



Celebration of Life
1953-2019

PHILIP GOODWIN FREELON



***The stone which the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.***

***This was the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.***

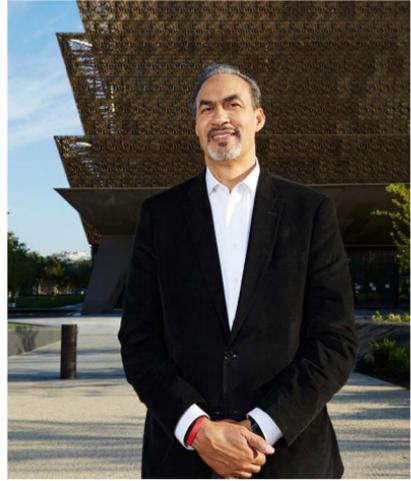
Psalm 118: 22-23

Welcome	Maya Freelon <i>Daughter</i>
Introduction	Pierce Freelon <i>Son</i>
“Just You”	Nnenna Freelon <i>Wife</i>
Reflections	Deen Freelon <i>Son</i>
	Bob Powell <i>Lifelong Friend</i>
Video	Celebration of Life
Reflections	Phil Harrison, FAIA <i>Colleague</i>
	Justice, Stella, Aion, Wonderful, August, Nova, and Zora <i>Grandchildren</i>
	Zena Howard, FAIA <i>Colleague</i>
Video	Gov. Roy Cooper
Reflections	Randall (Randi) Freelon Vega <i>Sister</i>
Thanks and Benediction	Bishop Clarence Laney Jr.
Drumming Recessional	Caique Vidal, Baba Teli Shabu and friends

Philip G. Freelon, one of America's most influential African American architects and an activist for people and communities traditionally outside the mainstream, died July 9 in Durham, North Carolina following a lengthy battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He was 66.

Profoundly connected to and inspired by his family, he is survived by his wife of 40 years, Nnenna Freelon; three children, Deen Freelon (Kate Sheppard), Maya Freelon, and Pierce Freelon (Katie Proctor Freelon); three siblings, Randi Vega, Doug Freelon (Richard Plombon) and Gregory Freelon; sister-in-law, Debbie Pierce; brother-in-law, Melvin Pierce (Pat Branner-Pierce); six grandchildren, Justice, Stella, Aion, August, Nova and Zora; nephews Andre and Niko Vega and nieces Livvy Cunningham and Liana Cooper. He is preceded in death by his mother, Elizabeth Neal Freelon, his father, Allan Randall Freelon Jr., and a grandson, Wonderful Legacy Asante.

Phil was a change agent for his profession. A central theme of his work and a source of his satisfaction and enjoyment was creating spaces for everyday people. He challenged architects to see what he saw—that every person should experience beautiful and inspiring architecture not only when visiting a famous building but also in their everyday life. Freelon was equally known for challenging the status quo, working to bring greater equity and diversity to architecture and business. As a mentor, he encouraged young designers and other professionals to aim high and break through established barriers.



Phil at the National Museum of African American History and Culture © Noah Wilman

He founded The Freelon Group in Durham in 1990, which earned dozens of national and regional design awards for educational, cultural, library, and health research buildings. Working in North Carolina and throughout the U.S., The Freelon Group became one of the nation's largest African American-owned architecture firms. In 2014, The Freelon Group joined with global design firm Perkins and Will, where Freelon was named Managing Director of the North Carolina practice and served on the firm's Board of Directors and Executive Committee.



National Center for Civil and Human Rights.
© Mark Herboth

A distinct sensitivity to humanity is evident in each of Freelon's landmark projects: The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture in D.C., the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, the Durham County Human Services Complex in Durham, the Harvey B. Gantt Center in Charlotte, the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture in Baltimore, Emancipation Park in Houston, North Carolina Freedom Park in Raleigh, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson, and the Motown Museum Expansion in Detroit.



Phil pictured on the top right, with his family.

Phil was born and raised in Philadelphia as part of a family of artists, educators, and inventors, which gave him a lifelong love of the arts, music, and culture. Harlem Renaissance-era painter Allan Randall Freelon Sr., his grandfather, helped ignite his awareness of the physical world and his interest in creative expression.

He earned a Bachelor of Environmental Design in Architecture degree from North Carolina State University and a Master of Architecture degree from Massachusetts Institute of



Phil graduating from NC State University College of Design.

Technology. Freelon was the recipient of the Loeb Fellowship at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, where he completed a year of independent study in 1989. He received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Duke University in 2018 and honorary degrees from NC State University and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

He taught for more than a decade at the MIT School of Architecture and Planning and was a sought-after guest lecturer for architecture and design schools across North America.

Freelon was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, a recipient of the AIA North Carolina's Gold Medal, a recipient of the North Carolina Award for Fine Arts, and a recipient of the Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Architecture. President Barack Obama appointed him to the Commission of Fine Arts in 2011. *Fast Company* magazine named him "Architect of the Year" in January 2018, lauding him as "America's Humanitarian Architect."

In partnership with Perkins and Will, he established the Phil Freelon Fellowship Fund at the Harvard Graduate School of Design in



Structure in Bloom by Phil Freelon.



Phil fishing in North Carolina

2016. The fund expands academic opportunities for African American and other underrepresented students studying design.

Photography was essential to Freelon's design vision and creative process. His photographs explore the structure that exists all around us, both in the natural and built environment. Celebrated in gallery exhibitions since 1990, Freelon's photography will be showcased in upcoming solo exhibitions at the Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington, N.C. and the University of Houston's School of Architecture.

Phil and Nnenna enjoyed living by the water, in the home he designed for them. He was a devoted fisherman who would often wake up at 5 a.m. to hook the best ones—but he usually just took a photo and let them go. It was the peace and quiet of fishing that he liked best.

Phil and Nnenna hosted an annual New Year's Eve party for many years, a gathering that brought together friends and family from all over the country. Phil didn't dance much, but he held down the DJ booth until long after the ball dropped with plenty of Earth, Wind & Fire, James Brown, and Cameo jams.

He had a great sense of humor—quiet, a little goofy, and lots of dad jokes. He enjoyed watching movies, and in many cases, rewatching them. Science fiction was his favorite genre, and he watched *The Matrix* well over 50 times. He was a Trekkie, and instilled in his children an excitement for the great unknown and the will to boldly go where no one has gone before.



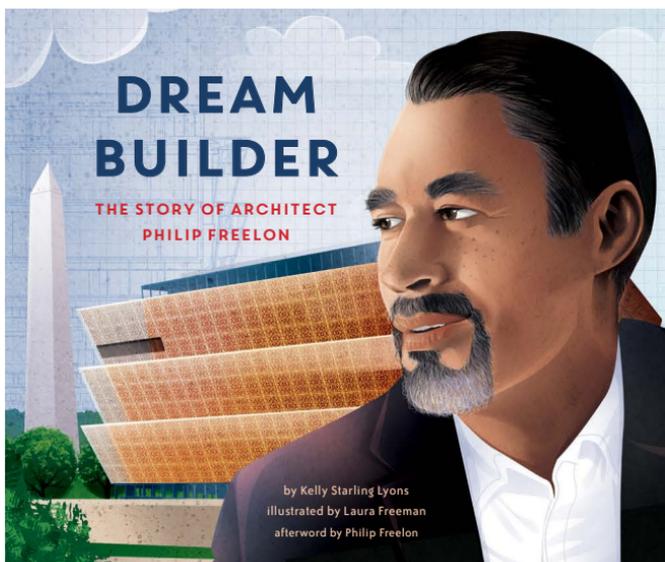


NORTHSTAR

CHURCH of the ARTS

Phil and Nnenna founded NorthStar Church of the Arts in 2018 as a sacred space for healing, arts, and spiritual connection. In lieu of flowers, Phil has asked that those who want to honor his legacy become sustaining donors of NorthStar, so that the same creative and spiritual energies that nurtured him throughout his life may positively impact others in his adopted home of Durham.

Donations can be made in Phil's honor at www.northstardurham.com



New children's book available January 2020

Author Kelly Starling Lyons and illustrator Laura Freeman have collaborated to produce a children's book about Phil's life, which will be published in January 2020 by Lee & Low Books. The book is geared to young readers ages 9 to 12, and is meant to inspire interest in architecture and other science, technological, engineering, art, and math careers.



Durham County Human Services Complex

“Durham’s vitality is built upon the health of our residents and the capacity of our community to foster and enhance the wellbeing of every citizen.”

— Phil Freelon’s quote at the building’s entrance

The Durham County Human Services Complex, where we are gathered today, was one of Phil’s favorite local projects. The Freelon Group designed the building to serve as a welcoming public space in the heart of downtown Durham. Completed in 2013, the building is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver certified. It houses the Durham County Public Health and Social Services departments and is meant to be a transformative healing space for the city. The building demonstrates how a shift in attitude toward the treatment of underserved populations can elevate experience, bringing dignity and value to the community.

DURHAM BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Resolution

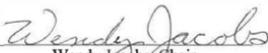
HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF PHILIP GOODWIN FREELON

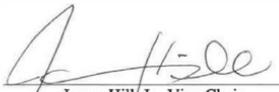
- WHEREAS**, Philip Goodwin Freelon, an award-winning and nationally-known architect, left us far too soon when he made his earthly transition on July 9, 2019 following a three-year struggle with ALS; and
- WHEREAS**, this amazing life force brought his experience and knowledge from his hometown of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to North Carolina, earning his initial architectural degree from North Carolina State University; and
- WHEREAS**, because of his keen interest, commitment and dedication to Durham, Phil designed many of our region's unique buildings, including Durham County's Human Services Building and South Regional Library, Durham Bulls Athletic Park, the Central Parking Structure at Raleigh-Durham International Airport and the North Carolina Central University Biomufacturing Research Institute and Technology Enterprise facility; and
- WHEREAS**, most notably he was a member of the planning and design team for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture, and additionally he was the lead architect for several significant cultural, educational, and civic projects including the International Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Emancipation Park in Houston, and the Motown Museum in Detroit; and
- WHEREAS**, President Barack Obama appointed him to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in 2011 and Phil was the recipient of numerous recognitions and honors during his career; and
- WHEREAS**, he will be forever and fondly be remembered for his lasting positive impact in Durham County and beyond through his design of numerous and unique structures and for graciously mentoring many aspiring architects along the way.
- NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that we the members of the Durham County Board of Commissioners, do hereby resolve to honor

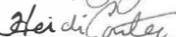
PHILIP GOODWIN FREELON

for his lifelong work as a gifted architect and for leaving an indelible mark on the culture and beauty of all the communities in which he designed and built masterful structures that will stand as a monument to his incredible artistic talent.

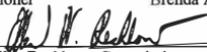
This 9th day of September 2019.


Wendy Jacobs, Chair


James Hill, Jr., Vice-Chair


Heidi Carter, Commissioner


Brenda A. Howerton, Commissioner


Ellen Reckhow, Commissioner









Artwork by Maya Freelon, *Ancestor Ascension (for my Dad)*, 44"x73", 2019

The Freelon family would like to express our deep gratitude to all who have encircled us in love, prayer, and good thoughts over the last weeks and months. We so appreciate the outpouring of kindness. It is truly a blessing to be in community with all of you through the ascension of our beloved Phil.

The Freelon Family