



Sarah Ellen Williams

July 5, 1934 - March 13, 2019

Sarah Ellen Williams was the second of four children born to the late Hazel Romeo Ragin and Zelia Lula Jones Ragin on July 5, 1934, in Summerton, South Carolina. She graduated from Manning Training School in the Class of 1951 at the age of 16, and later attended South Carolina State College and before migrating to Detroit, Michigan, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was the first African-American telephone operator for Bell Telephone Company before relocating to New York where she was a buyer for Blumstein's Department Store before going to work for the New York Transit Authority where she retired as a supervisor in 1994.

After retirement, she returned to South Carolina and resided in Lexington until she made her transition. Sarah wanted to start a new life, own her own home, leave the hustle and bustle of the big city so that she could garden, cook, play cards, sew, do light bookkeeping, enjoy crossword puzzles and word games, and travel (even to China).

Sarah, along with her parents Hazel and Zelia, was one of the original signers of the Briggs v Elliott petition, which led to the Briggs v Elliott lawsuit that became one of the four cases in the 1954 Brown v Board of Education decision. She also participated in the 2004 50th Anniversary Celebration of the landmark decision. As a result of her challenges, Sarah channeled her activism into support of the best possible education for her children. As a

single parent, she helped her four daughters attend private boarding schools and college.

As a young girl, she was raised in Historic Liberty Hill AME Church; she later joined Jones AME Church in Lexington, where she served as Church Treasurer.

In addition to her parents, Sarah was preceded in death by her daughter, Tanya Williams.; two brothers: Charles Ragin and Romeo Ragin; and two sisters: Roberta Dingle and Cynthia Gilyard.

She leaves to cherish precious memories three daughters: Andrietta Ragin Sims of New York, Diane Ellen Williams of South Carolina, and Darlene Xina (Tim) Goering of New Mexico; three grandchildren: Kendall Tyler Calyen, Kendra Zelia Sims, and Tyler Zachary Goering; a sister Leversa Johnson of South Carolina; a brother Andrew Lee (Khalilah) Ragin of Virginia; nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends.

Cemetery Details

Historic Liberty Hill AME Church Cemetery

Summerton, SC

Previous Events

Public Viewing

APR 5. 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Palmer Memorial Chapel - Columbia
1200 Fontaine Place
Columbia, SC 29223
(803) 786-6300
palmermemorialchapel@gmail.com
<https://www.palmermemorialchapel.com>

Family Visitation

APR 5. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Palmer Memorial Chapel - Columbia
1200 Fontaine Place
Columbia, SC 29223
(803) 786-6300
palmermemorialchapel@gmail.com
<https://www.palmermemorialchapel.com>

Public Viewing

APR 6. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Historic Liberty Hill AME Church
2310 Liberty Hill Road
Summerton, SC 29148

Celebration of Life

APR 6. 2:00 PM (ET)

Historic Liberty Hill AME Church
2310 Liberty Hill Road
Summerton, SC 29148

Tribute Wall



“ Sarah Ellen Williams

October 04, 2023 at 11:33 AM



“ I was so saddened to learn of Sarah's passing. We were neighbors for five years and had the best time. We were always up to no good! We worked in her yard and we would work in my yard; sharing laughter all the day long. After I moved, I would still try and stop by for a visit or two each year. I made sure I had a couple of hours when visiting as I knew we would use every minute to catch up!! I cherish the great memories! There was no other like Sarah!! Loved her dearly and will miss her dearly.
My sincere condolences...
Kindly,
Della Carmichael

Della Carmichael - April 08, 2019 at 11:50 AM



“ Cecilia Holland and Family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Sarah Ellen Williams.



Cecilia Holland and Family - April 04, 2019 at 11:52 AM

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“ I will forever miss my favorite cousin Sarah Ellen. She was a representation of family love and caring. I will always remember our laughs together and also her sharing wisdom. I am grateful to have had her in my life and will keep her in my heart.

Love always,
Cecilia Holland
"Ceci"

Cecilia - April 04, 2019 at 11:45 AM