

Obituaries

A tribute to Alice Windom

‘Embodiment of Black love, African cultural heritage’

by **Walle Amusa** for The St. Louis American

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Alice Windom, a fierce advocate for Black liberation, passed away on Thursday, Feb. 10, 2022, in St. Louis. She was 85. With her passing, we lost one of our greatest leaders, the likes of whom Missouri had never seen.

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Alice Windom attended Cote Brillante Elementary School in St. Louis. She graduated from Sumner High School in 1953. She obtained her bachelors’ degree from Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and her master’s in social work from the University of Chicago in 1959.

Alice Windom was a nationalist, a Pan-Africanist, a historian, a sought-after lecturer, and social worker. She was the quintessential and rational voice of logic and sanity. She was fearless.

She believed and fought for Black people’s right to self-determination. She was a relentless “keeper of the flame” in the fight to unite and elevate Black people from the doldrums of colonialism, neo-colonialism, oppression, racial inequities, and humiliation.

She lived in Accra, Ghana from 1962 to 1964 working as a secondary school teacher and a secretary to the Ethiopian Ambassador to Ghana. According to her biography, Alice Windom was among the historic African American expatriates – W. E. B. DuBois, Maya Angelou, and John Henrik Clarke – who lived in Accra, Ghana.

In 1964, she helped plan the itinerary for Malcolm X's historic visit to Ghana. Alice Windom was the link that connected W. E. B. DuBois, the Pan African movement, and Malcolm X. She worked for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa from 1964 to 1968 organizing international conferences in seven countries. She served as an organizer for the Department of Social Welfare in Lusaka, Zambia for three years before returning to the United States in 1972.

Alice Windom not only worked in Africa, but she also traveled extensively in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Central America. Her favorite subject was Africa and the plight of Black people globally. She lectured extensively on the Pan African movement and the ancient Olmec civilizations in Mexico.

I met Alice Windom in 1973 at a meeting of the St. Louis Committee on Africa. Over several months, I was involved with Alice, Evelyn Chauvin, Safiyah Chauvin, Mubarak Ali, Joe Scoggin, and others in a fight to elect a Black president of the organization and support for the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Alice was a leader in the international solidarity movement to free Winnie and Nelson Mandela, boycott the Krugerrand, and end the Apartheid regime in South Africa.

Alice Windom was unapologetic in her opposition to racism. She was an uncompromising defender of the lives, dignity, contributions, and rights of Black people in this country. On every local fight involving the rights, health, and lives of Black people, you could count on Alice Windom being there, as a soldier, supporter, and advisor.

As a member of the Association of Black Social Workers, she helped bring national attention to the struggle to desegregate Barnes Hospital and end the practice of consigning Black patients to the basement of that hospital with asbestos-laden pipes hanging over their heads. She was there in the fight to save Homer G. Phillips Hospital. Just last month, she issued a memo opposing Paul McKee's racist efforts to appropriate the name Homer G. Phillips Hospital for a private 3-bed clinic in St. Louis.

I worked with Alice Windom, Hershel Walker, and others in the campaigns to free Rev. Ben Chavis and the Wilmington 10 in North Carolina, J. B. Johnson in St. Louis, and JoAnn Little in Washington, North Carolina.

Along with civil rights icon, Hershel Walker, Alice Windom, Frank Chapman, Pamela Talley, Lew Moyer, Jay Ozier, and I were there when the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Rights Award Program was initiated by the St. Louis Branch of the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression in 1977. She was a recipient of the Phenomenal Women in Struggle Award from the Universal African Women's Union, the women's wing of the Universal African People's Organization.

Alice Windom was a member of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization and the African Heritage Studies Association. She was a steadfast supporter of Comptroller Darlene Green, Mayor Tishaura Jones, License Collector Mavis Thompson, former Mayor Freeman Bosley, Jr., Better Family Life, the Frederick Douglas Institute, Campaign for Human Dignity, and numerous other organizations.

Alice Windom joins the pantheon of great African American women from Missouri – Senator Gwen Giles, Senator Paula J. Carter, Pearlie Evans, Ora Lee Malone, DeVerne Calloway, Frankie Freeman, Margaret Bush Wilson, Betty Thompson, and others – who dedicated their lives to the struggles for equality, justice, and freedom for the oppressed Black people in this state and nation.

These women leaders were the backbone of the fight to successfully secure, protect and defend the first Congressional District while expanding political representation for Black people in Missouri. According to former Congressman William (Bill) Clay, “Alice Windom was a great leader. She lived a great life. And she made a difference in the lives of many other people.”

Alice Windom was the perfect embodiment of Black love and African cultural heritage. Percy Green, our intrepid civil rights activist put it succinctly when he said “Alice Windom’s core values are what we need among our new and upcoming Black leadership. Alice was a wealth of knowledge and experiences.”

When asked how she would like to be remembered, Alice Windom simply said: I would want to be remembered as an African Patriot...all I’ve ever really cared about are Black folks...the ones I see on the street. They are my family and then the whole Black world.”

Walle Amusa is a civil rights activist and co-chair of the National Campaign for Human Dignity



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