



Mrs. Johnella Minerva Frazier

October 1, 1949 - July 22, 2017

Johnella's Story:
by Dara Harper;

This Detroit original was a matriarch, political activist, advocate, friend to all, and so much more ...

In 1945, John William Brown was anxious for a new start. The tall, striking, World War 11 Army Sergeant and honorably discharged, disabled veteran had recently closed his beloved hamburger restaurant in Nyack, New York. He had been so generous to customers, offering too many menu items "on the house", that his business was no longer sustainable.

John decided to relocate to Detroit, Michigan with his wife, Mary, and their three children, Marilyn, Joseph, and Shirley. They all moved into his sister Susie Mae's tiny, two-bedroom, east side apartment, with her husband, William, and their son, Billy. The cramped quarters were so uncomfortable for Mary that she was desperate to return home to Thomasville, Georgia and forget all about the Motor City.

Just before she bought a train ticket, John took advantage of the G.I. Bill of Rights, and purchased a home on the west side of Woodward in 1946. The Browns were the second African American family to move on Clements

Street.

In 1949, Mary was expecting. John hoped that the baby would be a boy so the child could become his namesake. Mary was in labor for three days. John feared he might lose his wife and baby, so he demanded another doctor. The new doctor performed an emergency c-section and a precious baby girl was born.

John decided his daughter was going to be his namesake despite her gender, so he named her John and added his sister Ella's name at the end. Johnella Minerva Brown came into the world on October 1st, 1949.

Johnella was the first child in her family to grow up with a television. Her favorite cartoon character was Minnie Mouse. She shared a special connection with her maternal grandparents, Reverend Robert "Papa" and Minerva "Mama" Roulhac. She also shared Mama's love for flowers. Johnella was groomed as a nurturer, taking care of Mama Roulhac until she passed away in 1975.

Mary was a social worker and Johnella often accompanied her to appointments. At an early age, Johnella observed people in crisis and she concluded, "It's not what happens to you, it's how you deal with it:"

John owned an upholstery shop on Linwood and Johnella shared his creative passion for making old things new again. By the time she reached adulthood, she could refurbish almost any piece of furniture.

Johnella was so bright that she graduated from Central High School at the age of 16 in 1967, the year of the uprising. She never liked her name so she adopted the nickname, "Jan."

Jan enrolled in college courses and worked a range of jobs from accounts receivable specialist, to liquor sales representative. She was so professional and talented in the workplace that she never was fired from any position. As a single young woman, she achieved her goal of home ownership when she bought a house on Sussex Street.

Jan was beautiful, fashionable, and carried herself with class and poise. In her circle of friends, she was known as "Brown Sugar." One night at a girlfriend's Cost of Living Adjustment party, she met Greg Frazier, a young man who had just relocated to Detroit from Cincinnati, Ohio to work as a computer programmer for General Motors. Greg was mesmerized from the moment he laid eyes on Jan, but he insisted on calling her Johnella from the start.

From the time they started dating, Jan's entrepreneurial spirit was evident. She sold her house and opened Jan Jan's Flower & Gift Shop on Grand River. With her creative flare, she provided arrangements for all occasions.

A year into their relationship, Jan planned a romantic dinner for Greg and told him she was ready to start a family. He reflected on what she said and on October 15th, 1980, they eloped. Afterwards, they went to KFC and ate a bucket of chicken with the reverend who married them.

One of the reasons Jan didn't want a big wedding was because she did not want their loved ones to feel obligated to give gifts. She wrote a newsletter announcing their union that she titled, "FRAZIER TIMES" and mailed it to their family members.

The couple welcomed a daughter, Dara Ruth Bayete (August 19, 1981) and a son, Khary Bayete (December 23, 1982). Jan closed her flower shop to support her husband when he decided to quit corporate America and pursue his dream of entrepreneurship. Jan became the office manager for

Management Systems Consultants, Inc., located downtown in the Veterans Memorial Building.

Eventually, Greg opened Greg Frazier, CPA, PLLC. Jan was Greg's business partner, providing critical insight to help the company flourish into the successful operation it is today, with clients nationwide. She managed the money, client relations, and all clerical activities - in that order.

Jan was a Human Rights and Voting Rights advocate who was devastated when the State of Michigan nullified the will of the citizens of Detroit and took over the elected School Board. She and Greg were community activists in the fight to regain citizens' voting rights. She was also the campaign treasurer for key elected officials in Detroit, including the Honorable Sharon McPhail and the Honorable JoAnn Watson. Jan worked for many years as the office manager for The Michigan Citizen newspaper, a publication which celebrated causes that Jan cared for deeply.

To say that Jan was a devoted mother would be a gross understatement. When her daughter decided to produce an independent film, Jan came to New York City and volunteered as the production manager. Although she hated traffic, Jan drove a van through the most crowded neighborhoods in Manhattan to help her daughter realize her dream.

Today her legacy stands ever present in her son Khary's latest business endeavor, the Detroit is Different Incubator. Jan's vision brought to life the practicality of capturing the ideas of Khary under one roof. Together, Jan and Khary restored her childhood home. She painted the rooms and did countless improvement projects to make it happen.

Although Jan only gave birth to Dara and Khary, she was a mother to many. She was known for her selflessness and giving heart. Without hesitation, she

went out of her way to help anyone in need, even strangers.

One day, Jan was driving in snowy weather and saw a young lady without a coat, standing at a bus stop, holding a baby. She insisted on giving the girl a ride to the train station. There were delays because of the weather and the young mother and her baby were stranded. Jan paid for their stay in a hotel room, and made sure they had food to eat and warm coats. The next morning, Jan took the girl and her baby back to the train station and made sure they boarded safely.

Jan was a woman of faith who believed God could see her through anything. She loved Motown music, turkey spaghetti, African drumming, and most of all, her family. She lived by the quote: "One hundred years from now, it won't matter what car I drove, what kind of house I lived in, how much I had in my bank account, nor what my clothes looked like, but the world may be a little better because I was important in the life of a child:'

Cemetery Details

Woodlawn Cemetery

19975 Woodward Ave.
Detroit, MI 48203

Previous Events

Family Hour

Saturday, Jul. **29**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Fellowship Chapel
7707 West Outer Drive
Detroit, MI 48235

Funeral Service

Saturday, Jul. **29**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Fellowship Chapel
7707 West Outer Drive
Detroit, MI 48235

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Johnella Minerva Frazier*

January 21, 2023 at 09:34 PM



“ *I just found out that Ms. Jan passed away. I am saddened by this.*

Ms. Jan was the tour director for Motown the Musical trip in NYC. I had so much fun...except I got a little grumpy on the bus ride. This lady served us with grace and hospitality. She was so nice. She kept passing out water and snacks to us. The tour was great...she and her Dara taught how to ride the buses and train. Very organize and kind. I will miss Ms. Jan. My condolences to her husband, Dara and Khary/



Renee Beckley - February 03, 2018 at 10:59 PM



“ *Love, Dr. Denise Davis-Cotton purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Mrs. Johnella Minerva Frazier.*



Love, Dr. Denise Davis-Cotton - July 27, 2017 at 09:18 PM



“ *Family, You have our condolences, love and the strength of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Mama Jan will be sorely missed. Love and Blessings, Mama Monica Byrd and Blue Family*

Monica Byrd - July 27, 2017 at 09:08 PM

DW

“ Prayers are with the family during this time of loss
Dr. Debraha Watson

Debraha Watson - July 27, 2017 at 05:26 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of
Mrs. Johnella Minerva Frazier.



July 27, 2017 at 09:48 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the
family of Mrs. Johnella Minerva Frazier.



July 26, 2017 at 12:55 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the
family of Mrs. Johnella Minerva Frazier.



July 25, 2017 at 08:36 PM

MT

“ *MI/Welfare Rights offers our sincerest condolences on the loss of this soldier, this spokeswoman, this thoroughbred in the battle for justice. Words cannot fully express our pain after hearing of her transition followed quickly by our anger in that we want to get even with someone because of such a cataclysmic passing. We once again will close ranks, dry our tears, plug up the holes in each heart, and re-commit ourselves in this war in her name. Ms. Jan, we owe you and promise to stay focused as you would have us to do...NO REGRETS! Safe travels Dear - we will see you at sundown.*
Maureen Taylor, State Chairperson- MI/Welfare Rights Organization

Maureen Taylor - July 25, 2017 at 02:39 PM

ML

“ *I am so very sorry for your loss. May the God of all comfort embrace you with peace and hope as we all look forward to the time when even death will be no more - Rev 21:4. You have my deepest sympathy.*

Ms Laverne - July 25, 2017 at 01:17 PM

DD

I thank God for Mrs. Johnella Minerva Frazier. I knew her heart. When she fulfilled her earthy mission of her appointed season, GOD called her name and lifted her to join the angels. She had a heart that attracted family, friends, colleagues, students, and neighbors with an infectious smile and enduring spirit. I am so sorry to hear of her passing. I cherish personal memories of the times we shared together in Detroit. She served God as a loving daughter, wife, mother, sister, community leader, and mentor. She remains in my thoughts and prayers.

On behalf of Detroit School of Arts (DSA), we carry Mrs. Frazier's enduring spirit in our hearts. Peaceful memories and love will continue to be our guide. The family chain is broken, and nothing seems the same; but as GOD calls us one by one, THE CHAIN will link again. I send my condolences and prayers to the family!

Mrs. Frazier, thank you for being my friend!

DDC - July 27, 2017 at 08:25 PM

DE

“ You have my sincere condolences. May you find comfort in Isaiah 25:8

dee - July 24, 2017 at 06:42 PM

DD

I thank God for Mrs. Johnella Minerva Frazier. I knew her heart. When she fulfilled her earthy mission of her appointed season, GOD called her name and lifted her to join the angels. She had a heart that attracted family, friends, colleagues, students, and neighbors with an infectious smile and enduring spirit. I am so sorry to hear of her passing. I cherish personal memories of the times we shared together in Detroit. She served God as a loving daughter, wife, mother, sister, community leader, and mentor. She remains in my thoughts and prayers.

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Mrs. Frazier, thank you for being my friend!

DDD - July 27, 2017 at 08:23 PM

DI

Greg, my sincere condolences. Diggs

Diggs - July 31, 2017 at 09:41 PM