

Rhelda Marbry Morgan, Ph.D.



Dr. Rhelda Morgan was the daughter of Harry and Lillie Marbry. Mr. Harry Marbry, her father, preceded his wife in death soon after the passing of his daughter Rhelda. Harry Marbry's Grand-father on his mother's side was of Jewish decent, whose surname was Jacoby. Rhelda's mother Lillie Citizen Marbry was originally from New Orleans. She was the middle child of Henry and Elia Citizen. Lillie Citizen graduated from the prestigious "Tuskegee University" before becoming a member of the Army Nursing Corps (Women's Army corps) during WW 11. It was while serving in the military that she met and married another service member named Harry Marbry of Saint Louis, Mo. on January 2, 1946. Harry and Lillie Marbry were loyal, active members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post number 2910. Their daughter Rhelda became a life time member of this post as well. Mrs. Lillie Marbry passed away on Dec. 16, 2009 and was survived by Rhelda's only sister, Vera Marbry Louch.

Dr. Rhelda Marbry Morgan died on April 4, 1996, at the age of 48. At the time of her death she was completing her dissertation Ph.D. in American Studies at Saint Louis University. Her doctorate was awarded posthumously, although she had completed all the necessary coursework.

Rhelda Marbry Morgan was a St. Louisan. She was born here. She died here. And except for a three-year teaching stint in Gary, Indiana, she lived her short, valuable life in St. Louis. She was educated in St. Louis Public Schools, and graduated from Beaumont High School. She earned her bachelor's degree from Harris-Stowe Teacher's College (now Harris Stowe State University) and her Master of Arts in Teaching at Webster University.

Rhelda taught in the St. Louis Public Schools for 24 years. Her early appointments were at Walbridge Elementary School and Ford Middle School. For the last ten years of her career she taught in the Magnet school program. In 1987-88 she was the chair of the language arts program at Marquette Visual and Performing Arts Middle School. From 1988 to 1993 she taught English at Central Visual and Performing Arts High School, where she also served as head of the English and Foreign Languages Department. From 1993 until her death she taught American literature at Soldan International Studies High School. In addition to her duties in the St. Louis Public Schools, Rhelda held an adjunct appointment at Harris-Stowe State College and was a regular featured lecturer at Principia College.

This is a summary of the duties and responsibilities of a busy professional educator. However, it does not suggest the creativity, leadership, and progressive thinking that Rhelda brought to her profession. She was among the first to understand the importance of the computer as a learning tool, and worked on the development of the computer reading and writing laboratory at Walbridge Elementary School. She worked on a number of projects designed to make the public schools more responsive both to student needs and community concerns, departmentalized primary grade organization and decentralized decision making among them. Rhelda was also a counselor for the Hugh O'Brian Youth Foundation (HOBY).

Because of Rhelda's devotion to professional excellence in the area of education, she became an outstanding role model and mentor for student teachers. She supervised the classroom experience of teacher trainees from the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Principia College.

Rhelda was an exceptionally organized and meticulous person who was known for her attention to detail, which consequently was passed along to her students.

Indeed, Rhelda was an exemplary student, scholar and educator but she was also a very loving and devoted wife and mother. Rhelda met her husband, Edward L. Morgan, while she was teaching third grade at the Walbridge Elementary School in May of 1972. Edward Morgan who she later married was working for the Saint Louis Public School system as a locksmith. Ironically, Edward had a work request at Walbridge School, where Rhelda was teaching, to provide a key for Rhelda's desk. Edward later became the supervisor of the locksmith division for the Saint Louis Public school district where he retired after 47 1/2 years on June 30, 2011. When Edward and Rhelda met in 1972, it was love at first sight for both of them! They respected and supported each other and were inseparable throughout their entire marriage. Her husband Edward said, "I was the wind beneath her sail, and she was my sail. All because I kissed her once and she kissed me back." They would have been married for twenty-three years on July 20, 1996.

On October 21, 1976, Rhelda and Edward's marriage was blessed with a beautiful daughter, Tawanna Ka-Rhelda. She is a very bright young woman who was certified as a gifted student, who played the piano, sang and danced. She attended the St. Louis Public Schools. At the time of her mother's death, Tawanna was a junior at the University of Missouri at Rolla studying electrical engineering. Rhelda was an excellent mother and role model for her daughter. Tawanna said of her mother, "I love you mother and I will never forget how much you loved me."

Rhelda was also a devout Christian who lived by the precepts and tenets of the Church of God in Christ. Rhelda taught Sunday school, sang in the choir, and was an usher. Rhelda was also on a scholarship committee for her church. She assisted her husband, who was a minister and the treasurer, on the scholarship committee.

While she maintained her busy, productive and fulfilling life as a teacher, wife and mother, Rhelda Morgan also continued to grow as a scholar. Her husband, Edward Morgan, says that in the segregated St. Louis of the 1950's, Rhelda lived in a house on Montgomery Street adjacent to the all-white Columbia School. Her parents never told her why she had to walk blocks to attend the Dunbar School for "colored children." In the years between her Dunbar school days and her death in 1996 she learned why. She learned the whys and wherefores-the how and how-bad-of American racism. She learned these things not only as an African American who experienced them daily, but also as a scholar who studied the sociology, economics, politics, and literature of American Racism. She was especially interested in the effect of racism on African American women. She wrote and spoke of these things, not only in her classes but at regional and national meetings. At the time of her death she was completing her dissertation on the theme of spousal abuse in the writings of African American women novelists, especially Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker.

Through the Edward L. and Rhelda Marbry Morgan, Ph.D. Endowed Book Fund at Saint Louis University, Rhelda's legacy, scholarship, teaching and mentoring will continue to live.