

## Acknowledgments

Our family wishes to express our sincere appreciation for the overwhelming expressions of kindness and sympathy — whether through contributions to the program, gifts to the family fund, or words and tokens of heartfelt sentiment — during this period of bereavement.

Special thank you to the staffs of: the University of Illinois at Chicago, Mercy Hospital, Olympia Center, Northwestern University Department of Ophthalmology.

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Organization services provided by Braun Strategic Resources

Musical medley produced by Joshua Murphy

Videography provided by Tracye A. Matthews Ph.D. and Iris Dawn Parker

Video footage courtesy of The HistoryMakers, a national 501(c)(3) non-profit video oral history archive

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Cover photo by Dawoud Bey

Those wishing to contribute to the legacy of Dr. Maurice F. Rabb Jr. may do so by contributing to the Rabb Murphy Family Fund. All gifts will be matched one-to-one with a gift to the African American Legacy Fund at The Chicago Community Trust.

**CCF/Rabb Murphy Family Fund**  
**The Chicago Community Trust**  
111 East Wacker Drive, Suite 1400  
Chicago, IL 60601

**[www.DoctorRabb.com](http://www.DoctorRabb.com)**

# In Celebration of the life of Maurice F. Rabb Jr., M.D.

(August 7, 1932–June 6, 2005)



**Saturday, June 18, 2005 10:30am**

Thorne Auditorium  
Northwestern University School of Law  
750 North Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago, Illinois 60611

## Obituary

Dr. Maurice F. Rabb, Jr. was born in Shelbyville, Kentucky on August 7, 1932 to Dr. Maurice F. Rabb, Sr., a family practitioner, anesthesiologist, and civil rights activist, and Mrs. Jewel Miller Rabb, fellow activist and math teacher, who held a master's degree in Mathematics, of Columbus, Mississippi and Louisville, Kentucky, respectively.

At the age of 16, Dr. Rabb graduated from Central Colored High School in Louisville, Kentucky, where his mother was a member of the faculty. He then matriculated at the University of Indiana because his home institution, The University of Louisville, remained segregated. After two years he returned to Kentucky, when the University of Louisville was desegregated.

Dr. Rabb was one of the first African Americans to graduate from the University of Louisville College of Arts and Sciences. He went on to attend the University of Louisville Medical School. Dr. Rabb completed his ophthalmology residency at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) where he was the first Black resident in 1962 and first Black chief resident in 1963.

He was the first African American physician to open an office in the loop. He began the practice of general ophthalmology in 1964 as a general ophthalmologist, subsequently specializing in corneal disease. He moved his practice to Mercy Hospital where he specialized in the treatment and diagnosis of retinal diseases until 2004.

In the summer of 1964 in Chicago, Dr. Rabb met his wife-to-be, the artist Madeline Wheeler Murphy of Baltimore, Maryland, daughter of Judge William H. Murphy and Madeline Wheeler Murphy. The two wed in 1966, and their union was blessed with two sons, Maurice III and Christopher Murphy Rabb.

Dr. Rabb embarked upon an illustrious and trailblazing career in the field of ophthalmology while based at two Chicago institutions: UIC and Mercy Hospital.

At UIC, Dr. Rabb became the first Black tenured, full professor of clinical ophthalmology at a predominantly white institution in 1977, and the first Black physician to be the medical director of an eye bank, from 1972-1987. With colleague Dr. George Honig, Dr. Rabb co-founded The Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center at UIC in 1972, which Dr. Rabb directed for 16 years. This was one of the first and most successful centers for sickle cell anemia research and patient care in the world. Dr. Rabb's landmark research on sickle cell made it possible to prevent retinal detachment and blindness in sickle cell patients.

A highly regarded professor, Dr. Rabb received numerous awards for his excellence in teaching and service to the University.

Dr. Rabb joined the staff of Mercy Hospital in 1967. He served as the chair of Ophthalmology from 1971 to 2005 and brought Ophthalmology to departmental status in 1990. He was president of the Medical staff and a member of the Board of Directors from 2001 to 2003, and on the Mercy Foundation Board from 1995 to 2005.

In addition to work at his two professional homes, Dr. Rabb made significant contributions through other entities. Dr. Rabb traveled the globe for forty years, giving academic lectures at medical conferences as an expert on corneal disease and retinopathy. Dr. Rabb excelled at stereofundus photography and pioneered in bringing intravenous fluorescein angiography, a diagnostic procedure using special cameras to photograph the retina, to five Chicago hospitals.

A distinguished scholar, he was the first African American to co-author a textbook on ophthalmology, along with 5 other textbooks and more than 60 articles. Dr. Rabb was recognized by many of the most prominent medical

organizations in the nation and world. The Food and Drug Administration, The Center for Disease Control, and the National Institutes of Health appointed him to advisory positions.

Dr. Rabb was the first African American to receive the distinguished Honor and Senior Honor Awards from the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and was a co-founder of the Roman Barnes Society, an organization of Black Ophthalmologists.

Dr. Rabb was a dedicated member of the National Medical Association (NMA) for 40 years. He was responsible for elevating and establishing an academic standard that has become the model for the NMA annual meetings. The NMA has co-named a scholarship after Dr. Rabb and the late Dr. H. Philip Venable's commitments to patient care, teaching, and research. The Rabb-Venable Ophthalmology Award for Outstanding Research is granted to students and residents, and is the first academic research award named in honor of an African American ophthalmologist.

Dr. Rabb remained throughout his life a dedicated family man, and an avid photographer, traveler, cinephile and gadgeteer. His humor, humility, love, and kindness affected all who were part of his life. Heroically, he stayed alive long enough to enjoy his 39th wedding anniversary and died a day later, at home with his wife and sons at his bedside. He left a remarkable legacy, and will be profoundly missed. Dr. Rabb is survived by his wife, Madeline Murphy Rabb of Chicago, his sons, Maurice F. Rabb III of Chicago, and Christopher Murphy Rabb of Philadelphia, his mother, Jewel Miller Rabb of Louisville, Kentucky, his uncle, Louis A. Rabb of Tuskegee, Alabama, a daughter-in-law, Imani Perry, and a grandson, Freeman Diallo Perry Rabb, of Philadelphia.

## Slides

*Jeremiah 8:22 "Is there no balm in Gilead, Is there no physician there?  
Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?"*

Snapshots of far flung places  
Thailand, Australia, Haiti  
Where, your sons laugh, you surely avoided local cuisine  
But allowed yourself to be enchanted by people,  
and remembered them.  
And others.  
Who were often humble, ill, supplicating, degenerating, needing,  
But you took swift silent action,  
A healer. A teacher. A reluctant leader.  
Even in the pictures you are quiet,  
Sometimes invisible behind the camera,  
Other times still gazing out in wonder  
At one, two and three,  
Who shared your life.  
Death is cruel, pushing them out of your embrace.  
Leaving us all feeling infant, and longing.  
Stand close to me! you beckon  
Let it be grand love, you implore  
Without the need for words,  
Present when touch is lost!  
Let it be enduring, and dependable, tangible  
Like so many slides across a living room  
Records of life.  
Now, one, two, and three- and others  
Hold them up to the light,  
And let your glow, your charm, your warm soft hands,  
Refract through their weeping hearts  
A milky balm in Gilead.

—Imani Perry

## Memorial Service for Dr. Maurice F. Rabb Jr.

### Order of Service

Prelude

Musical Selection

*A Tree and Me* by Oscar Brown, Jr.

Tributes From Colleagues

Interlude

Tributes From Family & Friends

Musical Selection

*Men and Boys* by Oscar Brown, Jr.

Reflections

### Visual Retrospective

**Maggie Brown**, soloist

Accompanied by Miguel de la Cerna

**Gloria Jackson Bacon, M.D.**

**Lee M. Jampol, M.D.**

**Lenworth N. Johnson, M.D.**

**Sister Sheila Lyne, RSM**

**Oswaldo I. Lopez, M.D.**

**Veeral S. Sheth, M.D.**

Personal Video Interview (2001)

Edited by **Christopher M. Rabb**

**Roger Ebert**

**Thomas L. Matthew, M.D.**

**Laura W. Murphy**

**Maurice F. Rabb III and Christopher M. Rabb**

**Maggie Brown**, soloist

Accompanied by Miguel de la Cerna

**Rev. Michael G. Sykes**