



## Ms. Carol Ann Watson

July 13, 1933 - December 2, 2020

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that you donate to one of four organization that had a great impact on Carol's life:

The University of Michigan School of Social Work

<https://leadersandbest.umich.edu/find/#!/give/basket/fund/362634>

NAACP

I just gave to NAACP!

National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW)

<https://www.nabsw.org/donations/donate.asp?id=8545>

Alzheimer's Association

[https://act.alz.org/site/TR/Events/Tributes-AlzheimersChampions?](https://act.alz.org/site/TR/Events/Tributes-AlzheimersChampions?pxfid=659453&fr_id=1060&pg=fund)

[pxfid=659453&fr\\_id=1060&pg=fund](https://act.alz.org/site/TR/Events/Tributes-AlzheimersChampions?pxfid=659453&fr_id=1060&pg=fund)

### A Life Well Lived

How do you narrow down a life so well lived into a few paragraphs? Simple sentences, inadequate turns of phrases? How do you express succinctly the many lives touched, hearts and minds changed, love freely given? How can you possibly wrap up a life that was so full of joy, laughter, giving, and adventure? You don't. You have to tell the story of the storied life that was lived.

Carol Ann Watson was born on July 13, 1933 in Detroit, MI to Kenneth Theodore Watson and Caroline (Carilene, AKA Cari) Watson (nee Crunn), both who proceeded her in death. Even her arrival on this earth starts as an adventure. She liked to tell the story that she

was born at home, (delivered by future Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young's grandmother) weighing only 3 lbs., and believed to be dead on arrival. However, she wasn't dead, but alive and vibrant. Carol was Ken and Cari's first child and oldest grandchild on either side of her family. Carol spent the first 9 years of her life mostly living under the care of her paternal grandparents where she was loved, disciplined, anointed in the church, and spoiled, while her parents worked diligently to provide a better life for their daughter. Her mother, Cari, had high ambitions and expectations for Carol and at the early age of 3, she began her music education with piano lessons, which was a source of joy and family bonding throughout her life. Carol said that she begged her mother for voice and harp lessons, but her mother told her maybe if she got good enough at the piano. Carol laughingly said, "I guess I never was good enough." However, she played the piano for the church choir, became a certified piano instructor, and played for family and friends at social gatherings. In addition to being a musician, Carol was also an accomplished artist who drew, painted, and worked with ceramics. At the age of 10, Carol received the long-awaited sibling that she had begged for in her brother (Kenneth) John Watson. She noted that she was highly disappointed when her parents brought home this baby brother, rather than the child she sought in her mind's eye that she could play with. Nonetheless, she had a very close relationship with her brother Johnny (who preceded her in death) for many years where she was both sister and sometimes mother to him.

Carol was highly intelligent and believed strongly in the power of education to open up one's mind and bring about social justice. She believed that education could come from inside a formal classroom or from the classroom of life and one's own interest and desire to grow. She matriculated through the Detroit Public School system where she excelled to the point that she was double promoted and skipped a semester of third grade. Carol attended Northern High School from January 1947 to graduation in December 1950, where she was senior class president, valedictorian, president of the Latin Club, captain of the girls' basketball and tennis teams, and editor of the school newspaper, among other activities. She was also a member of the Co-Elite Club of Detroit and a Cotillion debutante. She was not only an accomplished pianist, but she was also a singer and very proud that she was chosen to sing a solo in Handel's Messiah.

Upon graduation, Carol received a scholarship to the University of Michigan where she planned to major in pre-medicine. However, she noted that when taking biology, she was never able to see through the microscope with her glasses and said to herself, "well, I guess I can't be a doctor," and didn't realize until years later she should have told the professor and sought out assistance. However, in true Carol Watson fashion, when life threw her lemons, she made them into lemonade, and changed her major to sociology with a minor in communications. She said she loved her radio classes and the classes in this "new technology" of television, but felt because she was Black she wouldn't be able to

make a career out of it.

While at the University of Michigan, Carol made several life-long friendships, played intermural tennis, and joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. where she was the Dean of Pledgees, chapter Bacillus, and grad advisor for about 10 years after graduation. She was one of a very few Black students at U of M at the time. She talked about how the year she came to Michigan was the first year they let Blacks live in the dormitories. At one time she said there were 14 Black women living in the same dorm and they thought they were “hot stuff!” She went on to say that they never had that many Black women living in a dormitory at the same time again while she was there. Carol loved U of M and her time spent there. She was an avid sports fan who rarely missed a football, hockey, or basketball game while she was a student, and was an active member of the Black Alumni Association for many years after graduation. Carol earned her Bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan in 1955.

Carol went on to earn her Master of Social Work degree in 1958 in one of the first professional graduating class from the University of Michigan’s School of Social Work. Later in life she returned to The University of Michigan to pursue her Ph.D. in higher education. During this pursuit she had the opportunity to continue to follow one of her life’s passions, traveling. While working on her Ph.D., Carol traveled to Denmark and several countries in Africa to conduct research into their institutions of higher learning. She never completed her degree, falling short of writing her dissertation, one of her only true regrets in life. She would often relate how the University sent her a letter telling her she had five years to complete her dissertation, and she said to herself, “Well aw, shoot, I have plenty of time!” and went off and explored many of her other passions instead.

Carol always recalled how she was fortunate enough to have loved all of her professional positions. As a psychiatric social worker at the Ypsilanti State Hospital, she was a trailblazer. Carol was hired as a supervisor, being the only social worker with an MSW at the time, and was the only Black person in a leadership position. While there, Carol was a researcher on the anti-psychotic medication Thorazine and arduously fought for equal rights and fair treatment of her female co-workers and patients. She genuinely enjoyed her work at the hospital and related the many stories and experiences that shaped her life. She made lifelong friends with her sorors Judy Racine, Doris Witherspoon, and Gwen Baker due to her work there and her continuous living in the Ann Arbor area. In 1968 a friend invited her to, “come see this new college we’re starting in Detroit.” She said when she got there, her friend introduced her to the president who extended his hand and said, “Welcome to Wayne County Community College.” Carol thought to herself, “Well, I guess I have a new job now.” Wayne County Community College had a huge impact on her life

and she had a huge impact on the many students whose lives she changed and perspectives she broadened. She gave her heart and soul to the college and often stated that going to WC3 was the best decision she could have made career wise. Carol became the first administrative head of the college's Human Services department and developed its first curriculum which she tweaked and added to over the years. Carol loved her job there and the many faculty members and students who became both friends and family. She worked at WC3 until her retirement in 2013 at the age of 80.

Carol loved life and she was also a crusader for equality and social justice. She was a quintessential social worker. While attending the National Conference on Social Welfare in San Francisco, California in 1968, she and other Black social workers walked out of the convention to protest racial inequality. She was one of the first members of the newly formed National Association of Black Social Workers. She continued to be an active member and attend the national conventions for many years after, bringing along both her mother and daughter to be engaged participants in the conventions as well. Carol was also an active member of the NAACP and attended the March on Washington and the funerals of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and John F. Kennedy with her mother. Additionally, Carol was a member of the Hartford Quilters, on the board of the American Indian Council, and the Campfire Girls, and gave generously to many arts and justice-focused organization. She believed strongly in equal rights and justice for all and actively impressed upon others the importance of knowing the history of oppressed people and working diligently to promote fairness, equal justice, and self-empowerment for all people.

Carol was an avid traveler. She began traveling with her family as a teenager when her father built a trailer. They would travel around the country in the summers, staying in state and national parks as Blacks were not welcome to stay in many hotels/motels across the country at the time. Carol went on to expand her travels internationally as an adult. She took many trips to Africa, Central and South America, Europe, the Caribbean, Asia, and Canada. Carol felt that travel was a way to broaden one's perspective and better understand other people. When she traveled, it was her philosophy to go off the beaten track and explore the people and areas where the tourist didn't go, always making friends along the way. She wasn't afraid to travel alone but usually had the constant companionship of her mother and a few close friends and family members. Carol's last trip was to Jamaica, the birth place of her mother's parents where she attended the wedding of her cousin's daughter. Traveling brought her joy, adventure, and new experiences. She said she didn't spend much time or energy on her house and keeping it really nice because she was afraid it would anchor her down and make her feel obligated to stay at home rather than travel the world.

While traveling was her passion, her family and friends were her greatest love. Though shy, quiet, and obedient as a child and young adult, Carol came into herself as an adult. She was gregarious and outgoing, and rarely encountered someone she didn't like. Carol loved people and helping others. She was never married, but in the winter of 1974, after being told at age 25 it couldn't happen, Carol discovered that she was pregnant. At the age of 41 Carol became a mother to a daughter, Dara-Nia Watson. She was absolutely delighted with being a mother and found the joy of her life in her daughter. However, Carol didn't let motherhood slow her down. Thanks to her extensive network of friends and family, Carol was still able to travel, work, and enjoy life while bringing Dara-Nia along for the ride when she could, or dropping her off at someone's house when she could not. Carol passed on her love of teaching, social justice, and the love of people to Dara-Nia. She was all about experiencing everything that life had to give and wanted to pass that virtue on to Dara-Nia through travel, education, the arts, and love of people. They attended many plays, museums, art exhibits, and live musical performances together due to Carol's love of the arts and made sure to provide Dara-Nia with many other rich activities and experiences throughout the years. Their relationship evolved and deepened into true friendship over the years and was cherished by both of them. Carol waited a long time to become a grandmother; Zachary's birth brought joy to the last few years of her life. Carol and Zachary developed a special bond that provided them both joy and allowed her to be silly and youthful while they were together in the later years of her life.

Carol was a faithful daughter and granddaughter, and was a constant companion to her mother once her father passed. She was a collector of not just things but of animals and people as well. Although it was only Carol and Dara who lived in the house together, there was rarely a time when it was only the two of them there. Throughout the years she'd open her home up to friends, family, students, and sometimes even strangers in need to live with her and her daughter and the house was a virtual menagerie of dogs, cats, rabbits, and fish. Many people have noted that Carol was a second mother to them and was always available for the middle of the night phone call (because you could guarantee that she would be awake) and was always willing to do anything to help others.

Carol was a unique individual who followed the beat of her own drummer. She loved her vivid colors, floppy hats, and African garb, and wore her fanny packs with pride. She could play cards with the best of them and was a member of an Ann Arbor based Bridge club for over 30 years. It would not have been unusual to find Carol downtown at one of Detroit's Ethnic Festivals or the Montreux Jazz Fest dancing and laughing with friends or complete strangers turned friends, at the Eastern Market picking up produce you'd find left on your doorstep, roaming the halls of the DIA or the casinos chatting it up with other patrons,

eating at any myriad of restaurants, or at your doorstep close to midnight, dropping by for a visit. Nor would it have been unusual for her to stop by for a visit with her quilt that she never completed, her latest multilevel marketing venture to entice you into, educate you on her most recent health and wellness findings, or engage you in talks about her holistic and spiritual energy healing, hypnoses, politics, or the state of the world. While Carol was not a religious person, she was a spiritual person and believed attending church drew her closer to community. She was a member of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church and attended many other spiritual institutions as well.

To know Carol was to love Carol. She had a very loving and generous spirit and many times would put the needs of others before her own. Her legacy of love, social justice, and fervor for life lives on in so many people. Carol passed away peaceful after a long battle with dementia on December 2, 2020. She leaves behind to cherish her memory her daughter, Dara-Nia (Stephan) Morgan, grandson Zachary Morgan, nieces Kendra Moyer, Nadzheja Williams, nephew Christopher Watson, first cousins Elizabeth (Patrick) Pieh, Elaine Hollis, Cara Adkins, Diedra Adkins, and Alvin Adgers, dear friends Suane Loomis and Shirley Strickland, and a host of other beloved family and friends.

# Events

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**DEC** **Family Hour** 12:00PM - 12:30PM

**17**

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O. H. Pye, III Funeral Home

17600 Plymouth Road, Detroit, MI, US, 48227

**DEC** **Memorial Service** 12:30PM

**17**

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# Comments

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“ Our thoughts and prayers are with as you prepare to say goodbye to your love one. Our father of tender mercies has himself experience the loss of a love one. Pour out your hearts to him in prayer concerning your personal grief.

**Evans family** - December 17, 2020 at 04:42 AM

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“ Dara, sending my condolences. Keeping you and your family in my prayers. May the Good Lord Bless and keep you. To Carol, my Cousin, you always make me laugh and smile. You were like my Mothers Daughter/Niece. We all loved you. You had great wisdom, strong minded, love of family and travel, creative, Unique in your own way. I will remember you always. DeeDee



**D.Adkins** - December 08, 2020 at 09:11 AM