



Joan M. Allen-Smith

September 17, 2024

Joan M. Allen-Smith, born on March 30, 1933, passed away peacefully on September 17, 2024. She was a beloved mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin, and civil rights activist who dedicated her life to advocating for justice and equality in Rochester, New York.

Joan was the daughter of the late James E. Allen and Clementine E. McCall-Allen. She was preceded in death by her husband, Earl E. Smith, her good friend and partner in raising their family, who passed away in 2015.

Joan is survived by her loving children: Kyle Preston Smith, Shelly Leigh Smith, Eric Allen Smith (Edie Smith), Nicole Lorraine Smith-Gibbons (William Gibbons), and Bryant Earl Smith. She also leaves behind her siblings: James Allen (Yvonne Allen), John Allen (Carmen Allen), and Joyce Wilson Allen.

Joan was a proud grandmother of 18 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren. She was also a beloved aunt and cousin to many more, and her extended family cherished the love and wisdom she shared with them throughout her life.

Joan's passion for justice shaped much of her life. She was one of the founding members of the Urban League of Rochester in 1965, playing a key role in addressing the racial inequalities of the time, particularly in housing, employment, and education. Working alongside pioneers like Connie Mitchell and Hannah Storrs, Joan was instrumental in the fight for civil rights, advocating tirelessly for the fair treatment of minorities in the Rochester area. Professionally, Joan broke barriers as the first person of color to be hired at

Rochester Telephone as an Accounting Clerk, where she was responsible for budgeting and maintaining financial records for engineering accounts. She also worked as a librarian at the Rochester Public Library and contributed to various nonprofit organizations throughout her career. Joan remained active in the workforce until the age of 80, serving as a receptionist at Chestnut Plaza, home of Garth Fagan Dance.

Her legacy was recognized in many ways, including being featured in "Who's Who" in the 1980s. Joan had the distinct honor of introducing Malcolm X during his visit to Rochester in 1965, just days before his assassination, as he delivered a powerful speech on expanding the fight for human rights. In 2023, the Urban League of Rochester honored her with the creation of the Joan M. Allen Award, recognizing leaders like Attorney General Letitia James and City Council President Loretta C. Scott for their work in interrupting racism.

Joan also contributed to Rochester's cultural scene as a writer for About Time Magazine in the 1990s, where she shared her insights and stories about the community, history, and social issues. She was also a talented artist, showcasing her artwork at the Memorial Art Gallery, where her creative expressions found a place to inspire others.

Beyond her activism and artistry, Joan was a woman of many interests and talents. She had a brilliant mind and loved the challenge of chess and backgammon. Joan had a deep love for the arts, particularly theatre, dance, and jazz. She was an avid antique collector and enjoyed a glass of Riesling paired with a delicious meal. Joan delighted in intriguing her loved ones and friends with her captivating historical tales, always ready to share her vast knowledge and life experiences.

Joan leaves behind a lasting legacy of love, resilience, and dedication to the fight for equality. She will be dearly missed by her extended family, including many beloved aunts, cousins, and friends, as well as all those whose lives she touched through her work, storytelling, art, and advocacy.

Family and friends may call at the Leo M. Bean and Sons Funeral Home Monday 10am-12pm. Funeral Service to follow calling at 12pm at the funeral

home. Interment, Grove Place Cemetery.

Cemetery Details

Grove Place Cemetery

2775 Chili Avenue
Rochester, NY 14624

Previous Events

Calling Hours

SEP **23**. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Leo M Bean and Sons Funeral Home
2771 Chili Avenue
Rochester, NY 14624
(585) 426-7830
beanfuneralhome@rochester.rr.com
<http://www.beanandsonsfuneralhome.com/>

Funeral Service

SEP **23**. 12:00 PM (ET)

Leo M Bean and Sons Funeral Home
2771 Chili Avenue
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Tribute Wall

RH

“ Miss you so much Auntie. Love you so many bunches❤️

Rhonda - October 07, 2024 at 06:37 AM

MT

“ Miles Smith And Gwen Tripp lit a candle in memory of Joan M. Allen-Smith



Miles Smith and Gwen Tripp - September 22, 2024 at 08:28 PM

MG

Grandmother, may your light shine for all eternity.
Miles Smith

Miles and Gwen - September 22, 2024 at 08:30 PM

OM

“ Olivia M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joan M. Allen-Smith.

Olivia M. - September 22, 2024 at 07:46 PM

JL

“ Joel Lee lit a candle in memory of Joan M. Allen-Smith



Joel Lee - September 20, 2024 at 12:03 AM

FF

“ From John, Carmen, and the family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Joan M. Allen-Smith.



From John, Carmen, and the family - September 19, 2024 at 07:51 PM

DD

“ Destiny R. Davis lit a candle in memory of Joan M. Allen-Smith



Destiny R. Davis - September 19, 2024 at 02:45 PM

JF

“ Joey, Megan, Lilly, Vivi, & Izzy Figueroa planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joan M. Allen-Smith.

Joey, Megan, Lilly, Vivi, & Izzy Figueroa - September 19, 2024 at 12:12 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Joan M. Allen-Smith.



September 19, 2024 at 12:12 AM

N.

“ *Nicole . purchased the Sweet Solace Spray for the family of Joan M. Allen-Smith.*



Nicole . - September 18, 2024 at 02:06 PM