

OBITUARIES

Khalif Mujahid-Ali, 60, a devoted advocate for ending violence

By Ellie Rushing and Massarah Mikati
Staff Writers

Khalif Mujahid-Ali, 60, a devoted community organizer who wrapped his arms around the city's youth and "took every homicide personally," died this week.

Mr. Mujahid-Ali, of Southwest Philadelphia, was found dead in Bellmawr, N.J., Tuesday morning, police said. While an official cause of death is not yet available, his family said they believe he died of a heart attack.

Mr. Mujahid-Ali was the founder of the Beloved Care Project, a nonprofit that sought to mentor and support children from West and Southwest Philadelphia through writing, trauma and grief counseling, field trips, neighborhood marches, and interfaith prayer. The goal, he said, was to uplift the voices of people and communities most affected by gun violence, and to "build a village" for the city's children so that they could see a future for themselves.

"They don't have no hope," he said of the city's young people in a recent interview. "We have to show them that we love them, we care, we want to save their lives."

He was born in Philadelphia on April 21, 1963, as Lewis Edward Brooks, and attended Philadelphia public schools. He converted to Islam in the '70s, his family said, and adopted a new name.

Mr. Mujahid-Ali had a contagious laugh and kept a short, graying beard, and was almost always wearing a hat — his signature look was sporting a black beret.

He spent some of his adult life in Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland, and over the years, worked as a kitchen and flooring specialist at Home Depot, an associate at a county landfill, and as a truck driver.

But he did not realize his true calling until he served a 6½-year jail sentence for aggravated assault in 2014. It was during his time behind bars, he said, that the idea for the Beloved Care Project was born — he was determined to ensure other Philadelphia children did not repeat his mistakes, and that even if they did, it would not define them.

He founded the nonprofit in 2020, and funded it largely out of his own pocket as an Uber and Lyft driver. He most recently worked full-time at the Penn Injury Science Center at the University of Pennsylvania, as a community outreach supervisor and violence interrupter.

People who knew Mr. Mujahid-Ali described him similarly: He was selfless — everything he did was for his community. He was humble — he never wanted the spotlight at the events he organized, and made sure attendees were the ones holding the microphone. And, above all else, he was committed to building trusting relationships with community members, especially youth.

"His whole philosophy was, show up. He would say, 'I don't want your money, I want your support. This work can't be territorial, we have to work together,'" said friend and confidant Natasha McGlynn, executive director of the Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia.

McGlynn recalled the first time she met Mr. Mujahid-Ali, at a community meeting in early 2021, where he told the group that he regularly cried for the city's children and the violence they were enduring.

The two spoke almost daily after that. "I had a 60-year-old best friend," said McGlynn, 37.

"He wanted to make a change and he wanted voices to be heard," said Mecca Robinson of Forget Me Knot, who organized anti-violence events with Mr. Mujahid-Ali. "We really lost a soldier."



Khalif Mujahid-Ali founded the Beloved Care Project to ensure that other Philadelphia children did not repeat his mistakes. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer

Mr. Mujahid-Ali personally knew the pain wrought by gun violence — in 2009, his sister Tara Monique Brooks was fatally shot.

He was tired of politicians and institutions telling his community what they thought they needed, he said, and wanted those most impacted by violence to be heard.

"You can't walk in our house and tell us how to fix it," he told The Inquirer. "We're gonna tell you how to fix it."

Recently, he'd become a key volunteer for mayoral candidate Rebecca Rhynhart's campaign and appeared in multiple commercials.

Rhynhart called Mr. Mujahid-Ali's anti-violence work "inspiring and contagious."

"Khalif genuinely believed we could improve our neighborhoods through compassion — and I hope we all can lead by following his example," she said in a statement.

Rhynhart's campaign manager, Kellan White, added: "He just cared in a way that was so authentic. He took every homicide personally. Whether it was Northeast Philly, Center City, Southwest, Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, didn't matter to him. It was all a disease that was warping our city in a way that was unacceptable to him."

Mr. Mujahid-Ali built close

relationships with many families who'd lost loved ones to gun violence, standing alongside mothers such as Crystal Arthur, whose son Kristian Hamilton-Arthur was killed in 2017, to call for justice in their unsolved cases.

"We have to keep it alive," Arthur said. "We can't just let the Beloved Care Project go. His legacy has to be fulfilled."

Family was at the heart of all of his work, McGlynn said. He was a loving son and father and was especially devoted to his grandchildren, said his niece Shannon Brooks.

Even if he was in a meeting, she said, when his twin granddaughters called him, he stopped what he was doing and answered the phone.

"They were inseparable," Brooks said.

Mr. Mujahid-Ali is survived by his mother and children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. A janazah prayer will be held Saturday, May 13, at 1 p.m. at the West Philadelphia Masjid, at 4700 Wyalusing Ave.

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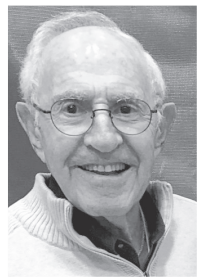
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BRAHIN

JUDITH (NEE FREEMAN)
Passed away on May 11, 2023. Mother of Jeffrey (Carol) Brahin and Lee (Silver) Brahin, grandmother of Roman and Jordan. Relatives and friends are invited to Funeral Services Monday, 11:00 A.M. precisely at **GOLDSTEIN'S ROSENBERG'S RAPHAEL-SACKS, 6410 N. Broad St., Phila., PA 19126.** Ent. Roosevelt Memorial Park Mausoleum. Shiva will be observed Monday and Tuesday at her late residence. Contributions in her memory may be made to The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, <https://en.huji.ac.il>. www.goldsteinsfuneral.com



ROMISHER, MD. GARY



May 10, 2023, age 88, of Cherry Hill. He is survived by his adoring wife, Sivyva (Spiegel), who shared 66 wonderful years of marriage with him. Gary had 3 devoted children, Michael (Laura,) the late Sharon (John,) and David, DMD (Janet, DMD.) He took special pride in his grandson, Shaun and his 7 granddaughters, Alison Romisher, MD, Lauren and Sophie Romisher, Rachel Hoy, DMD, Elyssa Hoy, Abigail and Riley Romisher and great granddaughters, Savannah and Molly. He is also survived by his loving sister, Deenie (Alan) Ettenson. He was predeceased by his parents, Rose Greenberg and Solomon Charles Romisher and his brother, Leo Romisher, DO. Gary was a graduate of Central HS, Class of 197, Temple Univ, and Jefferson Medical College. He completed his Radiology training at Phila. General Hospital and was Chief Radiologist at Zurbrugg Memorial Hospital in Riverside, NJ for over 35 years. He then worked for Larchmont Imaging until retirement. Gary's passion was taking care of his family, friends and employees and will be deeply missed by all. He was also an avid tennis player. Relatives and friends are invited Friday, May 12th beginning 12:30 P.M. to **PLATT MEMORIAL CHAPELS, INC., 2001 Berlin Rd., Cherry Hill, NJ** where Funeral Services will begin promptly at 1:00 P.M. The Funeral will also be live streamed on plattmemorial.com. Int. Crescent Mem. Park. Contributions in his memory can be made to Alzheimer's Assoc., alz.org, Samaritan Hospice, samaritanj.org or Temple Beth Shalom, tbsonline.org.

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Philip J. Ginyard, senior pastor, theologian, counselor, and blogger

By Gary Miles
Staff Writer

Philip J. Ginyard, 62, of Mullica Hill, former senior pastor at First Baptist Church of Swedesboro, chaplain for the Woolwich Township Police Department, theologian, program director at Missio Seminary, and inspirational blogger, died Friday, May 5, of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis at his home.

Pastor Ginyard, called Pastor Phil by many, was the son of Joseph Ginyard, another prominent Philadelphia pastor. So it seemed only natural that, after being inspired by the fellowship and sense of purpose he felt when he joined First Baptist in 2000, Pastor Ginyard obtained his credentials and became the church's seventh pastor in 2015.

Since then, says his staff biography for Missio, Pastor Ginyard "has been on the forefront of an awakening missional movement to advance the Kingdom of God in tangible ways."

Indeed, Pastor Ginyard's missional disciple program at First Baptist focused on specific community outreach plans and personal interaction with those he found in need. He taught religious classes at church, built coalitions with organizations and church members of other denominations in Swedesboro, Woolwich Township, and Logan Township, and created his blog, the Disabled Disciple, to keep his messaging current and vibrant even after he fell ill.

He retired from First Baptist in 2021 due to his debilitating illness but continued to update his blog through eye gaze computer technology. His last blog post was April 15, and more he had written are set



Philip J. Ginyard did not let the restraints of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis define his ministry. Courtesy of the family

to be published.

"He was a fighter," said his wife, Donna Brown Ginyard. "He did not let that [illness] stop him. And he never complained."

As police chaplain for Woolwich Township, Pastor Ginyard counseled young offenders in New Jersey's Stationhouse Adjustment program that offers alternatives to criminal charges or incarceration. In 2019, to assist others in qualifying for advanced religious education, he helped create and was the first director of Missio's Diploma in Biblical and Missional Theology program.

He was "passionate about making seminary education readily accessible," his biography says.

The program launched in 2021, and the first class is to graduate in June. In a tribute, Missio officials noted Pastor Ginyard's "vision and leadership" and said he "left a lasting influence on the goals and structure and curriculum of the program."

Pastor Ginyard received his diploma in biblical and theological studies at Palmer Theological

Seminary in Wayne in 2007, and his master of divinity in 2011 and doctor of ministry in 2016 from Missio. He was on the board of directors for Wise Choice Ministries and active with the Word of Life Fellowship.

"Heaven is celebrating," a friend said in a Facebook tribute. "I'm a better person for knowing him."

The youngest of four children, Philip Jerome Ginyard was born Jan. 17, 1961. He grew up in Wynnefield, attended Calvary Gospel Chapel in West Philadelphia, and graduated from Overbrook High School.

He earned a bachelor's degree in political science at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1983 and became area director of the Omicron chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. He had son Quentin, and worked in insurance, most recently as an account executive with Independence Blue Cross.

He met Donna Brown at a fraternity function in the late 1980s, and they married in 1997. They lived in Logan Township at first and moved to Mullica Hill in 2010.

Pastor Ginyard never lost his

interest in political science and read everything he could, especially newspapers. He wrote on his own often and said in a 1997 op-ed in The Inquirer: "Despite the growing pains and the changing faces of the residents, Wynnefield has a special place in the mosaic of neighborhoods that is Philadelphia. It was truly a privilege to grow into adulthood in Dr. Wynne's 'hood.'"

He watched football games and munched on pizza after church on Sundays or wandered through museums with his wife before brunch. He felt at peace near the ocean, so they visited many islands.

He liked old movies, saw all 10 of August Wilson's plays on Broadway, and knew all the best restaurants in Philadelphia. He enjoyed summers at Word of Life Camp in New York as a boy, and he and his wife later served as camp counselors.

In a Facebook tribute, a friend said: "Phil will leave a legacy of strength, loyalty, and righteousness for us all."

In addition to his wife and son, Pastor Ginyard is survived by two sisters and other relatives. A brother died earlier.

A viewing is scheduled from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, May 13, at Sharon Baptist Church, 3955 Conshohocken Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. 19131. A celebration of his life is to follow. Interment is to be at 10 a.m. Monday, May 15, at Ivy Hill Cemetery, 1201 Easton Rd., Philadelphia, Pa. 19150.

Donations in his name may be made to the ALS Association Greater Philadelphia, Suite 260, 321 Norristown Rd., Ambler, Pa. 19002.

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Funding underwritten by Physicians Life Insurance Company