

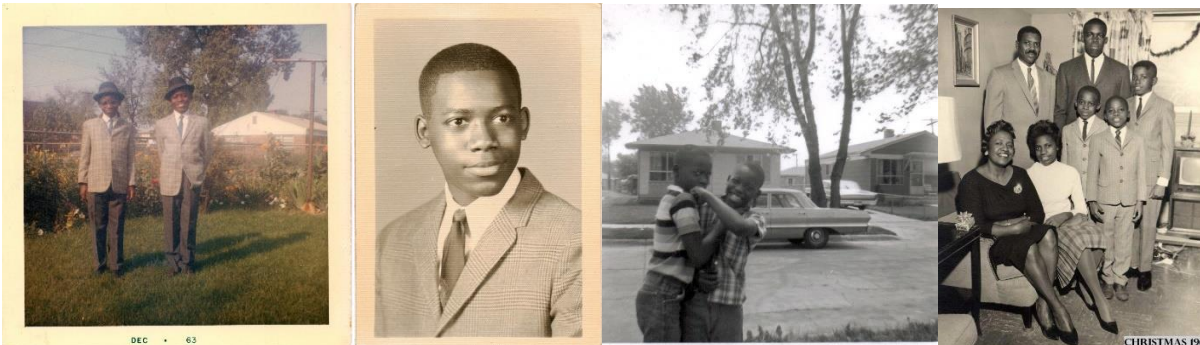
# Celebrating the Life of Gary D. Williams

## Biography

Gary Williams embodied “joie de vivre” (joy of life) and was a shining example of what an incredible man should be. He was wise, vibrant, and witty. At his core, Gary was deeply kind, generous and selfless in a way that was truly special. Always there for his family, friends and colleagues, he took pleasure in teaching and mentoring those around him. In passing unexpectedly, Gary leaves an indelible mark on the world as well as everyone who knew him.

## Childhood

Gary Duane Williams was born in River Rouge, MI on August 21st, 1951 to Henry and Carrie Lavinia (Patton) Williams. A happy and beautiful baby from day one, Gary grew into a caring and dependable young man loved by his friends and family. He often reflected fondly upon his relationship with siblings Carlton, Abdul Alim, Zakiyyah and Rodney. Gary and his immediate family grew up in the city of Ecorse, MI. Their youthful adventures consisted of legendary neighborhood baseball games, bike rides through rival neighboring territory, and occasionally borrowing from the neighbor’s peach trees.



## Education and Career



Gary attended Ecorse High School from 1965-1969. Even at a young age, he was a forward thinker. Gary was passionate about technology and communications. While he was just as fond of sports as his peers, Gary focused on what he saw as “the way of the future” and became a member of the Ecorse High Audio-Visual Club. After high school, Gary joined Michigan Bell Telephone Company and



worked as an Equipment Installation and Repair Technician. On September 20, 1971, he enlisted in the United States Army. Gary completed basic training at Fort Knox. He then received instruction at Fort Gordon’s US Army South East Signal School. Gary was trained in communications and certified as a Signal Support Systems Specialist on February 7, 1972.

On April 10, 1972, Gary received orders to report to S.H.A.P.E. / NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Shortly afterwards, he was reassigned to the Communications Air Base in Prüm, Germany to perform his duties as a Communications Center Specialist. At the conclusion of his military service on March 22, 1974 he was awarded the National Defense Service Medal before returning to Michigan Bell Telephone Company. Gary later enrolled at

Eastern Michigan University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Communications in 1983.

## Family and Passions



Gary married his soul mate, Yolande Turner, on March 26, 1972 in an intimate ceremony at Ecorse's own Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church. His beloved and beautiful children, Kael Rembert-Henry, Alexis Duane, Deanne Carrie-Lee (Shaw), and Linden Andrew Williams were born in 1973, 1977, 1980 and 1985, respectively. Gary spoke constantly through the years about his children to friends and colleagues. He was focused on their many achievements and wanted them to be happy, successful well-rounded citizens of the world. Gary was so proud of the strong, accomplished individuals they became. They were always his top priority.

Gary was not only known to be a wonderful husband and father, but also a great friend and servant to his church community. He acted as Treasurer, Trustee, and Audio Ministry Lead for several years. He had numerous hobbies and passions which included photography, television production, and computer systems.

Gary's love of history inspired him to explore his genealogy. He did so with such intense enthusiasm that relatives from every branch of the tree regarded him as the official "family historian". He enjoyed collecting archived ancestral data from libraries across the nation, as

well as from various sources of public records. Gary's decades of research ultimately rewarded him with the discovery that his paternal DNA originated in the African nation of Gabon, and that his maternal DNA was traced to Africa's Yoruba people from Nigeria. Lastly, Gary always had a place in his heart (and garage) for curvaceous Buick and Chevrolet sedans.

## **Legacy**

Gary was diagnosed with lupus in 1973. At the age of twenty-four, a 1975 diagnosis of end-stage kidney failure marked the beginning of Gary's forty-five-year journey as a hemodialysis patient. Doctors informed Gary that he was not expected to live past the age of 40. With the help of his devoted wife Yolande and the grace of God, Gary defied the odds for nearly 3 decades. Citing his wife and four children as his sole motivation, Gary remained doggedly dedicated to his health. With decades of dedication, will power and love of family, Gary was blessed to see the additions of two wonderful daughters (in-law) and become a grandfather of 8. With effortless class and humility, he was a legendarily beautiful example to his children, grandchildren and many others dealing with seemingly overwhelming issues; internal or external. Throughout the trials and tribulations of battling lupus, his strength, perseverance and resilience were on full display. In March 2010, Gary was recognized by the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan Decade Club for having the most years on dialysis of any Michigan resident living with kidney disease. Gary took pride in providing encouragement and hope to dialysis newcomers as he pulled from his own experiences to counsel them on how to preserve a fulfilling quality of life.

To the deep grief and heartache of his family, friends and colleagues, Gary passed away on September 13, 2020. Together, we mourn Gary's loss as a devoted and loving brother, father, grandfather, and wonderful husband. Gary was preceded in death by parents Henry and Carrie, brother Carlton, and nephew Mustafa. He is survived by wife Yolande, children Kael (Amichael), Alexis (Chareese), Deannè, and Linden; grandchildren Estebon, Amenra, Nya, Kelsi, Emory, Baeden, Elliot and Greyson; nephews Shareef, Kamerron, Adam, Antar and Omar; nieces Kimberly and Yasmin.

Rest in peace Gary D. Williams. We are eternally grateful that you have been a part of our lives and for the wonderful memories with you that we will always cherish in our hearts.

## **A Message from Gary's Family**

The Williams family would like to thank you for the many expressions of love, understanding, and comfort shown during our time of need. Your kind words, prayers, cards, flowers, calls, texts, and other comforting gestures are greatly appreciated during this difficult time.