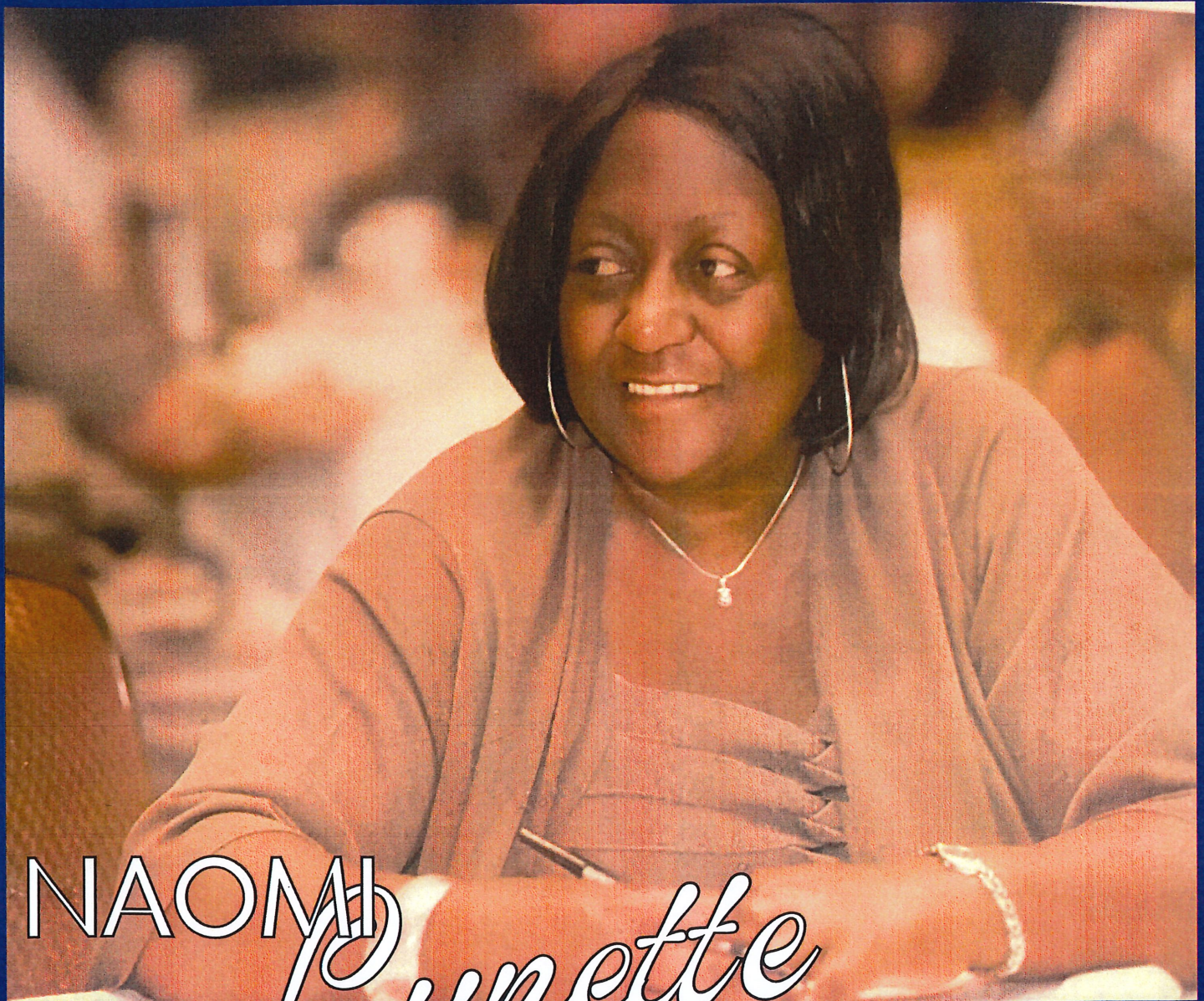


NOVEMBER 24, 1952

MARCH 5, 2024

GRATEFUL



NAOMI

Lynette

COTTOMS

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

ORDER OF SERVICE

PROCESSIONAL

Soft Music

PRAYER

Reverend Jerome Bridgers

St Luke AME Church, Forrest City AR

SONG

Candice Carter & Company

SCRIPTURES:

Rev Amos Newell,
St Paul Missionary Baptist Church
Old Testament Psalm 34:18-19

Reverend Mary Hull-Lovett

New Testament Revelation 21:1-7

WORDS OF COMFORT & ENCOURAGEMENT

Minister Rochelle Burton

Soul Gathering Ministries Community Church

SOLO

Candice Carter & Company

RESOLUTION/ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lynda Williams

OBITUARY

Read silently

SOLO

Tina Adams

EULOGY

Reverend Marcia Burns

RECESSIONAL

Soft Music

GRATEFUL

Active Pallbearers

DARIUS BONDS

DANTE BONDS

JOHN BRIMLEY

BOBBY BRIMLEY

DEMOND HOWELL

LAFAYETTE SMITH

FELIX MILTON

SCOTT SMITH

From the
Family

GRATEFUL

We are most grateful for the comfort of friends like you, who have been so kind and thoughtful during these hours of sorrow. Your prayers, visits, calls, flowers and every act of kindness, have given us strength and inspiration for facing this hour. May God ever bless each of you. Special acknowledgements to extend our heartfelt thanks to the medical staff of the wards E & H7 at the University Arkansas Medical Sciences and Arkansas Hospice who showed unwavering dedication in caring for our loved one during her illness.

Final Resting Place

Oneida Community Cemetery
Hwy 85 South
Oneida AR 72369

Service Entrusted To

Kelley Smith Funeral &
Cremation Services
8424 Kanis Road
Little Rock AR 72204
501.612.5607

GO DOWN, DEATH (A FUNERAL SERMON)

AN ADAPTATION FROM THE POEM BY JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

Weep not, weep not,
She is not dead;
She is resting in the bosom of Jesus.
Weep no more;
She only just gone home.

Over that weekend,
God was looking down from his great, high heaven,
Looking down on all his children,
And his eye fell on Sister Naomi,
Tossing on her bed of pain.
And God's big heart was touched with pity,
With the everlasting pity.

And God sat back on his throne,
And he commanded that tall, bright angel
standing at his right hand:
Call me Death!
And that tall, bright angel cried in a voice
That broke like a clap of thunder:
Call Death! - Call Death!
And the echo sounded down the streets of heaven
Till it reached away back to that shadowy place,
Where Death waits with his pale white horses.

And Death heard the summons,
And he leaped on his fastest horse,
Pale as a sheet in the moonlight.
Up the golden street Death galloped,
And the hooves of his horse struck fire from the gold,
But they didn't make no sound.
Up Death rode to the Great White Throne,
And waited for God's command.

And God said: Go down, Death, go down,
Down to Little Rock, Arkansas,
And find Sister Naomi.
She's borne the burden and heat of the day,
She's labored long in my vineyard,
And she's tired -
She's weary -
Go down, Death, and bring her to me.

And Death didn't say a word,
But he loosed the reins on his pale, white horse,
And he clamped the spurs to this bloodless sides,
And out and down he rode,
Through heaven's pearly gates,
Past suns and moons and stars; on Death rode,
Leaving the lightning's flash behind;
Straight down he came.

While we were watching round her bed,
She stirred in her sleep and breathed a little easier,
She saw what we couldn't see;
She saw Old Death. She saw Old Death
Coming like a falling star.
But Death didn't frighten Sister Naomi;
He looked to her like a welcome friend.
And she whispered to us: I'm going home,
And she smiled and let go.

And Death took her up like a baby,
And she lay in his icy arms,
But she didn't feel no chill.
And death began to ride again -
Up beyond the evening star,
Into the glittering light of glory,
On to the Great White Throne.
And there he laid Sister Naomi
On the loving breast of Jesus.

And Jesus took his own hand and wiped away her tears,
And he smoothed the furrows from her face,
And the angels sang a little song,
And Jesus rocked her in his arms,
And kept a-saying: Take your rest,
Take your rest.

Weep not - weep not,
She is not dead;
She's resting in the bosom of Jesus.

OBITUARY OF A *Remarkable Woman*

Naomi Lynette Cottoms passed away peacefully on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at the age of 71. She had fought a brave battle with cancer. She was survived by three sisters: Lola Hall, Kansas City MO; Marcia Burns, Jacksonville Ark; Joyce Cottoms, Collierville, Tenn; a goddaughter, Billie Jean Thomas-Woods; and many nieces, nephews, grand and great-nieces and nephews and cousins.

Naomi had an unforgettable effect on the lives of those who knew her, regardless of their standing in the world. She had a unique combination of humility, generosity, gratitude, concern and respect for others, and worked tirelessly to improve the lives of those in need. Her impact extended far beyond her personal relationships as she worked tirelessly both within communities in Arkansas and nationally to provide organizational leadership and programs to improve the lives of those most in need.

Born and raised in the heart of the Delta Region of Arkansas, Naomi graduated from Eliza Miller High School and continued her education at Arkansas State University. Although she later transferred to Philander Smith College (University) to complete her degree in social work, Naomi left her mark at ASU by working with seven other young women to charter the Kappa Xi Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. Naomi also earned a master of arts degree in human resource development from Webster University, was trained by the Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio and was an avid believer and practitioner of community engagement.

She is one of the founders for the Arkansas Community Health Worker Association, as well as a founder of the National Association of Community Health Workers and served on the boards of both organizations. She served on a National Research Project “Project Achieve” lead by the University of Kentucky, around transitioning healthcare. She has served as the Director of the UPward Bound Program at Philander Smith College and later as the Dean for the Division of Student Affairs.

In addition, she has been a member of the National Institutes for Health’s (NIH) Council of Public Representatives and a member of the Community Advisory Board for the University of Medical Sciences’ Clinical and Translational Research Center.

Naomi co-authored six published articles around research involving community as partners. She was one of ten people in the US to receive the Robert Wood Johnson’s National Community Health Leader Award in 2011. She has also received the Arkansas Minority Health Commission’s Dr Joycelyn Elders Pioneer Award; both awards were for outstanding and innovative efforts in health. She was proud to be a community health worker.

Naomi’s faith was of utmost importance to her. She grew up working in the church at St Paul Missionary Baptist Church and was a dedicated member of , where she worshipped regularly. Even in the darkest, most difficult moments, she would say “God is good,” “I’m grateful,” and “I am blessed.” Her life was an inspiration to many, and she will be deeply missed.

LIVING

life



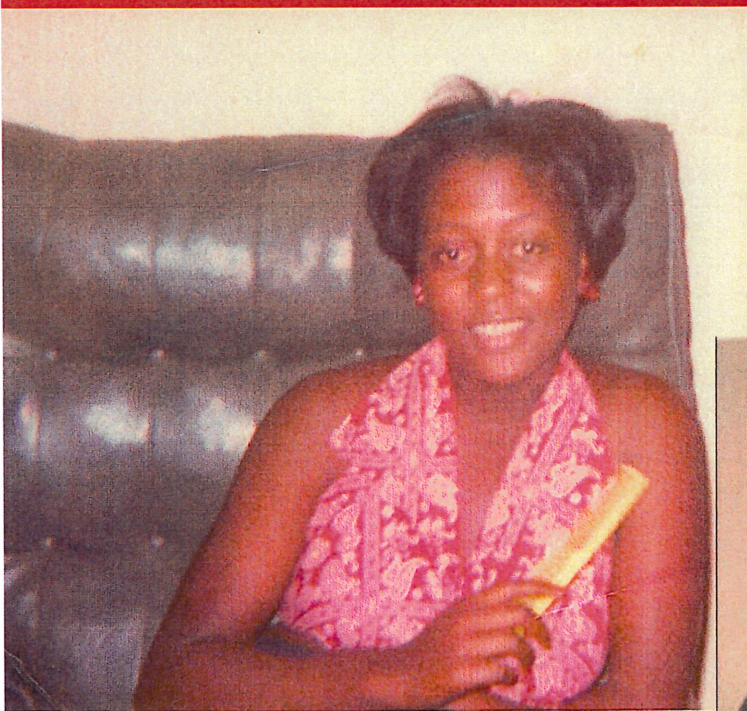
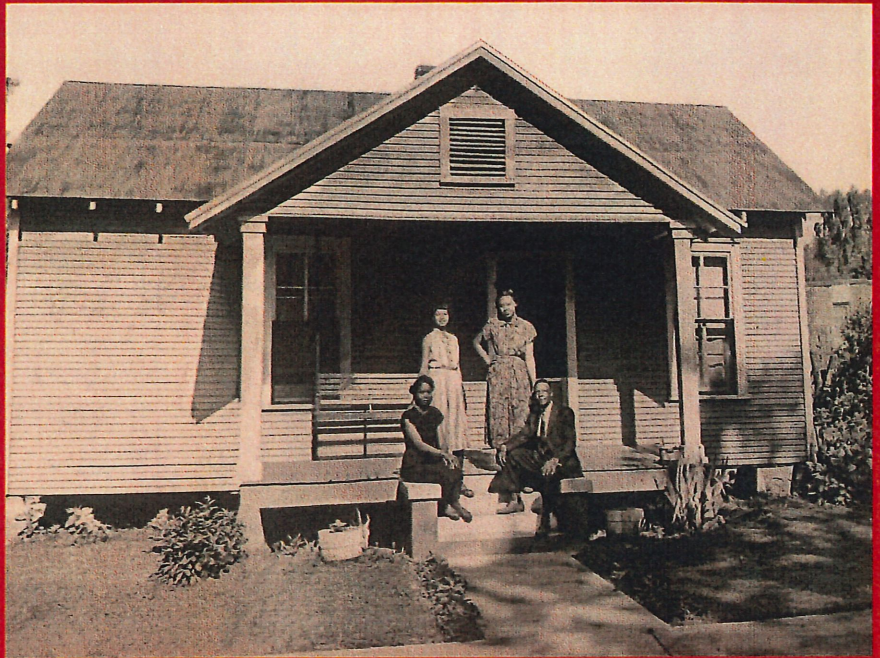
ON
the

DELTA

Naomi was born and grew up in Helena, Arkansas, in the rural Mississippi Delta. Her mother worked in the houses of white people, resulting in limited contact with white people while growing up. There was a little white boy that would stop by sometimes to share his fish. He never used the formality titles and her parents didn't correct him, although had it been a black child they would have. This was her introduction to a world where people were treated differently based on race.

This may have been the catalyst to push her to dedicating her life to helping others. Even though she travelled all around the world, she always considered Helena her home. So it should have been no surprise for her to return to her home in order to make it a better place.

On an act of faith, and out of her love and concern for others, Naomi, along with Dr. Mary Olson founded Walnut Street Works, a non-profit organization. It was through Walnut Street Works and later through Tri County Rural Health Network that Naomi performed much of her outreach work.



COMMUNITY LEADER

Naomi actively engaged in civic projects that enriched the lives of many people in the Delta. She served as the Secretary of Ending Racism, a national organization dedicated to ending racism. In Helena, she worked with the others to achieve this through the Racial Equality Task force. In addition, she attempted to combat unemployment in Helena-West Helena. Her first project Walnut Street Works, was dedicated to just that. She created an employment training program.

Many of the women who participated did find employment after graduation. A few partnered to open a restaurant in downtown Helena.

In an effort to eliminate the problem of unhoused or underhoused populations, she worked with Habitat for Humanity to identify families in need of housing. In addition, Naomi and team trained the future homeowners in daily up-keep and general maintenance. She even went as far and became a certified licensed contractor!

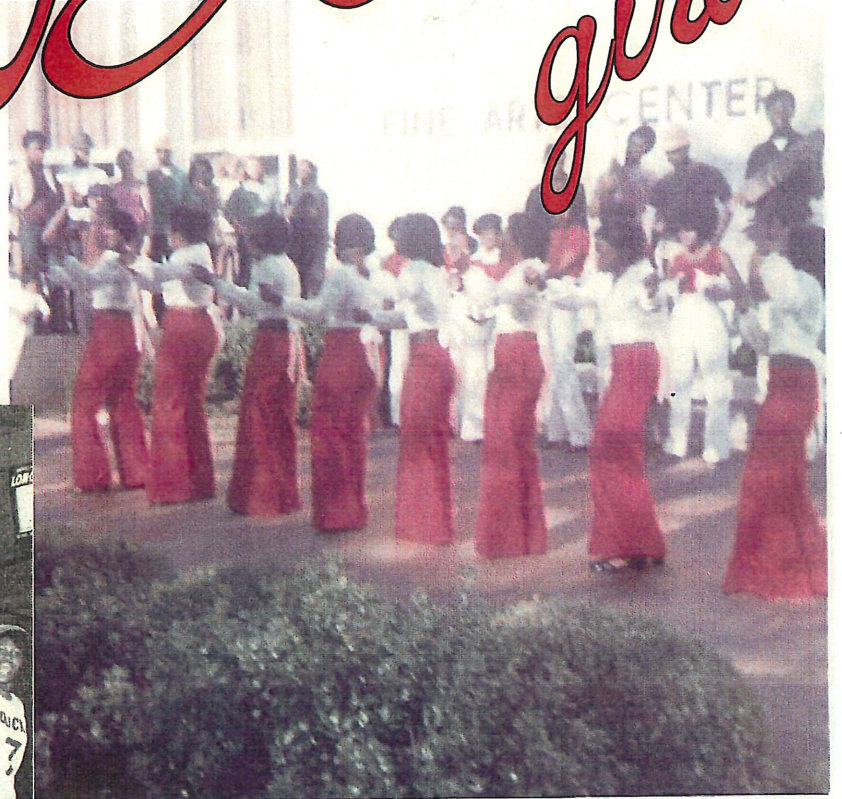
When she started Tri-County Rural Health Network, she began developing community connectors. That is what she identified the role of the community health workers to be, because they did so much. For example, her team founded the annual Thanksgiving food box giveaways and the associated day of feeding that took place downtown. During this day, hundreds of residents were provided with a hot and delicious meal, along with free clothing and hygiene supplies. She served as the Executive Director of Tri County for more than 20 years and developed the first community health worker (CHW) training program in the state, which was approved by the AR CHW Certification Commission to fulfill the training requirement for CHW certification.



Naomi was recognized both in Arkansas and nationally as a leader in the field of community health. She received numerous awards for her outstanding and innovative efforts in health and public service. She received the Public Health Hero Award, Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in 2010, the Arkansas Minority Health Commission's Dr. Joycelyn Elders Pioneer Award in 2012, and the Chancellor's Community Research Partner's award from UAMS' Translational Research Institute in 2016. As recently as April 22, 2023, Naomi received the Public Health Advocate of the Year Award from the Arkansas Medical Dental & Pharmaceutical Association at the organization's 130th Anniversary Gala. In 2023 the ARCHW Association named an award named in her honor - the Naomi Cottoms Community Health Worker Distinguished Service Award.



OH, TO BE A *Delta girl*



Delta Theta Sigma members muster their enthusiasm in a spirited yell for the Indians.



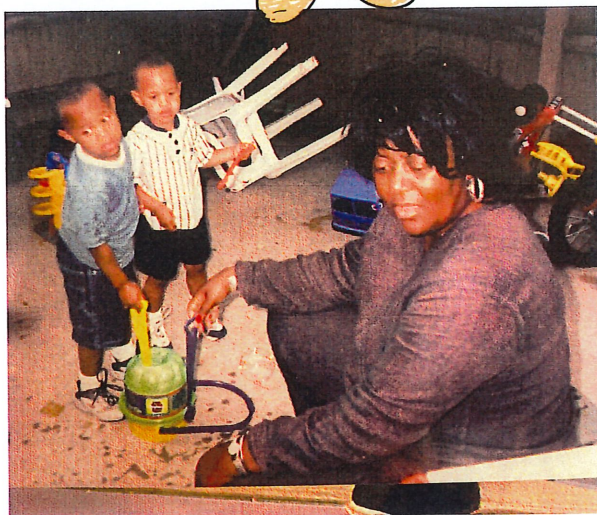
During her time at Arkansas State University, Naomi was part of the charter line of the Kappa Xi Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta. Her great-neice would pledge the same chapter 20 years later.



KAPPA XI

Childish Wonder

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN



TRIBUTES & Condolences



Kevin Smith ▸ Naomi Cottoms

6d · 🌐

...

Thank you so much Naomi Cottoms for all you did for so many in our community, and in the Delta. Your many contributions, your selfless devotion to make a better world for so many, your leadership and character and integrity, will live on forevermore through countless generations. It was such a shock to learn of your passing. Your mission on Earth was noble and good, and will carry on though the many lives you touched, and to those for whom you set the standard on how to be the leader who makes a difference through caring, and giving of yourself. I will miss you. We will all miss you. Your loss leaves a giant void for us. It is now for those who follow to take inspiration from your example, and to make sure it was not in vain by marching ever forward...Just as you did. Never wavering. Thank you so very much Naomi, for all of it. RIP.



5



Nakita Herd

2d · 🌐

...

Whew!! I've been trying to cook neck bones and candy yams all week!! And I know it's because that was our last meal together! And I was so proud that you loved those yams!!

Truly a legend!!! A great mentor, colleague, and friend. She provided my first introduction to real community health workers! The world is a better place because of her work. So job well done Ms. Naomi Cottoms! Get your rest. I will forever cherish our moments together! ❤️

Ms Cottoms. You will be missed. I want to Thank you for pouring into a teenage girl and changing the trajectory of her life. You taught me that education is important and having tenacity will take you far. Thank you for being a fearless leader and supporting all the people that was fortunate enough to know you. Much love. Latonia Grimes-Gipson.



Philander Smith University

March 11 at 1:30 PM · 🌐



Today, we remember Ms. Naomi Cottoms, a cherished 1976 Philander Smith alumna. As executive director of the Tri-County Rural Health Network, she was dedicated to trumpeting the importance of community health care; indeed, her strength, brilliance, and dedication to second chances touched many lives. A former director of Upward Bound at Philander Smith College (now University), Ms. Cottoms also served her alma mater as Dean of Students. She later went on to establish several nonprofits that strengthened communities in the Delta, including her native Phillips County. We extend sincere condolences to Ms. Cottoms' loved ones and many friends, along with members of our alumni community, who will sorely miss her yet cherish her life and legacy.



My Girl!

When I was young, you stood in the gap for me in ways I didn't understand until I was older. As an adult, you've filled me up when I needed filling up. When I got a family, you loved on them as much as you loved on me and we will always love you and adore our precious time you shared with us.

Rest well, Naomi! Until we see you again...

Your niece Dot
Demond, Sasha, DJ



Phyllis Y. Hammonds

March 6 at 11:57 AM · 🌐



Yesterday, an Icon of my beloved community passed, Naomi Cottoms, a strong-willed, brilliant, articulate, and spiritual woman who loved supporting people who needed a second chance in life. She was the Founder of several organizations that enhanced the lives of people in need in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas. We worked on several projects to strengthen our community. Naomi was highly engaged in high school activities such as band, a majorette, a member of social and academic organizations, etc. Naomi was a charter member of Delta Sigma Theta, @ Arkansas State University (ca. 1973) a graduate of Philander Smith College (University) and the University of Arkansas. After College, she worked at Philander and eventually returned home to become the Founder of various non-profits that strengthen communities throughout Phillips County. Naomi's works will never be forgotten! Her legacy will be continued through the lives she changed! Please pray for her sister, Dr. Joyce Cottoms, nieces, and other relatives. Also close friends, Beverly, Sue, Dr. Olson, and her employees. We thank you for a "job well done" as you transition to be with your Heavenly Father. To God Be the Glory!



On behalf of the Pi Sigma chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity at Philander Smith College, we will be forever grateful for the contributions that Ms. Cottoms made towards our development. She gave a lot of us the gift of "confidence to pursue goals" that will last a lifetime.

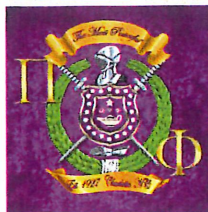
When she was over the SPARKS program and ran Upward Bound, a mentorship for adolescents, she recruited us for employment opportunities and made sure we showed up. Trust, there's nothing like your boss knocking on your dorm room door saying get yo (blank) up.

She always had this smirk that said "do you ever get tired of doing dumb crap" before giving us motherly advice to get us out of whatever self-inflicted jam that we were involved in.

I don't remember if she was promoted to dean or assistant dean of students before I graduated. But, what I do remember is that she ran whatever circles that she was involved in. Trust, that this included the President of the College. Mrs Cottoms had feedback for everyone and didn't care if you wanted to listen.

The only thing Ms. Cottoms loved more than her students at Philander was her nieces. I vividly remember when I was liking one of her nieces. She made it clear that we weren't qualified to date any of them!!!!!!

We are forever indebted to her services.



Timon Edwards

Philander Smith College c/o 1997



Veronica Polk Booth

March 7 at 12:16 PM · 🌐

Loved me some **Naomi Cottoms!!!** She was the sweetest person and always showed me so much love. I miss her already! Rest Well my beautiful Soror! **#GammaGamma** 🙏🏻



Arkansas Minority Health Commission

March 11 at 3:19 PM · 🌐

We are saddened to learn of the passing of Tri-County Rural Health Network Executive Director, Naomi Cottoms.

Ms. Naomi was a long-time partner of the Arkansas Minority Health Commission and was one of the driving forces behind the development of the Arkansas Community Health Workers Association (ARCHWA).

She will be sorely missed. Her legacy lives on in the numerous community health workers she trained and the countless organizations and members of the public who learned about the important of connecting community to care.

<https://www.kellysmithfunerals.com/obituary/NAOMI-COTTOMS>

#amhc #workingtodayforahealthiertomorrow





Laynette, Naomi, Ms Cottoms, Ms Naomi – whatever you chose to call her, she had a significant impact on so many lives. I called her Auntie, Friend, Soror.

Laynette was my favorite auntie when I was a kid. My family would say it was because she let me do whatever I wanted, but that isn't the reality. I don't know why God cursed me by placing this sensitive natured, take everything personally, I just want to know you like me, validation seeking little girl in this family of strong opinioned, will *always* tell you what they think, light on the tact, don't care about your feelings, suck it up buttercup black women. I have read and listened to so many people talk about the impact Naomi has had on their lives and how she saw something in them that no one else did, it made me understand finally why she was my favorite. She saw me. I didn't have to pretend it didn't hurt or that I didn't want to cry because she said something off cuff. She had a connection with people that surpassed most. Like the bible teaches, she has always been able to reach the people where they are, no matter the message. She was always that voice that encouraged, uplifted and inspired. I used to watch her interact with other people, with ease and connect with everyone she met. It was awesome.

When I got older I understood that everyone wasn't her friend and she didn't call everyone friend, but she had a respect of everyone that crossed her path, even if they didn't like her.

Our physical distance and busy lives prevented us from spending time, but I made attempts to stay connected. We bonded over the constant struggle to lose weight. We encouraged one another, although I don't think she really took any of my advice, but she always made sure I didn't give up. We are exactly 20 years apart in Delta. She chartered my chapter 20 years before I pledged. It was funny, we never talked about it, but one homecoming I went back for anniversary events for activities and clubs I was a part of during my time at Arkansas State University and when she walked into the Kappa Xi luncheon. If I remember correctly, the charter members were being honored and she went straight to the head table. She didn't even see me. My line sisters knew her by name because THEY knew she was a charter member! When I got the new job in Virginia, she was more excited than I was. I missed my family already. The last time I talked with her she told me how brave she thought I was. She influenced so much of who I am today and I will miss her and her laugh and that annoying squeal when she gets excited. Even today I still remain so impressed and in awe of her. I just hope that I can live up to who she believed I could be.

Alystris

Phenomenal Woman

BY MAYA ANGELOU

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally,
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them,
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally,
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing,
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
The palm of my hand,
The need for my care.
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally,
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

