



A CELEBRATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY
LIFE

THEODORA CASTION TAYLOR

DECEMBER 31, 1923 - DECEMBER 24, 2023

Convent of the Sacred Heart
1 East 91st Street
New York, New York
February 9, 2024

ORDER OF SERVICE

PRELUDE

WELCOME & PRAYER
FATHER GREGORY CHISHOLM

SCRIPTURE READING
DENESE POWELL

TRIBUTE
ANTHONY THOMPSON

OBITUARY (SILENT READING)
MUSICAL SELECTION
"THEODORA"

JIMMY OWENS
WINARD HARPER
CHIP JACKSON
CHRISTIAN SANDS

EULOGY
KIM TAYLOR-THOMPSON

HOMILY
FATHER GREGORY CHISHOLM

MUSICAL SELECTION
"I WISH I KNEW HOW IT WOULD
FEEL TO BE FREE"

BENEDICTION



OBITUARY

On the morning of Christmas Eve 2023, Theodora Castion Taylor passed away peacefully. Her daughter and son-in-law, Kim and Tony, were by her side. Teddi was born in New York City on December 31, 1923 and

transitioned just one week short of her 100th birthday. Reaching that numerical milestone had never really mattered to her. She simply decided, in true Teddi Taylor fashion, that Christmas Eve was close enough.

She was a proud New York native. Growing up during the Depression meant learning to thrive at the messy intersection of doing without and doing all you could to make the most of life's circumstances. Throughout her life, Teddi demonstrated an improbable resilience that would ultimately define her. At a time when society looked to confine Black folks and women to narrow spaces and subservient roles, she held her head high. Rebellious from the start, Teddi would live her entire life defying those who looked to trap her in the margins. She was a Harlem/Bronx girl to her core with the sass to remind you of that fact.

Until she married her husband, jazz musician Bily Taylor, Teddi had never ventured far from home. But all of that would change in 1948. Upon returning from their brief honeymoon, the young couple learned that Bill had lost his job. Luckily, that freed him up to tour post-war Europe with Don Redman's jazz band. And Bill arranged for Teddi to travel with the band. Although, she was the only woman on the tour, she held her own. Her sense of style distinguished her and an unerring confidence enabled her to stand tall in every room. During her first year of marriage, she would visit eight countries. That extraordinary experience for a young Black woman in the 1940s would ignite a life-long passion for travel. And it revealed her strength of character. Throughout her life, she would always be herself and at ease whether in the company of US presidents, foreign heads of state, or jazz royalty. Another person might have gotten lost in the shadow of a famous jazz musician. But not Teddi Taylor. She was, in every way, her husband's life partner and the love of his life. In return, her love for her husband was real and unbreakable. They were married for 62 years until his death.

Teddi's life's work was her family. Although she often enjoyed the chance to mingle with celebrities, she always preferred just being in the company of her family. She loved fully, fiercely, fearlessly. Teddi cherished each member of her family, perhaps because she learned early that those bonds can be at once precious and precarious. She was the youngest of three girls, and when she was just three years old, her mother passed away from illness. Like her mother, Teddi also had three children. Her first child, Michelle, lived only a few short months. Teddi later gave birth to Duane and then to Kim, and raised each with love that was unwavering. She took great pride that Duane attended and graduated from Grinnell college and that Kim attended and graduated from Brown University and Yale Law School. Both Duane and Kim attributed their confidence and success to her unshakable belief in them. Of course, Teddi would be annoyed if we failed to mention that she also had a fourth child -- the family cat, Sophia, whom everyone knew was her favorite child.

Teddi's deep love extended to other passions as well. She loved to cook and earned a reputation for being unmatched in the kitchen. She loved art and developed an unparalleled collection of Black and African art. She loved tennis, although to be clear, she really only cared about Serena and Nadal. She loved fishing with Tony and tended to stretch the truth about her catch like every good fisherman. She loved basketball and may have been responsible for the winning seasons that the Knicks and the Bulls enjoyed back in the day. Her loud coaching through the television made all the difference ... or, so she claimed. And she maintained a healthy passion about politics and an equally healthy dose of rage against any injustice. She was our rock and the world seems less steady without her.

Teddi is survived by her daughter Kim Taylor-Thompson, her son-in-law, Anthony Thompson, nieces, nephew, cousins, grand-nieces, grand-nephews whom she loved dearly and friends whom she embraced as family.



The Family of Teddi Taylor wishes to express their sincere appreciation for the kindness shown to them during this time

In remembrance of Teddi Taylor, and in lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to:

Jazzmobile, Inc.

www.jazzmobile.org