

Dr. Joseph Nathan Gayles was born in Birmingham, Alabama, on August 7, 1937 as the first child of the late Joe N. Gayles and Ernestine Williams of Bessamer, Alabama. He attended public schools in the city of his birth and demonstrated such an exceptional ability in mathematics and science that he spent his junior year at Andover Newtown Academy in Massachusetts on full scholarship. After graduating from Ullman High School in Birmingham in 1954 as the top student in mathematics, he entered Dillard University on a full academic scholarship and, in May of 1958, graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in chemistry.



In 1958, with a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, he entered Brown University and in 1963, at the age of twenty-six, earned the Ph.D. in physical chemistry. In 1964, he was an assistant professor post doctoral at Oregon State University, and in 1965 he conducted research in quantum chemistry, biophysics and solid state physics at the University of Uppsala in Sweden, concentrating on electromagnetic radiation and computer applications. From 1966 to 1969, he was a staff scientist/project director at IBM Research Laboratories in San Jose, California.

In 1969, he was a member of the chemistry faculty at Morehouse College, where he was named by the Board of Trustees as Program Director of the Initiative that would lead to the founding of the Morehouse School of Medicine.

From 1977 to 1983, he served with distinction as President of Talladega College, where he raised more than forty million dollars and conducted the first successful capital campaign in the history of the College. In 1983, he returned home to the Morehouse School of Medicine, where he served as Vice President for Institutional Advancement until 1996 and, in that capacity, generated more than sixty million dollars during two campaigns. The following year, he founded a consulting firm named Jon-Mon Incorporated after his children Jonathan and Monica.

Widely published in reputable journals, major among them the Journal of Physical Chemistry, he was the recipient of many honors and awards, including Membership in Phi Beta Kappa, Camille and Henry Dreyfus Teacher Scholar, Honorary Doctor of Laws from Dillard University, and the Presidential Leadership Award from Morehouse School of Medicine. In April of 2000, he was awarded the honorary degree, Doctor of Science, at the 25th anniversary of the Morehouse School of Medicine for the key role he played in the founding of the institution.

He was a visionary and a scholar who devoted his life to Black higher education. All the places in which he served—Talladega College, Morehouse College, and the Morehouse School of Medicine—bear the imprint of his commitment to hard work, excellence and achievement.

DU Alum '58 Dr. Joseph Gayles Jr. Rest In Peace

Wednesday, 08 October 2008 07:18

He was preceded in death by his brothers Carl Gayles and Robert Gayles. He is survived by his son Jonathan (Pam); his daughter Moncia (Anthony); his two grandchildren, Tyler Kate and Andrew Joseph; his nieces Angela and Stephanie; his former wife Gloria Gayles; and a host of cousins and friends who loved him.

Services were held in Atlanta on Wednesday, October 8, at 11:00 a.m. at Cascade United Methodist Church and in Birmingham on Thursday, October 9, at 1:00 at the Sixth Avenue Baptist Church.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions be made to the Joseph N. Gayles Scholarship Fund at Bank of America. The money will go towards African American participation in higher education.