

# Obituary – Crystal Boling-Barton

As a child, Crystal Boling-Barton was told by her school counselors that she could only become a secretary. To prove them wrong, Crystal set a path of realizing her dreams. As a sickly child, she always appreciated the care given to her by nurses, so she wanted to become one when she grew up. She first attended the Adult Nursing Program at Trott Vocational, graduated, got her license and enrolled in the State University at Buffalo. Finding the classes to be overwhelming in size, she transferred to Niagara University, and found that the nursing classes were full so she enrolled in the education program. She is a graduate of Niagara University, where she received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Education, a Master's Degree in Educational Administration, a Master's Degree in Counseling Education, a Post Master's Professional Diploma in Counseling Education and a Certificate of Specialization in Minority Group Studies. She was also one of the first African American females to enlist in the ROTC at Niagara University and received an honorable discharge from the United States Army.

One of sixteen children, she is the sixth daughter and eighth child of the late Floyd Sr. and Zorie Mosley Boling. A descendent of an African American pioneer family to Niagara Falls, New York, many of her family members worked at the famous Marigold Restaurant, which was opened in the 1930's and located on Fourth Street, next to the present location of the Seneca Niagara Casino. Many African Americans worked there. The owner, Mary Baldwin, brought African Americans up from the south to work in her restaurant. There was also a Marigold in New Orleans, Louisiana. Crystal's grandmother, great grandmother and other family members worked there at the time. Crystal remembers her mother telling her how she worked there as a young girl, with her mother. Crystal's Great Aunt Ellen Robinson's image was used on the pink china (made by Buffalo China Co.) and on the cover of the restaurant's cookbook, billboards and other items. She sued the restaurant owner and lost her case.

Crystal attended Beech Avenue and Center Avenue Elementary Schools, North Junior High School, and graduated from Niagara Falls High School. Her mother taught her children to always look out for the children and the elderly and that's what Crystal continues to do in her life.

Crystal's professional education career began in the Niagara Falls, New York School District, where she worked as an Intergroup- Relations Specialist, and her experience spans grades kindergarten through twelve, as a teacher and counselor, and grades four to twelve as an assistant principal and 9-12 as a principal. Currently and for the past thirty one years, she has been the Principal of

McKinley High School, in Buffalo, New York. Also a pioneer in education, she was appointed as Principal of McKinley in 1987, and is the first female to have been appointed as a Principal of a Career and Technical School in Buffalo Public Schools' then one hundred and forty nine year history.

In addition to her years as an educator, Crystal has been employed as the Director for the Summer Institute of Math and Science at Buffalo State College, the Director of Youth Services at the Niagara Community Action Organization in Niagara Falls, New York, a Nurse, a Counselor for a Buffalo Urban League After School Program and a Facilitator for the School Leaders Network.

She was a People To People International Ambassador to South Africa in 2003, which is a program established by the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 to promote friendship, cultural sharing and education throughout the world. Some other organizations she is a member of are: The Links, Incorporated, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, she is a life member of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., a life member of the Association of Black Women Historians, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Past President and Vice President of the Black Pioneers of Niagara Falls, New York, member of the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the Afro American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier Inc., and Past President and Vice President of the American Business Women's Association, Frontier Chapter. She is also a member of Phi Delta Kappa, Pi Lambda Theta National Honor Society, National Association of Secondary Principals, Supervisors and Administrators of New York State, the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People and the American Institute of Parliamentarians.

A strong Union Officer, Crystal started her service to her Union immediately after being employed as an Assistant Principal in 1984. She is a Past President and Vice President of the Secondary Assistant Principals' Association, Past President and Vice President of the Secondary Principals' Association, a former Vice President of the Buffalo Council of Supervisors and Administrators, AFSA, AFL-CIO Local 10 and since 2005, currently serves as its President. She was the first African American and female to be elected to this office. She is also a Vice President of the American Federation of School Administrators AFL-CIO and the Past President and current Vice President of the New York State Federation of School Administrators and has served in these capacities, since 2005. While in these leadership roles, she has also served on numerous state and local educational committees.

A supporter of the Arts and a former Niagara University Player, she performed twenty one shows of

"Godspell" at Artpark, played the character of "Mother White" in Pulitzer winning Playwright, August Wilson's, "If you Can't Say Amen, Say Ouch", hosted by The Bells Of St. Johns, while the author was present, and got a raving review from him. A writer of poetry and song, she also played the character of "Evilene" in McKinley High School's two night, sold out performances of "The Wiz." A former model, she was an extra, playing the wife of surviving USS Mason Sailor, Lorenzo DuFau (who played himself in the movie), in the opening of the movie "Proud." She is a former "Black America Queen of Buffalo", "Miss Black Beauty" and "Miss Niagara Observer" of Niagara Falls; a Grapevine Writer for the Niagara Falls Gazette, and former host and producer of CB's Educational Journals.

The contributions Crystal has made to her community and individuals have been recognized through the awards she has received throughout the years. Among these awards are: the Buffalo Branch NAACP, "Daniel Acker Community Service Award"; the "Niagara County Black Achiever Award" and the "Erie County Black Achiever's Award"; the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Erie County Chapter, "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award for Outstanding Community Service in Education"; Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Theta Sigma Chapter, "Distinguished Educator Award"; the JROTC United States Army "Distinguished Public Service Award"; The Niagara Improvement Association, "Distinguished Educator Award"; The Afro Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, "William Wells Brown Award"; the "Outstanding Educator's Award" from the Black Women's Association, the St. Phillips Community Center, "Women Builders of Communities and Dreams Award"; the "Women In Industry Award In Education" from the Honorable Antoine Thompson; the "Minnie Gillette/Joan Bozer Award In Education For Empowering Women"; "The Career & Technical Educators Guild of Buffalo, New York Appreciation Award" for Dedication and Service to Career & Technical Education; the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, Inc., "Community Service Award"; the African Methodist Ministers Alliance, "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Education Award"; and the "Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Educational Leadership Award" from McKinley High School. Crystal Barton was also the first administrator to receive "The Apple For The Teacher Award" from Iota Theta Lambda Sorority Inc., Beta Phi Chapter; Crystal was honored with a "Crystal Boling Barton Day" in Buffalo, New York, by the Honorable Mayor Byron Brown, as his first ever honoree, for Women's History Month; received the 2016 CAO "Excellence in Partnership Award"; the 2018 "Roses for Outstanding Women Award"; 2018 Canisius Academic Talent Search "Trailblazer Award" and is listed in the National Women's Hall of Fame's "Book of Leaves."

Crystal is well known for her work in the community and the Niagara Falls and Buffalo School Districts. Having served on many committees during her tenure, she currently serves as a member

of the Operating committee for "Say Yes Buffalo." She was appointed to a NYSED Blue Ribbon Committee, by Commissioner of Education, Mary Ellen Elia to Improve Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color; served as a member of the NYSED Alternate Assessment Panel for two terms and the NYSED School Leader Evaluation Task Force, appointed by former Commissioner Richard Mills. She was the only principal who was asked by Commissioner Mills to join superintendents from around the state, to discuss new state standards for students. She recalls how the Deputy Commissioner said that they "wanted someone with fire, and who was not afraid to speak."

As a principal, Crystal always sought ways to engage members of the community to help students, she worked with her colleagues to establish partnerships with many organizations including but not limited to: The Construction Exchange of Western New York and The Construction Industry Foundation Inc.; Erie County Community Action Organization; The Academic Talent Search Program of Canisius College; the Liberty Partnership Program of Buffalo State College and with the assistance of the district's Career and Technical Education Department, McKinley has articulations agreements with Erie County Community College and Niagara Community College as well as partnerships with Alfred State, Montante Solar & Montante Construction, LLC; Compliance & Administrative Services of New York (CASNY), as one of the district's NYS P-Tech Schools. Most recently, Principal Barton extended McKinley's 21st Century partnership with the Community Action Organization of Erie County, to include a McKinley-Buffalo Leadership Academy for male students to encourage and assist the students in planning for their futures and finding positive ways to accomplish their goals of entering college or the workforce after graduation. These partnerships helped to increase McKinley's graduation rate to 84% in 2017, helping to return the school to "Good Standing" status, as it had been for most of the thirty one years she has been there.

Since 2002, Principal Barton has led her school and the district in the preservation and teaching of African and African American History and other multi-cultural educational experiences. She and her staff brought speakers from around the country to McKinley and the community, to conference with students. Speakers such as: Ruby Bridges; Kenneth B. Morrison, great- great- grandson of Booker T. Washington and the great- great- great grandson of Frederick Douglass; the great -great-great nephew of Harriet Tubman, who lives in Buffalo; Dr. Maya Rockeymore; The Honorable Dorian Gadsen; Gail Deculus-Johnson, Sheila Evans-Tranum; representatives from the United Nations, and so many more.

Principal Barton has always been a leader in Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning. McKinley High School, under Principal Barton's leadership, hosted the first, city-wide African American History Quiz Bowl for students and teachers; hosted the first African American History

Pageant; hosted an Annual Legacy Luncheon so that the students would learn firsthand of WNY Legends; hosted a WNY Gospel Hall of Fame; hosted an Annual "Teachable Moment in African American History" and other activities focused on Multicultural and Diversity of the various ethnic groups in the school. She envisioned the establishment of an interactive Black Memorabilia Museum that students and the community could use in the years to come, and has been working hard to realize that dream via the conference exhibits held each year.

A hard and dedicated worker, Crystal always says, "The only thing I hate about living is knowing that I have to die; so I plan like I'm going to live forever and live like there's no tomorrow. The one thing I always remember however, is that through faith, I can live again and knowing that brings me joy."

Crystal is the mother of three, grandmother of eight and great grandmother of two. She is the wife of retired principal, Robert Barton Sr. (*Author: Uncrowned Community Builders*)

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, July 23, 2022, 11 AM at McKinley High School, 1500 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14207. At the request of Mrs. Barton, no prior visitation will be held.

To send a flower arrangement or to plant trees in memory of **Crystal A. Boling-Barton**, please [click here to visit our Sympathy Store](#).