



Mrs. Eloria Sherman Gilbert

March 28, 2023

Wife of civil rights leader and former pastor of First African Baptist Church, Rev. Ralph Mark Gilbert has passed. Surrounded by family and friends, Mrs. Eloria Sherman Gilbert passed away on March 28, 2023 at Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan, New York.

Eloria Sherman Gilbert was born in Washington County, Georgia to Deacon James and Rose Sherman. Her family moved to Manhattan (Harlem), New York in 1922. She became a member of the Union Baptist Church where she accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior and became a life-long Christian worker.

Mrs. Gilbert received her education from the New York Public School Education System. She also attended New York City College Biblical Theological Seminary. She received youth oratory training and competed in the 1937 New York State Colored Baptist Convention Oratory Competition and won first place.

Mrs. Gilbert met the Rev. Ralph Mark Gilbert while he was on a visit to New York City as a guest speaker.

The couple married at First African Baptist (FAB) Church where Rev. Gilbert was pastoring on October 22,

1945. Blessed with five children from Rev. Gilbert's previous marriage, they later adopted a son.

Mrs. Gilbert continued her oratory training as the First Lady of First African

Baptist Church. She organized the Baptist Youth Fellowship, a youth service ministry that ministered at the jail; sponsored youth from other churches for Ms. Youth and raised funds for FAB's first bus. She was advisor to the deaconess, and a member of the Georgia Ministers Wives while serving her family, community, and joined her husband Dr. Ralph Mark Gilbert in advocating for civil rights for Negroes in the South. Eloria Sherman Gilbert never imagined that she would be cited in books like *Southern Black Women In The Modern Civil Rights Movement* for being one of the courageous "...women whose work against discrimination and injustice helped sway the civil rights movement and had as much of an impact in changing race-relations and how blacks were treated in the South as did their male counterparts."

Stephen G. N. Tuck said in his book *The Struggle For Racial Equality In Georgia, 1940-1980* that "Eloria Sherman Gilbert shared the workload of her late husband Dr. Ralph Mark Gilbert and established a reputation as an orator and organizer in her own right". During a three-week tour in the summer of 1946, Rev. Gilbert recorded that "he divided the territory between the wife and myself...I took the new and weaker branches and got the Madam to take the strong and better establishments". She alone was responsible for

founding the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] NAACP branch in Hazlehurst, Georgia, and she gave a series of human rights speeches in cities along the Atlantic Coast on her way to

meet her husband in New York

Mrs. Gilbert returned to New York after her husband died in 1956 and continued her service as a

Christian worker. She served as a deaconess, trustee, and director of Christian Education at Union Baptist

Church. She was a principal of Mt. Pleasant Christian Academy, and was appointed chairman of Area 2

Churches of Metropolitan, New York and vice president of the Manhattan Division of Churches.

Mrs. Gilbert funeral services will be held on April 17, 2023 at the Union Baptist Church, New York,

New York. In lieu of flowers send donations to Mt. Pleasant Christian Academy/Eloria S. Gilbert Scholarship

Fund, 126 West 119th Street, New York, NY 10031.