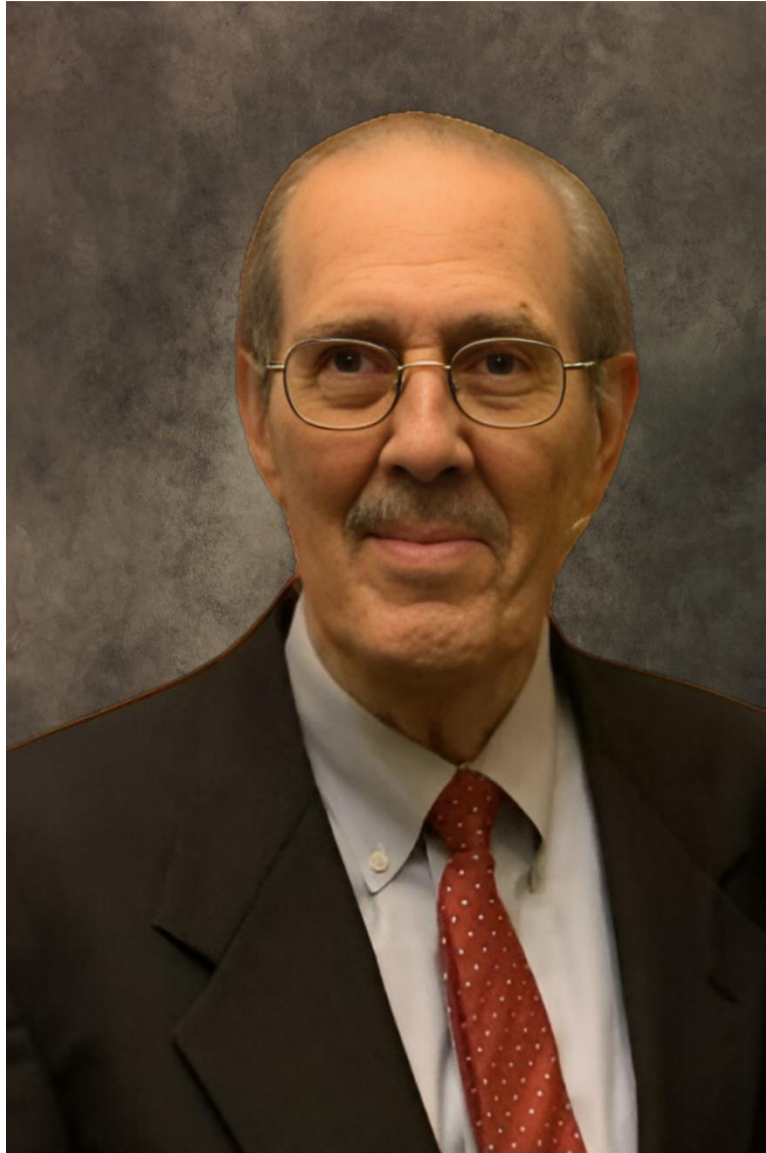


MEMORIAL SERVICE

Dr. Joseph Alphonso Pierce, Jr.



Friday, September 13, 2024

1:00 p.m.

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

1001 Walters Street

San Antonio, Texas 78220



Joseph Alphonso Pierce, Jr.

The foundational values that shaped the life of Joseph Alphonso Pierce, Jr. were developed and nurtured on the Black College and University campuses where he was raised. The cultural, academic and religious experiences gave meaning and direction to his life's journey. Our family is grateful to God that Joe's life spanned eighty-nine wonderful years.

Joseph (Joe) Alphonso Pierce, Jr. was born on August 13, 1935, in Marshall, Texas where his parents, Juanita George Pierce and Joseph A. Pierce, Sr., were young faculty members at Wiley College. Joe was their only child. It was the time of "the great debaters" and professors like Melvin B. Tolson, whose literature Joe would collect in adulthood. When Joe was three years old, the family moved to Atlanta, Georgia when his father accepted a teaching position in the graduate school of Atlanta University, his Alma Mater. Joe attended Oglethorpe Elementary School, where his mother also taught. He had fond memories of those years where he sold the popular Pittsburgh Courier and Ebony Magazines over a wide area of Atlanta on his bicycle. In Atlanta, Joe established life-long friends, made lasting memories, and was influenced by significant role models in this African American academic mecca.

When he was 13 years old, his mother and father, having both earned their doctorate degrees at NYU in 1945 and Michigan in 1938, respectively, accepted positions at the newly opened Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas. Upon earning his doctorate in Mathematics, Joe's father became the fifth African American at that time to do so. Joe enrolled in Jack Yates High School, and throughout his life, he boasted of the joy and pride he felt in being a Yates alumnus. He was especially proud of the superlative preparation of his teachers and the high-level academic competition of his peers. It was at Yates that Joe won two state championships in tennis doubles and in 1952 graduated ranked fourth academically in his class. During the summers of college and early medical school years, Joe worked as a lifeguard at the Emancipation Park swimming pool. He thoroughly enjoyed this job because he was working alongside his dear friends Ed Jones and James Teal. Joe graduated from Texas Southern University in 1957 with a major in Chemistry and minors in Mathematics and Biology.

In 1961, Joe earned a medical degree from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, one of the nation's oldest and largest historically Black academic health centers. After interning at Hubbard Hospital, also in Nashville, he entered the United States Army Medical Corps. Following one year in Korea and several months at Fort Ord, California, he was transferred to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas.

On March 1, 1964, Joe married Aaronetta Hamilton in Nashville, Tennessee at St. Luke CME Church. As newlyweds, they moved to San Antonio where Joe completed a residency in Anesthesiology at Brooke General Hospital at Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, and Aaronetta taught at Riley Junior High School in the San Antonio Independent School District. They enjoyed living in San Antonio and made many new friends. Their union was blessed with two sons, Joseph Aaron Pierce who was born in 1969 at the 2nd General Hospital in Landstuhl, Germany and Michael Arthur Pierce who was born in 1972 in San Antonio, Texas.

In 1967, the United States Army gave Major Pierce a military assignment to one of the largest military hospitals in Europe. For three years in Germany, he served as chief of the Anesthesia and

Operative Services at 2nd General Hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, and during that time, he attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. While there, he and Aaronetta travelled extensively throughout Europe, learning more about the culture and history of many countries. Joe particularly enjoyed visiting the great European museums and during that time he developed a lifelong appreciation for the visual arts.

In 1970, upon returning to the United States, Joe and Aaronetta chose to make San Antonio their home. Joe began a private practice as an anesthesiologist and worked very hard for 40 years. During those years, he served many patients and worked with a cadre of medical professionals who became dear friends. He worked in numerous local and national general medical organizations and the local and national Anesthesiology medical societies. He was one of five charter members of the C.A. Whittier Medical Society, an affiliate of the National Medical Association. He traveled to medical meetings across the country and had a favorite meeting in Los Angeles where he and dear friend, fellow Anesthesiologist, Dr. William Hadnott, always managed to take their golf clubs.

Joe nurtured his fervor for the visual art of African Americans as well as for books by African American authors. After seeing an exhibit by John Biggers at the Institute of Texan Cultures in the 1970's, he traveled to Houston and passed several hours listening to and learning from Dr. John Biggers, the founding chair of the Art Department at Texas Southern University. Dr. Biggers was so proud to see this young man whom he had watched growing up on the campus develop an interest in the visual arts. During that visit, Joe purchased four original drawings by John Biggers and several books that Dr. Biggers had authored. Thus, the Pierce collection of art and books by African Americans was born.

Joe continued to collect rare and out-of-print books, many of which were signed, for the remainder of his life. He ultimately amassed a collection of almost six thousand books. In 1984, he, Aaronetta and others founded the San Antonio Ethnic Art Society, and Joe also served as a board member of the African American Museum of Art and Culture in Dallas, Texas. His love of art and books was shared by Aaronetta and their sons. It enriched their lives immeasurably and gave major direction to their work. They created precious friendships with Maya Angelou, Alex Haley, and Joe's mother's Fisk University classmate and American historian, John Hope Franklin, and more.

Joe's greatest treasures were his sons. He loved them wholeheartedly and unconditionally, and he was very proud of them. He was devoted to them and was a monumental example for them. He shared his respect for our cultural legacy with them. Joe took them on numerous trips from Oregon to New York and from Nebraska to Florida as they pursued basketball and track and field competitions. They also enjoyed family trips and especially trips to the National Medical Association conventions, which opened the door for his sons to meet life-long friends from all across the country. Joe admired their academic and athletic accomplishments. He smiled with great respect when his son Joe graduated with a finance degree from Georgetown University as a varsity Track and field athlete and followed with joint graduate degrees, an MBA and JD from the Wharton School and Law School at the University of Pennsylvania. Michael followed a few years later, and Joe beamed with pride as Michael earned an undergraduate business degree in Marketing from Morehouse College and an MBA from Clark Atlanta University.

Joe had so many interests and recognitions during his lifetime. For example, for thirteen years, Joe was an investor in the San Antonio Spurs NBA Team. Joe and three other African American friends, Dr. James Hadnott, Dr. William Hadnott and Dr. Robert Hilliard likely became, without fanfare, the first African Americans to own a part of a major professional sports franchise in 1974. Spurs games were a high priority for the entire group of families.

In 1990, Joe and Aaronetta created Premier Artworks, Inc. to offer for sale art and books by African Americans. Joe also was a member of the Lone Star Chapter of Stein Collectors International. Joe greatly admired the design artistry as well as the biographical and historic significance of the stein manufacturers. He collected numerous porcelain, glass, and pewter steins.

In 1988, Joe was a charter member of Gamma Phi Boule of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. He was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, having been inducted into Delta Theta Chapter in 1955 when he was a student at TSU. In 2008, he was inducted into the Prairie View Interscholastic League Coaches Association Hall of Fame (PVILCA) for his high school tennis accomplishments. In 2011, he was honored as a golden son (fifty-year graduate) from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. In 2018, he was inducted into "History Makers", a national archive of African American leaders. He was also interviewed for the San Antonio Library Foundation Families of San Antonio archives.

Joe was the ultimate sports fan. He was known to even attend junior high school track meets, especially if he had read about an outstanding athlete or if a friend's son or daughter was competing. He enjoyed museums, reading, antiquing, golf and jazz. He rarely missed attending a Texas Relays or the U.S. Track and Field Olympic Trials. Through the years, he often attended conventions of the African American Museums Association and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). Joe was very proud of his cultural heritage, and he did all he could to preserve and promote it.

Joe's small nuclear family was blessed when the Bethel family joined his upon the marriage of his son, Joe, to Kama Bethel Pierce, Esq. in 1994. Kama's parents, Rev. Dr. Leonard Bethel and Veronica Bethel, are both retired college educators who share the Pierce family's civic, cultural, and academic commitment. Joe celebrated with joy and pride the births of his three grandchildren and became a classic "pied piper" communicating their accomplishments and growth, including each grandchild's college graduation.

Joe was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Aaronetta; sons Michael and Joseph; daughter-in-law Kama; grandchildren, Marco, Julian and Jasmine; sister-in-law, Sylvia Hamilton Thomas; nephew, Eirik Collins; cousin, Dr. Brenda Elaine Jones; godson, John Elihue Codwell III; goddaughter, Joy Hadnott Lewis; and a host of dear friends.



Lift Every Voice

By James Weldon Johnson

Lift ev'ry voice and sing,
till earth and heaven ring,
ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise
high as the list'ning skies,
let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us.
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun
of our new day begun,
let us march on till victory is won.
Stony the road we trod,
bitter the chast'ning rod,
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
yet with a steady beat,
have not our weary feet
come to the place for which our people sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.
We have come, treading our path thro' the blood of the slaughtered,
out from the gloomy past,
till now we stand at last
where the bright gleam of our bright star is cast.
God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
thou who hast brought us thus far on the way,
thou who hast by thy might
led us into the light,
keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;
lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;
shadowed beneath thy hand,
may we forever stand,
true to our God, true to our native land.

Order of Service

**Reverend Dr. Kenneth R. Kemp Officiating
Senior Pastor Antioch Missionary Baptist Church**

Prelude ~ Professor Oscar Ford, Jr., Antioch Minister of Music Emeritus

Processional

Scriptures

Old Testament ~ Ecclesiastes 3:1- 4

Rev. Dr. Robert Jemerson, Sr., Senior Pastor, Second Baptist Church

New Testament ~ I Corinthians 15:51-57

Rev. James P. Amerson, Senior Pastor, St. Paul UMC

Prayer

Rev. Jessica Kemp, Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

Assistant Chaplain, Trinity University

Memorial Service

Gamma Phi Member Boulé, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity

Solo — “Amazing Grace” ~ Juli Henderson, Longtime Friend, JH Voice Studio

Silent Reading of the Obituary ~ “Wind Beneath My Wings”

Expressions

Mayor Ron Nirenberg, City of San Antonio, Texas

Mr. John Jacob, Longtime Friend

Dr. John Codwell III, Godson

Dr. Judith Craven, Longtime Friend

Resolutions

Family Tribute

Mr. Joseph Pierce, Esq., Son

Solo — “The Greatest Love of All” ~ Juli Henderson

Eulogy — Reverend Dr. Kenneth R. Kemp

Hymn

“Lift Every Voice and Sing” ~ Professor Oscar Ford, Jr.

Recessional

“When Great Trees Fall”

By Maya Angelou

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall
in forests,
small things recoil into silence,
their senses
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly,
see with
a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines,
gnaws on kind words
unsaid,
promised walks
never taken.

Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.
Our souls, dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance,
fall away,
we are not so much maddened
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance
of dark, cold
caves

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.





Honorary Pallbearers

Class of 1961 Meharry Medical College
Delta Rho Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity,
Incorporated
Gamma Phi Member Boulé, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity

Nolan Anderson
Dr. Richard Anderson
Charles Andrews
Samuel Bacote, Jr.
Dr. Leonard Bethel
Dr. Amiel Bethel
Alrutheus (Ted)
Buchanan
Dr. Randall Burkett
Dr. Benny Callies
Cary Clack
Dr. John Codwell III

Dr. James Densler
Dr. Charles Dillard
Dr. Carl Dukes
Dr. Walter J. Duncan
Dr. Coyness L. Ennix
John Facey
Dr. Donald Gardner
Dr. Harris Gibson
Artis Gilmore
Dr. Frank Guridy
Dr. James L. Hadnott

Dr. William H.
Hadnott, III
Dr. George D. Hilliard
Ronald Hilliard
Dr. Freeman
Hrabowski
John E. Jacob
Edward C. Jones
Dr. Eddie Moore
Dr. Gurney Pearsall
Dr. James Pilgrim

Honorary Flower Bearers

Alpha Tau Omega Chapter
Alpha Alpha Xi Omega Chapter of
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated
The San Antonio (TX) Chapter of
The Links, Incorporated

Priscilla Hill-Ardoin
Veronica Bethel
Gloria Bryant
Judith Craven
Gwendolyn Hadnott
Madeline Hardy
Elena Huckaby
Barbara Lawrence

Linda Hope Lee
Matilda Louree
Patsy Campbell Petway
Jeanette Lofties Sims
Perry Anne Stith
Gertrudejane Stone
Lydia Stuckey

Sylvia Hamilton
Thomas
Flavia Walton
Alvia Wardlaw
Tracy Watts
Hildred Webb
Trudy Taliaferro

Acknowledgements

The family of Joseph A. Pierce, Jr. extends our heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming kindness, support and thoughtfulness shown by our many friends during this challenging time. Joe was a cherished member of our family and his memory will forever be etched in our hearts. We are immensely thankful for the many friends with whom he was blessed. A special thanks goes to all of you. We extend our sincere appreciation to his local doctors, and all of the healthcare professionals at University Hospital and Northeast Baptist Hospital for their unwavering care. We are especially grateful to Pastor Kenneth Kemp, First Lady Velma Kemp and everyone at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church for their many kindnesses. A special thanks to Francine Prosser-Johnson, Michelle Hayes, and Pat Casey for their multitude of kindness and support.

Reception

A reception will be held immediately following this service in the Antioch Sports Complex.

Funeral Arrangements Entrusted to
Lewis Funeral Home
San Antonio, Texas

Interment

Private Burial at Ft. Sam Houston Cemetery

In honor of Joe Pierce's life, donations may be made to The McDermott Fund at The Witte Museum, San Antonio African American Community Archives and Museum (SAAACAM), or Meharry Medical College Nashville, Tennessee.