

A Service of Remembrance

Prelude		
Processional		Family
Musical Selection	“How Great Thou Art”	Mr. Byron J. Barr
Invocation and Words of Comfort		Father Michael Okere
First Reading		Mr. Chikwe Njoku
Second Reading		Mr. Ogunna Njoku
Musical Selection	“One Moment In Time”	Ms. Tammy Brown
Reading of Obituary		Mr. Joel Njoku
Eulogy		Father Michael Okere
Remarks		Ms. Brenda Clark
Recessional Song	“Going Up Yonder”	Ms. Wygelia Palmer
Postlude		



Acknowledgement

We, the family of Dr. Eva Mary Njoku, would like to thank each and everyone for your many expressions of love and support shown to us, during the passing of our loved one. We pray the Lord blesses each of you in a very special way.

Services Entrusted To:

<p>Taylor Street Chapel 1831 Taylor Street Columbia, SC 29201 (803)771-7799 I. S. Leevy Johnson -Owner & Director-</p>	<p>Leevy's FUNERAL HOME Chris Leevy Johnson -President & Managing Director-</p>	<p>Lower Richland Chapel 9120 Garners Ferry Road Hopkins, SC 29061 (803) 776-6922 Leverette A. Williams, II -General Manager-</p>
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Home Going Service
In Loving Memory
of
DR. EVA MARY NJOKU

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2022
11:00 A.M.

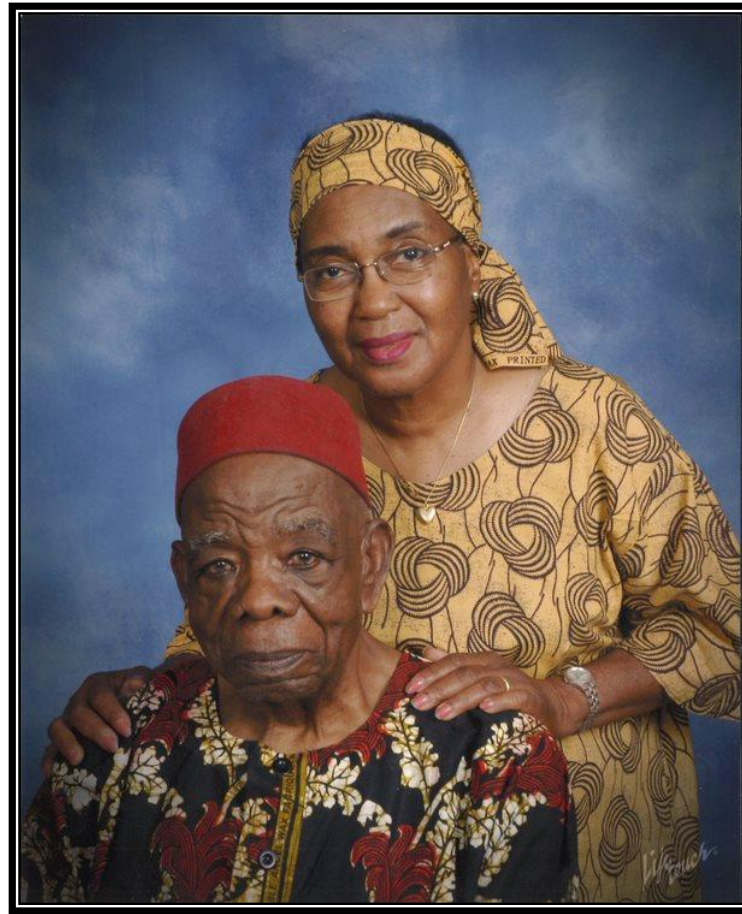
LEEY'S FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL
1831 TAYLOR STREET
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

Obituary

Dr. Eva Mary (Luchie) Njoku, affectionally known as Mary, passed away on Saturday, August 27, 2022. Mary was born on October 12, 1942, to Lewis Luchie, Sr. and Nettie Mae Haslem in Philadelphia, PA. She spent a considerable amount of time with her godparents, Charles and Laura Evans, her grandmother, Eva Cook, her church family at St. Paul Baptist Church, all of which influenced her at a young age. She graduated from West Philadelphia High School in (1959) and went on to Fisk University, in Nashville, TN (1964), where she majored in Sociology. Mary was dedicated to her education, but her passion was ballet. While attending Fisk, she danced with the likes of Judith Jaimeson, who went on to join the Alvin Ailey Dance Troupe in NYC.

After graduation, she traveled across the country visiting a Native American reservation and other sites. She began to explore her interest in assisting people especially children, young adults, and the disadvantaged, which began her interest in the field of social work. It was one of her cross-country trips when she was visiting Oregon where she met a young and ambitious Nigerian college student named Athanasius O. Njoku. He immediately fell in love with her and proclaimed that he would not rest until he had married her. He kept in contact with her via, phone, and by writing dozens of letters professing his love for his future wife. They married in June of 1967, at St. Paul Baptist Church in Philadelphia PA. After marrying, she traveled with her young husband to Illinois as he pursued his PhD in Economics. While in Illinois, she worked for a brief period as a case worker for the Illinois Children's Home, and Aid Society, where she identified adoptive homes for children with special needs, supervised foster care homes, and developed mentoring programs for unwed mothers. She later traveled with her husband to Sierre Leone in West Africa and served as a program assistant at the International School at the University of Njala. There she worked with local villages focusing on maternal and childcare health services and family planning. She later returned to Illinois where she continued to work with youth, serving as a Community Resource Coordinator for Illinois Children and Family Services at a local community center. She worked mainly on the issue of teen pregnancy and substance abuse while developing outreach strategies which later became the basis of the state's teen pregnancy prevention program. It was here in Illinois where she gave birth to her first son, Joel Uzodima Njoku in August of 1969.

In 1970, she and her young family relocated to Columbia, South Carolina when Athan, now Dr. Njoku, received a job as a professor at Benedict College. In 1972, they gave birth to their second son, Chikwe Celestine Njoku (March 1972) and later bought their first home in the Eau Claire section of north Columbia. Eva's commitment to her own education continued as she went on to receive her Masters of Social Work from the University of South Carolina (1974) and joined her husband working at Benedict College. She served as the Director of Social Work overseeing faculty development and advisement. In the spring of 1976, she gave birth to her third child, Ogunna Osisisugo Njoku. Despite having three young children, she continued to balance her work life, being a mother, wife, and daughter by still finding time to visit her parents and family in Philadelphia. One of her most enjoyable, though arduous, experiences was making the journey twice a year during Christmas and the summers to Philadelphia. The experience involved taking three young and spirited boys on a twelve-hour (12) train ride up the east coast to Philly. Those journeys were later replaced with road trips where she would drive from Columbia, SC to Richmond, VA and stay over at her brother Michael's before continuing to Philadelphia.



She loved being home on North 26th Street reconnecting with her parents, old friends, and spending time in her childhood home sharing stories with her kids on growing up in the neighborhood. These visits were supplemented with trips to various museums, the zoo, events, and shopping excursions before celebrating the holiday at her brother Lewis Luchie, Jr., and his wife Louella's home with their children and friends. These trips were some of her most cherished memories, as it brought together the family which was always important to her.

Mary worked at Benedict College from 1974 until 1992. During those years both she and Athan became well known to the Benedict College community. During her tenure there, she also served as Coordinator of Continuing Education and led the Social Work Program through accreditation and reaccreditation in 1980 and 1984. She also led it through reaffirmation in 1987 through 1994, in addition to developing evening and weekend programs for mature students and those seeking professional development. She also developed a specialized training program for Human Service workers for the State Department of Social Services seeking a Bachelors of Social Work for certification. In addition to all these academic efforts, she still maintained her relationship and love for dance. She choreographed and led the Benedict Dance Troupe during the 1980s putting on a major reproduction of 'The Wiz.' She received a standing ovation from the standing room only crowd at the conclusion of the performance in Benedict College's Dr. Henry Ponder Fine Arts Center. The production went around the state performing in several communities throughout that year, and she continued to teach modern dance for much of her tenure at the college.

She received her Doctorate in Education from the University of South Carolina in 1990. She worked for the South Carolina Health and Human Service Finance Commission where she managed a federal research grant to provide comprehensive treatment programs for Medicaid eligible pregnant women in Orangeburg and other parts of the State. She later worked as a visiting professor at South Carolina State University from 1995-2000 before becoming an Assistant Professor at the University in the Department

of Human Services -Social Work Program. Mary had a strong yearning for additional life experiences, traveling, and wanting to help others. In the summer of 1995, she was finally able to take her long-awaited trip to visit her husband's native home of Nigeria. She traveled with her husband, their son, Chikwe, and her mother, Nettie Luchie, and spent several weeks in his home, Chokonaeze in Imo State. There she was bestowed the title of "Lolo" which is the highest title for a woman in Ibo Culture.

Throughout her career, she completed over a dozen research projects many that were published and received several awards such as The South Carolina Legacy of Black Educators Award 1982; Benedict College Distinguished Faculty Award, 1985; Benedict College Faculty Award for Services, 1989. She was also a member of professional associations such as the National Association of Social Workers, a Certified Licensed Social Worker, a member of Phi Delta Kappa and the distinguished sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, where she was inducted into the Gamma Nu Omega Chapter.

She retired from South Carolina State University in 2014, and spent most of her retirement visiting her children, grandchildren, and family members while taking care of her husband, Athan, until he passed away in 2016. She tried to maintain an active lifestyle traveling and telling stories about her life and experiences of growing up in Philadelphia seeing James Brown and other stars of the 1950s and 1960s perform in North Philadelphia. This included sharing her prized program autographed by Harry Bellefonte and Sidney Poiter that she received while they were visiting Fisk University in the 1960s. She continued to attend ballet and dance performances with her favorites being 'The Nutcracker', 'Cats', the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, and other African Dance recitals. She also enjoyed the classic horror movies of her youth such as Frankenstein, The Wolfman, Dracula to modern day Sci Fi movies and was often very comfortable sitting at home in her living room watching and critiquing these films and reminiscing over the times she saw them in the theaters during her youth.

She is preceded in death by: her parents, husband, Athan, brother, Lewis Luchie, Sr., his wife, Louella and leaves behind her brother, Michael (William) Luchie and his wife, Christine; her sons, Joel Njoku, Chikwe(Monica) Njoku, and Ogunna (Janet) Njoku, five grandchildren whom she loved immensely, Azunna, Reagan, Amara, Nneoma, and Obi; three nieces, Wanda (Ustice) Luchie, her husband, Charlie and daughter, Sophia; Krista (Luchie) Brown, her husband, Arthur and their children, Arrington and Ella; and Michanett Luchie, and her son, Cameron.

Mary was a loving, caring, kind, and genuine person who always put the needs of her family and others above herself. She touched thousands of people either by providing information and services to them early on in her career, to educating them through her tenure at Benedict College and South Carolina State University or conducting research and providing data that would be used to create programs to improve their lives; and simply by listening, providing advice and showing an interest in them. She was generally a quiet person but was passionate about her beliefs and would not hesitate to make them known. Her legacy will live on especially in her granddaughters from Reagan's leadership abilities and interest in human service; to Amara's love for ballet and dance along with her inquisitiveness and interest in conducting research; to Nneoma's creative and artistic abilities along with her athleticism. Each of them represents various aspects of Mary's personality that will allow her to continue to live on in our hearts and minds through the next generation. Though the curtain may have closed and she has taken her final bow on this part of her life, Act II has begun. Athan has extended his hand for her to join him in this last dance. This is one that will last from now until eternity with God, his angels, and those who have gone before her as the audience. Her soul is now free and she can soar among the clouds....for one final performance...one that has no end.

We love you mom. May God Bless you as you rest in peace Amen