



## Mr. John W. Joseph

September 29, 1933 - November 3, 2017

OPELOUSAS-Funeral services will be held at 11:00 A.M. Saturday, November 11, 2017 in Progressive Baptist Church, 2001 E. Simcoe Street, Lafayette, LA for John W. Joseph, 84 who entered eternal rest on Friday, November 3, 2017 in Opelousas General Health System.

Interment will be in Bellevue Memorial Park. Rev. Lloyd Joiner, Jr. Pastor of Progressive Baptist Church will officiate the Celebration of Life.

John Wilfred Joseph was born on September 29, 1933, to the union of Reverend Adam Joseph and Mrs. Julia Lee Jones Joseph. His earthly life expired on November 3, 2017.

John W. Joseph was born and raised on his father's farm in Plaisance, LA during the time of racial divide and a dual education system, which relegated him to minimum and hand-me-down materials for an education. Following the sale of the family farm, the family moved to Opelousas, LA. John W. Joseph enrolled at St. Landry Parish Colored Training School and graduated with honors in 1951. He then attended Leland College and graduated magna cum laude in May of 1955. He, subsequently, earned a Master's Degree in Administration and Supervision from Southern University. An additional thirty graduate hours were earned at USL (now known as ULL), LSU, and Clark Atlanta University.

On December 24, 1955, John W. Joseph was united in Holy Matrimony to the love of his life, Cecile Catherine Slaughter. Five daughters and three sons were born to this bond of love. He was a devoted husband, father, and

grandfather. His parenting and life were positive models for others to emulate. He was a man of great strength and principles who loved his spouse, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He was a proponent for systemic maturity. He motivated his children and countless others to strive for excellence.

John W. Joseph accepted Christ at an early age and was baptized by his father and pastor, Reverend Adam Joseph, at Star Light Baptist Church in Opelousas, LA. For more than 50 years, he served as a deacon and superintendent of the Sunday School at Star Light. For several decades, he served as President of the Brotherhood Department of the Southwest Missionary Baptist Association of Louisiana. Following the death of his father and pastor, he later joined Progressive Baptist Church in Lafayette, LA. He has served as Chairman of the Deacons' Ministry, member of the Trustees' Ministry, Discipleship Training Teacher, and as Sunday School Teacher. He ministered to numerous colleagues, families, neighbors, students, and friends with godly wisdom. He was loved and adored by all individuals he impacted. He lived a faithful Christian life.

Because of a genuine love for helping young people develop to their maximum potential in a manner beneficial to themselves and to society, and following an honorable discharge from the United States Army with two years of military service, John W. Joseph began teaching in the St. Landry Parish Public School System in January of 1958. His work ethic, competence, compassion, and dedication enabled him to be appointed to serve in positions at various ascending system levels. He served as Teacher, Coach, Guidance Counselor, Assistant Principal, Principal, School System Supervisor, and Director of Federal Programs. His main school system focus was predicated on the belief that every student could succeed.

Following retirement from the St. Landry Parish Public School System with thirty-two years of creditable, honorable, and distinguished service, John W. Joseph was elected in 1986 to serve as the 17th Mayor of the City of Opelousas and the 1st African American Mayor of Louisiana's 3rd oldest City.

An overwhelming endorsement of changes made by John W. Joseph and his administration during his 1st four-year term was evident as voters re-elected him in 1990 to serve a 2nd term. His governance was predicated on freedom, opportunity, quality services, and inclusion. His historic eight years energized all.

This anointed public servant was appointed to state wide positions by three Louisiana Governors with confirmations by the State Senate. He served as Deputy Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Social Services, member of Southern University Board of Supervisors for 8 1/2 years, member of the Louisiana Board of Regents' Committee on Academic and Student Affairs, was elected parish-wide member for three terms on the St. Landry Parish Democratic Executive Committee, became an Executive and Entrepreneur as co-owner of Ford and Joseph Funeral Home, Inc., was a member of Keystone Lodge No. 196, Commander-In-Chief of R.B. Jones, Sr. Consistory, No. 298, and as a member of Iota Epsilon Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma. The life of this icon reflects ten administrative public service positions.

In an effort to document his legacy and inspire future generations, John W. Joseph penned a book entitled "From Farm Boy to First Black Mayor" in 2006. It was a detailed account of his life-challenges and legendary accomplishments.

The primary focus during the life of John W. Joseph was to function as a catalyst in transitioning from a legacy of slavery to inclusion and serve in positions designed to make a difference in the elevation and advancement of all mankind. He lived to help others improve the quality of their living and acquire and use smart power to raise standards. He was endowed with a clear vision and a resolve to serve as a genuine change agent. He served as a welcomed conduit for helping to make our area a better place to live and work. His life was well lived, full of service, and a life that will be greatly missed. He leaves an outstanding legacy for others to emulate and perpetuate. He leaves a phenomenal presence in the lives of all he impacted.

John W. Joseph was preceded in death by his loving wife, Cecile Catherine Joseph and his parents Rev. Adam Joseph and Julia Lee Jones Joseph. He leaves to celebrate his life and perpetuate his legacy: eight children, Cynthia Bridges (Jesse) of Elk Grove, CA; Brenda Bullard (Theophilus Jerone) of Shreveport, LA; Shelia Jolivette (Col. Gerard) of Garden Ridge, TX; Rev. John Keith Joseph (Keita) of Fort Worth; Juan M. Joseph (Janya) of Opelousas, LA; Sonya Helaire (Edmond) of Gilbert, AZ; Justina Lazard (Rev. Darwan) of Ville Platte, LA; and Brent Joseph (Shirley) of Carencro, LA; 24 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren; one brother, Former U. S. Ambassador (to South Africa), Rev. James A. Joseph (Mary) of Chapel Hill, NC; one nephew, Jeffrey Joseph (Lisa) of Arlington, VA; one niece, Denise Joseph of Alexandria, VA; and two great-nieces and a host of other relatives and special friends.

Mayor John W. Joseph will lie in state on Friday, November 10, 2017 from 2:00 P.M. to 6 P.M. at Opelousas City Council Chambers, Executive Department, City of Opelousas Municipal Plaza, 105 N. Main Street, Opelousas, LA for public viewing.

The family request visiting hours be observed on Saturday, November 11, 2017 from 9:30 A.M. to 10:45 A.M. in Progressive Baptist Church.

Share words of comfort with the family of John W. Joseph on his Permanent Life Tribute Page at [www.williamsfuneralhomes.net](http://www.williamsfuneralhomes.net) or [facebook.com/WilliamsFuneralHomeInc](https://www.facebook.com/WilliamsFuneralHomeInc) .

In lieu of florals the Joseph family request contributions be made to Alzheimer's Association Donation's on behalf of John W. Joseph: [https://act.alz.org/site/SPageServer?pagename=Donation\\_Form\\_Launch\\_Page&s\\_affid=87](https://act.alz.org/site/SPageServer?pagename=Donation_Form_Launch_Page&s_affid=87) and American Cancer Association Donation's on behalf of John W. Joseph: [https://donate3.cancer.org/?campaign=search&gclid=EAlalQobChMI0sT3gaSw1wIVQ7nACh09Zw9HEAAYASAAEgLv9fD\\_BwE](https://donate3.cancer.org/?campaign=search&gclid=EAlalQobChMI0sT3gaSw1wIVQ7nACh09Zw9HEAAYASAAEgLv9fD_BwE) .

Final arrangements entrusted to Williams Funeral Home and Cremation Service of Opelousas, 817 E. South Street, 337.942.2037.

# Cemetery Details

## Bellevue Memorial Park

Opelousas, LA 70570  
(337) 942-7055

# Previous Events

## Public Repose at Opelousas City Hall

NOV 10. 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, CITY OF OPELOUSAS  
MUNICIPAL PLAZA  
105 N. MAIN STREET  
Opelousas, LA

## Visitation

NOV 11. 9:30 AM - 10:45 AM (CT)

Progressive Baptist Church  
2001 E. Simcoe Street  
Lafayette, LA

## Service

NOV 11. 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM (CT)

Progressive Baptist Church  
2001 E. Simcoe Street  
Lafayette, LA



# Tribute Wall



“ *Mr. John W. Joseph*

January 28, 2023 at 08:52 AM



“ *Sending My Condolences & Deepest Sympathy To The Entire Family Mayor Joseph You Will Be Truly Miss But Never Be Forgotten RIP Cuz Joseph*

**jacqueline joseph** - November 11, 2017 at 09:04 AM



“ *WITH OUR DEEPEST LOVE & SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILY  
RUSSELL & JUDY BALTAZAR JR*



**Russell & Judy Baltazar Jr** - November 10, 2017 at 11:59 PM



“ *Brenda,  
May GOD comfort you and your family during the homegoing of your father. I am praying for you and your family. Weeping may endure for a moment but joy comes in the morning. God is always near. Continue to trust in the LORD with all of your heart. God loves you and your family so do we.*

*Love Hilda*

**Hilda Braggs** - November 10, 2017 at 08:21 PM

LS

“ To the family of Mr. John W. Joseph,

*Our hearts are saddened by your loss and our thoughts and prayers are with you.*

*Lee Anna and Sharon Stephens*



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**Lee Stephens** - November 10, 2017 at 04:35 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Mr. John W. Joseph.



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November 10, 2017 at 12:18 AM

RH

“ To: Mrs. Cynthia Bridges

*Dear Cynthia, our thoughts and prayers are with you, Jessie, and all family members at this time.*

*Rosalind and William Smith*

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**Rosalind Hunt** - November 09, 2017 at 11:48 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. John W. Joseph.*



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November 09, 2017 at 08:59 PM



“ *To The Joseph Family,*

*A great soul has departed, but the memories shall never fade. Your loss is huge, and Ty and I can only share your pain. May the soul that has gone, rest in peace. Keep faith and courage. Shelia and family know that you are in our prayers. We am sorry for your loss.*



*Derwin & Tysonia Babineaux*

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**Derwin** - November 09, 2017 at 12:21 PM



“ *Mark And Ommanda Major lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Mark and Ommanda Major** - November 09, 2017 at 10:28 AM



“ *Sapphire Skies Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. John W. Joseph.*



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November 08, 2017 at 11:57 PM



“ *To the entire Joseph Family. You have my sincere hearth felt sympathy in the lost of your loved one. He will forever be remembered in all of our hearts. My prayers are with the family. May God bless you all.*



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**Barbara W. Thomas** - November 08, 2017 at 06:10 PM



“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



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**Catherine Sion-Anderson** - November 08, 2017 at 04:59 PM

AA

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

*Condolences to the family of Mr. John Joseph. Mr. Joseph's works, actions and love modeled within the community and before his students inspired many to push forward even when faced with much adversity. We are humbled, and grateful to have been blessed with his leadership and life.*

*Anita Alexander (Brothers and Sisters - Harold, Pauline, Paul and Anthony)*

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**Anita Alexander** - November 08, 2017 at 02:22 PM



OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY AND PRAYERS GOES OUT TO THE JOSEPH FAMILY!!! SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS!! FROM: RITA GRADNIGO PICKENS & FAMILY!!

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**Rita Marie** - November 09, 2017 at 12:06 AM

GS

TO THE JOSEPH FAMILY, WE SEND OUR LOVE AND CONDOLENCES TO YOU. MAY GOD COMFORT YOU IN HIS LOVE FOR YOU. I WILL NEVER FORGET THE VALUES HE AND YOUR MOTHER TAUGHT ME AT CARTER G. WOODSON HIGH SCHOOL....GO MAYOR, TAKE YOUR REST IN THE PRESENCE OF ALMIGHTY GOD--LOVE YOU ALL--GLORIA, CATHY, SHALEMEIKO, SW FIDELITY CORPORATION.

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**GLORIA SONNIER** - November 09, 2017 at 02:59 PM

LE

*To the family of John W. Joseph you have our deepest sympathy. Richard & Lou E. Evans*

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**LOU ELLA EVANS** - November 09, 2017 at 09:06 PM

CS

“ My deepest sympathy To the family of Mr. John W. Joseph  
I had the pleasure of working with Mayor Joseph through both of his terms. He was indeed a pleasure to work under. May his great legacy continue to live on through his children and grandchildren..



*May his soul rest in God's glorious Paradise..*

*Mrs. Catherine Sion-Anderson*

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**Catherine Sion-Anderson** - November 08, 2017 at 02:13 PM

KJ

“ Prayers for all of you. I considered Mr. Joseph a special friend both while he was in the School System and as Mayor. He always acknowledged my worth as a teacher. I know that he will be missed.

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**Kayre Jones** - November 08, 2017 at 12:32 PM

LR

“ Lillian Rideaux-Savoy lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph



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**Lillian Rideaux-Savoy** - November 08, 2017 at 10:09 AM

JS

“ *Johnnie B. Simmons lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Johnnie B. Simmons** - November 08, 2017 at 09:19 AM

JS

“ *To the entire John Joseph Family , we, the Eliza J. Scott Family send our Empathy and Prayers to all of you. We Love Former Mayor John and your Mother, the Mighty Team.. He is with his Life Partner now. God is Pleased.. God's good and Faithful Servant..*

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**Johnnie B. Simmons** - November 08, 2017 at 09:18 AM

CH

“ *My deepest heartfelt condolences are with the family of Mr. John W. Joseph (Pop).  
From: Cassandra Harrison and Staff*



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**Cassandra Harrison** - November 08, 2017 at 08:10 AM

JP

“ *We extend our condolences to the Joseph family as well as our heartfelt gratitude for the service of your loved one to this community. May his soul rest in peace. 🙏🙏🙏 God bless. ❤️  
The Payne Family*



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**Joseph and Cynthia Payne** - November 07, 2017 at 10:08 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Mr. John W. Joseph.*



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November 07, 2017 at 04:37 PM



“ *Brenda And Willeah sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Brenda and Willeah** - November 07, 2017 at 03:05 PM



“ *Brenda And Willeah lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Brenda and Willeah** - November 07, 2017 at 03:04 PM

BW

“ *My love and deepest condolences to all my blessed cousins,.May Almighty God be your comforter once again. May he give you strength once again.May you carry on the love of family,as bestowed upon you by John and Cecile.Every joy,sorrow and pain becomes more bearable when you have the support of a loving family.Carry on the love and family commitments bestowed on you by your parents and grandparents,exp. Uncle Adam.God Bless you all.Rip John and Cecile.Together Again. Love and Blessings Brenda Green ,Willeah Cooks and Family*

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**Brenda and Willeah** - November 07, 2017 at 03:01 PM

GJ

“ *Gene Gollahon Jr lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Gene Gollahon Jr** - November 07, 2017 at 02:28 PM

ES

“ *Emily Arvie Sam lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Emily Arvie Sam** - November 07, 2017 at 02:03 PM

AB

“ *My prayers and condolences are offered to his family, friends, colleagues, church members, my fellow Opelousas citizens and all who have loved and admired this distinguished gentleman. May he rest in peace.*



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**Andrea Brisco** - November 07, 2017 at 02:00 PM

SL

“ *To the family of Mr. John Joseph and his daughter, Sheila. It is with heartfelt sympathy that I ask God's blessings and comfort during this time of bereavement. The obvious impact he had on others is exemplified in the life of his daughter whom we love dearly. We are thinking of you all and praying for quiet, peaceful reflections.*



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**Sheron Leonard** - November 07, 2017 at 11:59 AM

MS

“ *"Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Come and share your master's happiness." "*  
*Matthew 25:21 NIV.*

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**Michael Saucier** - November 07, 2017 at 10:44 AM

RR

“ *God bless you John, and all your family as you treasure the memories of this blessed man. He sounds like a great man to have known, and even more so to have a part of his family!*

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**Ron Rutledge** - November 07, 2017 at 10:00 AM

DJ

“ *Debra Moore Johnson lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Debra moore johnson** - November 07, 2017 at 09:50 AM

AT

“ *Audry Batiste Of Round Rock Tx lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Audry Batiste of Round Rock Tx** - November 07, 2017 at 09:37 AM

RM

“ *Mr. John Joseph was a great humanitarian who served Opelousas and St. Landry parish with humility and dignity. He was respected by everyone.*

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**Rosalie Meullion** - November 07, 2017 at 09:22 AM

RM

“ *Rosalie Meullion lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Rosalie Meullion** - November 07, 2017 at 09:17 AM

DL

“ *Delbert T. Lewis lit a candle in memory of Mr. John W. Joseph*



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**Delbert T. Lewis** - November 07, 2017 at 08:44 AM