



Dr. Cecil W. Cone

May 21, 1937 - March 31, 2016

Dr. Cecil Wayne Cone was born on a beautiful spring day on May 21, 1937.

Dr. Cone and his deeply devoted wife (Juanita Fletcher Cone MD, MPH) were happily married 33 years ago on February 26, 1983. In 1982, Juanita's mother invited her to a summer beach bridge party. Dr. Cone was in attendance and that was the beginning of their magnificent love journey. This amazing love affair took them on a journey of oneness - one mind, body, and spirit, a journey of immense joy, love, bliss and overwhelming gratitude for each other. To celebrate their 33rd wedding anniversary, they had planned a trip to St. Maarten Island in the Caribbean. Unfortunately, three weeks before the planned wedding anniversary celebration Dr. Cone became acutely ill from which he did not recover. On March 31, 2016 at 1:30 a.m., the Almighty Sovereign God transformed Dr. Cone from the finite existence of Time to the infinite existence of Eternity.

He left a legacy of unconditional love, spiritual wisdom, higher consciousness, and liberation to every life he touched. And he continues to do so through the empowering messages he left for us. Many of you have been uplifted by his words, works and precious smile. Many of you have been motivated to soar to higher heights after hearing one of his familiar sayings, such as:

“Whatever the mind can conceive and the heart truly believe, under God, you can achieve—if you are willing to get to work.” “I don't want nobody to give me nothing. Just open up the door, and I'll get it for myself.” “Edward Waters College will become the best academic institution in the pursuit of academic

excellence to be found anywhere on Planet Earth.”

He inspired so many of us to love more, be more, and do more for ourselves and for all people. We are witnesses of the extraordinary and amazing life he lived; a life filled with love and dedication. First and foremost, Dr. Cone was an anointed man of God. He was an extraordinary devoted husband, son, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and cousin. He was a man after God’s own heart. He was a man who loved and embraced all people. He was a man who empowered others to know, without a doubt, that with God, all things were possible. He lived a life of demonstrating what he believed. Actions, much more than words, characterized his life and the lessons he left behind for us. So this celebration of life is about gratitude. We are thanking God each moment for the incredible gift of life we had in Dr. Cecil Wayne Cone. We are forever transformed in mind and consciousness as a result of having been touched and liberated by his divine words and deeds. We are so immensely thankful for a man who embodied God and finally, surrendered his body to be present with God and available for the next leg of his eternal journey. Dr. Cone’s life journey as a Theologian, Pastor, Educator, Lecturer, and writer started in Fordyce, Arkansas where he was born. He grew up in the small town of Bearden, Arkansas fourteen miles away from his place of birth. Throughout his childhood, his parents instilled in him core values: faith in God, academic excellence, social justice and civil rights. Dr. Cone answered the call to the ministry at the tender age of thirteen. By the age of 16, he had been appointed to his first church. His rich pastoral ministry includes the privilege of serving as Senior Pastor at several AME Churches throughout Arkansas, Detroit Michigan, and Jacksonville, Florida. After moving to Atlanta, Ga he joined the ministerial staff at St. Phillips AME Church in Atlanta, Ga.

Dedicated Father

Dr. Cone was a committed and devoted father. He adored his three beautiful and brilliant children and emphasized, along with their mother, the importance of self-knowledge, God consciousness, and academic excellence. As a result

of these values, they are now highly accomplished medical doctors. He often talked about their childhood and the times they spent together. As he played with his grandchildren he often expressed the immense love for his family. He thanked God each day for all of them.

Education

After graduating from Bearden High School in 1953, Dr. Cone went to Shorter College in North Little Rock and received his Associate of Arts degree with honors. In 1957 he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Philander Smith College. After teaching school for one year, he entered Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois where he earned a Master of Divinity degree in 1961. He was the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology and Philosophy from Emory University in Atlanta in 1974. During his tenure at Emory, he was the recipient of a Rockefeller Doctoral Fellowship. In 1993 he went back to school and earned a Masters of Arts with honors in Counseling Psychology from The University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Not only did Dr. Cone have an insatiable appetite for knowledge, he had the gift to inspire others to achieve academic excellence. Dr. Cone served as Dean of Jackson Theological Seminary in North Little Rock, Arkansas, President of Turner Theological Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Professor of Systematic Theology at B.F. Lee Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida, Professor of Black Theology at Emory and Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, and Professor of Black Theology at Spelman College.

A special highlight of Dr. Cone's illustrious career was serving as President of Edward Waters College (EWC) in Jacksonville, Florida. Edward Waters College was more than a job for Dr. Cone. For him, EWC was a mission.

When he arrived at the College, he declined to have an inauguration, rather, he rolled up his sleeves and went to work. At that time (1977), the primary need for the College was to become fully accredited. In personal memoirs,

Dr. Cone writes that prior to coming to EWC, the Associate Executive Director of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) tried to convince him not to come. SACS had written off EWC as a hopeless case and that nothing short of a miracle could enable the Institution to become accredited. Further, if the College did not achieve full accreditation within the next three years, EWC would lose its candidate status and not be allowed to apply again for another two years. Dr Cone's reply to the Associate Director of SACS was, "I have read the Standards of SACS and rest assured that EWC would be in full compliance by December, 1979." True to his word, two years after taking the helm in December, 1979 the College became fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Full accreditation required hiring professors with doctorate degrees. By September 1977, he had added twenty-five new full-time faculty and administrative personnel. Using "Divine Salesmanship" he was able to convince Ph.D. professors to take huge cuts in salaries and join the EWC mission to achieve full accreditation from SACS and academic excellence. Another step in gaining accreditation was the addition of more than "50,000 volumes" to the Library. The College Board had recommended that the "OLD" Centennial Building (built 1916) where the Library is housed today be demolished. As a visionary, Dr. Cone conceptualized that not only could the building meet the present need for a library, but also it would enable the College to build for the future. President Cone consulted a structural engineer to determine if the building could be preserved. The structural engineer's evaluation revealed: "that the building was so sound that if we dig five feet in the ground with five feet round holes, strategically placed and fill these holes with concrete to provide the foundation for steel girders to reinforce the entire structure of the building, then the building could even serve as a storm shelter." The cost of the renovation was \$1 million! Using his gift of "Divine Salesmanship," Dr. Cone convinced the contractor to renovate the building on a "pay as you go" basis. Using this methodology and increased resources from the AME Church and Jacksonville Community, the College officially

restored the Centennial Building. And on April 11, 1979, the College officially opened the facility as the new library. With restoration of this valuable historical site originally built in 1916 it is now listed on the National Historic Register. The historical attainment of accreditation in 1979 was the first time in the College's 113-year history that EWC had been accredited as a four-year College. The community joined in the celebration. But, unspeakable joy came from the student body. When Dr. Cone arrived at the Jacksonville airport following the SACS successful meeting, the EWC student body not only greeted him, but picked him up on their shoulders, and carried him through the airport like a winning football coach! Moreover, as a result of full accreditation, Edward Waters College was admitted to full membership in the prestigious United Negro College Fund. The initial accreditation was for five years. Indeed, the mission was dynamic, but for Dr. Cone, more work needed to be done. Other milestones accomplished during Dr. Cone's tenure at EWC included reaffirmation of accreditation in 1984 for 10 additional years, new majors in accounting, communications, engineering, and air traffic control, construction of 192-bed Morris-Cone Student Residential Complex, successful 2-million-dollar fund drive headed by the Corporate Community, acquisition of "the Obi Collection" of African art, valued at over \$500,000 and donated by a Jacksonville physician.

Organizational Affiliation

Dr. Cone was a life-time member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, life-time member of the NAACP, life-time alumnus of Philander Smith College, and a founding member of Jacksonville, Florida Gamma Beta Boule' Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity Inc.

Community Activism

Dr. Cone has been on the forefront of the Black Liberation struggle as a writer and activist. During the 1960's he marched with Dr. Martin Luther King in Detroit, Michigan and in Selma and Montgomery, Alabama. He was a key

organizer and spokesperson in Civil Rights marches in Little Rock. In 1957 while Senior Pastor of Allen Temple, he served as pastoral counselor to Elizabeth Eckford, a member of his church. Ms. Eckford is one of the “Little Rock Nine” who integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. In addition, Dr. Cone was a Founding Director of the ACLU of Arkansas. For his work in Civil Rights and the field of Education, Dr. Cone was awarded several honorary Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) degrees from Temple Bible College and Seminary in Cincinnati, Philander Smith College in Little Rock, and Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce. He was selected by Phi Delta Kappa on its 75th Birthday as one of 75 young leaders in Education throughout the World, who exemplify the Phi Delta Kappa Ideals of Research, Service, and Leadership. And he appeared and participated in the film, “The Arkansas Rockefeller.”

Dr. Cone was a gifted orator and prolific writer. He lectured on a various themes from his scholarship throughout the United States and around the world—especially all over the continent of Africa, the Republic of China, Egypt, Japan, Bermuda, and Jamaica. He has also lectured in Dimona, Israel and Petra, Jordan. Dr. Cone is preceded in death by his parents Charlie Cone (father) and mother Lucille Frost Cone. He is the father of three amazing adult children: Cecil Wayne Cone, II, MD (Sheree’), St. Maarten, Caribbean Island, Leslie Anita Cone-Sullivan, MD (Eric), Atlanta, GA, Charleston Alan Cone, MD Oakland, California; and four miraculous grandchildren: Jaden, Jordan, and Cecil Wayne Cone III, and Paris Cone-Sullivan. He is survived by two devoted brothers: Charles Cone (Abbie), Pine Bluff, Arkansas, James Cone Ph.D. New York, aunts, uncles, and a host of nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews.

Special Tribute to My Husband

COLD HANDS (by Juanita F. Cone MD - Written on November 2014)

Cecil’s hands are bitterly cold especially during the winter. Oftentimes during a

playful moment, he will partially close his hands and touch my back with fingers that literally feel like ice. Too often, I'll say to Cecil, "Don't touch me with those cold hands." My loving husband's response is so gentle: "Just think, I have to live with them every day." We laugh, change the subject, no longer touching, and move on to something else. A few days ago, a thought came to me about death: when the breath of life is taken away; almost immediately the entire body becomes COLD— hands, feet, face, legs....As I reflect on the finality of death (should Cecil precede me) when earthly interactions are no longer possible between us, I certainly wouldn't want to think that I spent any precious moments saying to my beloved, "Don't touch me with those cold hands." If I have to view Cecil in a casket and place my hands on his cold body, cold forehead, cold hands, I want to be able to smile and remember how we embraced regardless of whatever physical changes affected our bodies (cold hands, edentulous mouth, bedsores, memory impairment) as we moved down the cycle of life. Life is too short and beautiful to be miffed by worldly things. Every moment is precious together especially with loved ones. From this day forward, I will forget the cold hands. So, my darling Cecil, touch me with your cold hands. Let my body warm your hands. Touch my face. Touch my neck. Touch my chest. Touch me... Touch me....Touch me....

Family Tributes

Charles and Abby Cone (Brother and Sister)

Dear Cecil,

We want to say (thank you Cecil). Thank you for being the warm, understanding, capable, tireless, courageous person that you were. Thank you for giving us, each and everyone of us, the opportunity to say that for at least once in our lives, that we knew an example of the finest that humanity can produce, we knew Cecil Wayne Cone - a very special brother, indeed. We will miss you. James Hal Cone Ph.D. (Brother)

Cecil, we were blessed to be together many years--playing, arguing, loving, preaching, studying, and doing theology. I will always miss you and the great

times we had together with our brother, Charles, and mother and daddy. May God be with you on your journey to a new life. Your brother, James.

From Cecil Wayne Cone II Son (Sheree') Dad, you are the epitome of what it means to be a black man in our society. You instilled in me spirituality, manhood, and righteousness. I am proud to be your "number one son."

Jaden, Jordan, and Cecil Wayne Cone III (grandchildren)

Grandad, you are very special to us. You always gave us love and affection.

You will forever remain in our hearts. We will never forget you.

From Leslie Anita Cone-Sullivan MD daughter (Eric)

Daddy, I smile thinking of you as an ordained minister when you were just a teen in Bearden, Arkansas and receiving your Ph.D. in Theology at Emory University. Religion was not the first thing on my mind at thirteen. You always emphasized religion, knowing your history, and that "education is the key."

Your words of encouragement will forever be in my heart and passed on to Paris. I love you and I'm proud to be your daughter. Nene

Paris Cone-Sullivan(granddaughter)

Granddaddy

I love it when you keep me from falling when I run and play at your house and give me sweets when mommy and daddy aren't looking. You are the best grand daddy ever! Paris

Charleston Cone MD (Son)

Rest in Peace Dad Kay Marvalyn Cone Mosby and Maritta Cone Pickett (nieces)

Dear Uncle Cecil

Thank you for being out of the ordinary and a cut above the regular. With a great deal of personal happiness and some pride as well that we say to you that anybody's definition, Cecil Cone I was a very special Uncle.

Michael Cone (nephew)

Uncle Cecil, I will always remember fondly my times at EWC and the touching tributes you gave to my wife and I at our wedding. Rest in peace, your nephew Michael!

Charles Cone (nephew)

Dear Uncle Cecil - You supported me in my education. You stood by my sick bed when I was far from home. You guided me with your wisdom and understanding. My love goes with you on your continued journey into God's embrace. - Love your nephew Charles

Excerpt From Cecil Wayne Cone's Book: The Identity Crisis in Black Theology

“Since everything begins and ends with God, it follows that African American culture and belief system are characterized by a holistic, non-materialistic, and communal orientation. Herein contains of course the heart of the identity crisis: Analyzing and interpreting our African American culturally centered experience from the European American worldview. That is to say, since we face as African Americans two mutually exclusive and antithetical, but self-consistent conceptual systems, it is inevitable that we experience an identity crisis when our experiences emanating from our African culture are interpreted from the Euro-American belief system.”

In lieu of flowers, the family suggest that those desiring may contribute to the Cecil Wayne Cone PhD Memorial Scholarship Fund. Check should be written to the Cecil Wayne Cone PhD Memorial Scholarship Fund . Mail checks to St Philip AME Church 240 Candler Road Atlanta Georgia 30317

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 8. 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Gwinnett Chapel
914 Scenic Hwy.
Lawrenceville, GA 30045
(770) 338-5558
info@levettfuneralhome.com

Family Hour

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

Gwinnett Chapel
914 Scenic Hwy.
Lawrenceville, GA 30045
(770) 338-5558
info@levettfuneralhome.com

Service

APR 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

St Phillips A.M.E. Church
240 Candler Road S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30317

Tribute Wall

GH

“ Gloria Fields Hood lit a candle in memory of Dr. Cecil W. Cone



Gloria Fields Hood - November 19, 2024 at 10:05 PM

GH

“ Dr. Cecil W. Cone was the most caring person I ever had the pkeasure of knowing. His wisdom in counseling helped save my emotional and spiritual life during one of the most difficult times of my life. A bout with cancer had me in a terrible state. Thank you Dr. Cone 😊

Gloria Hood - December 12, 2019 at 02:58 AM

BP

“ The "God of all comfort" is aware of your sorrow and he promises: "Your dead will live.... They will rise up." ~Isaiah 26:19. He is faithful and always keeps his promises! ~Isaiah 55:11. My sincere condolences to you all...

B. Parks - April 17, 2016 at 02:13 PM

TF

“ The Cooper Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Dr. Cecil W. Cone.



The Cooper Family - April 08, 2016 at 10:22 AM

RS

“ *Rev. Dr. D. Lovett Sconiers lit a candle in memory of Dr. Cecil W. Cone*



Rev. Dr. D. Lovett Sconiers - April 06, 2016 at 12:47 PM

PR

“ *We pray your strength in the Lord.
Pearlie, Edsel, Jr, and Desiree Robinson*

Family of the late Elder Edsel F. Robinson, Sr

Pearlie Robinson - April 04, 2016 at 04:13 PM

AR

“ *Please accept our heartfelt sympathy at the home-going of Dr. Cecil Wayne Cone, theologian, scholar, teacher, preacher, pastor, seminary dean, college president. He is already missed. His contributions to the Church and the academy are well-documented. Our thoughts and prayers are with the entire Cone family. God bless you with comfort and care in this time of bereavement.*

*Bishop and Mrs. Adam J. Richardson
Eleventh Episcopal District
African Methodist Episcopal Church*

Adam J. Richardson - April 01, 2016 at 09:10 PM

AW

To the family of Rev. Dr. Cecil Cone, I pray you will be comforted in this time by the Eternal and Certain Love from our Creator! Rev. Dr. Cone is yet living in and with this same Eternal Love. Praying for The Spirit of Comfort and Celebration to be with you in this time.

*Peace and Blessings,
Dr. Anika T. Whitfield
Little Rock, AR*

Anika Whitfield - April 04, 2016 at 01:42 AM