

IN CELEBRATION
OF THE LIFE
AND LEGACY
OF



Gloria Holmes Riley

June 19, 1931 | May 20, 2026

SATURDAY – June 20, 2026

VISITATION: 10:30 AM
SERVICE: 11:30 AM



St. Andrews Episcopal Church
1809 Rutland Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45207

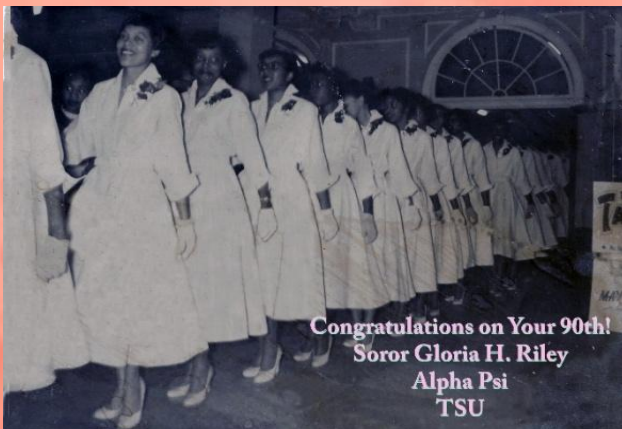
The demure 27-year-old mother of two, fashionably dressed, walked into the second-grade classroom with the upward tilt of the head for which she was known. She was there to make history as the first Black teacher to educate military dependents in Department of Defense schools in Japan. The gravity of the assignment did not escape her as she smiled for the photographer, took her place behind her desk, and welcomed her students.



This brief narrative illustrates **Gloria Riley's** approach to life: set a lofty goal, assume you will achieve it, take the steps necessary for success, and look like a million dollars while doing it. In many ways and through many achievements, her formula for success was repeated.



Gloria Riley, a trailblazer in education and a woman of remarkable grace and determination, transitioned peacefully on May 20, 2026, at the age of 94. She was born on June 19, 1931, the third and youngest daughter of Johnnie L. and Rachel Miller Holmes. Born and raised in Memphis, she attended Lester Elementary School and Booker T. Washington High School. There, she studied and laughed with those who would remain her best friends until her transition. She later attended LeMoyne-Owen College and graduated from Tennessee State University (TSU) in Nashville, Tennessee, majoring in Education. While at TSU, she was initiated into Alpha Psi Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (AKA) in 1951, following in the footsteps of her sister Helen, who had been initiated in 1946. Her first teaching position was in Memphis City Schools. Her passion for education led her to teach in three countries and eight school systems, earning a master's in education from South Carolina State University in 1971, and obtaining a Learning Disabilities (L.D.) Specialist designation when that program was in its infancy in Cincinnati Public Schools.



Soon after she began her career, a handsome Air Force lieutenant came to Memphis on Temporary Duty. She and Thurman Alexander Riley were married in 1954 and remained so for 45 years, until his transition in 1999. Gloria adapted well to military life, continuing her career as a working mother across the globe. She gave birth to Kelvin Andre in Houston, Texas; Gail Frances in Japan; Gregory Holmes (who transitioned in 1995) in Goldsboro, North Carolina; and Terilynn Alexia in the Philippines. She insisted that each of her children pursue their passions—vocal and instrumental music, sports, ballet, equestrian activities, and artistic pursuits. She was also a lover of the arts—opera, symphony, theater, and served as a gallery docent. An avid explorer, she traveled extensively throughout Europe, Asia, and North America.

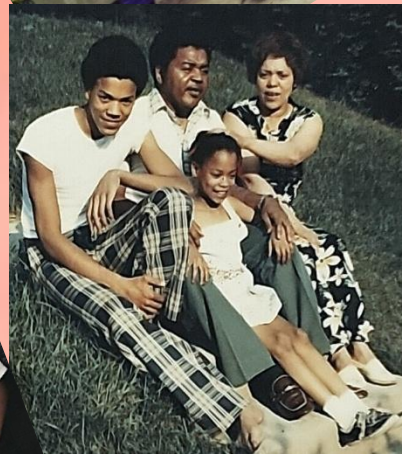


Gloria was proud of her Faith, Family, and Friendships. She joined St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church in Hampton, Virginia, in 1960 and remained spiritually devout and a hard worker in the Episcopal Church well into her 90s. She was a tireless worker at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Sumter, South Carolina for five years before relocating to Cincinnati, Ohio, where, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, her service included St. Teresa's Guild, Episcopal Church Women, the Summer Reading Program, the Summer Readiness Program, and numerous other contributions.

While achieving much, *Gloria* was best known for her joy, laughter, and relationships. A vibrant presence, she cultivated deep friendships everywhere she lived. She loved to entertain, design clothing, shop, and dance. If you are one of those friends, think of one of your most memorable times with her. You will no doubt remember her bright smile and infectious laughter. Among the many friendships she nurtured over the years were those within AKA, The Links, Incorporated, where she was a charter member of the Queen City Chapter; The Girl Friends, Inc.; Jack and Jill of America; Kappa Silhouettes; The Couples Club; and others. These are the friends with whom she shared her talent and resources in friendship, and for the betterment of mankind.



Gloria is survived by three of her four children, three grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and other loving relatives. She may be remembered as a trailblazer in education, as a woman with the courage to live in and travel to more than 20 countries beginning in the 1950s, and as someone who set and maintained a standard of excellence in all her pursuits. Or you can remember this simple formula: set a lofty goal, assume you will achieve it, take the steps necessary for success, and look like a million dollars while doing it.



May her legacy of excellence and joy continue to inspire all who knew her.



Interment

**Spring Grove Cemetery
4521 Spring Grove Avenue | Cincinnati, OH 45232**

Pallbearers

**Brandon Riley
Alexander Kenney
Devon Keith
Jalen Burlew
Rafael Caballero
Joshua Riley**

“HEARTFELT THANKS”

The Family of Gloria Holmes Riley feels great comfort in the assurance that we are not alone in our bereavement ~ assurance as manifested in your warm expressions of care and concern. We are deeply touched and eternally grateful. Your kindness will always be remembered.

A very special thanks to St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Choir and Musical Director Neil Stewart, Vincent Nealy for his floral designs, the Altar Guild, Officiants, and all other Staff. Also, to Renfro, Patterson & Jordan Funeral Services for your care.

**Donations in honor of Gloria Holmes Riley can be made to the
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church After School Program.**

**A Repast will be held at the University of Cincinnati, Graduate by Hilton Cincinnati,
151 Goodman Street - Cincinnati, OH 45219 following the Interment, at 2:00 PM.
Parking is complimentary.**



RENFRO PATTERSON & JORDAN FUNERAL HOME
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