



HOME GOING EDITION: 85

HENRY

The Late

Frankie
MAE KEELING HENRY

A LIFE WELL-LIVED WITH UNWAVERING FAITH, PURPOSE AND POWER.
CALLING: OCTOBER 25, 1940
CROWN: MAY 2, 2026



THE LAST
Frankie
MAE
KEELING HENRY

*The Journey Within:
Chapters of Faith, Purpose and Power.*

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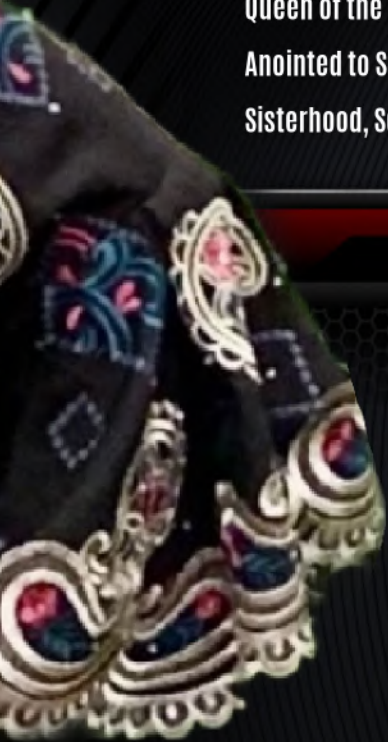
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ALLEN



KZ



Frankie Mae Keeling Henry: A Life Well-Lived with Unwavering Faith, Purpose and Power.

Frankie Mae Henry was born to Richard Keeling and Johnnie Gunn Keeling, a cherished daughter and sibling in a family rich with love and legacy. From her earliest years, music filled her world — a gift that no one taught her and no classroom could contain. As a young girl, Frankie taught herself to play the piano simply by listening and watching her mother play, both at home and in the church. What began as quiet observation became a lifelong relationship with music that would follow her across decades and stages. She gave her life to the Lord early on, and that foundation of faith would anchor every chapter of her extraordinary life.

She came of age with beauty, boldness, and purpose, graduating from Cameron High School in 1958 — where she wore the title of Cheerleading Captain with pride and distinction. It was on those very grounds that she met the man who would become her greatest partner in life, James E. Henry, captain of the football team. What began as a high school romance would grow into a love story for the ages — a covenant that held strong through moves and milestones, through marches and music, through raising a family and building a legacy together, until Rev. Dr. James E. Henry was called home in 2021.

In 1959, Frankie enrolled at Tennessee A&I University with her eyes set firmly on the future. But destiny had an even greater assignment for her. As a sophomore, she was personally recruited to join the Nashville Sit-Ins alongside a young man named John Lewis — the same John Lewis who would go on to become one of the most celebrated civil rights leaders and congressmen in American history. She did not hesitate. She stepped forward, stood her ground, and placed herself on the front lines of the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville, helping to reshape the moral fabric of this nation. Her courage came at a cost — she was suspended from the university in 1960 as a direct result of her participation — but she never wavered, and she never apologized for doing what was right.

On October 26, 1961, Frankie and James Henry welcomed the greatest joy of their lives — their son, LaMont Kinnard Henry. In 1962, the young family packed up their world and relocated to Washington, D.C., where James pursued his law degree at the prestigious Howard University. Washington shaped them, stretched them, and strengthened them — and when their season in the nation's capital was complete, Frankie and her family returned home to Nashville, ready for the next great chapter.

Back in Nashville, Frankie did what she had always done — she got to work. She reenrolled at Tennessee A&I and refused to let anyone or anything write the end of her academic story. With the same determination that had carried her through picket lines and cross-country moves, she earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in 1972, proving once and for all that a detour is never a dead end.

Armed with her degrees and an unshakeable calling to serve, she joined Metro Nashville Public Schools as a certified Physical Education teacher around 1972-1973. For over 30 years, she showed up — not just as an educator, but as a mentor, a model, and a force of nature in the lives of Nashville's young people. She poured herself into every student she encountered and built a career that was as impactful as it was enduring, retiring with honor in 2006.

South Nashville's Starts and The Family's Heart

But Frankie was never just one thing. She was a woman of multitudes. From 1973 to 1978, she sang and recorded with the Johnson Ensemble, bringing her voice to audiences and leaving her mark in the world of gospel and inspirational music. And in 1978, she joined the 21st Century Singers on their celebrated Sunday Night Fever album — a testament to a woman whose talent refused to be confined to any single arena.

On October 31, 1987, Frankie was initiated into Nashville Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, as a proud and distinguished member of "The Classic 22." She was also a devoted member of Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., Nashville Capitol City Chapter, where she joined in 1992 and lovingly served as choreographer of the formal Gala ball dance for the bi-annual Beautillion.

Frankie also stood tall as a proud member of the NAACP, carrying forward the same activist spirit that moved her to action decades earlier on the streets of Nashville. And in a nod to her joy, her humor, and her zest for life, she was a beloved member of the following organizations: Fantasia in Red of the Red Hat Society, National Education Association (NEA), Tennessee Education Association (TEA), Metropolitan Nashville Education Association (MNEA), Tennessee Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (TAHPER), Phi Delta Kappa Sorority, Inc., National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, Inc., the Nashville Student Movement Legacy Foundation, Cameron High School Alumni Association, The Cameron Singers, and W.O.M.E.N.'S Ministries (Wives of Ministers Embracing Newness).

She was preceded in death by her devoted Husband: Rev. Dr. James E. Henry; Father: Richard Keeling; Mother: Johnnie Gunn Keeling; Sisters: Eleanor Keeling and Elizabeth Ann Keeling; and Brother: William Richard Keeling (affectionately known as Sonny)

She leaves to cherish her memory her Son: LaMont Kinnard (Claudia) Henry; Granddaughter: Christian Lanae (Chrissy) Henry; Great-Grandson: Kaleb Levi Lamont Baxter; Sisters: Minnie Theresa Fletcher and Loretta Boyd; Brother: Kenneth Kinnard (Reba) Keeling; Sisters-In-Law: Terra Keeling, Nelda Goodgames of Tampa, Florida and Alice McDade of Cincinnati, Ohio; Brothers-In-Law: Roderick Henry and Walter (Barbara) Henry Jr. of Cincinnati, Ohio; a beloved host of Nieces, Nephews, God-children, Sorority Sisters, Sons and Daughter in the Ministry, The Mt. Ararat Baptist Church Family, and cherished family friends whose lives she touched in ways words can scarcely measure.

Frankie did not simply pass through this world — she transformed it. She marched when it was dangerous. She sang when the world needed a song. She taught when a generation needed guidance. She loved fiercely, served humbly, and lived with a fullness that most only dream of. The footprints she leaves behind are too many to count and too deep to ever be erased.

Well done, thy good and faithful servant!

















COURAGE

Frankie Henry

Counter Seats **and**
KEELING
Courage

I CAME TO
NASHVILLE
NOT TO BRING INSPIRATION,
BUT TO GAIN INSPIRATION FROM
THE GREAT MOVEMENT
THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE
IN THIS COMMUNITY.
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.





Her fight for freedom gave generations hope

When you think about the impact of someone's life, many think about family, careers or even economic or social status. But for Frankie Mæ Keeling Henry, her impact truly became historical.

While it was never her intent to become involved in the Civil Rights Movement, she, along with other young Black college students in Nashville, helped to turn the tide in this nation. Their courageous efforts led Nashville to become the first city in the South to desegregate its lunch counters.

At age 19, Frankie enrolled at then-Tennessee State A&I University to begin her educational journey. Her plan was to focus on her studies, socialize with friends and have an opportunity to participate in her favorite pastime – dancing. However, in just a short period, her academic pursuits turned into activism when she met Diane Nash, a Fisk University student who, at the time, Frankie initially mistaken to be a white woman.

Nash asked Frankie if she would accompany her to downtown Nashville and, when Frankie agreed, that's when her life would forever change. In an interview with Tennessee Lookout (March 2, 2021), Frankie said, "I asked myself, 'what does this white girl [Diane Nash] want with me?'" Then while walking through The Arcade, a strip of enclosed stores in downtown Nashville, Frankie noticed several Black students sitting at whites-only counters. "They're going to get in trouble," Henry said, before learning that the students were in the middle of a citywide movement to protest segregation.

Frankie soon decided to join those students in their peaceful protests, staging sit-ins at downtown diners. And so, her place in history had begun.

The fight to end segregation in Nashville was not without battle scars. As peaceful as the protestors were, some in the white community wanted to keep things the same, and violently attacked and hurled racial slurs at the students. Frankie knew segregation was wrong and she was willing to put herself in harm's way to change things.

She adopted the nonviolent tactics of the movement designed to combat the ignorance and unjust treatment experienced by racism. Some of the abuse she suffered was being called the N-word, being burnt by a lit cigarette, and eventually being arrested with fellow protestors and spending two weeks in a jail cell where they were forced to sleep on cold steel bunk beds with no mattresses or blankets.

In 1961, along with other members of the Nashville Student Movement, Frankie boarded a bus to Birmingham, Alabama as part of the Freedom Rides. Once again, the group was met with arrests; but there was no turning back. A change was going to come. And it did.

Along with her active involvement in the movement, Frankie never took her focus off education and was determined to complete her degree. After graduating from college, she continued the fight for equality. As an educator, she taught generations of students, as well as passing along life lessons that spoke to the power of inclusivity, kindness and doing the right things.

I was blessed to have met and been in the great company of "Mrs. Frankie" during my time as a co-producer for the Dr. Bobby Jones Presents show airing on the Impact Network. She was involved in helping to spread the word about the show's monthly tapings and gaining audience participation from across the city. In the time we shared time together, she told me about some of her experiences during the Civil Rights Movement and the importance of "never giving up the fight for what's right." I will fondly remember her brilliant smile, adorning hats, and spirited personality, but most importantly, her wise words.

Let us always remember Frankie's brave sacrifices that opened doors and provided access for so many generations who came behind her. She truly made the most of the hyphen in her life – from the day she was born until her final transition – and her contributions will forever leave an indelible mark not only on Nashville, but the entire nation.

- Dr. K. Dawn Rutledge



Dr. K. Dawn Rutledge & Frankie M. Henry

Her faith, her voice, her courage - even jail
could not silence Frankie Keeling

Counter Seats and

KEELING *Courage*



THE CLOSING SERVICE OF A LIFE WELL-LIVED

A Life Well-Lived with Unwavering Faith, Purpose, and Power

10:00 AM | Entrance and Seating of the Family

10:00 - 11:30 AM | Public Viewing

11:30 AM | Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Omega Omega Service

FINAL SALUTE & CLOSING OF THE CASKET | LaMont K. Henry, Son
Saxophone Tribute by Austin Wille
Neighbor of Rev. Dr. James E. and First Lady Frankie M. Henry

Service

Liturgist: Pastor Keaton C. Walkine

CALL TO ORDER | Pastor Keaton Walkine
Mt. Ararat Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

SCRIPTURE | Pastor Eric Stevenson
Greater Harvest Church of God In Christ, Nashville, TN

INVOCATIONAL PRAYER | Rev. Morgan Branch, Son in the Ministry
Mt. Ararat Missionary Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

MINISTRY IN SONG | First Lady Frankie M. Henry Celebration Choir
"I Shall Wear a Crown"
Lead Vocalist: Velma Smith, Cousin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & RESOLUTIONS | Mrs. Claudia Henry, Daughter-In-Love

EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE | Hon. Zulfat Suara, Councilmember-At-Large

"DEAR MOMMA" | LaMont K. Henry, Son

MINISTRY IN SONG | First Lady Frankie M. Henry Celebration Choir
"All My Life, God's Been Good to Me"
Lead Vocalist: Evertt Drake

A MOMENT OF SILENCE | 1 MINUTE

VIDEO TRIBUTE | Pastor Hervis L. Bain III, Son in the Ministry
Bahamas Harvest Church, Nassau, Bahamas

VIDEO TRIBUTE | The Rt. Hon. Bishop Delton D. Fernander, Son in the Ministry
Pastor, New Destiny Baptist Cathedral, Nassau, Bahamas • President of the Bahamas Missionary & Educational Convention • Immediate Past President of the Bahamas Christian Council

ORDER OF SERVICE



CONDOLENCES | KINDLY LIMIT TO NO MORE THAN 3 MINUTES

AMBASSADOR DR. BOBBY JONES | Beloved Friend

PASTOR KEITH A. KERSHAW | Cousin to the late, Rev. Dr. James E. and First Lady
Frankie M. Henry
Genesis Church of God in Christ, Columbia, SC

PASTOR JIMMY GREER SR. | Beloved Friend
Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

PASTOR VINCENT C. JOHNSON | Son in the Ministry
Community Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

PASTOR JAMES "TEX" THOMAS | Beloved Friend
Pastor Emeritus, Jefferson Street Missionary
Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY | Elder Emmanuel Barnes, Son in the Ministry
Pastor Emeritus, Mt. Ararat Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

FINAL REMARKS | Pastor Keaton Walkine, Mt. Ararat Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

RECESSIONAL | "I Just Want to Praise You!"

Committal

Interment: Historical Greenwood Cemetery Main
1428 Elm Hill Pike | Nashville, TN 37210

For those traveling in the funeral procession, please turn on your hazard (flashing) lights and remain close to the vehicle ahead to ensure a smooth and uninterrupted commute. We kindly ask that you follow the lead car and avoid unnecessary stops or lane changes so the procession may arrive together safely and without delay. Thank you for your cooperation and care as we honor our beloved First Lady Frankie Mae Henry.





QUEEN *Keys*
of the
SHE LIVED FOR THE
MUSIC
SHE BREATHED



The Late, Mrs. Johnnie Keeling

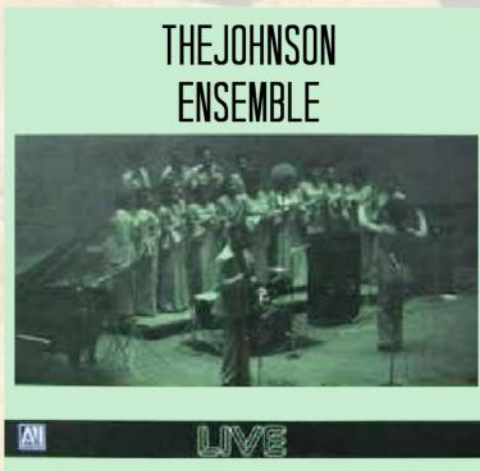
“Ma Meeka”

Mother of First Lady, Frankie Mae Henry





THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SINGERS



QUEEN OF THE KEYS SHE LIVED FOR THE MUSIC SHE BREADED

A Song in Her Soul

The Musical Legacy of Mrs. Frankie Mae Henry

Written by LaMont and Christian Henry, assisted by Mrs. Carolyn Jennings, Cameron High School Alum and Classmate

Some people find music.

Frankie Mae Henry was born into it.

Long before the stages, the recording studios, and the gospel choirs, a little girl was sitting in the pews of Saint Paul AME Church in the 1950s, watching her mother's hands move across the piano keys. No one sat her down for a lesson. No one handed her a book of scales. Frankie Mae simply watched, listened, and one day — she played. She taught herself entirely by ear, by instinct, and by the grace of God, and what emerged was a gift so natural and so powerful, it would carry her through nearly every chapter of her life.

The Church Years — *Where It All Began*

The church was her first stage, and she honored it faithfully. Frankie went on to play for some of Nashville's most beloved congregations and their shepherds, including:

- King Solomon Baptist Church — under the Late, great Rev. Morgan Babb
- Watson Grove Baptist Church — under the Late, Rev. Curtis Goodwin
- Tabernacle Baptist Church — under the Late, Rev. Richard Hunt
- Mount Ararat Baptist Church — under the Late, Rev. Julius Scruggs, Rev. David Groves, alongside her husband, the Late, Rev. Dr. James E. Henry and Elder Emanuel Barnes

In every sanctuary she served, Frankie did not just play music — she ministered through it.

Cameron High School & The G's

— A Star in the Making

While excelling as a student and cheerleading captain at Cameron High School in the late 1950s, Frankie Mae was also a proud member of the "Cameron High Singers", but her musical ambition didn't stop there. She and a few of her friends formed an independent group that would become one of the most remarkable untold stories in Nashville's music history — The G's.

The members of The G's were:

- Budenia Kenkacha-Jordan
- Gloriadean Easley
- Leola Alkerson Collum
- Rosetta Bonner
- Louise Lavender
- Carolyn Armstrong Jennings
- Mildred Smith-Riley

These young women — gifted, bold, and years ahead of their time — secured an Atlantic Records recording contract and cut a demo. The song was called "I Sold My Heart to the Junkman." Atlantic Records! A demo! A contract! These high school girls from Nashville had done what most artists spent a lifetime chasing. But fate had a different plan. The parents of the young ladies made the decision not to sign the contract.

The next group in line to record that very song was Patti and the Blue Belles. The rest, as they say, is history.

It is a moment that speaks not to what was lost, but to how extraordinary Frankie Mae Henry and her sisters in song truly were — talented enough to stand at the very same door that opened for one of the greatest voices in the history of American music.

The 1960s — *Singing Behind the Legends*

The G's did not slow down. Through the 1960s, the group sang background for some of the most iconic names in American music, sharing stages and studio spaces with:

- Ray Charles
- Joe Tex
- Larry Birdsong
- Bobby Hebb
- Jimmy Church

Frankie Mae Henry stood in the company of legends — and held her own.

The 1970s

— Gospel, Ensemble, and the Recording Studio

Never one to rest on her gifts, Frankie Mae continued to pour herself into music throughout her professional career. From 1973 to 1978, she sang and recorded with the Johnson Ensemble, bringing her voice to gospel audiences across the region. In 1978, she joined the 21st Century Singers on their celebrated Sunday Night Fever album. She closed out a decade of recording with the same fire she had carried since those early days at Saint Paul AME.

From a little girl watching her mother play, to Atlantic Records, to the gospel stage — the musical life of Mrs. Frankie Mae Henry was nothing short of extraordinary. She sang through the Civil Rights Movement, through raising a family, through three decades in the classroom, and through every season life placed before her.

The music never left her because it was never just something she did. It was who she was.



Carolyn Jennings with Frankie Mae Henry

THE KAZI CRAFT





LEADING LADY, FRANKIE M. HENRY

ANOINTED & *Appointed*

Anointed to Serve, Appointed to LEAD:
Her Worship, Her Witness, Her Walk

First Lady Henry served and led faithfully in the church from childhood, remaining an integral part of its life for all her days. From her earliest years, she became woven into the very fabric of the Mt. Ararat ministry — her presence strengthening every corner of the church.

She served in numerous capacities: Minister of Music, Women's Ministry Director/Advisor, Choir Director, and organizer of many multiple praise teams. She brought health and joy to the congregation by teaching exercise classes at Mt. Ararat, always finding new ways to uplift both the body and the spirit. Her devotion to the church's growth and well being never wavered.







hella
Black.
hella
Proud

I MATTER. YOU MATTER. WE MATTER.

BACK
VOTERS
MATTER

BlackVotersMatterFund.org



WYKE

THE LATE
Frankie
MAE
KEELING HENRY







SISTERHOOD

Service, and the
that stood!

strength





RT
KIN



POST CAFE
PASTICCERIA
ICE-CREAM



FRANKIE

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS...

PALLBEARERS

- Lonell Bennett
- James Ford Sr.
- Prince William Ford
- Sir James Ford
- Deadrick Patton
- Archie L. Robinson Jr.
- Sam Taylor
- Warren Thomas

HONORARY PALLBEARERS

(Nephews & Friends)

- Bufford Barbie
- David Lee Brooks
- Hosea Cabknor Jr.
- Rodney Cabknor
- Richard Fletcher
- Taylen Fletcher
- Tyler Fletcher
- Victor Fletcher Sr.
- Victor Fletcher Jr.
- Trent French
- Derrick Smith
- Jerry Davis

FLOWER BEARERS

(Nieces & God Daughters)

- Sharonda Bradford
- Tachiquanna Cabkor
- Falecia Cox
- Jamesia Cox
- Mya Cox
- Crystal Fletcher
- Ikiyia Fletcher
- Asjah Hall
- Jazz Hawkins
- Kai Hawkins
- Jessica Jackson
- Angie Jefferson
- Emiah Johnson
- Etana Johnson
- Eyden Johnson
- Jennifer Keeling
- Jothanie Ladd
- Ishaya Marsh
- Madajha Mitchell
- Keyona Moxey
- Thea Murray

Prayer without works is dead.” James 2:17

Frankie
MAE
KEELING
HENRY



A LIFE LIVED WITH UNWAVERING FAITH, PURPOSE, AND POWER.

With our hearts filled with enormous gratitude, thank you for honoring the life and legacy of our beloved "Chrissy-Pool!" Her life was rooted in Service, Justice, Ministry, Education, Music and Family — a life poured into people, community, and change. Whether she was lifting her voice for civil rights, shaping young minds, leading with grace as First Lady, mentoring with wisdom, or breathing life into every note she played, she gave all of herself with love. Your presence, your prayers, your stories, and your kindness remind us how deeply she touched the world. Thank you for standing with us, praying for us, celebrating her journey, and carrying her light forward in your own lives. We are forever grateful for your kindness as we carry the trailblazing legacy of the late Frankie Mae Keeling Henry forward. May God bless you "Real, Real Good!"

LaMont, Claudia, Christian and Kaleb

LEWIS & WRIGHT
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Signature
creations

Memorial keepsake lovingly prepared by LaMont, Claudia and Christian. Designed by Goddaughter, Donella Johnson

www.SIGNATURECREATIONS.net

SCAN THE QR CODE TO VIEW THE DIGITAL FLIPBOOK