

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF  
MICHAEL D. HARRIS



July 14, 1948 ~ July 11, 2022

Saturday, August 6, 2022  
~ 11:00 AM ~

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
105 Courtland Street, Northeast  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

The Reverend Dr. Dwight D. Andrews, Officiating







# ORDER OF SERVICE

CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF  
DR. MICHAEL D. HARRIS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 2022  
~ 11:00 AM ~

THE REVEREND DR. DWIGHT D. ANDREWS  
OFFICIATING

Welcome and Invocation .....The Reverend Dr. Dwight D. Andrews

Musical Selection

Sacred Writings

Rumi ..... Dr. Shani Harris

23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. ....Rev. Dr. Dwight D. Andrews

Pastoral Prayer .....Rev. Dr. Theophus Smith

Obituary/Life Reflections..... Maahra Hill

## Remarks & Tributes

Nathan McCall

Anthony Fudge

Ron Hill

Napoleon Jones-Henderson

Musical Selection

Words of Comfort .....Rev. Dr. Dwight D. Andrews

Acknowledgements.....Rev. Dr. Dwight D. Andrews

Benediction .....Rev. Dr. Dwight D. Andrews

Recessional



*M. D. Harris '93*

## DR. MICHAEL DEHART “OLUSHINA” HARRIS

*Artist. Art Historian. Photographer. Professor. Scholar. Father. Friend.*

Michael D. Harris was born on July 14, 1948 during a Cleveland Indians double-header in Cleveland, Ohio. As his grand entrance would suggest, his early life was marked by a love of baseball. He was swinging a bat by the time he was 5 years old and by high school he was a standout short stop. He left Cleveland for Bowling Green University where he continued to play ball. But another passion was taking shape. He was a budding artist. By the time he entered graduate school at Howard University he had set baseball aside to pursue the art profession.

His art work depicted an African aesthetic heavily centered on Yoruba art and a Pan-African social consciousness. This artistic sensibility is reflected by his forty years as a member of AfriCOBRA, an artist collective focused on the “sublime expression of the African diaspora.” His catalog is extensive and ranges in style from paintings, to quilts, to shrine-based mixed media work. He often incorporated photography and iconography into his work. One was as likely to see a 100-year old family photo imbedded into the background of a painting as they were to see Yoruba or Amharic script interwoven into the piece. He exhibited art works in New York, Haiti, Martinique, France, Scandinavia, and all over the United States. He was always in good company and his work was seen alongside that of Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, Jeff Donaldson, Renee Stout, David Driskell, Nelson Stevens, Henry O. Tanner, and many many other great African American artists. His art has been reproduced in books and catalogs, and has been displayed in museums, university collections, and in private collections across the nation.

Michael was an accomplished photographer. His most recent work featured artist portraits and travel photos. He was proud to serve as the official photographer for the 1987 Association for the Study of Classical Black Civilizations conference and study tour of Egypt where he photographed John Henrik Clarke, Na'im Akbar, Leonard Jeffries, Yosef-Ben-Jochannan, and many other Africentric scholars.

A true intellectual, Michael was among the few African American scholars to hold terminal degrees in Studio Art (M.F.A, Howard University 1979), African American Studies (M.A., Yale University, 1989), and in Art History (Ph.D., Yale University, 1996). He was Associate Professor Emeritus in the Department of African American Studies at Emory University. Prior to his tenure there, he taught at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, earlier at Morehouse College, and was a visiting professor at Dillard University in New Orleans. Additionally, he taught as an adjunct at Wellesley College, Duke University, and Spelman College.

Michael authored a number of seminal books. They include *Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representation* (2003), one of the first books dealing with critical issues in African American art, *Ashé: Ritual Poetics in Africana Expression* (2022), a recently released book he co-edited with Paul Carter Harrison and Pellom McDaniels, and *A History of Art in Africa* (2000, 2007), the first major textbook for African Art, which he co-authored. His last book, *Sanctuary: Conjuring an Africana Art Aesthetic* is currently at Duke Press and is slated to be released in 2023.

His scholarship and artistry blended in his role as curator. He curated exhibitions, first as Gallery Director of the Neighborhood Arts Center in Atlanta, later as a curatorial consultant at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, independently as a curator for the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, and the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service. He co-curated the ground-breaking exhibition, *Astonishment and Power: Kongo Minkisi and the Art of Renee Stout* at the National Museum of African Art in 1993, and the following year was guest curator at the High Museum for *The Royal Art of Benin*. His exhibition, *Transatlantic Dialogues* opened at the Smithsonian Museum of African Art in 2000. His final curatorial project was *Visible Man: Art and Black Male Subjectivity*, which opened at Bowling Green State University in Ohio in 2021 and then traveled to the Harvey B. Gantt Center in Charlotte in 2022.

Michael was a fun and loving father of two daughters – Shani and Dara. He documented their childhood through countless photos that have become treasures for the entire family. He loved watching movies with his girls, eating his famous nachos or homemade popcorn. When he moved away for graduate school he sent letters and cards and most memorable of all - created funny home videos just make them laugh.

These experiences shaped Shani and he gave her unconditional support as she pursued a doctorate degree while making films along the way. He trained her to be a youth track athlete, excited that she might follow in the



footsteps of his Olympian grandfather, DeHart Hubbard. She's proud that he was able to see her become a youth state champion and add another 'Dr.' to the Harris family name.

He always encouraged Dara to be her truest self, whether it was pursuing her love of the performing arts or following her favorite rock band around the country. He understood her and loved her as she was, and she will always carry that with her, along with an appreciation for groan-inducing punny jokes.

Michael loved to travel and had friends with whom he would visit around the world. His travels took him to Panama, Barbados, Brazil, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Hong Kong, London, Paris, and many other sites. He was motivated by an intellectual curiosity and a love for people, friends, and fine foods.

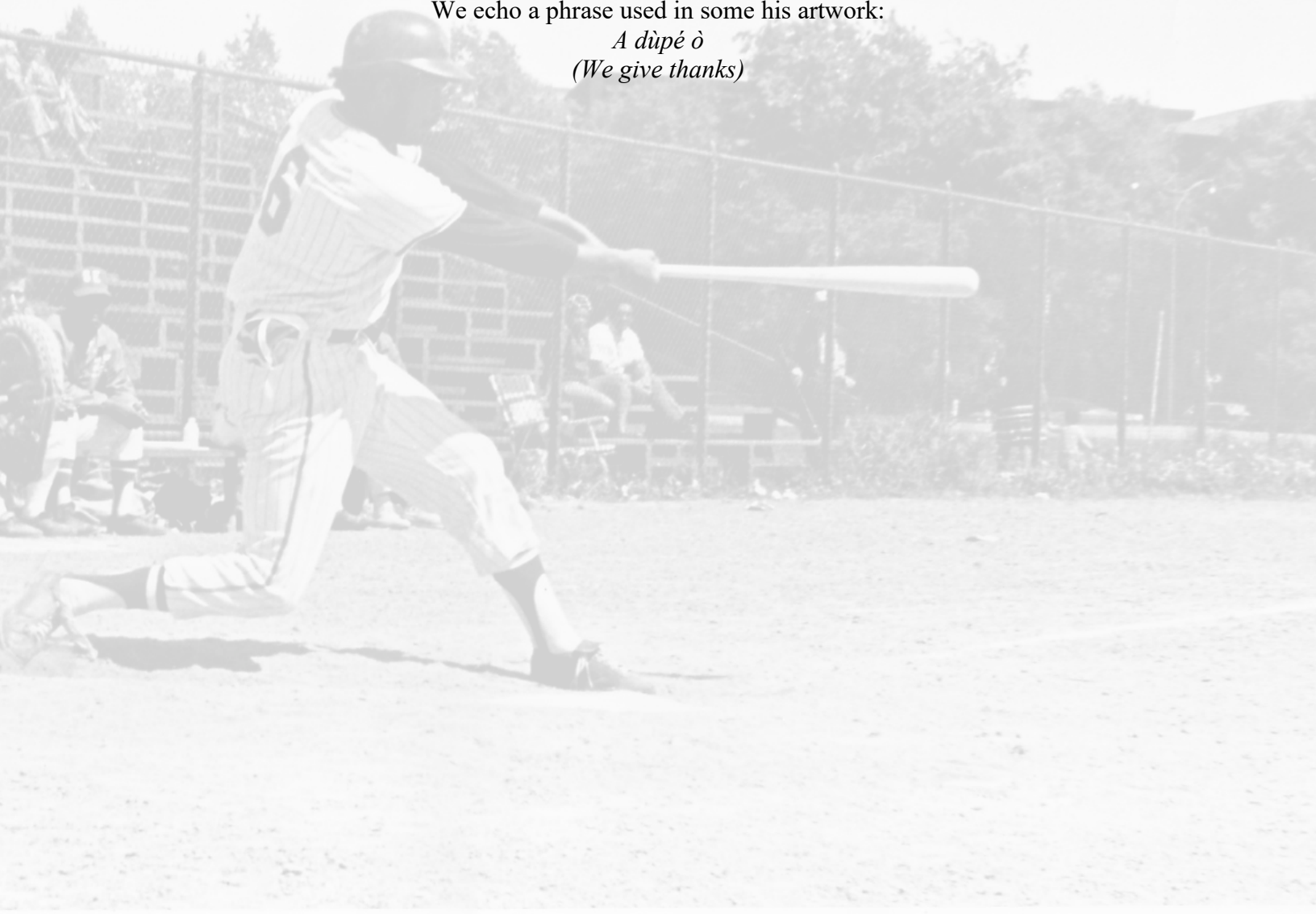
He also filled his life with sports. After leaving baseball he became an avid tennis player and runner and then a true golfer. He mixed his passion for travel with golf and played with friends at some of the world's top courses. He enjoyed watching sports as much as he liked playing them and he was a lifelong Cleveland Brown's fan. He rounded out his passion for life with a love for music. He worked hard to learn to play the saxophone (much to his daughters' chagrin). His 'man cave' boasted a beautiful sound system that he would proudly invite visitors to experience.

And it must be said that the man loved to make people laugh. He was known for his jokes and stories. His friends can attest that he wouldn't go long without telling a good one or making a pun to keep them smiling.

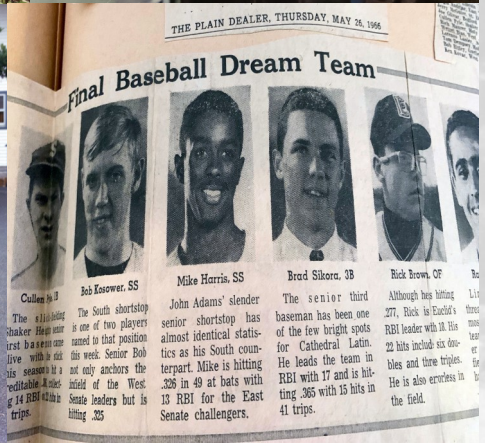
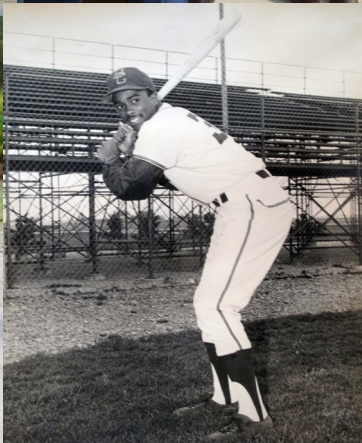
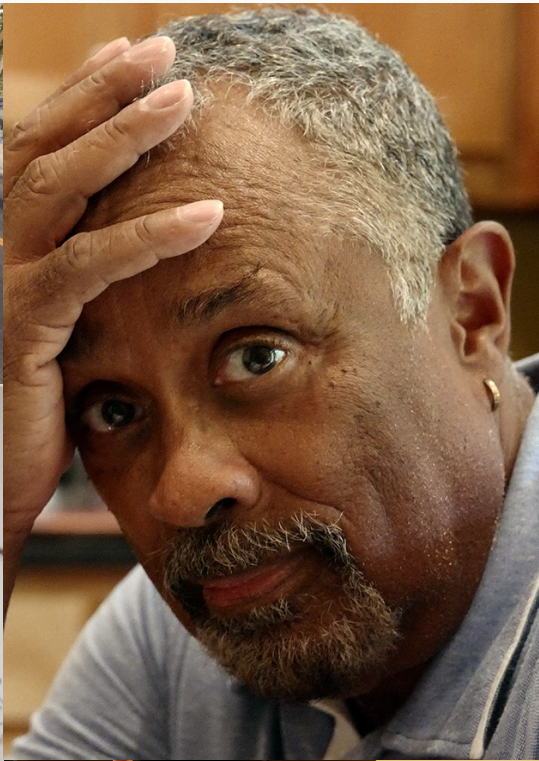
Our dear Michael passed away on July 11, 2022. He is survived by his two daughters, Shani Harris and Dara Heard (from ex-wife Zuri Amuleru-Marshall); his six grandchildren, Naiyah Peterson, Salaam Davis, Indigo Heard, Solomon Davis, Atlas Heard, and Salm Davis; his sister, Suresha Hill, his niece Maahra Hill and her daughter Asia, and a host of extended family, and life-long friends. He was greatly loved and will be sorely missed.

We echo a phrase used in some of his artwork:

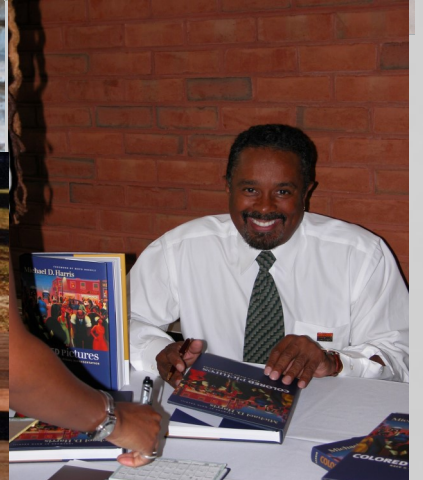
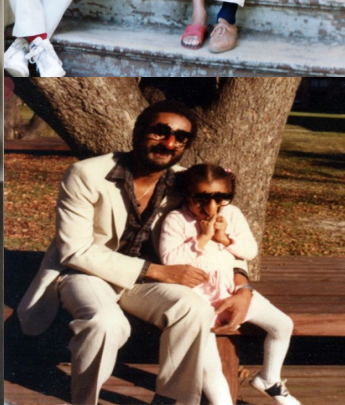
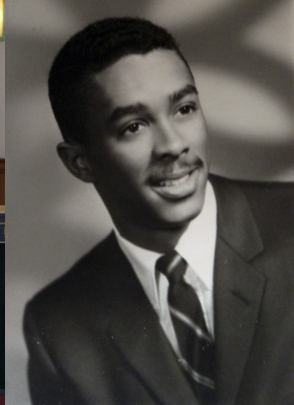
*A dūpé ò*  
(We give thanks)













### HONORARY BROTHERS & SISTERS

Carl Blackwell

Jae Delsarte

Anthony Fudge

Gary McIntyre

Moyo Okediji

CT Powell

Mary DePillars

Jimmie Edwards

Ron Hill

Nathan McCall

Ken Perry

Charlotte Webb

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The family of **Dr. Michael D. Harris** extends sincere gratitude for the many expressions of love, concern and support. We appreciate your thoughtfulness and kindness for the family during this transition. Your prayers, calls and other of expressions of love have given us strength.*



*We have created the Michael D. Harris Memorial Fund to support artists and scholars.*

*We welcome donations at:*

<https://everloved.com/life-of/michael-dehart-harris/>

*or donations can be made to the Endowment of First Congregational Church in his honor.*

*Professional Services entrusted to:*

**CARL M. WILLIAMS FUNERAL DIRECTORS, INC.**

492 Larkin Street, SW ~ Atlanta, Georgia 30313 ~ Telephone: 404.522.8454 ~ [www.carlmwilliams.com](http://www.carlmwilliams.com)