

Remembering Trish Morris-Yamba: A Champion Of Women And Children



Trish Morris-Yamba, the wife of NCC Board President Dr. A. Zachary Yamba, was a champion of women's and children's causes. Photo courtesy of Dr. A. Zachary Yamba.

Newark and the community at large lost a dedicated champion of women and children with the passing of Trish Morris-Yamba March 8 at the age of 80. She was the wife of New Community Board President Dr. A. Zachary Yamba.

Morris-Yamba was heavily involved in the Newark Day Center, which aims to train the poor to help themselves, and its Greater Newark Fresh Air Fund. She worked for the Newark Day Center for 32 years and continued to be involved with the organization during her retirement.

The Greater Newark Fresh Air Fund sends inner-city children from the Greater Newark area to camp, where they can enjoy the outdoors and participate in activities like swimming. Morris-Yamba was heavily involved in the process to make sure children had positive experiences. Yamba said at one time she worked with an airline that would take the children to the Bahamas for a day.

"It was a great treat for the kids," Yamba said.

In addition to her work at the Newark Day Center, Morris-Yamba was the founding president of the Early Childhood Coalition of Newark and she founded the CHEN School, a collaborative preschool sponsored by the Council of Higher Education in Newark.

Women's empowerment was another area Morris-Yamba was passionate about. She was a founding member and vice chair of the National Congress of Black Women. She also chaired its metro-Newark chapter. Yamba said she helped install various chapters of the group.

He explained that Morris-Yamba helped women professionally and politically, supporting women who were running for public office and influencing public policy.

"It didn't matter what level office they were seeking. She would go to their rallies and support in whatever way she could. Whether it's at the local level in New Jersey, whether it's in Washington, whether it's in Atlanta, she would get up and just go," Yamba said.

Yamba said he asked her if she would run for office, but she declined.

"She said, 'No, I like to support women's issues, women's causes and open doors for them.' Especially some of the younger people because she said we need young people in the pipeline," Yamba explained.

Although Morris-Yamba was busy with her advocacy work, Yamba said she was always present for their children and their events and made time to attend some of his professional functions as well. Yamba served as the president of Essex County College for 30 years so they both had very active professional lives.

"We never got in each other's way," he said. "We supported each other. I went to some of her functions and she went to some of mine."

Many saw Morris-Yamba as a mother figure because Yamba said she took people under her wing throughout her life. He said he believed her drive to help others was nurtured by her mother who was very active in the community when Morris-Yamba was young, organizing softball games for neighborhood children and being very active in church organizations.

Newark served as the base for Morris-Yamba's advocacy work, but her influence spread much farther than the city limits. In addition to her work with the National Congress of Black Women, she served as the host of "Black Spectrum," a public affairs show that aired on NBC for many years.



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Morris-Yamba was an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, which aims to study and help alleviate problems concerning girls and women in order to improve their social stature and to be of service to all mankind. Yamba said his wife loved being part of the sorority and several relatives, including two granddaughters and nieces, are carrying on in her footsteps as members.

Morris-Yamba was a longtime member of Bethany Baptist Church in Newark and served on several boards, including the Bethany Christian Academy, Newark Emergency Services for Families and the Community Advisory Board of Thirteen/WNET.

The loss of Morris-Yamba will be felt by those close to her personally, throughout Newark and beyond. The work she did throughout her life, however, will continue and will serve as a positive influence on women, children and society at large.

“We’re going to miss her. No question about that,” Yamba said.