



Dr. Bernice Finley Morton

August 29, 1923 - July 6, 2018

Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Dr. Bernice Finley Morton:

Bernice Finley Morton, PhD, M.S.N., B.S.N., R.N. was born on August 29, 1923 in Detroit, Michigan to Minnie Alice Batchelor and Virgil Finley, along with her beloved sister Mildred who as a teen preceded her in death. Bernice accepted Christ and was baptized at Corinthian Baptist Church in Hamtramck, MI, where she spent her early childhood. She was a product of both the Detroit and Hamtramck school systems and graduated from Cass Technical High School in 1942.

Bernice attended Wayne State University in 1942 through 1944 when she became a member of her beloved Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Tau Chapter. As a result of the racial climate at that time, Negro students were not allowed to enter the Nursing Program at Wayne State University. She entered Lincoln School for Nurses in the Bronx, New York. Bernice graduated from Lincoln with a diploma in nursing in 1948, not satisfied, she then returned to Wayne State University where she received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Bernice married Donald Allen Morton, a childhood friend October 1, 1949 and they were blessed with two daughters, Donna Jean and Mildred Ellen. She exposed her girls to some of the finer things in life, but kept them mindful of the importance of giving back to the community. The travel bug and the

appreciation of different cultures were instilled in her children early in life. In her downtime and for fun, Bernice was a member of the High-Melders Pinochle Club for over fifty years and was a member of Top Ladies of Distinction. She loved to read, watch football, travel (especially cruising), and to be around her family!

Dr. Morton was Associate Professor Emeritus, College of Nursing, Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. She was former chairperson, Department of Community Health Nursing, and Minority Affairs Officer of the College of Nursing. She was particularly recognized for developing an affirmative action plan for increasing the number of minority students. Her early works as a Public Health Nurse, and later as a Maternity Nurse, were in service to minority populations. This plan, a first for the University, was published as a model for other schools of nursing. In 1968, representing the College of Nursing, Dr. Morton participated with members of the Regional Medical Programs of the Medical School of Wayne State University in planning and developing the Model Cities Comprehensive Health Care Center, a first in the United States. She served as the first nursing director of this program. Dr. Morton was the first invited Visiting Associate Professor in the School of Nursing at Howard University, in Washington, D.C, 1983-84. She was a Martin Luther King/Rosa Parks/ Cesar Chavez Scholar at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan in 1988 and again in 1989.

In 1996 Dr. Morton was recognized at the American Nurses Association Centennial Convention as the recipient of the 1996 Mary Eliza Mahoney Award. This prestigious national award is named for Mary E. Mahoney, a pioneer in opening doors and advancing opportunities for minorities. Mary Mahoney was a role model and major influence for Bernice whose lifetime work exemplified that spirit. Bernice gave more than fifty years to the nursing profession, being actively involved in the Detroit District and Michigan Nurses Association. Bernice was a member of Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc. an

international nonprofit professional service organization for registered professional nurses and student nurses. As a member of the Michigan Black Nurses Association she was recognized for her outstanding mentorship services to minority students. She was also an author having self-published a book, an oral history of Black nursing entitled *The Color of Healing*. In 2010 the College of Nursing at Wayne University dedicated and named a room in honor of her exemplary achievements.

For 74 years, Bernice was an active Golden Life member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and the 28th President of the Detroit Alumnae Chapter from 1991-1993. During her administration as president she developed a strategic plan that resulted in the establishment of Minerva Education and Development Foundation (“MEDF”), a philanthropic organization and with the help of the Kresge Foundation established an endowment fund. As a result she is recognized as the “Mother of MEDF.” She was also a founding director of Delta Manor, Inc. a 99 unit senior housing development and a recipient of the Lillian Pierce Benbow award. However, her greatest honor from her beloved sorority came at the 75th Diamond National Convention in San Francisco, CA in 1988 when she was recognized as one of the 75 Delta Diamonds.

Dr. Morton was the recipient of numerous awards and honors from business, professional, and educational organizations across the state and nation including: The Spirit of Detroit Award from The Detroit City Council. Her commitment continued into the community as the Director for Health-O-Rama, a founding member of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and a charter member of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Club of Detroit. In October 2017 Dr. Morton was inducted into the prestigious Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame as a Contemporary Honoree.

Bernice greatly impacted the nursing community, and the community at large. She was a dynamic mentor, role model, leader, mother, grandmother, relative and friend.

Cemetery Details

Detroit Memorial Park West

25200 Plymouth Road
Redford Twp., MI 48239

Previous Events

Visitation

Thursday, Jul. **12.** 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

O. H. Pye, III Funeral Home
17600 Plymouth Road
Detroit, MI 48227
(313) 838-9770
info@pyefuneralhome.com

Family Hour

Friday, Jul. **13.** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church
1725 Caniff
Hamtramck, MI 48212

Funeral Service

Friday, Jul. **13.** 11:00 AM (ET)

Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church
1725 Caniff
Hamtramck, MI 48212

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Bernice Finley Morton*

January 21, 2023 at 09:34 PM



“ *Mildred I am so sorry to hear of the loss of your mom. Prayers to you and your family. Hoping you and your family find comfort and peace during this time*
Gail Griffin and family

Gail Griffin - July 12, 2018 at 10:35 PM



“ *On behalf of Sigma Theta Tau International, Lambda Chapter Wayne State University, I want to convey condolences and prayers to you and your family loss. Our hearts are saddened and pray precious memories will bring comfort during this time of sorrow.*
Gail Griffin, STTI-Lambda Chapter President Wayne Sate University

Gail Griffin - July 12, 2018 at 10:28 PM



“ *"The world is so full of care and sorrow that it is a gracious debt we owe to one another to discover the bright crystals of delight hidden in somber circumstances and irksome tasks"*
H. Keller



Rest Forever Safe and Well in God's Care. Robert B. Arnold

Robert B. Arnold - July 12, 2018 at 01:48 PM

LG

*Donna,
My deepest Sympathy and Prayers 🙏 are for you and your Family for
the loss of your Mother.*

Lola Goodman and Family

Lola Goodman - July 15, 2018 at 07:41 AM

ML

“ *I am so very sorry for your loss. May the God of all comfort embrace
you with peace and hope during this difficult time. Rev 21:4*

Ms Laverne - July 11, 2018 at 05:54 AM