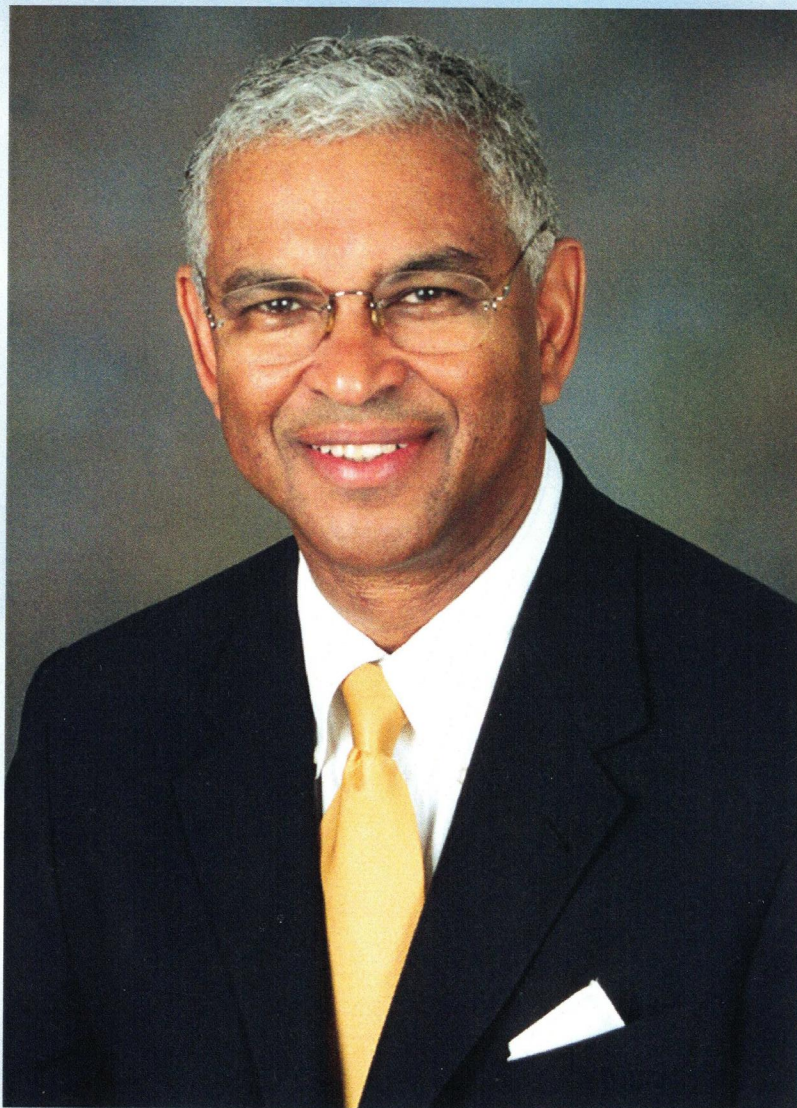


# CELEBRATION OF LIFE TRUSTEE DWIGHT RAIFORD

January 13, 1949 – February 24, 2024



Monday, March 4, 2024  
12 Noon

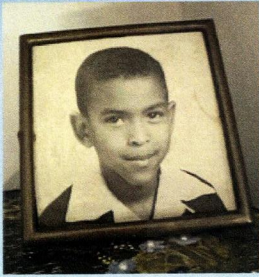
EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH  
101 Jackson Street, NE  
Atlanta, Georgia

Rev. Raphael G. Warnock, Ph.D  
*Senior Pastor*



# WILLIAM DWIGHT RAIFORD

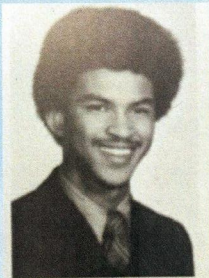
January 13, 1949 – February 24, 2024



Born in Burlington, North Carolina, in 1949, the youngest of Otis and Beulah Lee Baskett Raiford's four sons, William Dwight Raiford was both typical and extraordinary. Dwight grew up in the last decade of Jim Crow segregation, attending Black schools for most of his childhood. Teachers took notice of his sharp intellect and curious mind and early on a primary school teacher told him that he needed to leave North Carolina for college, "which was sort of unheard of...And that kind of stuck with me. I was cocky enough to think that I was bright enough to go anywhere." After selection into the competitive Governor's School of North Carolina which brought the best and brightest students of the state to Salem College in Winston-Salem for summer enrichment, Dwight set his sights on the Ivy League.

Dwight loved his friends and Black history-centered education at the all-Black Jordan Sellers High School, and he'd known many of his classmates since kindergarten. But if he was going to get into the Ivy League, he "thought that maybe going across the track to [the all-white Walter Williams] High School might help that endeavor. So I did that. And quite frankly hated it... I had never been called a n\_\_\_ more than I did in that nine months." He was one of four Black students in a graduating class of about 500 and together they formed a close-knit group to make it through. As challenging as that time was, Dwight's plan worked: he was one of the first, if not the first, person, Black or white to be accepted into Yale University from his area.

In Fall 1967, Dwight arrived at Yale University in New Haven, CT, with a single cardboard suitcase (which he kept for the rest of his life), a twenty dollar bill ("which disappeared real quick") and boundless optimism. One of the first dedicated classes of Black men in the still single sex Yale College, Dwight and his other Black classmates called themselves "the Dirty 30."



WILLIAM DWIGHT RAIFORD

Against the backdrop of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's assassination and the Black Panther Party trials and protests in New Haven, Dwight helped form the Black Student Alliance at Yale (BSAY). He also participated in the creation of the Afro-American Studies program, serving as one of four student committee members alongside four faculty members that met weekly for a year to put forth an interdisciplinary proposal for Black Studies. Along with beloved and brilliant college colleagues including Armstead Robinson, Donald Ogilvy, Craig Foster, Glenn DeChabert, and Doug Smith, Dwight organized and attended the symposium "Black Studies in the University," published as a collection of essays in 1969, which have become a critical text on the origins of the field of Black Studies. Dwight graduated with a BA in Afro-American Studies and History.

WILLIAM DWIGHT RAIFORD. Resident: 1643 Timothy Dwight College. Born, January 13, 1949 in Burlington, North Carolina. Attended W. M. Williams High School, Burlington, N. C. Major: Afro-American Studies (History). Armour Council, Davenport (2). Dahl Committee on Afro-American Studies (2). Corresponding Secretary, Black Student Alliance (2, 3); Chairman, Executive Committee, Afro-American (3, 4). Home Address: P. O. Box 1326, Burlington, North Carolina 27215

In 2003, Dwight sat in the audience as his daughter Leigh received a PhD in African American Studies from Yale. In 2017 at BSAY's 50th anniversary, Dwight was honored with the

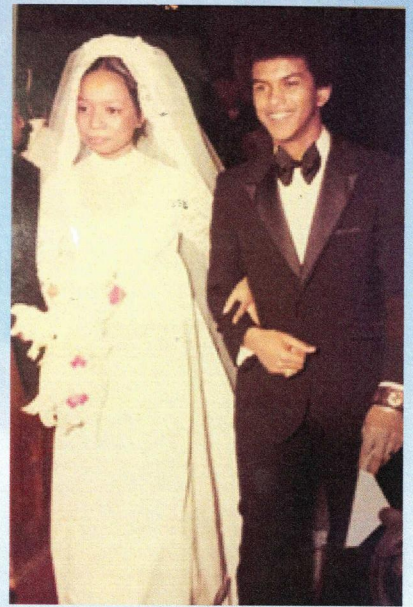
Trailblazer Pioneer Award which he received in New Haven with his granddaughter Maya, Yale College 2021, also Davenport College, in attendance.

From the first moment he stepped on campus, Dwight made lifelong friends and was respected among his peers. Scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr. Yale College class of 1973 said Dwight had "the best Afro on campus." At a party in January 1971 during his senior year he met Iris



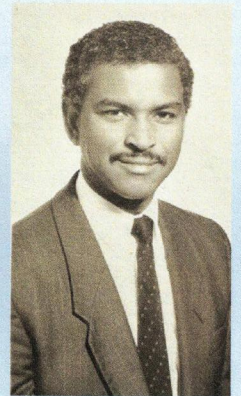
Mordecai, a student at Manhattanville College. They quickly became inseparable and were married in December 1971 at Convent Avenue Baptist Church in Harlem. In November 1972, Iris and Dwight welcomed their first child, daughter Leigh Renee Raiford.

To support his family after graduation Dwight worked two jobs: teaching math through the Opportunities Industrialization job training program, and teaching a Black Intellectual Thought course of his own design at Green Haven Correctional Facility in upstate New York. His time at Green Haven impacted Dwight in ways that were evident throughout his life. He would say that some of the men he taught were among the smartest people he'd ever met, Yale included, and also some of the most broken by society. It awakened in him a love of teaching, sharpened his capacity to see people as more than their circumstances, and cultivated a commitment to creating options for Black youth especially that broadened horizons away from prison.



Dwight and Iris moved to New York City briefly before dispatching for Cambridge and Boston, Massachusetts, where Dwight pursued an MBA at Harvard University (1976-1978). Iris worked full time in banking to support the family while Dwight completed his studies and was primary caregiver for preschool age Leigh.

Dwight made new lifelong friends at Harvard and in 2004 he received the Bert King Award for Service. However, Dwight and Iris were no lovers of Boston—a city where they'd experienced rampant racism including the 1977 Boston Busing Crisis and the worst weather, the Blizzard of 1978. Dwight and Iris, returned to Harlem mere hours after the Harvard Business school graduation. At the time Black MBA's were being steered into advertising positions and away from high finance. Dwight smiled politely and took a job first as Assistant Vice President at Manufacturers Hanover Trust (1974-1980) and then as an investment banker at Citibank in 1980. Over the course of his 19 years with Citibank, Dwight worked with Fortune 500 companies including PepsiCo, traveling to Europe, Asia, and Latin America for work. He left Citibank in 1999 at the level of Senior Banker. Here too he forged friendships and gained admirers.



The Citibank position enabled Dwight and Iris, together with Iris's mother Shirley Mordecai, to purchase a brownstone on Convent Avenue across the street from Convent Avenue Baptist Church, choosing to settle in a Harlem that in the late 1970s was underserved, abandoned, and maligned. The couple wanted to raise their children in Harlem and do their part to "create a larger community." It was to the house on Convent that Dwight & Iris welcomed their second and third children, Joshua Dwight Raiford and Andrew Mordecai Raiford (1987-2010).

Joshua was becoming a gifted athlete and wanted to play baseball but there was no opportunity for him to play in Harlem. So Dwight and Iris co-founded Harlem Little League. Beginning with 8 teams and 129 players, the goal of HLL as Dwight always said was not growing big league ball players but growing big league citizens. Dwight coached both Josh and Andrew's teams in addition to being a longtime board member and continued to be an avid supporter, cheerleader, and advisor to the league in retirement. In addition to his dedication to HLL, Dwight served nearly 25 years as a member of the Little League International Board of Directors, including a stint as the organization's first African American Chairman, from



2001-04. He worked tirelessly to advance access to the sport for inner city youth and was instrumental in the establishment of the Little League Baseball's Urban Initiative. After their three children, Harlem Little League was Dwight and Iris's greatest collaboration. And the potency of their partnership is fully evident in the conceptualization and execution of what is now a Harlem institution.



Dwight longed for work that would more directly benefit his communities. So after 20 successful years at Citibank, and two years at Price Waterhouse Cooper, Dwight began a new career as a financial planner at MetLife in 2002. This work enabled him to bring his vast business knowledge to support a largely Black clientele in gaining financial literacy, building intergenerational wealth and plan for long term financial security while listening to his clients complicated and often painful relationships to money with kindness and without judgment. Here too Dwight was successful, rising to elite ranks and receiving accolades nearly every year.

In 1987, Dwight and Iris reaffirmed their commitment to God and became members of Convent Avenue Baptist Church. Dwight taught Sunday School, offered financial literacy workshops, served on the church development board and served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees (2002-05). He found great satisfaction in the many ways he served the Convent community and in turn was deeply sustained by the church community especially after the death of youngest child Andrew in 2010.

By the time he and Iris left New York City in 2015, Dwight could not walk the streets of Harlem without being stopped in warm greeting by local politicians and business owners, current and former little league players and parents, church members and neighbors. He also amassed a long list of honors and awards, many with Iris for their collective HLL work, including being named a "Financial All-Star" by Black Enterprise in 2014 and getting to ring the closing bell of the New York Stock Exchange in 2002.

Since 2015, Dwight and Iris have called Atlanta, Georgia home, and enjoyed being closer to son Joshua (BS Morehouse, MBA Georgia State, and 25 year Atlantan) as well as a host of family and friends. Retirement afforded Dwight the opportunity to play golf, enjoy time with loved ones, and to immerse himself in his new church home, the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church. Over the last few years, Dwight taught Sunday School classes, led financial literacy workshops and served on the development committee. On January 27, 2024 Dwight was elected an Ebenezer Trustee and was greatly looking forward to his first trustee meeting on March 3. Filled with excitement for life and beaming with love and pride, Dwight celebrated his 75th birthday in January 2024 surrounded by friends and family at Top Golf. He expressed how much he was looking forward to some last "gogo" years of travel with Iris before being called home to glory. Dwight passed away on Saturday February 24, 2024 in Tampa, Florida on a favorite annual golf trip with friends.

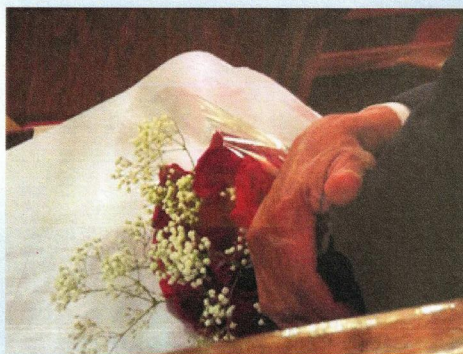




Dwight was predeceased by his parents Otis and Beulah Raiford, his oldest brother Otis Raiford, Jr., and his youngest child Andrew Mordecai Raiford.

He is survived by Iris Raiford, his wife of 52 years; his two older children, Leigh Raiford and Joshua Raiford; his two beloved grandchildren, Maya Haley and Maceo Hendrix Raiford Cohen, and son-in-law Michael Mark Cohen; his two older brothers Clyde Raiford and Joe Raiford, and sister-in-law Barbara Raiford; a loving cadre of cousins and cousins-in-law representing the Abarca, Mitchell, Raiford, and Younger families; a host of nieces and nephews; and a core group of friends spanning his full life from J.F. Gunn Elementary School to Jordan Sellars High School, Davenport College and the Afro House at Yale to Harvard Business School, from Harlem Little League to golf courses around the country, from Convent Avenue Baptist Church to Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Dwight Raiford will be greatly missed by all who knew him. We take solace in the care and love he showed us. We carry his legacy forward.



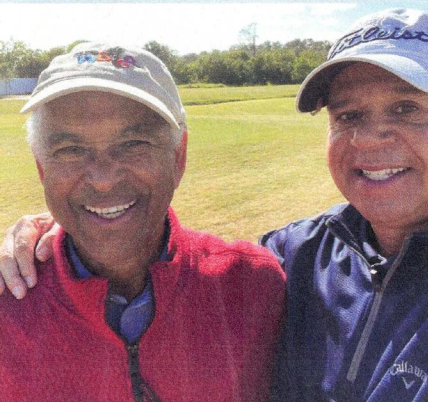
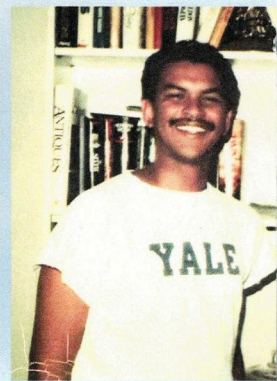
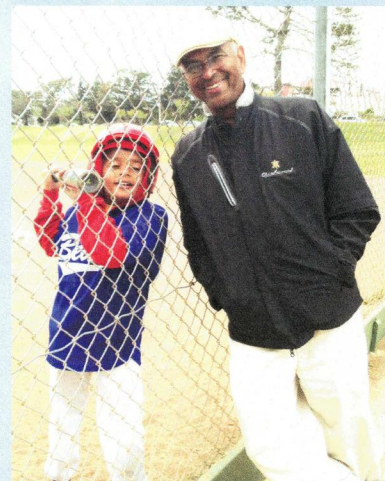
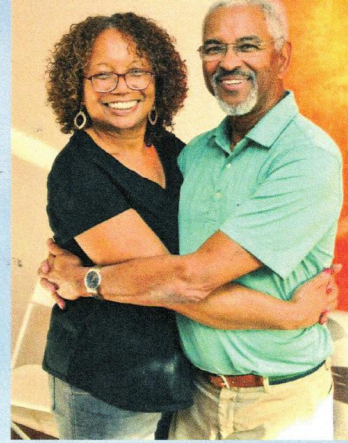
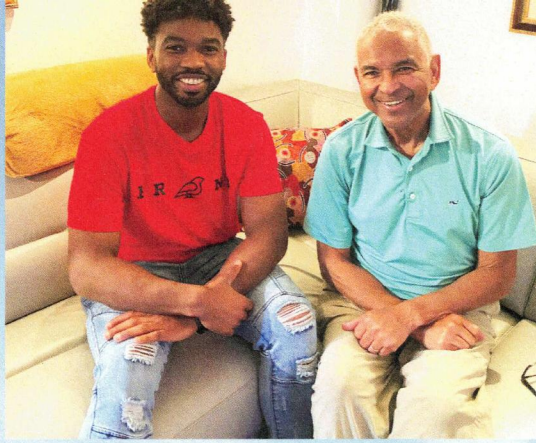


# ORDER OF SERVICE

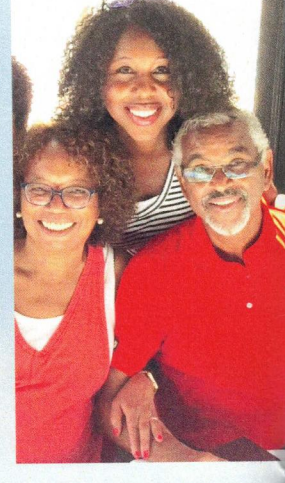
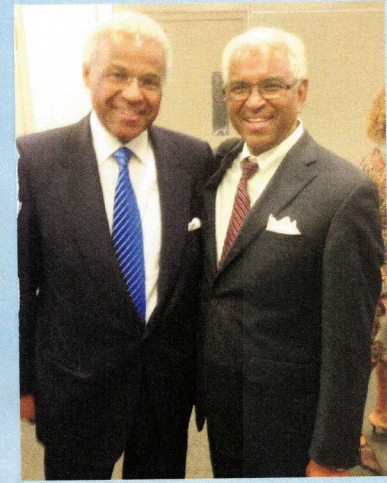
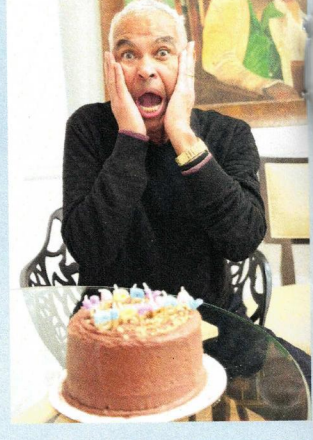
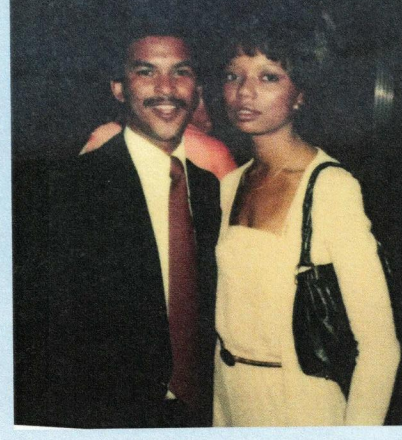
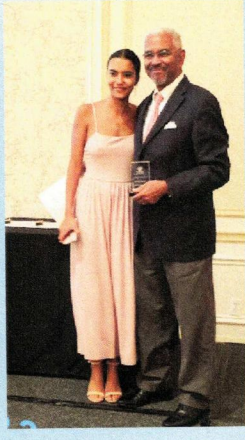
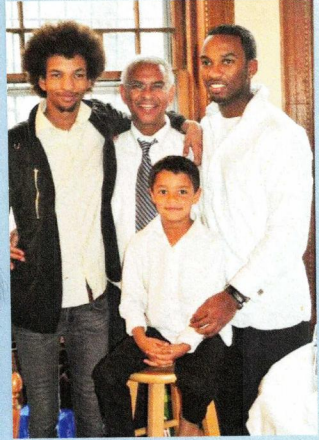
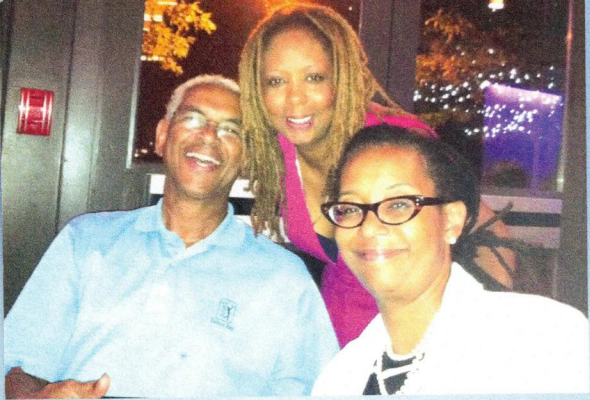
The Honorable Rev. Raphael G. Warnock, Ph.D  
*Officiant*

Prelude	Mr. Cori Stevenson, <i>Piano</i> Mr. Terrell Sass, <i>Drummer</i> Mr. Joel Powell, <i>Bassist</i>
Instrumental	<i>"Great is Thy Faithfulness"</i> <i>"Amazing Grace" (Jazz Style)</i>
Invocation	Rev. Raphael G. Warnock, <i>Senior Pastor</i>
Musical Selection	<i>"I Shall Wear A Crown "</i> Tamika Patton, <i>Psalmist</i>
Scripture Readings	
Old Testament: <i>Psalms 23</i>	Ms. Sandra Abarca Lopez, DBA and Ms. Maya Haley Raiford Cohen <i>Yale 2021</i>
New Testament: <i>1 Peter 4:10-11</i>	Mr. Henry Randolph and Elder Daniella Hampton
Pastoral Prayer	Rev. John Vaughn, <i>Executive Pastor</i> <i>Former Harlem Little League Coach</i>
Celebration of Friendship	Mr. John W. Sellars, <i>"Burlington Roots"</i> James R. Rohrbaugh, MD, <i>"Yale 1350 Crew"</i> Mr. Gary A. Griggs, <i>Atlanta Pro Duffers, "Serious Golf"</i> Mr. Stephen D. Keener, <i>President and CEO</i> <i>of Little League Baseball and Softball</i> <i>International, "Williamsport, PA Harlem, NY"</i>
Special Remarks	Ebenezer Baptist Church
Video Tribute	<i>"Let My Work Speak for Me"</i>
Celebration of Family	My Cousins' Love: Celia Abarca My Brother's Voices: Joe & Clyde Raiford Read by Al Mitchell My Good News Children: Leigh Raiford, Joshua Raiford My One and Only Love: Mrs. Iris Raiford
Sermonic Selection	<i>"Safe In His Arms"</i> Tamika Patton, <i>Psalmist</i>
Words of Comfort	Rev. Raphael G. Warnock, Ph.D
Recessional	<i>"Goin' Up Yonder"</i> Tamika Patton, <i>Psalmist</i>

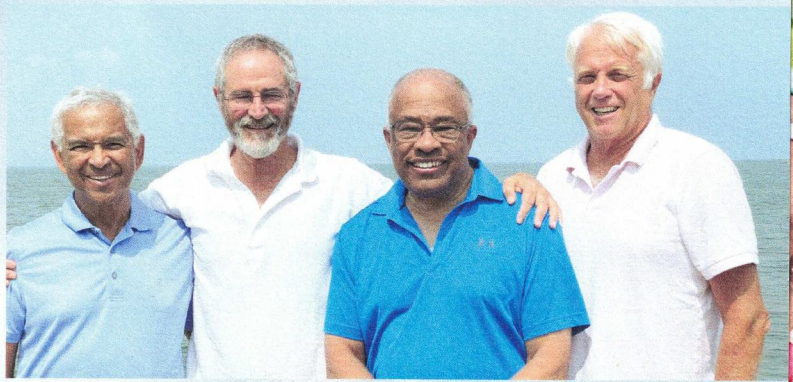
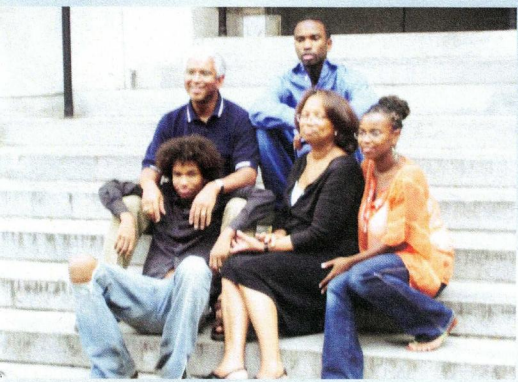
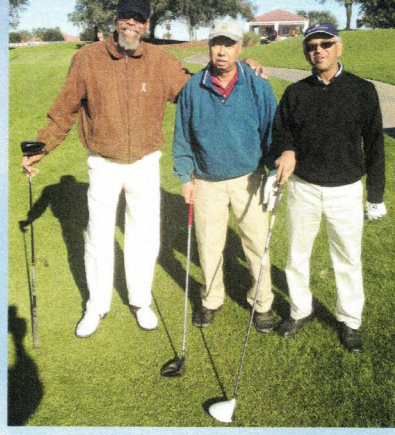
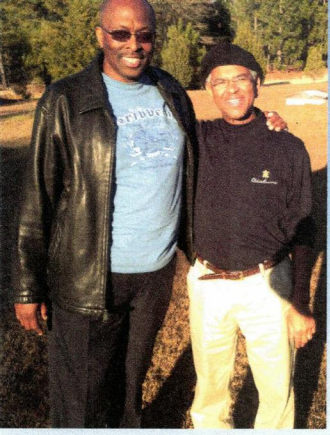




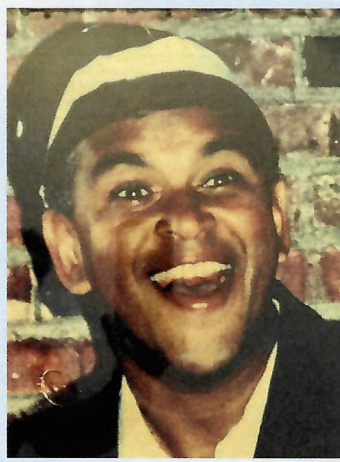
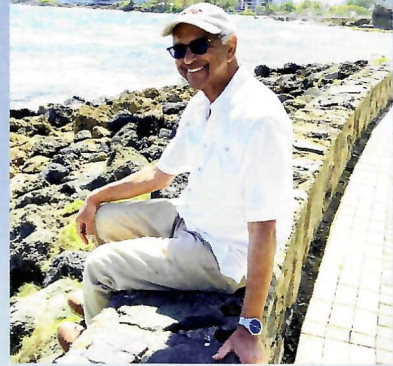
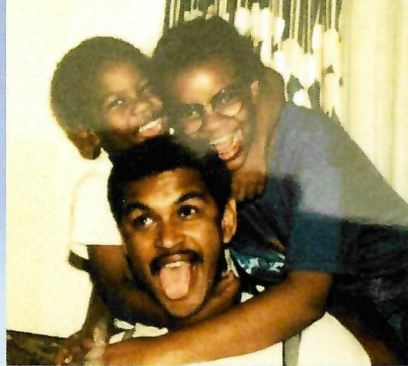




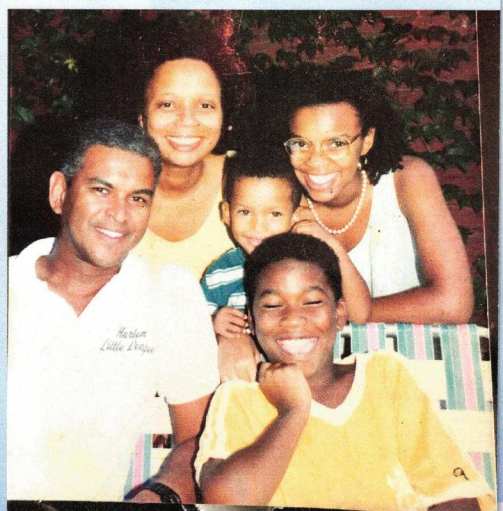
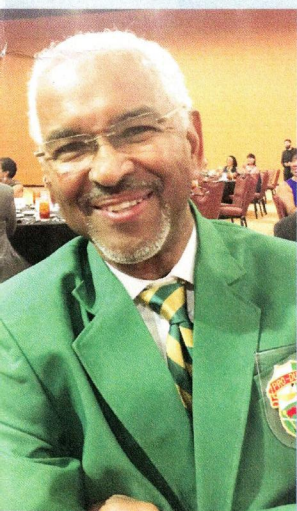
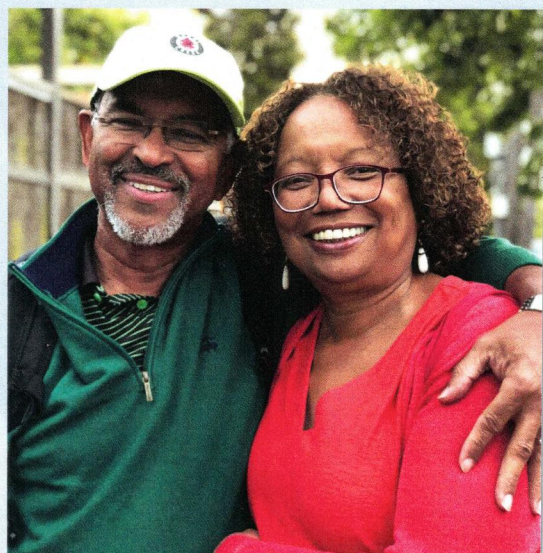
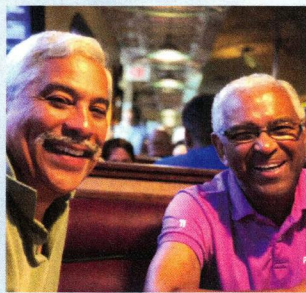
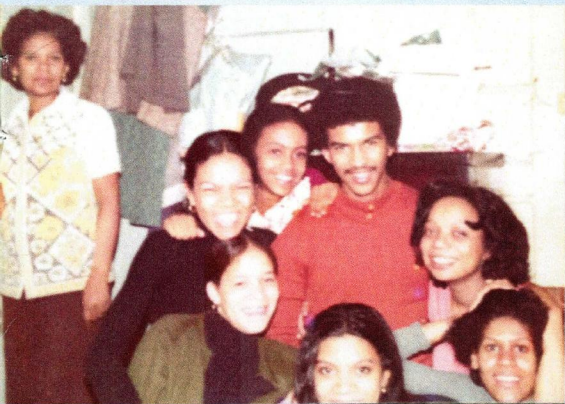
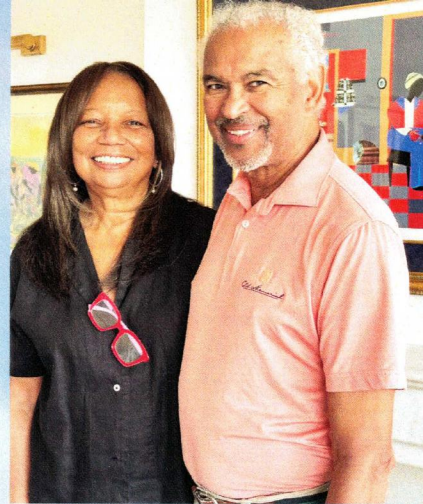
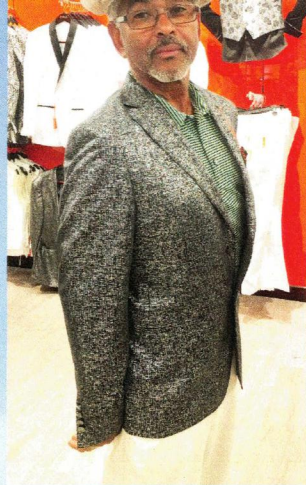
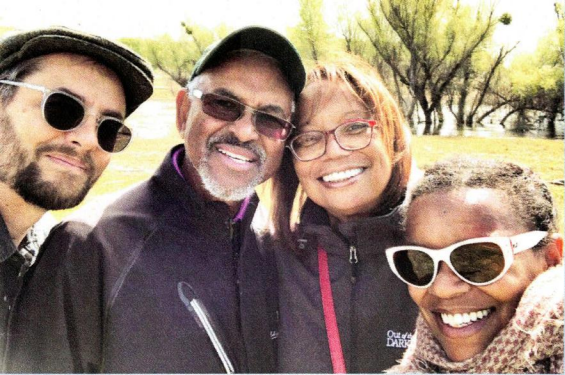














## **HIS JOURNEY'S JUST BEGUN**

*Don't think of him as gone away ~  
His journey's just begun  
Life holds so many facets  
This earth is only one.*

*Just think of him as resting  
From the sorrows and the tears  
In a place of warmth and comfort  
Where there are no days and years.*

*Think how he must be wishing  
That we could know today  
How nothing but our sadness  
Can really pass away.*

*And think of him as living  
In the hearts of those he touched...  
For nothing loved is ever lost ~  
And he was loved so very much.*

### **PALLBEARERS**

Michael Mark Cohen  
Al Mitchell  
Eric Mitchell  
Joe O'Neill

Joshua Dwight Raiford  
Maceo Raiford Cohen  
Douglas K. Smith  
Ricardo Rey Lopez

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The family of William Dwight Raiford is grateful for the many acts of sympathy extended to us during the transition of our loved one. May God continue to bless each of you.



**MURRAY  
BROTHERS  
FUNERAL HOME, INC.**

**404-349-3000**

**1199 Uttoy Springs Road, Southwest**

*(corner of Cascade Rd, near I-285)*

**Atlanta, Georgia 30331**

MKO Graphics & Printers, Inc.  
404-931-7230