



## Dr. Leroy Ronald Ray Jr.

October 17, 1930 - February 12, 2013

Leroy Ronald Ray, Jr., age 82, passed away Tuesday, February 12, 2013 in Kalamazoo, MI. He was born October 17, 1930 to Leroy Sr. and Tommie Lee Ray in Temple, TX, and attended segregated public schools in Temple, graduating from Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School. With a football scholarship in hand, he attended Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, LA, where he received a Bachelor's degree. He taught biology at Booker T. Washington High School in Shreveport, LA, prior to attending graduate school at Howard University, Arizona State University and the University of Southern California. While living in California he worked for Aerojet-General Tire Corporation, then later pursued his Ph.D. at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

As a faculty member and administrator, Dr. Ray was employed at Johnson C. Smith University (Charlotte, NC) and Malcolm X College (Chicago, IL). In 1973, he began his employment with Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo, and served as Professor and Director of Black Americana Studies until his retirement in 1996. He initiated many community outreach programs at Western including the Hands On Science Training Program for Elementary Age African American Youth. He also started the Afro-American Chorale, and offered courses on Black Male/Female Relationships and Black Women through the Black Studies department. He organized an annual W.E. B. DuBois Conference, and initiated a major study on the Black Church in

Kalamazoo.

Dr. Ray was the founder and executive director of the Farm Research Cooperative located on his farm in Bloomingdale, MI, where youth and small farmers participate in science and agricultural workshops. He was one of the founders of the annual Michigan Family Farms Conference, was the lead investor in the Lester Lake Investment Corporation/Simpson's Resort initiative, and hosted a Black- owned rodeo there for several years in the 1990s. He was a Golden Heritage Life member of the NAACP, and a proud member of the American Quarter Horse Association. He cherished his horse Stormy's Bingo.

Over the years Dr. Ray was involved with numerous national, state and regional organizations and agencies, including the USDA/NRCS/RMA Risk Management Agency, Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS), the Michigan Alliance of Cooperatives, the USDA Committee for Van Buren County, the Smart Board of Directors, and the Sauk Trails RC&D Council. He also was a longtime supporter of the Piney Woods School in Mississippi.

He is survived by his son, Larry (Shirley) Ray, Dallas, TX; daughters, Karen Ray (Richard) Wood, Tampa FL; Patrice (Brian) Whittaker, Kansas City, MO; Abeni Hester, Flossmoor, IL; one sister, Carlos (Terry) Busby; five grandchildren including: Yolanda Ray Jennings, Rachelle Wood, Marlon Wood; three great-grandchildren Keiron Jennings, Kendall Jennings and Jaedon Wood; a nephew, two nieces and other relatives. Special friends include Roberta Alexander, Chauncey Brinn, Janie Brooks, Morse Brown, Rhonda Davenport-Johnson, Denise Hall, Daniel Harvell, Glenn Hawkes, Mildred Johnson, Leander Jones, Barbara James Norman, James C. Palmore, Sandy Penn, John Pierre and Robert Young.

He was preceded in death by his parents Leroy and Tommie Lee Ray, and

dear friend Janet Walker.

\*\*\*\*NOTE:\*\*\*\*In lieu of flowers, monetary gifts may be made toward a youth scholarship fund payable to the Farm Research Cooperative, 14530 CR 665, Bloomingdale, MI 49026.

# Previous Events

## Service

FEB **16**. 1:00 PM (ET)

The Red Barn at the Farm  
14530 County Road 665  
Bloomington, MI

# Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Leroy Ronald Ray Jr.*

October 23, 2023 at 06:06 AM



“ *Dr. Leroy Ronald Ray Jr.*

October 06, 2023 at 10:42 AM



“ *To the Family of Dr. Leroy Ray,  
I was one of Dr. Ray's first students in Shreveport, Louisiana. He was my Biology teacher at Booker T. Washington High School. He had a tremendous influence on my career choice as he mentored me in the sciences. Under his direction, I won science fairs which resulted in competing at the national level for two consecutive years. I later chose science as a career, ending with a PhD in Chemistry and spending more than 25 years in Corporate America. Dr. Ray can take credit for my success. He was a wonderful person. I am blessed that our paths crossed.  
Blessings to all of you,  
Dr. Nodie Monroe Washington  
Wilberforce, OH*

**Nodie Monroe Washington** - February 22, 2013 at 05:13 PM



“ *Dr Ray thank you for your inspiration you gave me as a young man, I couldn't ask for a better neighbor.  
I will miss you,  
Marv Akerson jr*

**Marvin Akerson** - February 18, 2013 at 03:09 PM

GM

“ *Georgia Ann Moss, Muskegon, MI lit a candle in memory of Dr. Leroy Ronald Ray Jr.*



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**Georgia Ann Moss, Muskegon, MI** - February 17, 2013 at 06:09 PM

CO

“ *Cheryl Owens-Nebedum lit a candle in memory of Dr. Leroy Ronald Ray Jr.*



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**Cheryl Owens-Nebedum** - February 17, 2013 at 09:33 AM

 Keisha Barksdale

“ *Keisha Barksdale lit a candle in memory of Dr. Leroy Ronald Ray Jr.*



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**Keisha Barksdale** - February 17, 2013 at 03:04 AM

SW

“ Well LORD, what can I say...

*Where do I start, Dr. Ray was a very special man to me. When I first arrived at WMU my freshman year I was in his class. I felt he was such a great guy that required all of us to strive for nothing but excellence. He took me under his wing and I worked for him as his assistant for 2 years when I could not get work study. Many years I remember working for him and kicking off what is now my event planning and business career as an entrepreneur is dedicated to him, as he gave me my first opportunity by letting me facilitate his visiting scholar events, arrange all the details, organize his summer youth science program with Bingo ( the horse ) on site of course ( smile ), today I won't mourn but will celebrate Dr. Leroi Ray Jr. for his personal contribution to my life in a positive light as a leader, caring soul and man with a heart of gold for the students at WMU and the youth in Kalamazoo. Rest in PEACE MY Dr. RAY- ^ Tear...*



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**Stephanie A. Watson** - February 17, 2013 at 02:42 AM

 Willie Harris Jr

“ *I praise God for the opportunity to have known Dr. Ray. He made a big impact in my life during high school and was instrumental in me getting an internship at a local company. He definitely encouraged young people to pursue education and advancement. May God bless and comfort his family. May you all place your hope and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Willie Harris, Jr.*

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**Willie Harris Jr** - February 15, 2013 at 05:01 PM

BH

“ Karen, Jesse, Jess, Marcus, and I (Betty) extend our condolences to you and your family during this time of celebration of the life of your dad. Sadness in loss is human, and yet, we can know, the love and legacy of our loved ones are eternal. Love, Betty

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**Betty Hearn** - February 15, 2013 at 02:48 PM

DP

“ Dr. Ray was a wonderful man with a big heart. I had the opportunity to spend several hours with him at his farm in Bloomingdale a few years ago for a story I wrote in the Gazette's Generation section. I was struck by his passion for people, especially young people, and all of the things he did for them.

*Dave Person*

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**Dave Person** - February 15, 2013 at 12:12 PM

JL

“ Dr Ray was a very determined dedicated man striving to bring improvement to our people. Always working on a project. My memories will comfort me.

*Memories keep the one you loved close to you in spirit and thought and always in your heart, today and forever.*

*Thinking of you with sympathy. Ms Jessie*

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**Jessie Lowery** - February 15, 2013 at 04:58 AM

AL

“ I will Miss you GRAMPS



angelo lowery - February 14, 2013 at 12:33 PM

AB

“ Arlene Buchanan lit a candle in memory of Dr. Leroy Ronald Ray Jr.



Arlene Buchanan - February 14, 2013 at 02:43 AM

AL

*Hey Gramps This Is Angelo. I love you and i can hear your voice telling me if you dont want to get old than die young. I guess you wanted to get old.. I love all the talk advice and leadership that you shared with me. Your work will still go on. Science is the wave of the future. Candles LIT!!!!*

angelo lowery - February 14, 2013 at 12:32 PM

GH

*Le Roi I flew out to see you on Wednesday, but you were already airborne on another set of wings. I won't be there for the memorial service this Saturday, but will be thinking about you (and about Janet and Spencer too) and imagining all of the good stories that will be told.*

*While in Kalamazoo and then out at the farm, I had nice visits with Roberta and Janie and James. We all feel so blessed for our friendship with you and with one another. Also, my sons, Jesse John and Elijah, are so grateful to have had known you, and to have learned so much and to be continuing to learn, because of your life and work. You taught me much, beginning with WEB DuBois, and I've been able to reach others and sometimes use your words: "read DuBois!" And my new life today, with my American/Rwandan family, and our home in East Africa, and a school fees program for children that is guided by the words of DuBois: "All children are the children of all." (1903) -- all this was nurtured through my relationship with you.*

*You often signed your letters with the words "In the struggle." I'm glad that your struggle is over, and that you and Bingo are standing there together -- in that green pasture beside the still waters. Good bye for now. Still in the struggle. - Hawkes*

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**Glenn Hawkes** - February 15, 2013 at 07:16 PM