



Willene Pulliam Taylor

September 24, 2015

Dr. Willene Pulliam Taylor

Dr. Willene P. Taylor was born in Camphill, Alabama on October 20th, 1936 to Bozie and Cassie Pulliam. She often spoke of her home which was humble but rich in the Baptist faith. She was a woman of great intellectual strength and moral fortitude. She spoke softly and explicitly but had the gift of strong character combined with human understanding.

She graduated from Laurel High School in Alexander City, Alabama at the age of 15. She taught at Anniston High school at the age of 19. Always a diligent student, she received honors and accolades during her school years.

Dr. Taylor received an undergraduate degree in English from Alabama State University at the age of nineteen. She graduated with highest honors also while attending Alabama State she pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. She enrolled in graduate school at the University of Madison, Wisconsin where she was awarded a Master of Arts degree in the field of English. At that time, on campus in Madison, she was recruited by the late Dr. Emmit Bashful to become a founding faculty member of the newly organized campus of Southern University in New Orleans. Due to limited housing facilities in New Orleans during that era, she boarded at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Addison Carey. During that period of time, she met Jesse Frederick Taylor, also on the faculty of SUNO and they married. Several years later, to their union was born their son, Darryl Kenyatta Taylor. She remained married until his death in 1999.

Prior to Darryl's birth, Willene enrolled in the graduate program at Tulane University, becoming one of three students to be enrolled during a turbulent period of civil unrest. Her tenacity and intellectual fiber enabled her to matriculate successfully although she was assigned security service for her protection. As a result, she achieved the distinction of being the first African-American woman to receive a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Medieval Literature in 1967.

Dr. Taylor's tenure at SUNO spanned forty-two years in combined professorial and leadership roles. She was an outstanding instructor to students enrolled in the English department classes. Over the years she was appointed to leadership roles as the Chairperson of the Humanities Division and Chair of the Department of English. She achieved the professorial rank of Professor of English based on her instructional excellence, professional publications and university service.

An impeccable grammarian, Dr. Taylor loved her areas of expertise, namely Medieval, American and Afro-American Literature. She was nationally acclaimed for her review of the book, "Things Fall Apart" written by the African author Chinua Achebe. In addition, she is published in numerous articles in editions of the Journal of English. She was active in her professional organizations, attended annual meetings and made oral presentations of her writings.

As a classroom instructor, she encouraged students to develop analytical skills through the writings of Shakespeare, Chaucer and other literary giants. She believed literature transcended lifelong learning and understanding.

Dr. Taylor leaves to cherish her memories her son Darryl Kenyatta, her daughter-in-law, Bianca Noble Taylor, grandchildren Charles James and Tia Breishi of Avon, IN. Her sister Ruth Burton of Tennessee. In addition she will be remembered by her former students, advisees and colleagues.

Cemetery Details

St. Louis #3 Cemetery

3421 Esplanade Ave
New Orleans, LA 70119

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 3. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Israel Baptist Church
1701 Marais Street
New Orleans, LA

Service

OCT 3. 10:00 AM (CT)

Israel Baptist Church
1701 Marais Street
New Orleans, LA

Tribute Wall

DS

“ I was afforded the opportunity to take many classes under Dr. Taylor's outstanding teaching. Furthermore, Dr. Taylor set the tone for instruction on the first day of class. For example, she would say, " My name is Dr. W. P. Taylor, and the "P" doesn't stand for play." Additionally, she was passionate about literature and grammar. In doing so, it seemed that the works of literary giants like Chaucer was embedded in every fiber of her being. Consequently, I was inundated with a love and appreciation for literature which equipped me with the skills needed to become an excellent English teacher and administrator. Finally, on behalf of all the students who were bestowed the honor of Dr. Taylor's proficient teaching, I say to the family to proudly remember all the countless students like me who will never forget the impact made in our lives by Dr. Taylor.
Sincerely, Dwayne Sails c/o 1996!



dwayne sails - November 15, 2015 at 09:30 AM

MG

“ Monica Gaines lit a candle in memory of Willene Pulliam Taylor



Monica Gaines - November 14, 2015 at 09:27 AM

DS

“ Dwayne Sails sent a virtual gift in memory of Willene Pulliam Taylor



dwayne sails - November 13, 2015 at 06:45 PM

DH

“ To Dr. Taylor's family: I offer my deepest sympathy. I did not know Dr. Taylor, but I had JUST assigned her essay, "The Blindness Motif in Richard Wright's NATIVE SON" to my students (at Spelman), and they were working on a paper in response to her essay at the time when she made her transition into eternity. I sincerely hope she felt the psychic energy of these young people pondering her research, her reading of the classic novel, and her cogent writing. I hope she knew--and I want YOU to know--that her work and her words will continue to represent her intellectual brilliance long after her physical presence is gone.

Sincerely,

Donna Akiba Sullivan Harper, Ph.D.

Professor of English, Spelman College

English Area Representative, College Language Association

Donna Harper - October 18, 2015 at 06:03 PM