



Lottie Willia Bland

May 28, 1925 - February 18, 2018

Willia Bland was born in Chadbourn, North Carolina, to Addie Suggs and Marion Buck on May 28, 1925. Her father worked the railroad in the South and, arriving in Baltimore, became a painter, paper hanger and lecturer, who held court in barber shops to spellbound listeners. Her mother was a talented seamstress who taught her daughters, how to sew.

Influenced by her father, Willia loved language, diction and acting. Influenced by her mother, she loved fashion and dancing. She decided to enroll in Carson Modeling School, which was Baltimore's first African American school of its type. She graduated in 1967.

With her world opening up, Willia became a model and taught the craft. Then, as a volunteer at Provident Hospital, where her sister Dorothy had studied to become a nurse, she developed the Provident Hospital Auxiliary's Annual Fashion Show fundraiser, becoming its director and producing it until 1995.

In 1968, Willia and friend Lucille Banton established Flair Modeling Studio to enhance self-esteem among women of color by helping them realize their own possibilities. For many years, Flair was the only black modeling agency in Maryland. In the years preceding Flair's inception, Willia and daughter, Andrea Bland-Travis, worked as a team training models and dancers, producing fashion shows, facilitating outreach programs and operating Flair's dance

school. This year, with Willia Noel Montague at the helm, Flair will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Willia always offered that her modeling classes were designed to develop self-esteem. Flair also took workshops and fashion shows to sororities, churches, the Links, Baltimore City and County after-school programs and recreation centers, among many others.

In 1975, she developed Flair Dance Studio and Shawan Patterson Jackson, teaching students from 3 to 80. Flair's dances have appeared on stages throughout the eastern seaboard. In 1990, her dancers were the only African American dancers, among 200 others, selected to "Tap Around the Harbor," in celebration of Harbor Place's 20th anniversary. Flair was also the producer of the Miss Baltimore Scholarship Pageant, an affiliate of the Miss America Pageant.

During World War II, Willia worked with FBI classified files in Washington. In 1951, she broke the segregation barrier at the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in Baltimore, working as a ward secretary for the cardiac research unit, then as Outpatient Clinics manager, then as the hospital's Director of Volunteer Services. In 1969, she became the first African American to serve on the board of the Maryland Association of Hospital Auxiliaries; 1972, she became president of the Maryland Council of Directors of Volunteer Services; from 1974-1983 she was the only civilian chosen to serve on the Surgeon General Public Health Services staff, becoming its chief, where she was responsible for policy and direction of seven national hospitals.

Willia has received multiple awards. Among them, she has been cited as one of Baltimore's most influential women, a "Living Maker of Negro History," and received numerous beauty pageant titles.

Willia Bland was predeceased her sons, Harold Leighton Mitchner and Jeffrey Craig Bland.

She is lovingly remembered and survived by her daughters, Diane Mitchner Brown and husband Michael Anthony Mallick and husband Hugh Mallick; and Misty and husband Derek Drummond; Mona Hanson, Willia Noel Montague and Mari Andrea Travis; And great-grandchildren, Michael Antonio Bernal, Maria Bernal, Gemma Mallick; Madison Drummond; and Nolan and Harper McCormick. She is also survived by many loving relatives, her Flair and church family and friends.

Cemetery Details

Arbutus

1101 Sulphur Spring Rd.
Baltimore, MD 21227

Previous Events

viewing

FEB **26**. 8:30 AM - 8:00 PM (ET)

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

Family Hour

FEB **26**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

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

Wake

FEB 27. 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Grace Presbyterian
2604 Banister Rd
Baltimore, MD

Service

FEB 27. 10:30 AM (ET)

Grace Presbyterian
2604 Banister Rd
Baltimore, MD

Tribute Wall



“ *Lottie Willia Bland*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *Tracey lit a candle in memory of Lottie Willia Bland*



Tracey - April 12, 2021 at 02:19 PM



“ *Emily Tiilley lit a candle in memory of Lottie Willia Bland*



Emily Tiilley - March 06, 2018 at 10:56 PM



“ *Vanessa Williams lit a candle in memory of Lottie Willia Bland*



Vanessa Williams - February 27, 2018 at 11:39 AM

VW

Mrs. Bland's words have stuck with me over the years. "Always present yourself with style and Flair".

Vanessa Williams - February 27, 2018 at 11:49 AM

FP

“ Thanks will always be given to Ms. Bland for helping to inspire my daughter (Phylicia Porter) will charm and grace. You and Flair Dance Studio will always have a place in our hearts. --- May God's holy hands be with the family at this time.

Freida & Phylcia Porter

Freida Porter - February 27, 2018 at 06:59 AM

JH

“ Jonelle Hooks lit a candle in memory of Lottie Willia Bland



Jonelle Hooks - February 26, 2018 at 08:36 AM

KA

“ My Sincere Sympathy to the Family. A life well lived is a rest well deserved. R.I.P. Mother of Fashion. Much Love, Ken Alexander



Ken Alexander - February 24, 2018 at 10:51 PM

LI

“ may you all be supported by the many that are thinking of you all.Lossing a dear love one breaks the circle of life.We can look to the future with confidence that the time is coming when dying will be a thing of the Past as noted in the Bible At Rev.,21:3-5.A great promise to look forward to.

Lillian - February 24, 2018 at 06:28 PM

LI

“ I would like to express my condolences to you all.Lossing a dear love one breaks the circle of life.Our heavenly Father is the God of all comfort .We can look forward to better times in the future when dying will be a thing of the Past May all the cherish time spent together help to support you all in the days ahead.

Lillian - February 23, 2018 at 08:44 AM

RW

“ Rain Watkins lit a candle in memory of Lottie Willia Bland



Rain Watkins - February 22, 2018 at 12:49 PM

RW

My daughter went to Miss Willia's Studio when she was in Mondawmin Mall many years ago and did a fashion show there she will be truly missed. God Bless the Family

Rain Watkins - February 22, 2018 at 12:53 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 - February 21, 2018 at 04:03 PM

WE

Please correct the spelling of Ms. Bland's name: Willia, not Willa. Thank you so much.

Webster - February 21, 2018 at 11:33 PM

VB

I have admired Ms. Bland and the good things she was doing for the girls and young women of Baltimore over the years. She will be missed.

Violet Baxter - March 01, 2018 at 10:29 AM

AN

I joined the first class of Flair Studios with Ms. Bland and Ms. Cille. Ms. Bland is the reason, that to this day, I receive complements for being poised. She taught us how to apply makeup, to walk by using a book on our head, and how to be glamorous and ladylike at all times. Ms. Bland was also my neighbor so she advised of her teachings often. She was so poised, beautiful, glamorous, strong, and a brilliant business woman. She will be sorely missed by the so many lives she touched! Thank you Ms. Bland!

Angela - March 11, 2018 at 07:58 PM