

MEMORIAL SERVICE
IN HONOR OF
AMBASSADOR RUTH A. DAVIS

MAY 28, 2025
11:00 AM



Sunrise May 28, 1943 – Sunset May 3, 2025

National Presbyterian Church
4101 Nebraska Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Minister Martin Charles, Officiating

ADVENTURES IN A YOUTH SOUL

Ambassador Ruth A. Davis

What say you woman about your long-lost youth
When at night you listened as rain danced on the roof
When far away lands in your dreams beckoned
And with wanderlust you barely reckoned

When Italy was but a spot on a well-worn map
And being stationary was an unrelenting trap
That held you as you longed to wander the globe
To find adventure in France or a Mediterranean cove

When music meant gospel, spirituals, weary blues or soul
Before Callas and Domingo were as familiar as Nat King Cole
Before the San Carlo taught you the wonders of Puccini
And you fell under the musical spell of Verdi and Rossini

Long before you knew the beauty of castles in Spain
Or the thrill of sunlight dancing on the Spanish Plain
Shifting its rays to inspire Dali and Picasso to capture
Matador and Bull in death's dance of rapture

When the Far East called and no one understood
When the bamboo forest whispered that you could
Slip away on mechanical wings across the seas
And discover the mysteries of the Orient with ease

When Africa awaited with solemn stories which revealed
A people whose worth American history books concealed
When you longed to know the continent whose sun tinted your skin
And you vowed to fulfill the dreams of your ancestors and African-kin

What say you woman about your long-lost youth
When at night you listened as the rain danced on the roof
When far away lands in your dreams beckoned
And with wanderlust you barely reckoned

Silence. Because you always knew
That you were a part of the entire world
And the entire world was a part of you



A Lasting Legacy



Please consider making a gift in memory of
Ambassador Ruth A. Davis
to establish the
Ambassador Ruth A. Davis Memorial Endowed Scholarship
at Spelman College for students to study international affairs.

Please make checks payable to
Spelman College
350 Spelman Lane SW,
Box 1303, Atlanta, GA 30314
Or, make an online donation by following the
'Make A Gift Today' button at
www.spelman.edu/giving

In both instances, please specify your gift is for
'Scholarship in Memory of Ambassador Ruth A. Davis.'



Memorial Service Order of Celebration



Processional

Scripture Reading

New Testament
New Testament

Galatians 5:22-23
Philippians 4:8

Ryan Penn
Ryan Penn

Prayer of Comfort

Musical Selection

Tiffany Choe, Soprano

“*Vissi d’Arte*” Puccini, from *Tosca*

“Vissi d’Arte” Italian Lyrics

Vissi d’arte, vissi d’amore,
non feci mai male ad anima viva!
Con man furtiva
quante miserie conobbi aiutai.
Sempre con fè sincera
la mia preghiera
ai santi tabernacoli salì.
Sempre con fè sincera
diedi fiori agl’altar.
Nell’ora del dolore
perchè, perchè, Signore,
perchè me ne rimunerì così?
Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto,
e diedi il canto agli astri, al ciel,
che ne ridean più belli.
Nell’ora del dolor
perchè, perchè, Signor,
ah, perchè me ne rimunerì così?

“Vissi d’Arte” English Translation

I lived for my art, I lived for love,
I never did harm to a living soul!
With a secret hand
I relieved as many misfortunes as I knew of.
Always with true faith
my prayer
rose to the holy shrines.
Always with true faith
I gave flowers to the altar.
In the hour of grief
why, why, o Lord,
why do you reward me thus?
I gave jewels for the Madonna’s mantle,
and I gave my song to the stars, to heaven,
which smiled with more beauty.
In the hour of grief
why, why, o Lord,
ah, why do you reward me thus?



Acknowledgments

Reflections of Life

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations

Dr. Jendayi Frazer

Former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs

Ambassador Aurelia Brazeal

Spelman Graduate and Trailblazer, U.S. Department of State

Ambassador Teddy Taylor

Association of Black American Ambassadors

Ambassador Natalie Brown

President, Thursday Luncheon Group

Dr. Sandra Rivera

President, International Career Advancement Program Fellows Association

Hermes Grullon

President, Pickering Rangel Fellows Association

Pooja Chandra Pama

Philanthropist and Humanitarian, Founder and President,
ACE Health Foundation

Satish Mehtani

International Mission of Mercy



Sunita Bajaj
President, IWEC

James Chitty
Tribute from Congresswoman Diane Watson

Dr. Laura Taylor-Kale
Mentee

Daniel Delk
Mentee

Stacy D. Williams
Protégé of 29 Years

Malaika Billups & Austin Clements
Family

Musical Selection
Tiffany Choe, Soprano
Amazing Grace

The Message of Life
Minister Edward Wilson

Recessional



Ambassador Ruth A. Davis Obituary


May 28, 1943 – May 3, 2025



Ambassador Ruth A. Davis, daughter of the late Anderson and Edith Mallett Davis, was born May 28, 1943 in Phoenix, Arizona where her father was on military assignment. She grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, and graduated with honors from Booker T. Washington High School and as Summa Cum Laude from Spelman College. At Spelman, she was awarded the Merrill Scholarship which financed 15 months of study and travel abroad in Europe. She earned a Master's Degree in Social Welfare from the University of California at Berkeley and holds Honorary Doctorates from Spelman and Middlebury colleges.

Ambassador Davis entered the U.S. Foreign Service in 1969 and retired in 2009. Specializing in American Citizen's Services and Visa Issues, she served in Kinshasa, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo); Nairobi, Kenya; Tokyo, Japan, Naples, Italy; Barcelona, Spain as U.S. Consul General and as Ambassador to the Republic of Benin where she championed girl's education and contributed to the development of the institutions necessary for creating a democracy in Benin.


Davis achieved a long list of "firsts" during her 40-year career. She was the first African American to serve as Director of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) that trains Foreign and Civil Service State Department employees for diplomatic service domestically and overseas. At FSI she was founder of the School of Leadership and Management and FSI named the Director's conference room in her honor; the first African American Senior Watch Officer in the Operations Center that monitors current events worldwide; and was the first African



American female Director General of the Foreign Service responsible for 40,000 employees scattered throughout the world; she was a Career Ambassador and upon retirement was the highest-ranking U.S. Foreign Service Officer. Her dedication to mentoring is legendary as is her work on Diversity and Inclusion in the international arena. She was revered as a powerful speaker and her essential work in securing the 1996 Olympic Games for Atlanta.

After retirement Davis was the first African American to be selected for The American Foreign Service Association's coveted Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award. She remained active in women's empowerment issues as the Founding Chair of the International Women's Entrepreneurial Challenge (IWEC); as the Founding and Serving Global Co-Chair of ACE Health Foundation's ACE Global Leaders of Excellence Network; as former Chair of the International Mission of Mercy USA (IMMUSA) and the Vice President of the Association of Black American Ambassadors (ABAA). She was a member of the Board of Visitors of the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, CA, the Board of the Diplomacy Center Foundation, and a member of the 16th and Decatur Church of Christ, Washington D.C.

She is survived by her sister Dr. Eugenia Davis, her niece Malaika Billups, Esquire, her husband Kenneth III and grand-nieces Ava and Ivy Billups; her nephew Austin Clements, his wife Crystal and son Chase; her Aunt Ida B. McCullough and a number of cousins and many friends both domestic and international.



A Pictorial Collection of a Life Well Lived



A Pictorial Collection of a Life Well Lived





In Memory of

Ambassador Ruth A. Davis

May 28, 2025

WHEREAS, today, we pay tribute to the life and legacy of Ambassador Ruth A. Davis, a longtime Washington, DC resident, exemplary public servant, and a trailblazer who made history during her remarkable 40-year career with the U.S. Department of State; and

WHEREAS, Ambassador Davis joined the U.S. Foreign Service (FS) in 1969, achieving the highest FS rank of "Career Ambassador" and becoming the first and only African American woman to do so; and

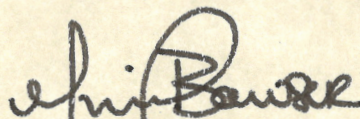
WHEREAS, she was first assigned as Consular Officer in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), expanded her diplomatic portfolio by serving in Kenya, Japan, Italy, and Spain, and later became the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, where she helped the Beninese create the structures needed for democracy; and

WHEREAS, after her overseas assignments, Ambassador Davis returned to Washington as a Pearson Fellow, working as a Special Advisor for International Affairs for the District of Columbia government and directing our city's Sister Cities Program; and

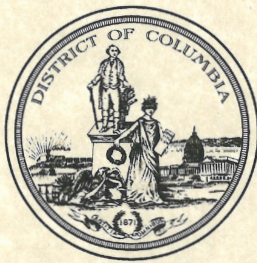
WHEREAS, Ambassador Davis mentored and coached countless women and entrepreneurs, leaders, and diplomats, shaping a generation of U.S. foreign policy professionals; and

WHEREAS, honoring Ambassador Davis today on her 82nd birthday is a fitting tribute to her unwavering commitment to improving lives through the transformative power of diplomacy:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, THE MAYOR OF WASHINGTON, DC, do hereby proclaim May 28, 2025, as a day of remembrance for "CAREER AMBASSADOR RUTH A. DAVIS."



Muriel Bowser
Mayor, Washington, DC





Acknowledgments



Perhaps you sent a lovely card or sat quietly in a chair; perhaps you sent beautiful flowers over the years, if so we saw it there. Perhaps you spoke the kindest words as any friend could say. Perhaps you were not there at all, just thought of us that day. Perhaps you prepared some food or maybe furnished a car; perhaps you rendered a service unseen, near at hand or from afar; whatever you did to console our hearts, we thank you so much, whatever the part.

The Clements Family

Funeral arrangements

Ridley Funeral Establishment, Inc.

Special thanks

National Presbyterian Church
The Katzen Arts Center at American University
CSI Printing & Graphics
Well Dunn Catering
Ingrid Hall
A-D Design



Ambassador Ruth A. Davis Commemorative Scarf



