



Clara Smith Simmons

April 7, 1935 - August 9, 2024

Clara Simmons was born April 7, 1935, in Washington DC, as the only child of William Smith and Lelia Chase. She was raised to be fiercely independent which she carried throughout her life. She graduated from Dunbar High School its last segregated class and directed by her parents, begrudgingly left Washington DC to attend the University of Illinois. Her parents insisted on a small college town-despite being offered a full scholarship to attend New York University

While she initially bristled about being so far away from home, while at the University of Illinois she experienced two of her happiest, life changing events-pledging Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and meeting and marrying, fellow University of Illinois student-David Simmons.

Upon graduation, she returned to Washington, DC to attend Howard University in pursuit of Masters in Social Work degree. Within a week of starting school, Clara was informed that since she was expecting a child (Steve) that she would need to discontinue school to tend to her child. Her strong-willed nature quickly arose as she informed the school that since they did not ask on the application if she was expecting a child nor was it listed as an exclusion for attending that the school had to allow her continued attendance which they reluctantly did. After graduating Howard University, she embarked on an over 40-year career in social work as a practitioner and

administrator in health, mental health and family services settings as well as a myriad of volunteer activities at the state and national level. Clara's passion for service, advocacy and compassion was evident throughout her experiences as chair of the National Committee of Racial and Ethnic Diversity, President of the Ohio Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and Chairperson of the National Committee of Racial and Ethnic Diversity. Her volunteer activities include serving on the Defiance College Board of Trustees; Georgetown University National Advisory Committee on Cultural Competence, Chairperson of the National Committee of Racial and Ethnic Diversity, Trustee of the Interfaith Hospitality Network United Way Senior Success Investment Committee and Founding member of the Samaritan, Inc.

Teaching is where her passion truly resided whether in academia or life as she thrived in being able to impart wisdom and empower others. Clara served on the faculty of Smith College, Cleveland State University and Case Western University but her instruction as the family matriarch provided indelible life lessons of faith, courage, persistence, and love.

Clara retired in 2005 but continued to remain active in social work. In 2007, after years of living in various northern, southern and Midwestern states, she returned home to the Washington, DC area to be close to family. In returning to the Washington DC area, she remained active in Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and became her chapter's first Pearl Soror-recognizing 65 years of membership. She has been recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award from National Association of Social Workers as well as acknowledged for outstanding achievement by the League of Women Voters, Case Western University.

Of her many accomplishments, she was also a cancer survivor who fervently believed that disease is not defeat and death is not an end. She is survived by her children, Steven, Cheryl and Spencer, daughter in laws, Virginia and

Nancy, and grandchildren whom she considered the joy of her life-Marissa, Steven, Sterling, Aliyah and Sakeenah.

Clara Simmons died August 9, 2024, at Holy Cross Hospital of cardiac arrest after a valiant fight against several debilitating illnesses. She was born April 7, 1935 in Washington DC to William Smith and Lelia Chase and married David Simmons in 1956. Clara graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and then from the Howard University School of Social Work. In her over 40+ years in the field of social work she served as both an educator and practitioner. She worked tirelessly for those who felt did not have a voice and had an unwavering faith. While her strength was diminished, her joy and spirit continued to be strong.

Her service is Saturday August 17, 2024 at the Congregational Church located at 9525 Colesville Rd, Silver Spring. 20901. It begins with the AKA Memorial Tribute at 9:30AM followed by a viewing at 10AM and funeral service at 11AM. Interment will follow at Lincoln Memorial Cemetery in Suitland, MD.

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Previous Events

AKA Memorial Tribute

AUG 17. 9:30 AM - 10:00 AM (ET)

Christ Congregational Church
9525 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20901

"Ivy Beyond the Wall" Ceremony

Visitation

AUG 17. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Christ Congregational Church
9525 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Service

AUG 17. 11:00 AM (ET)

Christ Congregational Church
9525 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Tribute Wall



“ Clara mentored me during her time in the field education department, and I learned a great deal from her. She had many excellent ideas that were successfully implemented in the department. I remember her laughter; she was always positive and cared deeply for her family. Henrietta

Henrietta Jones - October 30, 2024 at 03:53 PM

KH

“ Dear Cheryl -- Condolences to you and the rest of your family at this time of loss. I only met Miss Clara in the past five years when she accompanied you to church, and I so enjoyed our conversations over the back of the pew... I know you will miss her deeply. Sending love and hugs.
Karen Hawk



Karen Hawk - August 18, 2024 at 11:53 AM

WC

“ With love, Anne Chalmers purchased the Dreams From the Heart Bouquet for the family of Clara Smith Simmons.



With love, Anne Chalmers - August 18, 2024 at 11:29 AM

BC

“ CLARA & I lived a few blocks apart off Georgia ave attended elementary junior o r and senior high together Samaritans friends forever. Hope fond memories bri ng pe a ce my sincere sympathy to all the family

Bessie Crosson - August 16, 2024 at 08:10 PM



“ Priceless Memories with Mrs. Simmons. Cheryl may God strengthen and keep you and your family. 🙏

Diana Wourman - August 16, 2024 at 03:25 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Clara Smith Simmons.



August 16, 2024 at 12:29 PM

TA

“ The Psi Epsilon Chapter of AKA purchased the Pink Tribute Spray for the family of Clara Smith Simmons.



The Psi Epsilon Chapter of AKA - August 12, 2024 at 11:22 AM



“ We the March Family and Marshall-March Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

Marshall-March Funeral Homes - August 10, 2024 at 03:27 PM