



Ms. Fran Ross

August 16, 1953 - October 2, 2024

Fran Olenthia Ross was born August 16th, 1953, in Melbourne, FL via midwife to Johnnie Clyde Ross and the late John Arthur "Red" Ross. She was one of seven children, of which she was the oldest daughter. She was also the oldest granddaughter to her beloved Grandmother Gussie Patmon, whom she admired dearly and shared a very close relationship with. She was a proud native of Gifford, FL, attending both Gifford Elementary and Gifford High School before desegregation in Indian River County. Much of her youth was spent with family and friends in Gifford and Fellsmere, FL. She graduated from Vero Beach High School in 1971. She furthered her education at Indian River Community College, now Indian River State College where in 1973 she received her Associates in Arts Degree.

Fran earned a Bachelors in Criminal Justice from Florida Atlantic University in 1978. After graduating from college, she taught school in the school district of Indian River County for three years before pursuing her lifelong dream of becoming an attorney. Which is what led her to Southern University School of Law in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she received a Juris Doctor in June of 1985. She was admitted to the Florida Bar on April 21, 1988.

Over the next 36 years Fran would be of service to her community in multiple capacities, which gave her a very distinct and diverse background in terms of her work and life experience and opened opportunities for her to make diverse and rich relationships with everyone she met. She worked in various

government departments locally and at the state level. She often donated her time to local organizations involving the youth, community service, and civil rights. Fran also sponsored various local youth sports teams and youth programs, with the belief that the children are our future, and we must invest in them.

She was a schoolteacher (nonacademic and substitute) in Indian River County and St. Lucie County. She was the first African American female Radio Dispatcher for the Indian River County Sheriff's Office and Correctional Officer for the Indian River Correctional Institution, as well as the first African American female elected to the Indian River Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees, and the first African American female attorney in Indian River County. She was employed as an Assistant Public Defender in Ft. Pierce, Florida for eight years. The last five of those years she was the Supervising Attorney for the ten Assistant Public Defenders on her staff. She served as Special Magistrate to the city of Port Saint Lucie, FL for six years and the city of Fort Pierce, FL for twenty years.

With over 30 years of experience Fran began her legal career as a law clerk before transitioning into her own private practice law firm, Fran O. Ross, PA and Fran O. Ross, Attorney at Law. Though she practiced several types of law, her specialty was criminal defense. Fran believed that everybody deserved a second chance and a fair fight. She was referred to as a "pit bull in the court room," always giving her all to defending her clients for which she received high praise from her peers. She represented individuals charged with various criminal offenses ranging from misdemeanors to the most serious of criminal offenses throughout the state of Florida, though her main region of practice was along the Treasure Coast. Fran ran for Judge in the 19th Judicial Circuit in 2008 and 2018, both times receiving endorsements from local newspapers. She received a proclamation on February 21st, 2017, from the Indian River County Board of Directors recognizing her pioneer spirit and civic

contributions made to the Treasure Coast. She also received a Proclamation from the City of Fort Pierce in appreciation and recognition of her honorable and loyal service to the city in her role as Special Magistrate on June 17th, 2024. Over the years Fran received many accolades and awards of appreciation and recognition for her years of community service and civil rights activism in St. Lucie and Indian River County.

Throughout her life she served as a board member for many organizations including, the Indian River Medical Center Board of Directors, the Solar and Energy Loan Fund, the Florida Bar since 1988, The Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys and more. Fran was a devoted member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority and a Lifetime member of the NAACP. She was also a member of St. Paul AME Church in Fort Pierce, FL where she served on the Board of Trustees.

She was also acknowledged for her work and pioneering spirit in publications such as "Legendary Locals of Fort Pierce" by Jean Ellen Wilson and "Treasure Coast Black Heritage A Pictorial History" by Annie Kate Jackson, "The Faces of Eve", a coffee table book and featured in various local newspapers articles over the years.

Fran's life and legacy is one of joy and inspiration that was well lived and well done. She was a True Treasure of the Treasure Coast, loved and respected by so many. She will be remembered as many things: an attorney, a community activist, a local pioneer, an amazing mother to her two "boys" Israel and Noah, and a loving grandmother to her five grandchildren; Trinity, IJ, Lilly, Liam, and Logan.

Those close to her will remember her simply as Fran, a humble, down to earth, no nonsense, kind and loving person, who was family and community oriented, with a strong belief in education and self-improvement. She will live

on forever in our hearts and minds. She will be greatly missed.

She leaves to mourn her mother Johnnie Clyde Ross (the late J.A. "Red" Ross); her two (2) sons, Israel Ross and Noah Ross; three (3) brothers, Ronnie Ross (Diane), Kenneth Ross (Denise), and Michael Ross, John Arthur Ross Jr. (deceased); three (3) sisters Pamela Cummings, Cheryl Ross, and Lecia Hunter; five (5) grandchildren, Trinity Ross, Israel Ross Jr., Lily Ross, Liam Ross, and Logan Ross, and host of relatives and friends.

Cemetery Details

Fellsmere Cemetery

Fellsmere, FL

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **18**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

St. Peter's Missionary Baptist Church
4250 38th Avenue
Vero Beach, FL 32967

Service

OCT **19**. 1:00 PM (ET)

Pathway Church
1105 58th Ave.
Vero Beach, FL 32966

Tribute Wall



“ *Hortense & Mills Memorial Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Ms. Fran Ross*



Hortense & Mills Memorial Funeral Home - October 16, 2024 at 02:38 PM

DF

“ *Dorothy Gordon's girls and Gordon Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Ms. Fran Ross.*



Dorothy Gordon's girls and Gordon Family - October 18, 2024 at 07:42 PM

FF

“ *From the Isenhower family purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Ms. Fran Ross.*



From the Isenhower family - October 18, 2024 at 11:59 AM

DK

“ Dr's William and Lonnie Keith purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Ms. Fran Ross.



Dr's William and Lonnie Keith - October 18, 2024 at 11:16 AM

TF

“ The Broadneax Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Ms. Fran Ross.



The Broadneax Family - October 18, 2024 at 09:25 AM

ML

“ Marla L. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ms. Fran Ross.

Marla L. - October 18, 2024 at 12:36 AM

JF

“ Johnny, Shirley And The Turner Family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Ms. Fran Ross.



Johnny, Shirley And The Turner Family - October 17, 2024 at 03:13 PM

JF

“ James A. Roberts (Roberts Family) purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Ms. Fran Ross.



James A. Roberts (Roberts Family) - October 16, 2024 at 07:42 PM



“ 30 files added to the album Life Tributes



Hortense & Mills Memorial Funeral Home - October 16, 2024 at 10:09 AM

AF

“ Anya, Linda & Hanover Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Ms. Fran Ross.



Anya, Linda & Hanover Family - October 16, 2024 at 08:12 AM

AF

“ Anya, Linda & Hanover Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ms. Fran Ross.

Anya, Linda & Hanover Family - October 16, 2024 at 08:12 AM