

*Celebration of the Extraordinary Life
of*

Rodney Maurice Gilbert

*Sunrise
July 27, 1967*

*Sunset
November 8, 2017*



Friday, November 17, 2017

***New Jersey Performing Arts Center
Victoria Theater
1 Center Street, Newark, New Jersey***

***Elder Rev. Kevin E. Taylor Sr. Pastor,
Unity Fellowship Church NewArk***

***Services provided by
Whigham Funeral Home
580 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Newark, NJ***

Obituary

Rodney Maurice Gilbert was born on July 27, 1967 in Hunterdon County, NJ, to Camilla Gilbert and Edward Johnson. Rodney was raised in the City of Newark, where he graduated from Quitman Street School and Arts High School. He continued his education at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia where he majored in Theater and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1989.

Rodney's acting career began at the age of 9, when he starred as Travis in a production of "A Raisin in the Sun". Rodney worked in professional theatre for over thirty years and influenced generations of students and cultural artists. He loved all genres of art, and utilized them all to create, encourage, and promote socially conscious artistic expression. In 2003, Rodney founded Yendor Productions to meet the challenges of underserved artists and communities. As CEO of Yendor, Rodney developed, oversaw, and produced arts education programming and events and consulted on numerous projects. As one of the leading teaching artists in the tristate area, Rodney provided acting instruction for numerous institutions. Rodney was a professor in the Theatre Department of Drew University, an arts educator for the Kennedy Center's Wolfrap Program, and the Director of the Writers Program for Playwrights Theater. He developed the afterschool arts education program "ZOOM" for the City of Newark, and provided professional development for the Caucus Educational Corporation's Stand and Deliver Program. Rodney developed the Drew University Theatre partnership which continues to provide a unique theater experience to Newark Public Schools and Drew University students. Rodney conducted workshops as far away as Johannesburg, South Africa. As the Senior Program Manager for the Newark Murals Program, Rodney was responsible for many of the murals that enhance the esthetic of the City of Newark. May this serve as a partial list of Rodney's professional accomplishments, along with theatre and television credits too lengthy to mention.

Rodney is a member of the Actors Equity Association, a Leadership Newark Fellow, and an Audelco Award Nominee. He is the recipient of numerous awards including the Civic Engagement Award from Drew University. In 2014, Rodney was appointed by Mayor Ras J. Baraka to serve as one of the first members of the City of Newark's LGBTQ Commission.

Rodney was one of the most fun-loving people one would ever know. He was head-strong and high spirited. He loved Diana Ross, and was blessed to travel to Las Vegas in October to see her in concert. His favorite foods were barbecue and greens, and he loved all chocolate desserts. Rodney loved to dress. He was sharp. He was as comfortable in his many African garments as he was in one of his favorite suits and bow ties. Rodney loved to dance, and he was the life of every party. No paper cups or plates were allowed at his house. Rodney was LOVE. He was a most giving person who shared his truth and encouraged others to do the same. The world is forever changed because Rodney Gilbert was here.

Rodney was predeceased by his father, Edward Johnson, his grandparents, John Walker and Lillian Walker and his brother, Wendell Gilbert. He leaves to cherish his memory: his mother, Camilla Gilbert, daughters, Feign Powell (Roderick), Alexa Mack, Ny'errah Hall and Sasha Hall and granddaughters Dallas and Skyler Powell and Harper Mack, dear friend and mother of his daughters, Connie Long, brothers Jerry and Marvin Johnson, niece Michelle Moton, eldest cousin Rosalind Hazelwood, and dearest beloved friend Hughton Hall. Rodney leaves a host of relatives and a multitude of friends to cherish his memory and carry on in the spirit of Yendor. Rodney is that rare individual to whom throngs of people feel an individual closeness of friendship and a connection everlasting. We each know his place in our heart and ours in his; rest in peace, Professor Rodney Gilbert. Job well done!

Order of Service

Musical Prelude

Opening Prayer of Comfort Pastor Vanessa M. Brown
Rivers of Living Waters – NJ/NYC

Old Testament Scripture Psalm 23

New Testament Scripture Romans 8:35-39

Musical Selection Alexa Mack, “Supermarket Flowers” by Ed Sheeran

Reflections

Mayor Ras J. Baraka Mayor, City of Newark

MaryAnn Baenninger President, Drew University

Cecelia M. King Chief Executive Officer, Leadership Newark

Dr. Shannon Stanford Former student and mentee

Resolutions

City of Newark

Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Obituary Antoinette Richardson

Musical Selection Leah Wilson, “Marvelous” by Walter Hawkins

Eulogy Elder Rev. Kevin E. Taylor
Sr. Pastor, Unity Fellowship Church NewArk

Closing Prayer

Recessional

Interment

Fairmount Cemetery

Newark, New Jersey

Repast and Celebration of Life

15 Washington Street (next door to the Newark Public Library)



The family of Rodney Gilbert thanks everyone for the outpouring of love and support that you have shown us during this difficult time.

We express our sincere and heartfelt appreciation to the Whigham Funeral Home for the exceptional care and consideration given to our family and our beloved, Rodney Gilbert.