



## Welcome to the People of Abyssinian!

Augusta Grubb, a devoted member of The Abyssinian Baptist Church, dedicated 30 years of service to the Progressive Ladies Usher Board. Born on January 26, 1923, in Pensacola, Florida, to Geneva Edwards, a teacher, and Lawrence Butler, a clarinetist, Augusta's commitment to service and community began at a young age and continued throughout her remarkable life.

Raised in a close-knit family of educators and musicians, Augusta's roots were firmly planted in faith and excellence. Her grandparents, William J. Edwards and Susan Johnson Edwards, were pillars of Saint Peter's African Methodist Episcopal

Church. Her grandfather, a student of Booker T. Washington and a graduate of Tuskegee Institute, founded Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute in 1893, an institution now listed as a National Historic Place. His legacy, including his book *Twenty-Five Years in the Black Belt* (1918), highlighted the profound impact of their family in the heart of Alabama's "Black Belt."

Growing up on the serene grounds of Snow Hill, Augusta's life was steeped in music, education, and tradition. Taught piano by her aunt, Alberta Lee (grandmother to filmmaker Spike Lee), Augusta became both a musician and an early mentor—serving as Spike's first babysitter. Music was integral to her family's life, with annual Christmas performances of Handel's *Messiah* and a mandate that every family member learn an instrument.

This musical legacy blossomed in future generations, including her daughter, Deidre Grubb, a piano instructor for renowned artists like Marvin Winans, and Karl Reid of Commissioned. Their family band, "Descendants of Mike and Phoebe," carried this tradition forward, blending jazz and history in performances across the U.S., featuring Bill Lee, Consuela Lee Moorhead, and others.

Augusta pursued higher education at Alabama A&M University, majoring in Home Economics while excelling as an athlete. Her dreams of Olympic competition in the High Jump were interrupted by World War II, redirecting her path to critical wartime work assembling airplane parts in New Jersey. It was during this time, through her friend Cleo Reddick, that she was introduced to Abyssinian Baptist Church.

A fierce advocate for education, Augusta fulfilled her mother's wish to complete college and joined the New York City Board of Education. She later taught fifth grade and music at P.S. 153, The Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Elementary School, where her students'

exemplary behavior and musical talents became well-known. Even after art and music programs were cut, Augusta volunteered her time to provide after-school music lessons, demonstrating her unwavering dedication to Harlem's youth.

Her service extended beyond the classroom. At Abyssinian, Augusta was deeply inspired by Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and later Rev. Calvin O. Butts III. She continued her ministry on the Progressive Ladies Usher Board and as a member of the Black Teachers Who Care.

Augusta Grubb passed away on October 20, 2024, but we will forever celebrate her incredible journey of faith, family, and service. Her story is a testament to the enduring power of love, education, and community.

Welcome to the People of Abyssinian, where Augusta Grubb's legacy will inspire us for generations to come.