



## Johnnie S. Ray

January 18, 1948 - February 24, 2026

UTICA - Johnnie S. Ray, also known as “Njuzi” or just “Ray,” was born on January 18, 1948, in Newport News, Virginia to Bertha Shaw. Johnnie was an only child and was raised primarily by his grandmother Emma.

Throughout his lifetime, Johnnie faced many personal challenges, so he knew firsthand how much more difficult things could have been. That is why his motto was, “I’m too blessed to be stressed!”

He was dyslexic, so reading was a challenge. However, he became an avid reader and would sometimes skip school to visit the library. He also suffered from bipolar – manic depressive disorder, which he inherited from his mother. Johnnie was very observant of people and enjoyed being the quiet person in the room. He kept to himself and was grateful to have family and friends who loved him and cared for him whenever he experienced a psychotic break.

Johnnie met Freddie Hamilton in 1972 in Philadelphia at a political event. At the time, Freddie was a single parent raising five children. Johnnie and Freddie welcomed their son, Njuzi Ray II, on August 23, 1975. We lovingly called the baby “Little Njuzi.” Johnnie became the father of Omar Ray on December 11, 1977.

As a young man in the 1960s during the Black Power movement, Johnnie

changed his name to Njuzi. He became a member of the Black United Front (BUF) and joined a chapter of the Black Panthers.

Johnnie was a member of the House of the Lord Pentecostal Church in Brooklyn, under the leadership of Rev. Herbert Daughtry. In Utica, he was a member of St. James A.M.E. Church under the leadership of Rev. Richard Moran.

Johnnie loved Black people and Black history. Although he was an avowed Christian, he also studied and practiced the Yoruba religion. In 1999, he and Freddie traveled to Accra, Ghana, in West Africa. They visited the village of Pankese and were honored with an enstoolment ceremony. Johnnie became Nana Gyane, and Freddie became Nana Yaa Serwaa. They were also able to visit the W.E.B. Du Bois Library. Around 2019, Johnnie was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and prostate cancer. In recent years, he had begun to lose his memory.

Johnnie leaves behind to mourn his loving wife, Freddie Hamilton; children and their spouses, Pamela and Joan Hamilton, Christian and Linda Hamilton, Marc Hamilton, Paula Hamilton-Odom, Patricia Hamilton, Leverne Grant, Omar Ray, and Njuzi Ray II who predeceased him in 1993; grandchildren, Imani Odom, Isis Odom, Olivia and Dwyght Mack, Matthew Hamilton-Roux, Robert and Dera Hamilton, and Kwame Odom; great-grandchildren, Christian Benjamin Mack and Michael Hamilton; sibling, Susie and Allen Sampson; and a host of close friends, nieces, nephews, and neighbors.

A Memorial Gathering in Johnnie's honor will be held on Saturday, March 7, 2026, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. at the Eannace Funeral Home, Inc., 932 South St., corner of Hammond Ave. Johnnie's Memorial Service and Celebration of Life will commence at 3:00 p.m. at the funeral home. For those unable to attend, you may be present virtually at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86269796004>.

This obituary was lovingly composed by Johnnie's family.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Gathering

MAR 7. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Eannace Funeral Home, Inc.  
932 South Street  
corner of Hammond Ave.  
Utica, NY 13501  
(315) 724-6714  
eannacefh@roadrunner.com  
<https://www.eannacefuneralhome.com>

## Memorial Service

MAR 7. 3:00 PM (ET)

Eannace Funeral Home, Inc.  
932 South Street  
corner of Hammond Ave.  
Utica, NY 13501  
(315) 724-6714  
eannacefh@roadrunner.com  
<https://www.eannacefuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall

TN

“ Our family has known Johnnie for over 50 years. He has been a friend since the 1960's when he lived in the Washington, DC, area. When Johnnie moved to New York we maintained contact and he came to visit numerous times over the years. We talked to him every year on his birthday, and he called on our birthdays every year, without fail. I searched for Johnnie on line (after his phone wasn't answered) specifically because I did not get a birthday call this year.

*Our deepest condolences to your family. We feel like we've lost a member of our family, too.*

*Sincerely, T. Norman*

---

**T. Norman** - May 20 at 03:04 PM

AL

“ Freddie,

*Our deepest, most heartfelt condolences are with you and your family. May God comfort and strengthen you during this difficult time. 🙏*

*God Bless you,*

*Alison Short, Faye Short, and the Short Family*

---

**Alison** - March 06 at 11:24 PM

DE

*Much sympathy and love to Ms. Freddie and family.  
May God grant the faith that brings peace of mind and heart, that  
washes all sadness away in the days to come.  
My dad (John Robinson, Jr.) loved both of you and I know he was  
waiting to greet Mr. Johnnie in heaven. Blessings, The O'Garro Family*

Devana - March 07 at 02:14 PM

MW

“*Freddie! We're sending our sincere  
condolences to you and your family. We're  
sorry to hear of your husband's passing. We  
pray that God will comfort you during this  
difficult time.* 🙏🙏🙏



Mary and Robert Wells - March 06 at 09:34 PM

SF

“*Susie, Allen, Shaena , Alana, and family  
purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the  
family of Johnnie S. Ray.*



Susie, Allen, Shaena , Alana, and family - March 05 at 02:47 PM

CS

“*CDSC Board of Directors and Staff purchased  
the Touching Tribute Spray for the family of  
Johnnie S. Ray.*



CDSC Board of Directors and Staff - March 05 at 12:51 PM



“ Angela Patterson lit a candle in memory of Johnnie S. Ray



Angela Patterson - March 04 at 09:38 PM



“ 11 files added to the album Life Tributes



Eannace Funeral Home, Inc. - March 03 at 05:57 PM