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Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Harriet E. Singletary Rayner, Mother to Rep. Rayner-Goolsby, Passes Away
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May 23, 2023

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**Harriet E. Singletary Rayner, Mother to Rep. Rayner-Goolsby,
Passes Away**

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla.- It's with great sadness and a heavy heart that the Office of **Representative Michele Rayner-Goolsby (D-St. Petersburg)** announces the passing of **Representative Rayner-Goolsby's** mother, **Harriet E. Singletary Rayner**.

Harriet was a trailblazer. Not only was she one of the "USF 8," the first eight Black students to integrate into the University of South Florida, she was also one of the first Black social workers in Pinellas County.

She led a life of faith and service. Her full obituary, as well as funeral arrangements, can be found below.

Arrangements are as follows:

Date: May 26, 2023
Time: Omega Omega, 5:00 pm-6:00 pm
Public Viewing, 6:15 pm- 7:30 pm
Celebration of Life, 11:00 am (*May 27th*)
Location: Mt Zion UMC
2751 Sunset Point Rd
Clearwater, Fl 33759

Members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. are requested to wear red.

Cards and flowers can be sent to Smith-Youngs Funeral Home, located at 1005 Howard Street, Clearwater, Florida 3375 by May 26, 2023.

Obituary

Harriet E. Singletary Rayner, 78, passed away at her home in Clearwater, Florida on May 18, 2023. She was surrounded by her children, grandchildren, and treasured friends. Harriet was born on October 26, 1944, in Tarpon Springs, Florida to Harry K. Singletary, Sr. and Kinnie Faison Singletary.

Harriet, much like her husband Earl, persevered through the injustices of the Jim

Crow South to become a part of the “USF 8” to graduate from the University of South Florida in Tampa. Harriet was one of the eight (8) Black students who comprised the first wave of Black students to integrate into the university. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in 1968. Prior to matriculating to the University of South Florida, Harriet attended Gibbs Junior College (now known as St. Petersburg College) in St. Petersburg, Florida. Harriet completed her education by earning a Master of Science in Human Services from Nova University in 1979.

Harriet was a proud product of the Pinellas County School system. She attended Union Academy and Pinellas High School. During the time Harriet attended, the schools were segregated. Her childhood experiences left an indelible mark on her and were integral to her path of service and faith. As a small girl, Harriet was known not only for her intelligence, but her heart to serve her community. As such, it was only natural for Harriet to begin a career as a social worker. Harriet was one of the first Black social workers in Pinellas County and went on to have a storied career of service by working for HRS, Gulf Coast Jewish Family Federation, Directions for Living, Gift of Life, and eventually retiring from Lutheran Services of Florida. During her prolific career, she established programs serving the mentally ill, many of which are still in existence in Pinellas County. She left a legacy of empowering younger social workers and helping them understand that service to others is the highest calling one can have.

In 1963, Harriet and her childhood sweetheart and forever love Earl Rayner were wedded in holy matrimony, and shortly thereafter, in 1964, they welcomed their first child, a son, Michael Keith. Later, in 1981, they welcomed their second child, a daughter, Michele Kenyette. Harriet's greatest joy and accomplishment was being a devoted wife and mother.

Harriet was a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She was initiated on February 26, 1971, in the St. Petersburg Alumnae Chapter. Later, she was a charter member of the Clearwater Alumnae Chapter, where she remained an active member until her death.

In light of her many accolades, what Harriet was known for was her relationship with Christ. She was a mother to many. She was a licensed Evangelist Missionary with the Church of God in Christ. She served as a church mother and was a member of Restoring the Remnant International Church. Her cry was “Lord, I don’t want to be lost.” Her reach went far beyond the altar and church pew. It has been said she was a hidden figure in many success stories of great men and women. These people sought her out for her wisdom, love, and powerful prayers. She pushed many towards greatness and believed with God, all things are possible.

Harriet is survived by her loving **children** Michael (Meredith) and Michele Rayner-Goolsby (Bianca), **grandson** Matthew Rayner, **sisters-in-law** Essie Mae Jones, Ann Rayner, Angeline Rayner; and a host of grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and sorority sisters.

She was preceded in death by her **husband** of fifty-seven (57) years, Earl Rayner, **parents**, Harry K. Singletary and Kinnie Singletary, **sister**, Barbara West, and **brother** Harry K. Singletary, Jr.

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