

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND EDUCATOR GALA MUNNINGS DIES AFTER BRIEF ILLNESS

Written by STAFF REPORT



After desegregation came to Miami-Dade County, in part due to a lawsuit filed by her father, Gala Brown Munnings started sixth grade at the newly integrated Gladeview Elementary School. Her involvement in the desegregation process continued when she started at Miami Edison Junior High in 1962, becoming the school's first black cheerleader.

As a senior at Miami Edison High School, Munnings led a peaceful sit-in to protest discriminatory practices at the school. That effort ultimately resulted in Diane Dyes-Paschal, one of her closest friends, being made the high school's first black cheerleader.

Munnings, 60, died Friday, June 10, at home in North Miami after a brief illness, said her daughter Corine Munnings.

Born in Nashville, Tenn., to the late Dr. John O. Brown and Marie Faulkner Brown, Munnings spent four years in Tuskegee, Ala. In 1955, her family, which also included brothers, John Jr., William (deceased) and Lawrence (deceased), moved to Miami.

Munnings graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Fisk University in Nashville. She went on to pursue a master's degree in Social Work at Barry University in Miami Shores and, on Dec. 22, 1974, she married Frederick Munnings Jr. of Nassau, Bahamas. The couple settled in Nassau and had two daughters, Corine and Ashli.

Munnings spent 14 of her 15 years in the Bahamas working at the College of the Bahamas as coordinator of the Social Work Program and director of Field Instruction. She established the first after-school center for school-age children in Nassau.

Munnings returned to South Florida in 1995 and for six years she served as coordinator and Faculty Field instructor for the Academy for Better Communities Norland Triplex Field Unit, supervising social work interns. She was later appointed associate professor and then director of Field Education, posts she held until this April.

Gala's involvement in the desegregation movement in Dade County schools was documented in the Miami Herald series, "South Florida History - Miami Stories" and noted by Miami historian Arva Moore Parks. Articles written by Gala have been featured in the Miami Herald, the Bahamian periodical The Tribune and newsletters for Unity Church of the Bahamas and the Universal Truth Center.

Her survivors include daughters Corine Munnings, MD and Ashli Munnings, her mother, Mrs. Marie F. Brown, brother, John O. Brown Jr., MD, former husband, Frederick Munnings and many other family members and close friends.

Services will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday, June 18, at Universal Truth Center, 21310 NW 37th Ave., Miami Gardens. Remains will be cremated.