



Mr. Brendus Carnell Cottrell

January 14, 1948 - May 14, 2026

Brendus “Carnell” Cottrell entered this world on January 14, 1948, in Northumberland County, Virginia, born to the late Agnes P. and Robert E. Cottrell. Raised in Baltimore, he was educated in the Baltimore City Public School System, where he first discovered the passion that would shape the course of his life—barbering. Even as a young man, Carnell’s talent was matched only by his generosity. He often visited senior living centers, offering free haircuts and shaves to residents, honing his craft while uplifting those around him.

Carnell was drafted into the United States Army and served honorably in Vietnam from 1968 to 1972. During this time, he welcomed his daughter, Tomika, into the world. After returning home from service, he pursued higher education at Coppin State College for two years before fully embracing his calling in the hair industry.

His professional journey began at Hair Masters Barbershop under the mentorship of Lawrence Kent. There, Carnell quickly distinguished himself as a master stylist, particularly renowned for his artistry with the iconic Afro. His skill earned him a historic achievement: becoming the first Black barber to win first place in the interracial Maryland–DC State Barber Association’s Afro Styling Contest.

Determined to expand his expertise, Carnell enrolled in cosmetology school. When told he would never succeed because he refused to learn the press and curl, he simply found another school—one that aligned with his vision and values. This resilience would become a hallmark of his life.

Carnell's entrepreneurial spirit flourished when he and his business partner, Floyd, opened Fingertips Hair Salon in Silver Spring, Maryland. Together, they developed the now-famous Kemi Oil, a product still sold in stores today. After achieving great success, Carnell felt a call to return home to Baltimore, where he opened the well-known Hair Dimensions hair salon on Maryland Avenue and 25th Street. He poured his knowledge into his staff, nurturing the next generation of stylists.

His talent and reputation carried him far beyond Baltimore. As a master stylist for Johnson Products, Carnell journeyed across Europe, Africa, and the United States, teaching his craft to diverse audiences. He became the trusted stylist for legendary groups such as The Four Tops and The Whispers, to name a few, whenever they performed in town. His expertise even earned him a small role in the film *The Hitter*.

After opening multiple Hair Dimensions salons throughout the city, Carnell returned to his roots in barbering. He taught high school students at the West Side Skill Center and mentored young men from the community, bringing them into his shop and giving them a trade, a purpose, and a future. When he later moved his 25th Street salon to Liberty Heights Avenue, it blossomed into a thriving barbershop and salon.

In a full-circle moment, Carnell eventually became the owner of Hair Masters Barbershop—the very place where his career began—after his mentor Lawrence Hall retired. Fellow business owners affectionately called him “the Mayor” of the shopping center, recognizing his leadership, advocacy, and

unwavering commitment to community uplift. Through his connections, he organized back-to-school events, providing children with school supplies and free computers. He was always dreaming of ways to strengthen the community he loved.

Carnell also played a pivotal role in bringing the AFRAM Festival to Baltimore. In 1974, the Baltimore Downtown Promotion Office approved the 1976 American Bicentennial celebration proposal submitted by Carnell and his dear friend Skip. The approval included a partnership with Baltimore City's Urban Services, and from that collaboration, the Afro-American Bicentennial Exposition—and ultimately AFRAM 1976—was born. Little did either know that their proposal would become one of the largest African American cultural festivals on the East Coast. For many years, he worked tirelessly to secure the venue, coordinate vendors, and organize entertainment—laying the foundation for a celebration that continues to thrive today.

After 39 remarkable years in the hair industry, Carnell retired and embraced a new creative passion: art. He took classes at the Community College of Baltimore County, exploring various mediums and discovering yet another way to express his boundless creativity.

Throughout his life, Carnell touched countless lives with his talent, generosity, and unwavering belief in others. He was a mentor, an innovator, a community pillar, and a man who gave freely of himself. His impact will continue to echo through the many people he taught, inspired, and uplifted.

Carnell will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Carnell was preceded in death by his daughter, Tomika Bates, whom he dearly loved.

He leaves to cherish his memory: his sister, Andrea Cottrell; grandson, Corliss

Bates; granddaughter, Toni Bates; niece, Danielle Lott; great-niece, Madison Neally; aunt, Lillie Kearney (Robert); son, Perryn Braswell (Susan); a special friend, Patti Lewis; and a host of other relatives and friends.

Cemetery Details

Garrison Forest Veterans

11501 Garrison Forest Road
Owings Mills, MD

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 10. 4:00 PM - 6:30 PM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore
4300 Wabash Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215
(410) 542-2400
info@marchfh.com

Wake

JUN 11. 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

March Life Tribute Center, P.A. - Randallstown
5616 Old Court Road
Windsor Mill, MD 21244
(410) 655-0110
<https://www.marchlifetributecenter.com>

Celebration of life with live streaming

JUN 11. 11:30 AM (ET)

March Life Tribute Center, P.A. - Randallstown
5616 Old Court Road
Windsor Mill, MD 21244
(410) 655-0110
<https://www.marchlifetributecenter.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *March Funeral Homes created a Webcast in memory of Mr. Brendus Carnell Cottrell*



March Funeral Homes - May 26 at 03:47 PM



“ *Carnell you were someone special gifted talented , a rare gem 💎 . I'm Blessed and grateful to have had you in my life. Forever Dora*

Doreatha Hill - June 09 at 10:32 AM

CB

“ *Carayn Blake lit a candle in memory of Mr. Brendus Carnell Cottrell*



Carayn Blake - June 08 at 11:44 AM

BM

“ *Brenda McNeil-Bowie sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Brendus Carnell Cottrell*



Brenda McNeil-Bowie - June 03 at 12:42 PM

BM

“ *The only brother I knew who owned a flute, drove a Jensen Healy (convertible), great barber, introduced blow hair to Baltimore women. Our Initial connection Edgewood St., Dofield Barbers, upon completion of beauty school, a stylist at his Hair Dimensions Salon. His yellow house/Gwynn Oak Avenue. Enclosed are pics of Floyd Kenyetta, Carnell's super (lil sister) Andrea Michelle & me, the master barber himself, a newspaper clip spotlighting Dolfied Barber Shop. Lastly a pic of Hair Dimensions Staff, Charles, Roy Linda, Carnell, Renee, Jessie, Renee Spruill, Darlene, Brenda/me and Pete. One profitable salon.*

Thank you big brother, friend and role model. Rest



Brenda McNeil-Bowie - June 03 at 10:04 AM

CH

“ a great brother, we grew up together in the village a true friend, when I came home to visit, I always visited his barber shop we had great conversations, he will be missed, my deepest condolences to the family Rest in peace my brother



chambers - May 19 at 11:16 AM

KC

“ Carnell was a great barber. He needed a model for, a hair show in Washington D.C. (since his professional model opted out at the last minute). Of course, I was not a pro-model, and Carnell had not prepped my "Afro" before show time, as they all did. However, Carnell was so good that we still came in 2nd place, in the "Afro category" (which was excellent if you looked at the real professions models that other barbers had prepared for days before the contest. They looked like "Moorish Gods" and African Princes. I was just a young Morgan State College freshman, who he was hungover from the night before. Carnell dragged me out of bed, threw me in his car and I slept all the way to D.C..



Kenny Carter - May 18 at 08:49 PM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

March Funeral Homes - May 15 at 02:29 PM