



## Morris Jones Jr.

December 31, 2022

Morris Jones, Jr. was born at Charity Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana on Monday, July 8, 1940. He was the second born of five children, and the only son, of Earsly Mae Garig Jones and Morris Jones.

Morris lived in the Magnolia Housing Project until 1945 when his family moved to Perdido Street between Salcedo and Gayoso. He received his early childhood education at Fisk Elementary School and McDonough 30 School. At eleven, Morris received his first camera, the Brownie Hawkeye, as a gift from his Aunt Thelma Garig Williams in Chicago, Illinois. From then on, Morris was first and foremost a writer with light. He fell in love with photography and has been devoted to it ever since, rivaled only by his passion for jazz. As a young man, it became his good fortune to meet and work with New Orleans photographer legend Marion Porter, who became an inspiration, a teacher, and a mentor in his life; Morris would later photograph an exhibit dedicated to Porter in the late 1990s.

Ever the enterprising person, Morris' entrepreneurial spirit led him to secure his own route at the age of 12 delivering groceries and medicines to the community by bicycle. Morris was a proud graduate of Booker T. Washington Comprehensive Senior High School, class of 1958, where he ran track, became an acolyte of Miles Davis and discovered his favorite photographer Gordon Parks, who he was standing next to when he met Lena Horne at the March on Washington in 1963. Booker T. Washington was where Morris honed his skills in the art of sales and marketing early on and continued to

find success in business throughout his life.

Morris enrolled in Southern University at Baton Rouge and began studying Zoology. He was called to active duty by the President of the United States. He served as a paratrooper with the Airborne Division known as The Screaming Eagles of the U.S. Army from 1963 to 1965. Upon his discharge from the military, Morris re-enrolled in college at Southern University at New Orleans and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration on August 5, 1975.

Intent on building a legacy, Morris went on to own, partially own or invest in many other properties and businesses throughout his life. Gemini Distribution became an umbrella organization, having subsidiaries including Gemini Records, a record and equipment rental store; a snack delivery business to New Orleans corner stores; advertising specialties; commercial photography for Essence Magazine, Life Magazine, New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Essence Festival, Super Sunday, the Maafa, the Free Southern Theater, and a host of weddings, funerals, graduations and other celebrations for which community desired documentation.

Ever the community builder, Morris gravitated toward other artistic individuals around New Orleans who would pursue the same. He photographed anything that was significant to Black folks in the city, both culturally and politically. As a documentarian, he photographed the movement work of political organizations including Afro-Americans for Progress at Dillard University in the 1960s, and he was a charter member of S.O.U.L. (Southern Organization for Unified Leadership) in the 1970s, which grew out of the Lower Ninth Ward Development Association. On October 11, 1998, he participated in a Great Day in New Orleans: A Historic Gathering of African-American Artists in Congo Square (Armstrong Park New Orleans). Morris was honored to have his art on the cover of Life Magazine, and most importantly, the cover the publication "The Ties that Bind: Making Family New Orleans Style," a photo exhibition of African-American family lifestyles in New Orleans displayed from February through August 2000 at Ashé Cultural Arts Center. He also co-

founded the arts collective CULTURE BLACK. Morris photographed numerous leaders and artists, especially jazz musicians, including Abby Lincoln, Max Roach, John Coltrane, Dinah Washington, Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Big Chief Allison “Tootie” Montana, and Big Chief Donald Harrison, among others. Morris’ biggest contributions were as a memory keeper and a visual griot, and he was recognized with the Mardi Gras Indians Keeper of the Flame Award. One of his proudest shoots was photographing then-President Barack H. Obama at a Town Hall meeting at the University of New Orleans Lakefront Campus on October 15, 2009.

Morris has mentored many people across the arc of his life. Morris was honored to receive the 2013 Favorite Fathers Award on June 14, 2013 from the New Orleans Fatherhood Consortium Ashé Cultural Arts Center, and Women in Fatherhood, Inc. His excitement and enthusiasm for his art were infectious and anyone who encountered him with a modicum of interest in photography or jazz would soon be caught up in one of his ongoing educational diatribes. After the levees broke, he taught photography to New Orleans Charter Science and Math High School and O. Perry Walker students. He had a gift for finding a way to insert jazz and photography into every conversation. He was a learned man. Morris could pontificate at length on any subject. His recollection of historical events, particularly those related to the history of the City of New Orleans was unparalleled in its detailed accuracy. He was a voracious reader and could hold a conversation with anyone on ANY topic. You always knew you were in the presence of greatness, generosity, and genius when you were around him. Concomitantly, he had the gift of making you comfortable and demonstrated great humility. He was a charmer who lived a charmed life. He was a loquacious and observant seeker. He was an artist and he was art—a titan, a legend.

Morris Jones, Jr. departed this life on Saturday, December 31, 2022 at the age of 82 years to be with the ancestors. He is survived by his loving and dedicated wife, Gillian; two daughters, Maris and Giani; one sister, Thelma J.

Bertrand; and his grandson, Anthony Jones. In ancestorhood, Morris joins his grandparents Lillian Augustine, Joshua Jones, Louis Garig, and Mary Delone; parents, Morris Jones and Earsly Mae Garig Jones; sisters, Muriel J. Williams, Sandra J. Larvadain and Elaine J. White; and his son Anthony Atiim Jones. Morris leaves behind a host of family and friends including: Mother-in-Law, Evelyn Knowles-Cooper; Brothers and Sisters-in-Law, Linda Collie (Vernal), G. Kingsley Knowles (Sandra), Rudolph Cooper, Judy Cooper, Annischa Cook (Mark), Charles Cooper, Astrid Tinker (Lynden), Kelvin Cooper, and Moreene Cooper; nieces and nephews Robert Williams, Jr., Kevin (Germaine) and Anyelle Williams, Kemba White-Dupree (Camara), Norma and Earsly Larvadain, and Tyrone White; Annischa Cook Deveaux (Kendrick), Maradonna and Malaak Tinker, Kandra and Kea Knowles, Tabari Cook, Anthonya Cooper, Jason (Tyra) and Shawn (Jennifer) Pinder, Valentino (Danielle), Mario (Japeria) and James (Jennifer) Cooper, Michael Justin Hepburn (Cicily), Ashley Stubbs, Juanita Johnson, Marcia Johnson, and Lauren Jagdeo (Duran); Christophe, Christiaan Cartwright (Jessica) and Henry Cartwright, Christi Khia Cartwright (Chad) and Carter and Charlotte Wilcox; cousins Olivia Chase, Nona Ocloo, Ruby Simon, Whittona Jones, Taalib El Amin, Althea Cross Lasha, Tizona Watts (Darrell), Diane Baker, Kim Cross, Kezia Lasha, Lisa and Aliyah El Amin, Sandra and Camille Johnson; grand nieces and nephews Joshua (Nicole) and Wesley Johnson, Darrell Watts, Jr. (Melanie) and Yasiela Watts, Brandon Watts (Analeshia) and Jaxon Watts, DeMarco Campbell, Ronniesha Brown, Mykel Morgan (Ryan), Angel Rhodes (Javon), Cameron Williams, Sydnie and Royce Williams, CJ and Imari Dupree, Dashan Rogers, Abra Middlebrooks, and David, Mya and Malik Middlebrooks. Morris is also survived by a host of adopted family and friends including Sonya Sonia, Kelly Nash-Forrest (Rodney), Krystal Holmes, Dominique Nash Watson (James) and Riley Watson, Eric Waters, Ronald Green, Harry Doughty, Bradley Nzinga, Symone Wilson, Danielle Miles, Lidya Araya, Richard Trice, Terrence Joseph, J.R. Thomason, Girard Mouton III, Irving Johnson, Gus Bennett, Bernie Saul, Paul Sylvester, Keith Calhoun,

Chandra McCormick, Don Hubbard, Sydney Garrison, Robert Burns, Janice Clay, Janice Sawyer, Reginald (Annie), Denise, and JR Minnis, Carol Bebelle and members of Ashé Cultural Arts Center community, Backstreet, his church family, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, New Orleans, and the McDonalds (The Office) on Carrollton Avenue; and the staff and healthcare providers at Davita Dialysis, Touro, and Touro Infirmiry Hospital. Morris Jones, Jr. is survived by a host of additional family and friends, too numerous to mention in the space of this page. If your name was omitted, please forgive us.

Family, relatives and friends; and priest, wardens, vestry and parishioners of (St. Luke's Episcopal Church, New Orleans) are invited to attend a Jazz Memorial Service at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 1222 North Dorgenois Street, New Orleans, LA 70119 on Saturday January 14, 2023 at 10:00am.

Note: Masks are required to enter the church buildings.

Arrangement by D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave. Please visit [www.rhodesfuneral.com](http://www.rhodesfuneral.com) to sign the online guestbook.

In lieu of flowers, and in keeping with the Morris Jones, Jr. philosophy of life, well-wishers may donate to/support the business of his youngest child and primary caregiver, Giani Marisa Jones New Negroes. Contributions may be sent via Cash App, Venmo, or Zelle. Visit <https://www.newnegroes.com/> to peruse Giani's creations, commission designs, and purchase wearable art. Follow @newnegroes and @giudiebrown on Instagram.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 14. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Luke Episcopal Church  
1222 N. Dorgenois St.  
New Orleans, LA 70119

## Memorial Service

JAN 14. 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Luke Episcopal Church  
1222 N. Dorgenois St.  
New Orleans, LA 70119

# Tribute Wall

RS

“ *Morris Jones Jr was a caring person took time to listen to you and can hold a very good conversation with you. He wil be miss by so many people. Cousin I am one that will miss you so much. I am still waiting on a phone call from you, we used to talk 3 to 4 times a week we all loved you but God loved you more. It was just time for you to get your wings and be in the presence of God with him wrapping his loving arms around you . R. I. P . Cuz. My condolences to my family, his wife and 2 daughters. Praying for each one of you.*

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**Ruby Jones Simon** - January 16, 2023 at 01:55 AM

MR

“ *I am saddened to hear of Mr. Jones passing. He made me feel welcome during my first and only visit to New Orleans. Sincere condolences to Gillian and his family. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.*

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**Melanie Roach** - January 15, 2023 at 11:18 PM

EA

“ *To the family: "Death leaves a pain no one can heal - love leaves memories no one can steal." May the memories of your loved one and God's love give you comfort and mend your wounded heart.  
God's peace,  
Eugenia*

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**Eugenia Adams** - January 12, 2023 at 07:15 AM