



Monica Marie Esparza

March 27, 1962 - February 21, 2026

Legacy of Life

Monica Marie Esparza, born March 27, 1962, in Brooklyn, New York, was the eldest daughter of ancestor Antonio L. Esparza and Delores Del Rio Esparza. She transitioned peacefully at home on February 21, 2026, surrounded by love, in Richmond, Virginia.

Monica was an artist, author, community activist, historian, reverend, visionary, and so much more; a true renaissance woman.

She was a proud Wildcat and fondly shared stories of her time at Armstrong High School. She graduated from the University of Maryland in 1984, earning a Bachelor's degree in Urban Planning. In 2024, Monica, a lifelong learner, walked the stage for the first time at Virginia State University with a Master's degree in Media Management.

An avid traveler, Monica was a flight attendant for Air Atlanta, a pioneering Black-owned luxury airline, early in her career. An entrepreneur at heart, she owned businesses that uplifted her community, including Caribbean Beats in Jackson Ward, KII Industries, and AfroCity Tours. For over a decade, she was the Marketing Manager in the Civil Rights Division at the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), helping women and minority-owned businesses

navigate the agency's procurement network. An advocate for the youth, she also served in Richmond Public Schools as a Career & Technical Education Instructor and mentored many students at Virginia State University. Of all of her pursuits, she was most proud to be the trustee of Image Church - Renewal of Life Trust, where she carried forward her father's legacy of land stewardship and preserving green spaces as pathways for healing and transformation.

Throughout her life, she believed deeply in the power of community, freedom, and justice. Monica led the first Ancestor Day and Fete in 2011 at the African Burial Grounds and, for many years, continued the tradition, raising awareness through tours, advocacy, and building a Tekhen monument, which currently stands, symbolizing the spiritual resurrection of a liberated and inspired people. More recently, Monica dedicated her life's work to preserving the Hickory Hill Community Center, the first school for African American students in the County, which was established as early as 1856. As a direct result of her tireless work, Hickory Hill Community Center was placed on the State and National Register of Historic Landmarks in 2024. She chronicled the history, fight, and victory in her book "Curating Victory: Ecologies of Hickory Hill Life & Resistance."

Monica lived fully and freely all over the world, including in some of her favorite places such as Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominica, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Jamaica. She loved adventure, comedy, drawing, being one with nature, especially by the river or ocean, dancing, delicious food, gardening and farming, quilting, soul-moving music from all genres, and lively festivals.

She leaves to carry her light forward, her three children, Imani Esparza, Issa Esparza, Kehinde Esparza; and her two grandchildren, Mia & Damaal Jr. To cherish her memory, mother Delores Esparza, sisters Mechelle Esparza-Harris and Melody Esparza Gray, nieces and nephews Catherine Harris,

Kendra Esparza-Harris, and Nigel Harris; and a multitude of extended family, close friends, and kindred spirits.

We will miss her forever, honor her legacy, and lift her spirit as an ancestor.

Cemetery Details

Private

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 14. 11:00 AM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - Laburnum Chapel
2110 E. Laburnum Avenue
Richmond, VA 23222
(804) 321-4200
info@marchfh.com
<https://www.marchfuneralhomevirginia.com/>

The family encourages all guests to wear white or African prints in her honor.

Tribute Wall



“ *View and Download the Funeral Program*

March Funeral Homes - March 14 at 10:42 AM



“ *March Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Monica Marie Esparza*



March Funeral Homes - March 14 at 09:35 AM



“ *March Funeral Homes created a Monica M. Esparza in memory of Monica Marie Esparza*



March Funeral Homes - February 27 at 10:59 AM

MT

Sending love, hugs and Prayers to Imani and the rest of the Esparza Family for your loss!

Marian Taliaferro - March 04 at 03:46 PM

VD

*My sincere condolences to Monica's whole family. So sorry for your loss. I was a classmate of Monica's and I have only fond memories of her. I am sure she will be greatly missed.
Venetia.*

Venetia Dyer-Frances - March 08 at 07:25 PM

NG

Sending Comfort and Peace to Monica's children and her Family...May her Light Continue to Shine Upon Us All.

Nadirah Goldsmith - March 10 at 01:27 PM

JW

My deepest condolences to Issa, Imani, and your family. I am grateful to have been in your mom's presence. Her warm and welcoming smile and conversations will be missed. May God continue to keep and comfort you!

Jennifer Winston - March 11 at 10:16 PM

MB

I met Monica at Issa and Kehinde naming ceremony and was immediately infatuated by her calm, grateful presence. I spent some time with her and Ras Cali as their guest and I will cherish the memories of my visit with them. Likewise when she visited us in Guyana we were happy to reciprocate as being the host. On behalf of the Branche family we hope that the family find comfort knowing her's was a life well lived. Thanks for making the world a better place rest well my sister.

Michael Branche - March 14 at 09:34 AM

GU

“ 8 files added to the tribute wall



Goddess Queen U-Ahk - March 14 at 05:42 PM

GU

“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



Goddess Queen U-Ahk - March 14 at 02:47 PM

AW

“ *I'm grateful to have known Monica and to have experienced her spirit and originality. She was a sister to me, and a quiet thunder in this world. I feel lucky to have crossed paths with her. Rest in peace, Monica.*

Alvin Williams - March 13 at 08:29 PM

MV

“ I had the privilege of working with Monica at the Supreme Court of Virginia. She was brilliant, beautiful, and truly one of a kind. Monica carried herself like a queen and was an absolute treasure to everyone who knew her.

Rest in power and peace, my sweet sister. You will be deeply missed, but never forgotten.

Marjorie R Vaughn - March 13 at 08:08 PM

JU

“ Justin purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Monica Marie Esparza.



Justin - March 13 at 04:03 PM

EM

“ In Loving Memory of Monica Marie Esparza 🕊️✨

My Sincerest Condolences and Heartfelt, Warmest, Deepest sympathy to the Esparza Family, Loved Ones, and all those she touched with her Kind, DIVINELY Spirit & Gentle Soul. Healing Energy is being sent out to us ALL, who care and also Truly Loved Monica Marie Esparza.

Please Know that “No Words” can express the way I Truly Feel or capture the depth of this loss. I find myself Deeply Missing a dear, supportive friend that I Truly Love—from our high school days and shared March Birthdates to her time as a Fas-n Survivalist Alumna Comrade. 🤝

Whether we were Nation Building by putting our heads together to brainstorm, or simply enjoying the thrill of the amusement park roller coasters, to listening to music and dancing to just having fun together, every moment was a gift that I will always cherish and remember. 📺 🧑🏾 🎵

Monica Marie Esparza has passed on to the Ancestral Realm. (“What is lovely never dies, but passes into another loveliness.”) Therefore, in this transition, she has shifted from physical form to an eternal, guiding presence—acting as our guardian spirit. Monica’s light has not gone out; it has only joined into a new role. She so beautifully honored her father’s legacy by continuing his IMAGE Church Legacy with such faith and dedication; in that same spirit, we now carry the torch for Monica’ Marie Esparza’s own powerful legacy and the path she walked. 🏛️ 🙏🏾 🙏🏾

Monica was a Powerful, DIVINE BEING, and a Beautiful sistah whose creativity knew no bounds. We celebrate the artistry she shared, the fierce Advocacy she did in fighting for our rights, and the books she wrote—all the treasures she left behind. Her radiating smile, loving heart & Soul will never fade. 🎨 📖 🤝

As Maya Angelou said, "A great soul serves everyone all the time. A great soul never dies. It brings us together again and again."

As Monica Marie Esparza spirit and legacy live on through her children and the many works she left behind, may these memories strengthen us all with Peace, Love, and Healing Energy. Rest in peace, love, and power, Queen. 👑✨

To the Esparza Family: If I can assist in any way—whether it's with phone calls or just being there—please truly do not hesitate to call me. I am here for you.

With Much Love, Respect, Peace & Power

Fas-n Founder: Sister Moriah M.- El'Bey & Fas-n Partner: Brother Kamau

and The Committees Of...

FREEMAN Ancestral Survival Network (Fas-n)

and

Black Survival Network (BSN)

ALWAYS MUCH 1 LOVE ❤️ As DIVINELY RIGHTEOUS UNITY ☐

☐☐ Is The KEY

Namaste



Shalom



Empress Moriah M.-Bey - March 13 at 03:08 PM

GL

“ Goddess queen princess Laneisha purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Monica Marie Esparza.



Goddess queen princess Laneisha - March 12 at 08:33 PM

GL

“ Goddess queen princess Laneisha planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Monica Marie Esparza.

Goddess queen princess Laneisha - March 12 at 08:33 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Monica Marie Esparza.



March 11 at 05:02 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Monica Marie Esparza.

March 11 at 05:02 PM

NG

“ *Nadirah Goldsmith sent a virtual gift in memory of Monica Marie Esparza*



Nadirah Goldsmith - March 10 at 01:34 PM

Q(

“ *Quita Murray, Daughters and Otis (Son) purchased the Treasured Lilies Spray for the family of Monica Marie Esparza.*



Quita Murray, Daughters and Otis (Son) - March 10 at 12:49 PM

Q(

“ *Quita Murray, Daughters and Otis (Son) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Monica Marie Esparza.*

Quita Murray, Daughters and Otis (Son) - March 10 at 12:49 PM

TO

“ *Tariq, Aaron, Okera purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Monica Marie Esparza.*



Tariq, Aaron, Okera - March 09 at 11:14 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Monica Marie Esparza.*



March 06 at 08:15 AM



“ *I worked with Monica at the VDOT for several years. She was indeed an artist, a visionary and historian. She seemed to thrive working within the community to improve the lives of others.*

I extend my sincerest condolences to her children, grandchildren and other family members. May your memories of Monica and her love sustain you during this difficult time.

*Jessica R. Spencer
Yorktown, VA*

Jessica R Spencer - March 02 at 10:47 AM



“ *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 27 at 10:59 AM