

Ernestine Walton: Angelic warrior

Written by Al McFarlane, Editor-in-chief
Monday, 16 December 2013 13:19



Ernestine Shalema Walton-Brailsford was buried last Friday, the day after Nelson Mandela died. Friends and family mourned her loss and celebrated her life at midday funeral services at Trinity Tabernacle Church in North Minneapolis, where she was an active member.

Like many in our community, I knew Walton-Brailsford as an angelic warrior. Her disposition was bright, her countenance filled with compassion and empathy, her bearing, indefatigable. She died the Saturday before from complications of cancer. She fought for life, and, I believe, did not surrender to death, but with her warrior's spirit, simply moved on to the next battleground.

I met Walton-Brailsford over 40 years ago, when all of us were in our early 20s. She kept company with other angelic Black women, whose Afros, like living halos, crowned their exquisite beauty. Walton-Brailsford was a member of the Feast of the Circle African Drummers and Dancers. She was part of a social club called Midwest Express. In conjunction with Sabathani Community Center and the African American Cultural Center on 31st Street and 1st Through the years, Walton-Brailsford followed her passion for art and culture, and for celebration and elevation of Black people. An avid photographer, she documented, for her own private collection, the personalities and events that reflected the emergence of Minneapolis and St. Paul as wellsprings of world-class talent and creativity. Avenue in South Minneapolis, Walton-Brailsford created phenomenal cultural celebrations, community arts festivals at the MLK Park. I am indebted to Walton-Brailsford and her events for guiding me toward the woman

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I married, my life partner and soulmate, B.P. Ford, who was part of this circle of conscious Pan-Afrikanists women.

So as I sat in the memorial service with friends and neighbors, reviewing the arc of her ascent, it made sense to frame this day of celebration in the context of the global story of Nelson Mandela's passing. They and we are all fortunate to have shared the same space and time in creation.

Ernestine Shalema Walton-Brailsford was born in Chicago, Illinois on November 18, 1952 to her parents Mamie Lee Bullock and Hosie Walton, Jr.

She attended Manley Jr. High School and later Westinghouse and Tilden Technical High School in Chicago. She married Warrenell Pugh in 1969. They divorced in 1973. From this union a precious daughter was born, Felicia Ann. Ernestine moved to Minneapolis in June of 1969.

She traveled to Trinidad in the West Indies in 1976. There she met and fell in love with Christopher Mohammed from Trinidad, West Indies, and in 1978 had a daughter, Shanita Christina (deceased). Later she met and fell in love with Jerry Hilton Smith and had a precious son, Johnny Terrell Nicholas Walton, in 1979. She met and fell in love with Gerald Edward Hubbard, Sr., and had a precious son, Michael Ashanti Walton in 1984.

In 1994, she fell in love and married her cherished and beloved late-husband of 10 years, Ernest "Ernie" Brailsford.

In eulogy, the family said, "Ernestine was a child of God and gave her life to Christ at a very early age. She found a church home when she united with her friends and neighbors at Trinity Tabernacle Assembly of God in Minneapolis under the anointed leadership of Pastor Louis and Co-Pastor Gloria Walton in 1999."

Walton-Brailsford received her G.E.D. in 1977, attended Sawyer School of Business and graduated in 1978 and went on to attend the University of Minnesota graduating with honors in 1984.

She worked in community and corporate environments in administrative support. Her employers included Phyllis Wheatley Nursery School, Zion Baptist Church, The African-American Cultural Arts Center, Honeywell, Best Western Hotels, The Way Community Center, The Place Restaurant in San Fernando, Trinidad, West Indies, Insight News, Minneapolis Spokesman-Recorder, Star Tribune circulation department, WMOJ/KMOJ Radio/Center for Communication and Development, Control Data, Dayton's Contract Division, Dayton's Computer Operations, Pilot City Regional Center, U.S. Bank, and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage. She also spent many hours volunteering in the community. Her most recent employment was with Allison-Williams Company.

Walton-Brailsford was very active in the community. She danced with the Feast of the Circle African Drummer and Dancers in the early 70's and 80's. She later taught African and Modern

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Dance at the African-American Cultural Center/Sabathani, Phyllis Wheatley and The Way Community Centers. She loved music and formed a singing group with her best friend and God sister Dorrie (Teeny) Dailey in the 60's. They later formed a female group and sang with the band "Black Magic" in North Minneapolis.

Walton-Brailsford is survived by daughter, Felicia Ann "Pinky" (Mark)Taylor of Houston, Texas; sons Johnny Terrell "Pepper Red" Nicholas and Michael Ashanti "Little Jellybread" Walton of Minneapolis, grandson: Amir Terrell "Jumbo" Walton; brothers Willie (Ruthie) Blue, Robert James Blue, Johnnie L. Walton, Sr., Jimmie Walton, Hawthorne (Robbin) Vinson, Terry L. Vinson, Nathaniel (Leslie) Vinson, Sr., and Michael Jones.; and sisters: Shirley Blue, Hattie (Mark) Schley; and many aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews and many extended family relatives and friends.