

Pallbearers

Anthony Walker Jr.
Joshua Pickett
Steve Jones
Calah Inman

Devyn Walker
John Pickett IV
Ras-Haile Inman
Micah Inman

Flower Bearers

Cousins and Best Friends

Acknowledgements

The family wishes to acknowledge with deep appreciation the many expressions of love, concern, prayers, and kindness shown to them during this hour of bereavement.

May God Bless and Keep You!

- The family of Courtney Jean Gilyard



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In Loving Memory



COURTNEY JEAN GILYARD

SEPTEMBER 2, 1989 - JULY 17, 2025

August 9, 2025

Visitation: 9:30 am

Funeral Service: 11:00 am

Greater Saint John AME

772 Whitter Street

Cincinnati, Ohio 45229

Reverend Herbert Mabry, Officiating

Obituary

Courtney Jean Gilyard, born September 2, 1989, in Cincinnati, Ohio, passed away at the age of 35. She was a daughter, a sister, a mother, a cousin, and a friend—and the heartbeat of every room she walked into. Courtney wasn't just loved, she was adored. To know her was to know joy, laughter, and loyalty at its loudest, brightest, and most genuine.

She was the beloved daughter of Antonia Gilyard and Kenneth Gilyard Sr.—their one and only girl, their shining light, and the laughter that echoed through their lives. She was also the fiercely devoted mother of her pride and joy, LaRay “LJ” Rainey Jr., whom she shared with LaRay Rainey. LJ was her everything, and she made sure the world knew it. She poured all her love, strength, and energy into being a phenomenal mother, and she made sure he never went without her warmth or her protection.

Courtney was a proud product of Cincinnati, where she made her mark early. She graduated first in her class from Shroder High School in 2007 and left with a legendary moment—she ended her valedictorian speech with “Now walk it out”—because only Courtney could turn a graduation into a moment that nobody would ever forget.

To her brothers, Kenneth “Juice” Gilyard Jr. and Jason Gilyard, she was more than a sister—she was their biggest cheerleader and comic relief.

She was a proud and loving aunt to her many nieces and nephews, all of whom she adored and spoiled every chance she got. Courtney's relationship with them was filled with joy, laughter, and love—she showed up for them at every moment, big or small. She especially shared a close bond with her niece Kamayah Sipling-Gilyard, who was like a daughter to her in every way—their connection was deep, full of love, and truly unbreakable.

She leaves behind her beloved nieces and nephews: Kyland Sipling, Ka'moni Smith, Kenneth Gilyard III, Kayden Gilyard, Hayden Gilyard, and Jayla Gilyard.

She was also a granddaughter to Joyce Walker, whom she loved dearly. She was preceded in death by her grandfather, Anthony Walker Sr., whose passing just a few months earlier left a hole in the family that Courtney felt deeply. Courtney also leaves behind a village of aunts, uncles, cousins, and best friends who were more like siblings—her chosen family—who will feel her absence every single day. If Courtney loved you, you felt it. And if you were family, you knew she had your back no matter what.

Among those who loved her most were her lifelong sisters in spirit—the Fab 6. What started as friendship became sisterhood, rooted in years of memories, laughter, and unconditional love. Courtney was the kind of friend who showed up, even when life was heavy on her shoulders. She was smart, loyal, generous, and fiercely protective of the people she loved. She gave comfort without needing to be asked, celebrated her friends' wins like they were her own, and never let anyone feel alone.

She was the bartender of the family, the self-declared party starter, and the reason everyone was dancing at every get-together. If she wasn't there, it didn't feel right. “Where's Courtney?” was always the question, because the vibe didn't hit the same without her. She was always dancing, always laughing, always calling somebody out in the funniest way, and always looking flawless while doing it.

Courtney had confidence out of this world. She was bold, direct, and never held her tongue. If she said it, she meant it—and she was likely going to say it in a way that had the whole room hollering. “I said what I said” wasn't just a phrase—it was her lifestyle.

She loved the Cincinnati Bengals and was a die-hard fan—especially when it came to tailgating. Game day wasn't just a game; it was an experience, and Courtney made it feel like a festival. She brought energy everywhere she went, and people were drawn to her—whether they'd known her forever or just met her that day.

Courtney believed in Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, and her faith was a source of strength, joy, and grounding throughout her life. She carried her light with grace, and her love for God was reflected in how deeply she loved her family, her friends, and the life she was given.

Courtney lived out loud.

When I first walked into Silverton Elementary, at 10 years old in the 5th grade.

I saw you with your yellow flower dress, white stockings, dress shoes, and twisty hairstyle. I knew that day we would be friends, and 26 years later, here we are, sisters. To my beautiful sister, you are never too far away, and I will make sure your beautiful legacy lives on. We've smiled, cried, laughed, joked, supported each other, but most importantly, always remained loyal and solid.

You're forever my GINA, and I'm forever your PAM. Only the real ones will understand.

- Sincerely, your sister Chant'e

My dear Courtney, my sister and best friend, life will forever be altered without your presence. Your friendship painted beautiful memories. It was always rich with love, laughter, and joy. I will deeply miss your beautiful smile, squeaky voice, infectious laugh, witty humor, and those meaningful heart-to-heart talks. If I had known it would be our last goodbye, I would have told you a million more times how much I loved you! Your absence has left a void, but the love you shared is a gift I will cherish forever. Your spirit will live on in my heart, and your memory will never fade, and I promise to keep those play dates with our babies as planned.

- I Love You! Lauren aka BabyMama

My little sister, my heart, my twin. I may never understand why God chose to take you now, but know your spirit impacted everyone you loved. I'll remember all our times together and cherish the blessing you left with us. My heart will never be the same, but I know we'll meet again one day. I know you're with all us and I love you.

- Jason

I don't know how to write to you because I haven't accepted that you are not here anymore. I will not tell you goodbye now, I am broken without you, and I'm so mad that you left without telling me. I don't have the strength to give you your flowers, but I want to tell you that I love you and I will always be here for Courtney Face and LaRay.

- Juice

Courtney Jean – my sister, my best friend, MY BESTER. Life without you will never be the same. I will forever cherish our laughs, our tears, our long talks, and all the beautiful memories we created. You weren't just a friend – you were family. I'm so honored to have shared 25 years of life, love, and sisterhood with you. Thank you for your genuine, authentic friendship. You will forever live in my heart. Forever “The Virgos.” I love you, Sis #Fab6forlife"

"Special Tribute From Friends & Family"

5/5

There will never be enough words to capture what our sisterhood meant to me. I pray your transition was gentle and peaceful because that's exactly what your beautiful spirit deserved. I wish I had one more moment to tell you just how deeply your loyalty, your love, and your unwavering support over the past 20+ years shaped me. You made me a better woman, a better friend, and a better wife. You were a mirror of authenticity and showed me what it truly means to stand beside someone with your whole heart. Thank you for being the truest kind of friend. I won't say goodbye. I'll just say, see you later. Save me

a seat, baby girl.
I love you always,
- Danyelle Bush

My Patnah, Courtney blue Jean... man, this is a different type of pain right?! ... my heart is broken and my life is forever changed. Jean you were truly the ying to my yang.. my sister, my patnah in crime, my rider, my ace, my everything. I am going to miss everything about you so very much... our talks.. our patnah nights.. just simply being around your amazing energy. You are the true definition of a friend and I am extremely blessed to have been able to call you my best friend for over 20 years. Being a part of your life has truly been an honor. It's so hard coming up with something to even say because I truly can't believe you're no longer here with us.. We were supposed to grow old together!

You've been here for every milestone of mine both big and small and I'll miss your support tremendously. How do I continue to go on without my best friend?! I knew if I could ever count on ANYONE, I could always count on you. You are genuinely one of a kind and there will never be another Courtney Jean. I'm so thankful that you left us with a piece of you.. our LJ. LJ you had an amazing mommy and just know, her village is forever here for you! Jean you will forever be in my heart and I love you so very much.

- Jasmean

Courtney, you were more than a cousin—you were our sister, our role model, our safe space, and our biggest cheerleader. From making up dances and sneaking drinks to life talks, football Sundays, and showing up for every milestone, you were always there. You helped raise us, protected us, laughed with us, and loved us deeply. We'll miss hearing you say "hey cuz," your laugh, your bold spirit—just your whole presence. Though you're not here in the flesh, your spirit is still so strong with us, maybe that's why none of this feels real. We love you beyond words and promise LA will always be taken care of. Until we meet again

- Cousins



Order of Service



Musical Prelude	
Parting View	Immediated Family
Prayer	Robbin Boozer
Scripture	Robbin Boozer
Selection	Sharon McCullom
Tribute	Nate West
Acknowledgements	Joycelyn Pickett
Remarks	2 Minutes Please
Obituary	Read Silently
Praise Dance	Kaniyla Smith
Eulogy	Rev. Herbert Mabry
Benediction	Rev. Herbert Mabry
Recessional	Clergy, Family & Friends



Final Resting Place

Spring Grove Cemetery
4521 Spring Grove Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45232

"Baby Girl"

Thanks for being the one who always brightened up our day.

Always happy, knowing exactly what to say, with your robust character,
unconditional support, and beautiful smile.

Courtney, you have enriched our lives forever and made us both better.

Thanks, Baby Girl.

- Love always, Mom and Dad.

