interment
Evergreens Memorial Park, Bedford Heights, Ohio

B-enevolent when she didn't have much to give.

A-uthentic when it was easier to be fake.

R-ealist even when the truth was harsh.

B-rave when fear was the cheapest seat in the house.

A-dvisor when the mission required clear direction.

R-adiant when the world tried to dull her glow.

A-dmirable in the face of pain when it physically hurt to stand up.

***Barbara Stood Tall Through It All
She Showed Us All
How To Get Back Up And
Dust Yourself Off When You Fall!***

Written By:
Qwana "Mrs. Black America" Reynolds-Frasier

Acknowledgement

*The family acknowledges with deep appreciation all acts of
kindness extended to them during this bereavement hour.
May God bless you for all your thoughtfulness and concern.*

2352 8th Avenue • Manhattan, NY • (212) 666-8300
1406 Pitkin Avenue • Brooklyn, NY • (718) 774-1023
1018 Prospect Avenue • Bronx, NY • (718) 542-3833



Clifford V. James, President & CEO
www.unityfuneralchapels.com
email: unityfc@aol.com

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