



Dr. Tiffany Austin

April 26, 1975 - June 23, 2018

Obituary

Dr. Tiffany U Austin was born on April 26, 1975 in Murfreesboro, Arkansas to the union of Anthony (Tony) Eric Austin and Ruth Ann May, who later moved to Kansas City, MO in 1977.

Tiffany attended Southside First Baptist Church where she accepted Christ, while her father was the officiating Minister, Rev. Anthony E. Austin

Tiffany's affinity for reading books, writing, poetry & history started at a young age. Even though she loved the outdoors, she spent most of her time inside reading & writing in her own space during her quiet time. This is how & where her passions were nurtured. When she wasn't reading, writing & studying, she was engaged in family activities, quality time & Sunday dinners where her mother would cook delicious soul food. One of her fondest memories is shared with her siblings – listening to “the blues” while on road trips to Arkansas. Tiffany's adoration for her remarkable father was noticeable to all. He saw her potential during her debate journey in high school, in which her debate teacher Mrs. Gloria Henry still gives Tiffany accolades still today. Her father would always tell everyone “This is my lawyer,” which later inspired Tiffany to study law. She graduated in the top of her class from Ruskin High School in 1993. She then graduated magna cum laude from Spelman University in 1997, receiving her BA in English. During her time at Spelman,

Tiffany was an intern in Alaska for a year. Tiffany continued her higher educational journey thereafter. She received her MFA in creative writing from Chicago State University, her JD from Northeastern University School of Law (passing the bar on her first try), and her Ph.D. in English from St. Louis University. As part of her dissertation work, she spent 6 months in Ecuador to learn more about and speak with Luz Argentina Chiriboga, an Afro-Ecuadorian writer who was one of the subjects of her research.

A dedicated scholar and teacher, Tiffany had a breadth and depth of knowledge about African Diasporic literature, comparative literature, and critical race theory and gender studies. During her career, Tiffany taught at Florida Memorial University, Mississippi Valley State University, and she was recently a professor at the University of The Bahamas. She worked tirelessly on several courses including the Creative Writing course where she promoted the Bahamian creative writing community. She created the Tingum Collective group and compiled, completed and published a Tingum Collective chapbook. Tiffany loved teaching and helping to facilitate poetry workshops. She gave numerous conference presentations, and was the chair of the Midwest Modern Language Association panels on African American literature. She was also a widely published poet, with her chapbook *Étude* appearing in 2013. Of this volume, her mentor Sterling Plumpp noted, “Austin’s genius is her unusual gift for metaphor and allusion.” Others recognized Tiffany’s genius too, with her poems appearing in such prestigious outlets as *Callaloo*, *Obsidian III*, *African American Review*, *Coloring Book: An Anthology of Poetry and Fiction by Multicultural Writers*, *Warland*, *pluck!*, *The Journal of Affrilachian Arts and Culture*, *Valley Voices*, *Auburn Avenue*, *TriQuarterly*, *Sycorax’s Daughters*, and *Moko: Caribbean Arts and Letters*. Most recently, she signed a book contract with Routledge for a co-edited volume of poetry and critical essays, entitled *Revisiting the Elegy in the Black Lives Matter Era* (forthcoming October 2019). Her co-editor, Emily Rutter, will dedicate the volume to Tiffany and her legacy as an exceptional poet, critic, and kindred

spirit.

When Tiffany was not teaching and writing, she was busy bringing literature to the community and engaging in artistic fellowship. At the University of The Bahamas, she organized the Blue Flamingo Literary Festival, as well as the Anatol Rodgers Memorial Lecture Series, with invited guest Sonia Sanchez.

Her long list of fellowships and awards includes a Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop fellowship, a residency at the Virginia Center for Creative Arts, the Archie D. and Bertha H. Walker Foundation Scholarship, a grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a fellowship for the Kimbilio Writing Retreat, and the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Award. Tiffany also shared her work on the stage. A recent play was performed at both the Billie Holiday Theater in Brooklyn, N.Y., and the Hayti Center in Durham, N.C.

All of these experiences speak to Tiffany's love to travel, meet new people, and experience new cultures. She traveled to England, Jamaica, Europe, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Ecuador, and many more places. Her infectious smile was also contagious, and her laugh made you smile, even if you didn't know why she was laughing. Her humble spirit made you inquisitive about her life. While oftentimes unexpected, when engaging about a topic Tiffany felt strongly about, she made a point to be sure you walked away with facts. Tiffany was a fiery & powerful debater who shared her ideas with strong conviction. Tiffany was a teacher, writer, poet, author activist, and feminist. Never one for titles, she was moved instead by both action and passion. She was incomparable, courageous, generous, artistic, and authentic – a beautiful soul who will live on in the many artistic and personal seeds she planted and

nurtured.

Tiffany's beautiful life will forever be cherished. She leaves behind: her beautiful & phenomenal mother, Ruth Austin; 4 sisters, Rhonda Willis, Toni Austin, Aundrea Austin, Tamilya Austin; 1 brother, Eric Austin, 7 nieces, Michaela, Latisha, Kena, Lanesha, Samantha, Breauna, Erica; 5 nephews, TaeVion, Darius, Zion, Sherod, Kamdyn; 2 great nieces, Rayne & Harmoni & 2 great nephews, Monte & Kirby; 5 aunts, Brenda, Gloria (Auntie), Margaret, Emma, Ruby; 3 uncles, Anthony, Leonard, Raleigh Sr., many more family members including cousins & friends, colleagues whose lives were tremendously impacted by Tiffany's existence.

To send flowers
to the family or plant a tree
in memory of Dr. Tiffany Austin, please visit our floral store.

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Tribute Wall

RA

“ *A candle was lit in remembrance*

Ruth Austin - August 31, 2022 at 11:28 AM

RA

“ *My beautiful and brilliant daughter, we will love and miss you forever, you were the best part of me, I learned a lot from you. God will take care of you. Love always*

Ruth Austin - September 22, 2021 at 03:56 PM

LO

“ *I am so sorry to hear about the tragic loss in your family, someone so young. Please accept my deepest sympathy and may you find comfort from the words at Isaiah 41:10,13 and from God's promise to bring to life again those who have died. Acts 24:15*

Louise - July 20, 2018 at 05:40 PM

TR

“ *I'm sorry to hear about your loss. Please take comfort in Almighty God words at Ps.34:18 "He is close to the brokenhearted; He will save those crushed in spirit. There will be a resurrection and sickness and death will be gone forever." John 5:28,29;Rev.21:4 For more comforting words, please visit: JW.ORG*

Tricia - July 20, 2018 at 01:51 PM

SC

“ Grieved to hear of Tiffs passing. Please accept our sincere condolences. Hoping the promises from our loving Heavenly Father bring your family comfort and hope. Acts 24:15, John 5:28,29 and Revelation 21:4.

Sincere Condolences - July 16, 2018 at 06:39 PM

BE

“ I would like to send my sincere condolences to the family. May you take comfort from the scriptures that soon all sickness and death will be done away with. Isaiah 25:8

Bel - July 10, 2018 at 07:35 PM

LB

“ Tiffany had a huge impact on my best friend and me in the days we spent with her at the MMLA conference in Cincinnati last year. We are both beginning our careers in academia, and Tiffany generously, joyfully advised, mentored, listened to, laughed with, and hung out with us; she included us. In just a couple short days, she gave us a shining example of being authentic, rigorous, brilliant, and having fun in an academic career. That example will stay with both of us always. I feel so grateful to have met her.

Lucy Biederman - July 10, 2018 at 09:47 AM

LB

“ Sleep well Dr. Austin. Thank you for inspiring and encouraging me to be the best that I can be. I will never forget you and our always interesting and lively discussions in ENGW120 class.

Leonardette Symonette, University of the Bahamas - July 09, 2018 at 05:41 PM

JR

“ It is such wonderful experience to have met Tiffany. She visited my husband (Charlie Braxton) and I in Jackson when she was teaching at Mississippi Valley and a beautiful friendship was formed. We are heartbroken at the news of her transition, but know that a spirit as special as Tiffany's will never leave us!--Johnnie Robinson

Johnnie Robinson - July 09, 2018 at 11:13 AM

JJ

“ To a wonderful person I was only beginning to become friends with, thank you so much for your educational advice and sharing your experiences with me. You will be truly missed.—Janeill Jones

Janeill Jones - July 08, 2018 at 04:01 PM

RT

“ The authors of the forthcoming book *Michelle Obama's Impact on African-American Women and Girls* (forthcoming Palgrave, 2018) would like to express our sincere condolences to the family of our dear friend Tiffany Austin. Tiffany brought so much joy, hope and so much love in everything she touched. We were truly blessed to work with her as she brought her talents, her passion and her love for every word she wrote. I had the distinct pleasure of her friendship since her teaching at FMU. What a phenomenal woman. She filled every classroom with joy. She will be missed but her words will continue to inspire her many friends and most of all her students. We miss her. Sincerely Rose C. Thevenin Associate Professor of History Florida Memorial University

Rose C. Thevenin - July 08, 2018 at 03:08 PM

MV

“ Thank you for your friendship. You’ve impacted so many people with your kind and genuine spirit. You will forever be remembered and missed.

Marlene Vann - July 07, 2018 at 07:47 PM

JH

“ Tiffany, or 'Tiff' was such a powerful spirit and she inspired and gave me opportunities to grow professionally, but the greatest gift she gave me was being able to spend time with her laughing and sharing ideas. I send along condolences to the Austin family, and pray that Tiff beauty and energy will remain with us and bring us peace.

Jason Harris - July 07, 2018 at 07:39 PM

RR

“ Such a beautiful home coming. Our ongoing prayers and love go out to Ruth, Toni and family! Tiffany will always be with you in your heart and mind.

Rick & Breda Rowe - July 07, 2018 at 07:12 PM

ES

“ A Beautiful in Blue was sent on July 7, 2018Dear Tiffany, You always had a heavenly spirit and now you are an eternal angel. Love and miss you always! - Renee J. Wright, Spelman College, Class of 1997

Expression of Sympathy - July 07, 2018 at 06:38 PM

JP

“ R.I.P.

Joanne Pope - July 07, 2018 at 04:24 PM

TA

“ I love you big sis. Thank you for your contributions to my life, my children's & so many others. Thank you for being a light in all of our lives. Thank you for your warmth, humble spirit, intellect & your smile. You are my inspiration. ❤️

Toni Austin - July 07, 2018 at 01:01 PM

CC

“ My deepest condolences to the entire family. I remember Tiffany as being smart and driven and a great example of what a young lady should be. Rest well sis.

Candis Crain - July 07, 2018 at 11:05 AM

JF

“ As you Remember your BEAUTIFUL daughter... sister... Auntie... No she loved you.. as you loved her!! God can do EVERYTHING but FAIL!!. Im praying for STRENGTH for you all . Im sending love and big hugs from Atl.Ga Love you Ms.Tamilia and Family Jennette and Jordynn Flournoy

Jennette W. Flournoy - July 07, 2018 at 10:43 AM

EH

“ E Hale Praying for the Family !!! May God Bless and Keep You

Elton Hale - July 07, 2018 at 09:33 AM

MC

“ Tiffany was one of the sweetest people I've ever met on this earth. Rest Well, Tiffany. My thoughts and prayers of comfort are with the family through this difficult time.

Martika Cross - July 07, 2018 at 08:27 AM