

FORMER STATE SENATOR
RONALD L.

Rice

Standing Ovation and Applause for Ronald L. Rice



Seasons of a Life Well Lived

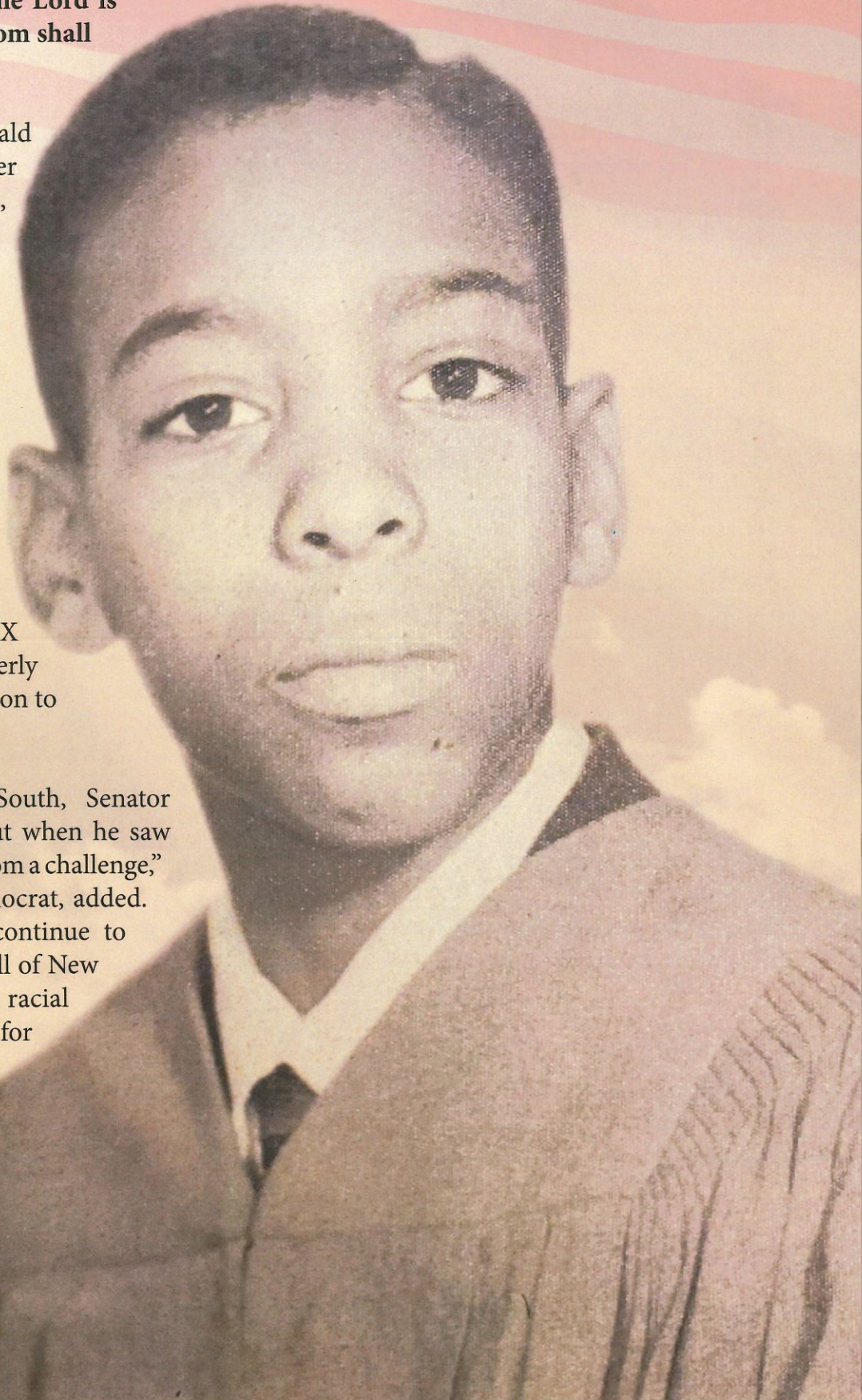
Spring - Birth to Childhood

Psalm 27:1; “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

New Jersey State Senator Ronald Louis Rice was born on December 18, 1945, in Richmond, Virginia, the son of Mary Sue King and Bennie Rice. Ron found his way to Newark when he was 9 in the wake of his parents’ divorce, after a judge sent him north to New Jersey to be with his father. He remembered tough economic times for his dad, Bennie Rice, who worked as a barber. “There were many days when he didn’t cut a head of hair,” Ron recalled.

He graduated from Malcolm X Shabazz High School (formerly South Side HS) in 1964 and went on to Howard University.

“Born in the Jim Crow-era South, Senator Rice never hesitated to speak out when he saw injustice, nor did he back down from a challenge,” Governor Murphy, a fellow Democrat, added. “His legacy and example will continue to inspire this administration and all of New Jersey’s leaders to work toward racial equity and expand opportunity for underserved communities.”



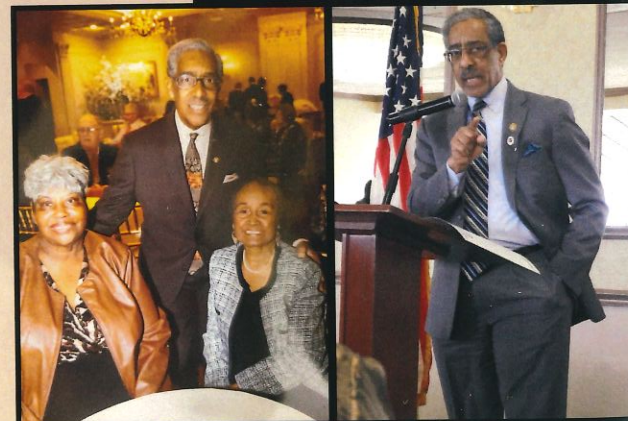
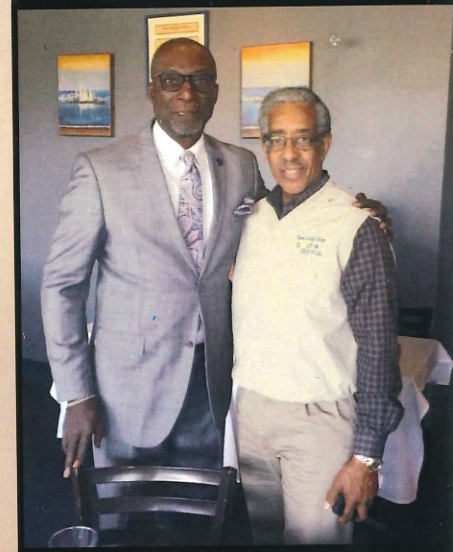
Fall - 40-60 yrs

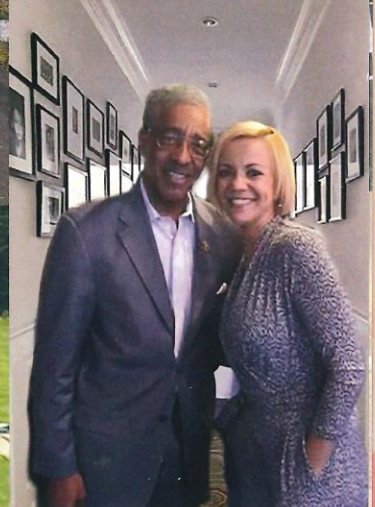
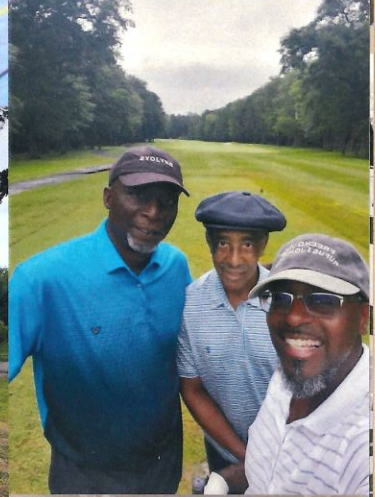
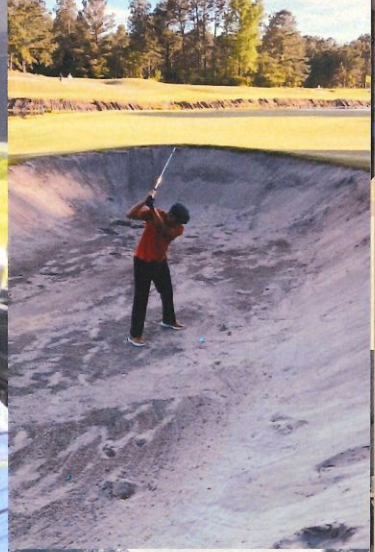
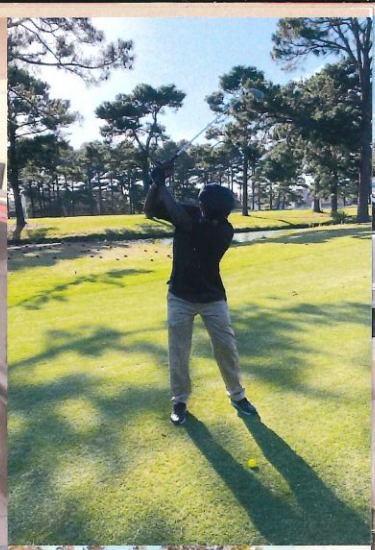
Micah 7:7-8; "As for me, I look to the Lord for help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me....For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light."

In 1986, Ron was the first elected councilman to endorse then Councilman-At-Large Sharpe James for Mayor. Following the death of New Jersey State Senator John P. Caufield in August 1986, Ron was elected in a special election to serve the 28th Legislative District. He was seated on December 4, 1986.

In the New Jersey State Senate, Ron began a leadership and service style that has become the model for legislative leaders of color in New Jersey and throughout the nation. He was the leading statewide voice on decriminalization of marijuana and expungement, housing, and police reform. Always fighting for the 28th District's "fair share," he applied skills honed on the Newark City Council, leveraging his legislative power of the purse during the budget and appropriations process to force state administrations, both Democrat and Republican, to act upon the priorities demanded by the residents of the 28th Legislative District, communities of color, and urban areas throughout New Jersey.

He served as Assistant Majority Leader 1990-91, Assistant Deputy Minority Leader 1994-97, Associate Minority Leader 1998-2001, and Assistant Majority Leader 2008-09. Named chair of the New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus Chair in 2003, Ron grew the size, strength, influence, and power of the caucus to unprecedented levels. Under his direction, and at the center of his heart, the caucus developed the most extensive database of Black elected officials statewide. With his leadership, it forged partnerships and alliances with colleges and universities to develop and promulgate policy initiatives.





Winter 70+ yrs

Isaiah 43:1-2; "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name. you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you."

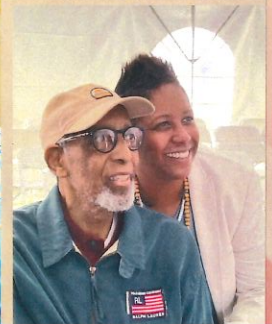
Senator Rice was an active member of several national organizations including, but not limited to, the NAACP and the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO) and was the recipient of many awards and honors too numerous to mention.


Any recognition of Senator Rice and his work would be incomplete without the mention and honoring of his Queen, wife and now partner reconnected in heaven, Shirley N. Rice. Shirley was Ron's anchor, the love of his life, his confidant, and his protector for 35 years since their marriage in 1985.

Still rail-thin and a self-described workaholic, Rice in his letter of resignation last August said that "despite the fervor of my commitment to the office and the depth of my dedication to my constituents and the people of New Jersey, circumstances beyond my control now force my retirement from this distinguished body."

He was one of New Jersey's most outspoken lawmakers and advocates for social justice.

Often a thorn in the side of governors and mayors over issues he felt passionate about, former state senator Ron Rice spent 35 years in the New Jersey Legislature, 18 of them as a founder and chairman of the state Legislative Black Caucus. Ronald L. Rice was the longest serving African-American state legislator in New Jersey history.





Ron's quotes:

"I am not a politician; I am an elected official"

"Yeah, I'm the craziest guy down there," Rice said in a 2006 interview with *The Star-Ledger*. "But I'll tell you this: I'm the sixth-most senior of the 40 senators. Maybe they should be more crazy for the people they represent."

Rice was also an outspoken opponent of legalizing cannabis in New Jersey. While favoring decriminalization, he believed recreational marijuana would devastate the quality of life in urban communities, flooding African American and Latino communities with destructive drugs. "I think this whole legalization stuff needs to slow down," Rice said at a news conference at the Statehouse in Trenton, calling it a money bill what would create a windfall for wealthy and white Wall Street investors. "I don't want to be any part of that," he said.

"Every move I made was to elevate others, to benefit my community and my constituents. I was never bought, and I was never bossed. I engaged in political scuffles and heated campaigns," he wrote. "Still, after the Senate vote or election day, we put our differences behind us and went on to work together to accomplish great things."

Words from his colleagues

"He was a trailblazer and icon who never compromised his ideals or principles," Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo Jr. said.

Newark Mayor Ras Baraka said Rice — whose legislative district included parts of the city — was both "a warrior and diplomat" in Trenton, fervent in his fight for the needs of the city's residents and their quality of life.

"He was unwavering in his conviction that America will attain its highest ideals of liberty and justice and his sights were laser-focused on the long game of racial equality," Baraka said.

Gov. Phil Murphy, one of the many officials Rice sometimes defied, said in a statement he will sign an executive order directing government flags to fly at half-staff in the legislator's honor. Murphy called him "a fearless and passionate advocate for his constituents and a powerful champion for social justice" with a record of transformational legislative successes.

On the floor of the Senate, Rice was known for his candid demeanor and his often lengthy and sometimes impassioned speeches he would deliver in support, or defiance, of proposed legislation. Fellow Essex County Democratic Sen. Richard Codey would say that he would get calls all the time about his colleague. How do you talk to him, some would ask. "When he starts talking, don't interrupt," Codey would respond. "If you wait, he's a complete gentleman. He's just a wonderful and joyful human being."

Codey said Rice "went above and beyond to represent those he served by giving a thousand percent to fight for social justice and racial equality."

LeRoy Jones, chairman of the state Democratic Party and a former member of the state Assembly, said Rice "always spoke his mind, fought for the principles he believed in, and refused to back down" but was also a "gentleman who, regardless of whether or not he disagreed on a public policy issue, always maintained friendships and cordial relationships with everyone he encountered."

Cory Booker called Rice "a man who prided himself on his Newark roots" and lived life in accordance with his values of fairness, equality, justice, and redemption. "So many of us are better leaders and citizens because of his service and his example," he said. "Few Newark leaders leave a legacy in public service as profound as his."

State Senate President Nick Scutari, D-Union, called Rice an "accomplished and respected man who dedicated his life to the service of others" and "left his mark in meaningful and lasting ways."

Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz, D-Essex, said the state "lost a giant, a man who lived his commitment to public service over a lifetime of hard work, sacrifice and dedication."

Former Senate President Stephen Sweeney, D-Gloucester, called Rice a "titan for civil rights" and a "true public servant" who was "fearless and relentless in his advocacy for his community, his district and the underserved people of New Jersey."

Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, D-Middlesex, said Rice's "decades of service to his country and community were unparalleled in the Legislature" and "we will all cherish the lessons we have learned from our time with him."

Assemblyman Ralph Caputo, D-Essex, Rice's longtime district mate, called him "one of the most remarkable people I ever met — his energy, his intelligence, his integrity, compromising but never selling out." Former Assemblyman Jamel Holley, D-Union, said Rice was "the epitome of real leadership."

Senate Minority Leader Steve Oroho, R-Sussex, called Rice a "fierce advocate for his constituents and a colleague who was deeply respected on both sides of the aisle."

Essex County Sheriff Armando Fontoura, who worked with Rice in the Newark Police Department, said he was a "no-nonsense, straight-shooting, great street cop" who became a tireless advocate for those he served as an elected official.

U.S. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., said "few Americans have been able bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice," but "as evidenced by his numerous accomplishments, former New Jersey State Senator Ronald Rice was one of those Americans."

A daughters love for her father

You were my father
before you knew you would be.

That knowing continues uninterrupted, for all time,
we will know I am your daughter.

I can no longer wrap my arms around your chest,
but you are lodged in my heart.

I can no longer hear your footsteps,
but I can follow you.
humbly, with bare feet
knowing no mortal can fill your shoes.

Your shoes were stitched before you were born by the Designer
who already knew your path and the heights of your climb.

Your shoes were made and
molded for a mortal whose fearlessness transformed him into
myth-maker, dragon-slayer, voice for the victimized, shield for the shunned.

They were polished by every skirmish
and sweetness that sealed the sign of your love.

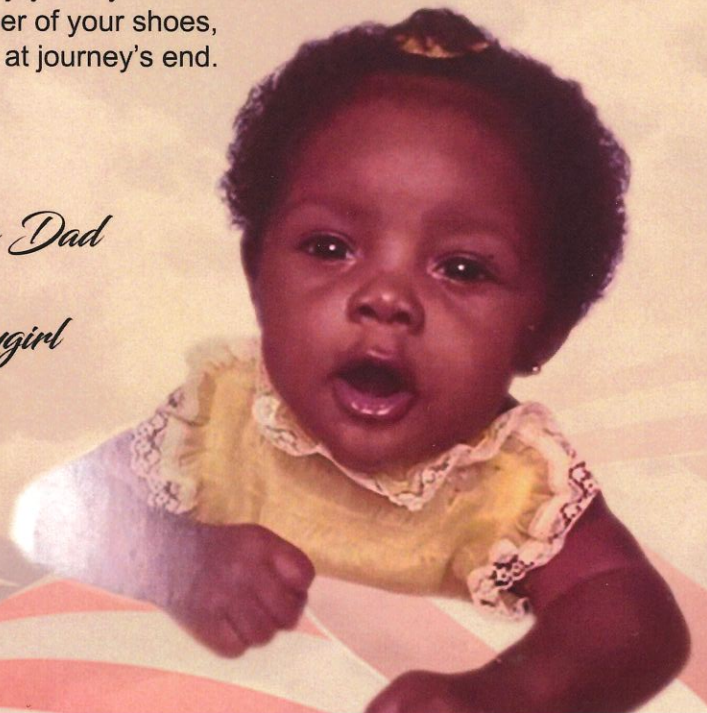
Your shoes shined with the glow of grace and gratitude.

Indeed –
Never
Ever

Will anyone ever fill your shoes.
But, I will walk along the trail you blazed,
with my bravest face, with joy in my broken heart
Knowing the Designer of your shoes,
has called you back at journey's end.

Love you Dad

Babygirl





I Am Free

DON'T GRIEVE FOR ME, NOW I AM FREE
I HAVE FOLLOWED THE PATH GOD HAS CHOSEN FOR ME,
I TOOK MY WIFE SHIRLEY AND GOD'S HAND WHEN I HEARD THEM CALL
I TURNED MY BACK AND LEFT IT ALL

I COULD NOT STAY ANOTHER DAY
TO WORK, LAUGH OR PLAY.
ANY TASKS LEFT UNDONE I KNOW THOSE MUST STAY THAT WAY
I HAVE NOW FOUND PEACE AT THE END OF THE DAY

IF MY LEAVING HAS LEFT A VOID,
MAY YOU FILL THEM WITH REMEMBERED JOY
A FAMILY EVENT, A GOLF GAME, A LAUGH, HUG, OR KISS
OH YES, THESE THINGS, I TOO WILL MISS.
BE NOT BURDENED WITH TIMES OF SORROW
LOOK FOR THE SUNSHINE OF LIFE LEFT TO LIVE TOMORROW.

AS YOU KNOW MY LIFE HAS BEEN FULL, I HAVE SAVORED SO MUCH
GREAT FAMILY, GOOD FRIENDS, GOOD TIMES, AND LOVE ONE'S TOUCH.

PERHAPS MY TIMES SEEM ALL TOO BRIEF
DON'T LENGTHEN YOUR PAIN WITH ANY UNDUE GRIEF.
LIFT UP YOUR HEART AND PEACE TO THEE,
GOD AND SHIRLEY WANTED ME NOW
FOR THERE IS NO MORE PAIN OR SICKNESS
MY SOUL HAS BEEN SET FREE!