



## Sandra Bazeman

November 7, 1938 - October 31, 2025

In the heart of Harlem, on the morning of November 7, 1938, a storyteller was born. Sandra Lucille Lewis, the first child of William and Adelaide Lewis, arrived. From her earliest days, she understood the joy and weight of being first as well as enjoyed rich relationships with her brothers - Billy, Bobby, Jimmy, and Ronnie. Though she had no sisters by birth, God gave her two cousins who were so in spirit - Peggy Crawley and Carole Lowe - whose laughter and love followed her from girlhood to glory.

Sandra's youth in New Jersey was a tapestry of accomplishment. She excelled in mind, body, and spirit - a scholar, athlete, and artist. At Rumson-Fair Haven High School (NJ), she was crowned Debutante Cotillion Queen, as the highest academic score in her class, a lifelong source of pride. Her academic career continued at Douglass College, Rutgers University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in economics. On her first day there she met Belinda (Linda) Fisher, who became her beloved "White Soul Mate Sister" and they made history as the college's first interracial roommates in 1959.

Sandra's love of words sustained and energized her. She gathered them, wrote them, and taught them to others. Across journals, letters, and classrooms, she captured her thoughts, her relationships, her ancestry, and her experiences. Her pen was her instrument, her way of testifying that life was an established story and a blank page. Proud of being honored by Ebony

Magazine as Runner-Up in its national Short Story Contest in 1999, her truest joy was when she was learning, as demonstrated by her ongoing education, and when her students found their own words and voices, and dared to use them.

Her life moved like poetry across places and people. She walked the streets of Harlem during its cultural bloom, lived on the island of Trinidad with her first husband, Hamel Nelson (deceased), and their two children, and returned to East Orange, NJ, where she began her distinguished teaching career and welcomed her third child with Joel Wheeler, Sr. Her transition to North Carolina began in Rockingham where she worked with Richmond County Schools and enjoyed wonderful friendships. She ultimately settled in Monroe, as the wife of Philip E. (PE) Bazemore (deceased), embracing the warmth and slower pace of Southern life before retiring to Florida. Every community she entered bears her imprint - a steady rhythm of service, elegance, and love.

A builder of people and programs, Sandra's legacy endures in the institutions she helped create. She was instrumental in founding and administering Mt. Pisgah Day Care and Elementary School (K-8) at Mt. Pisgah AME Church in Jersey City, NJ and co-founded Rainbow Theatre, Inc. in Monroe, NC, a place where music, dance, and drama opened opportunities for multicultural youth across Union County. She extended her reach beyond the school building by co-founding the Monroe/Union County Tutoring Program, presented at Union County recreation centers, and the Let Our Village Emphasize (L.O.V.E.) Tutoring Program at Langford Chapel CME Church Learning Center and Monroe Middle School. These efforts still echo her influence today through the lives of those she touched.

Sandra's love of community was boundless. She found joy in the work of uplift - through Alpha Pi Chi Sorority, the National Association of University Women (Union County Branch), the Order of the Eastern Star (35th District), the Union

County NAACP, and local, state, and national teachers' associations. Upon retiring to Florida, she reconnected with her beloved aunt, Gloria Palmentieri. Together they filled nearly two decades with travel, laughter, craft fairs, and the sacred labor of preserving our family's history and herstory.

Sandra is survived by her brother Ronald Lewis (Maebly); sister-in-law, Diane Lewis (James); children Kevin Nelson (Juanita), Monica York (Allen), and Joel Wheeler, Jr.; special daughter Ina Bazemore Horn; grandchildren Inez Chimhangariso (Tawanda), Alexandria Hicks-Nelson, Xavier and Dexter York, and Camilla and Nena Horn; and great-grandchildren True and Free Chimhangariso and Solána York. She also leaves her sister-cousins Peggy Crawley and Carole Lowe, and a host of cousins, nieces, and nephews to honor her legacy. Former companion, Joel Wheeler, Sr., her selected sisters, and Cindy Riggle and other special teaching colleagues, will cherish her memory, as will her students, church family, friends, and community members whose lives she touched with her wit, wisdom, and grace.

Sandra's life is a masterclass of accomplishment, adventure, and impact. Each lesson is a demonstration of grace, purpose, courage, beauty, and love, undergirded by sisterhood, faith, and family. And though she has joined the ancestors, her lesson continues - carried forward in the story of every person she touched, a living testament that will never fade.

# Cemetery Details

**Treasure Coast Crematory**