



# Dr. Daud Malik Watts

Pan-African Scholar | Devout Muslim | Historian | Educator | Author

December 18, 1950 – August 5, 2026



*Celebration of Life*

Sunday, August 16, 2026

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Thurgood Marshall Center

1816 12th Street, NW

Washington, DC

## *The Journey of Dr. Daud Malik Watts*

Daud Malik Watts, born Robert Leroy Watts on December 18, 1950, was a scholar, author, father, teacher, historian, musician, graphic artist, and visionary. Dr. Watts passed away on Wednesday, August 5, 2026, at West Jefferson Memorial Hospital in Marrero, Louisiana. He leaves a profound legacy of learning and cultural empowerment. As the founder of Afro-Vision and Afro-visionary, he devoted his life to celebrating African heritage, advancing knowledge, and inspiring others to recognize the strength, dignity, and possibility within themselves and the communities of the African Diaspora.

### *Early Life*

Before Daud became Dr. Watts, he was affectionately known as Bobby by his brothers, cousins, friends, and family. Born at Columbia Hospital for Women in Washington, DC, Bobby was the second son born to Sarah Frances and Frank Watts, Sr. Together, they had Francis (Weegie), Robert (Daud), Frederick (Freddy), Rodney, and Courtney. Frank, Sr., who was older than Sarah Frances, had four children from a previous marriage: Leslie, Frank Jr, Charlton (Chicky) and Geraldine (Geri). Frank was a welterweight boxer and a cook at Westbrooks, and Frances owned a nursery school. The family lived at 5629 Clay Place NE near the Shrimp Boat in Washington, DC.

Later, the family moved to 1223 Floral Street near the Gold Coast neighborhood in NW DC. The future Dr. Watts was an avid reader, a thespian, a musician, and an academic. During his 11th grade year, at Coolidge High School, he was offered the opportunity to attend a university high school program in Illinois, while his mother completed her master's degree at the University of Illinois. He won an academic scholarship to attend Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. During his time at Trinity, he earned another scholarship to travel to West Africa. This eventually led to him applying for and being accepted to the University of Ghana, Legon in a Master's Degree program.

### *Marriage & Family*

Robert converted to Islam and changed his name to Daud Malik. As he traveled around West Africa, he used his skills as a photographer to earn extra money. At the age of 24, he met Ameena, (formally Audrey Willson) a young mother, who hired this traveling American to take photos of her newborn daughter, Memuna. He was smitten. They became a couple moved from Sierra Leone to Ghana where they married and conceived Bilqis Adjoa (Billi Wilkerson). Ameena had four older children from previous relationships – Aisha (Patrice), Abina, Yasmina, and of course, baby Memuna. Ameena was a Montessori teacher and when the two returned to the United States, they founded a Montessori School in Reston, Virginia. After 10 years of marriage, and three more children, Nasir, Mahmud, and Netanya, the couple divorced. Daud moved back to his hometown of Washington DC where he worked as a historian and researcher at Moreland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.

Daud met and married Sala Faruq, thus adding Sala's daughter Oba to the family. Together, they lived at 2308 Pomeroy Road, SE, DC where they grew a huge garden of fresh vegetables and flowers. The two raised the children in the pan-African community. Daud loved drumming in African drum circles. The children studied African dance and drumming, the family celebrated Kwanzaa, everyone read from his extensive collection of books, and they actively engaged in the efforts to rebuild a strong Black nation. Daud worked as a reporter for Federal New Service, a wire service that provided verbatim transcripts of government hearings and press briefings to major news organizations including the Associated Press (AP). However, his passion remained with his experience in Africa. As side-income, Daud sold his photographs from Africa and provided lectures on the history of Africa to schools, churches and community centers. This eventually led to the founding of Afro-vision, a company that would later allow him to quit his 9 to 5 to pursue his dream of empowering new generations through an accurate, deeply researched understanding of the African past, ancient civilizations like Kemet and Timbuktu, and the global contributions of African peoples. The couple divorced, and Daud and his 4 biological children moved to 44 U Street, NW Washington DC, in the Bloomingdale neighborhood, near Howard University.

Daud's commitment to the practice of Islam grew following his divorce. In a beautiful story of second chances, he reconnected with his classmate from middle school, Khaula Murtadha, and the two fell in love and got married. The blended family included Khaula's six sons, Abdul-Khaliq (AK), Adam, Abdul-Haleem, Ahmed, Yusuf, and Usama. Eventually, Zikra Thomasina was born from their union. Khaula and Daud connected on a spiritual and intellectual level. Together, the two conducted research exploring educational policy and systemic racism, as Khaula completed her Master's and PhD at Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio. Together, they published a foundational peer-reviewed research study titled, "Linking the Struggle for Education and Social Justice: Historical Perspectives of African American Leadership in Schools." The couple moved to Indianapolis, Indiana when Khaula was offered a position teaching at Indiana University (IUPUI). The couple divorced, and Daud moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he continued his academic pursuits.

### *Philadelphia Years*

After years of balancing parenting/family responsibilities with enlightening the African American community about our history, Daud reaffirmed his commitment to his professional development. Daud was determined to complete a master's degree and PhD program at Temple University in Philadelphia. In Philadelphia, he married Aisha Watts, whose children were adults at the time of their brief marriage. His grandchildren have fond memories of cheesesteaks and music-making in the house in Philadelphia.

### *New Orleans Et the Love of Music Et Art*

Daud was a man who loved music, and a man who loved art. He was a drummer, a pianist, a bass guitarist, an acoustic guitarist, a flautist, and a vocal artist. He played several West African instruments including the kora, the thumb piano, the Congos, talking drums and the djembe. When he lived in New Orleans and taught at Dillard, most weekends you could find him in Congo Square, drumming in an African tradition that started by enslaved Africans over 250 years ago. Most who knew him well have memories of creating music with him – perhaps as a child, playing instruments, sound mixing in his studio, singing a Luther Vandross song on stage, playing Stevie Wonder and Pharoh Sanders records in the house, or just singing a lullaby or personal song. As a visual artist, photographer, graphic designer, and creative, his style was distinctive. He loved to create collages and incorporate images from textbooks and classic sources. He enjoyed using a colored pencil to reimagine a sketch from a hundred fifty-year-old history books.

### *Surviving Family*

Daud is survived by his mother, the 99-year-old family matriarch, Sarah Frances Watts-Henry, his brothers, as aforementioned, their wives Sheila (Weegie), Monica and her daughter Dasmine, Rachel (Courtney's daughter); his former wife, Khaula Murtadha; his 15 children and stepchildren; his grandchildren, Nandi (Kwame), Sylvia Maya (Zion), CJ, Braden, Levi, Osei, Naomi, Noble, Victoria, Judah and Jacob. His great-grandchildren Kawhi, Akobi, Kyair.

### *Final Word*

Dr. Daud Malik Watts passed away quickly and without long suffering. His attending physician at the time of his death was Muslim, and witnessed his passing in the Islamic tradition - he whispered the shahada and Inna lilahi wa inna ilayhi raji' - we belong to God and to God we shall return - to ease his transition to the spirit realm. His burial took place at Masjid Omar Cemetary near New Orleans, Louisiana in less than 48 hours following his death, in accordance with his wishes, and Islamic tradition. Daud deeply believed in love and marriage. He had a huge capacity for the blended family. A true romantic at heart, his final and most enduring love affair was with his books. Daud will be remembered with gratitude, pride, and enduring love. His vision remains alive in every person he inspired. One man, thousands of students, hundreds of lectures, 7 publications, 3 degrees and a lifetime in 75 years.

## *Professional Highlights*

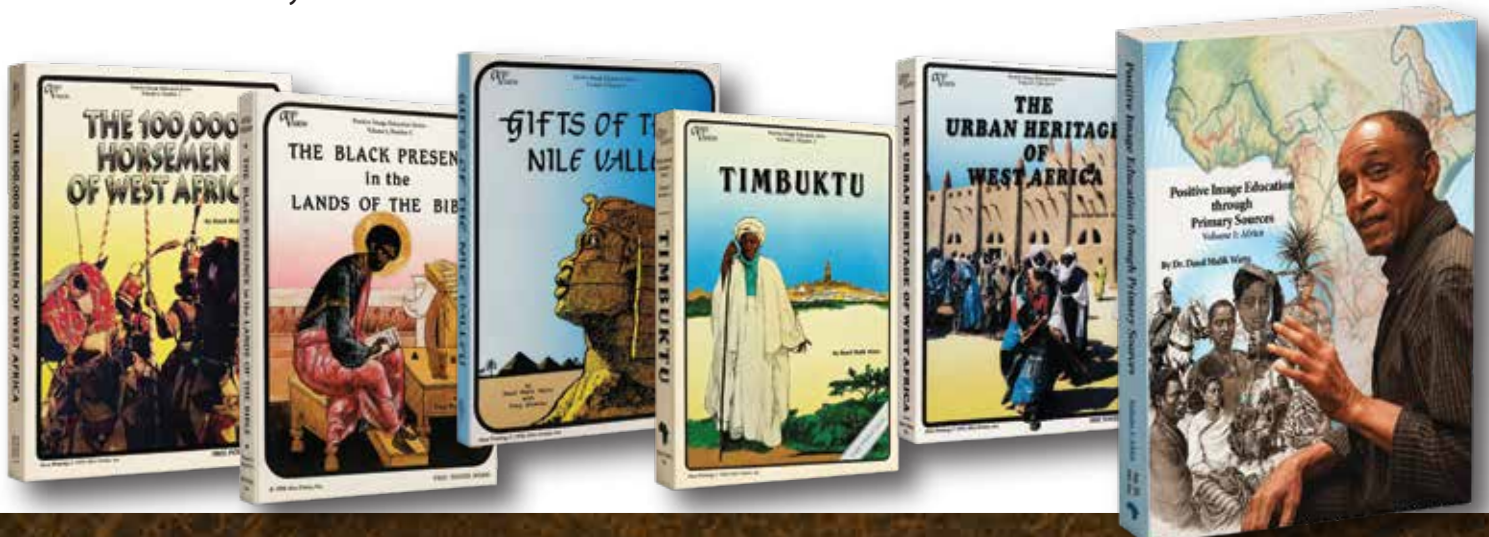
Dr. Watts has held academic positions teaching at Dillard University, Temple University, and University of Central Arkansas. For over 50 years, Professor Watts taught thousands of students. His influence extended far beyond lectures and books. He challenged his students to think deeply, live purposefully, and understand education as a means of personal growth and collective liberation. Dr. Watts taught within the walls of prisons, schools, community centers, churches, organizations, and institutions. His wisdom endures in his writings, institutions, family, and the countless students whose lives he shaped.

As an emerging entrepreneur, self-taught scholar and lecturer, Daud published the Positive Image Education Series with the goal of correcting false historical narratives, challenging Eurocentric misrepresentations of Africa, and highlighting visual and primary historical documentation. Titles from the series included, *The 100,000 Horsemen of West Africa*, *Gifts of the Nile Valley* (co-authored with Anthony Browder), *Timbuktu*, *The Urban Heritage of West Africa* and *The Black Presence in the Lands of the Bible*. He traveled in the HBCU lecture circuit from DC to North Carolina to Atlanta, peppering small, Black-owned bookstores, like Pyramid Books, near Howard University with his compact series.

In the early 2000s, Daud was one of the architects of the mandatory high school African American History Course Curriculum framework in Philadelphia. Daud's contribution of the lesson on the true size of Africa to the course's first iteration and his thinking about who African people are to each other pushed the critical breakthrough that led to the Africana Studies Curriculum Framework. Daud loved to give lectures; one notable presentation was a Ted Talk (TedXTempleU) called *Youth: Changing the Face of Africa*.

Daud collaborated with his adult children on various projects. With Netanya, Daud worked on several projects, including *Call Me MISTER* (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models). He and his daughter Bilqis co-authored an online publication called *Black History Lessons My Father Taught Me* and co-created the Facebook Page, *Black History All Year Long*. When Bilqis became a social justice advocate and Movement Lawyer, Daud consulted with her to support communities interested in learning their local history in the context of national events and the Reparations movement. After Covid, this online platform became the host of a series of educational online edutainment sessions on Black History with the help of his granddaughter, Nandi Wilkerson, and eventually his cousin, Darryl Herder.

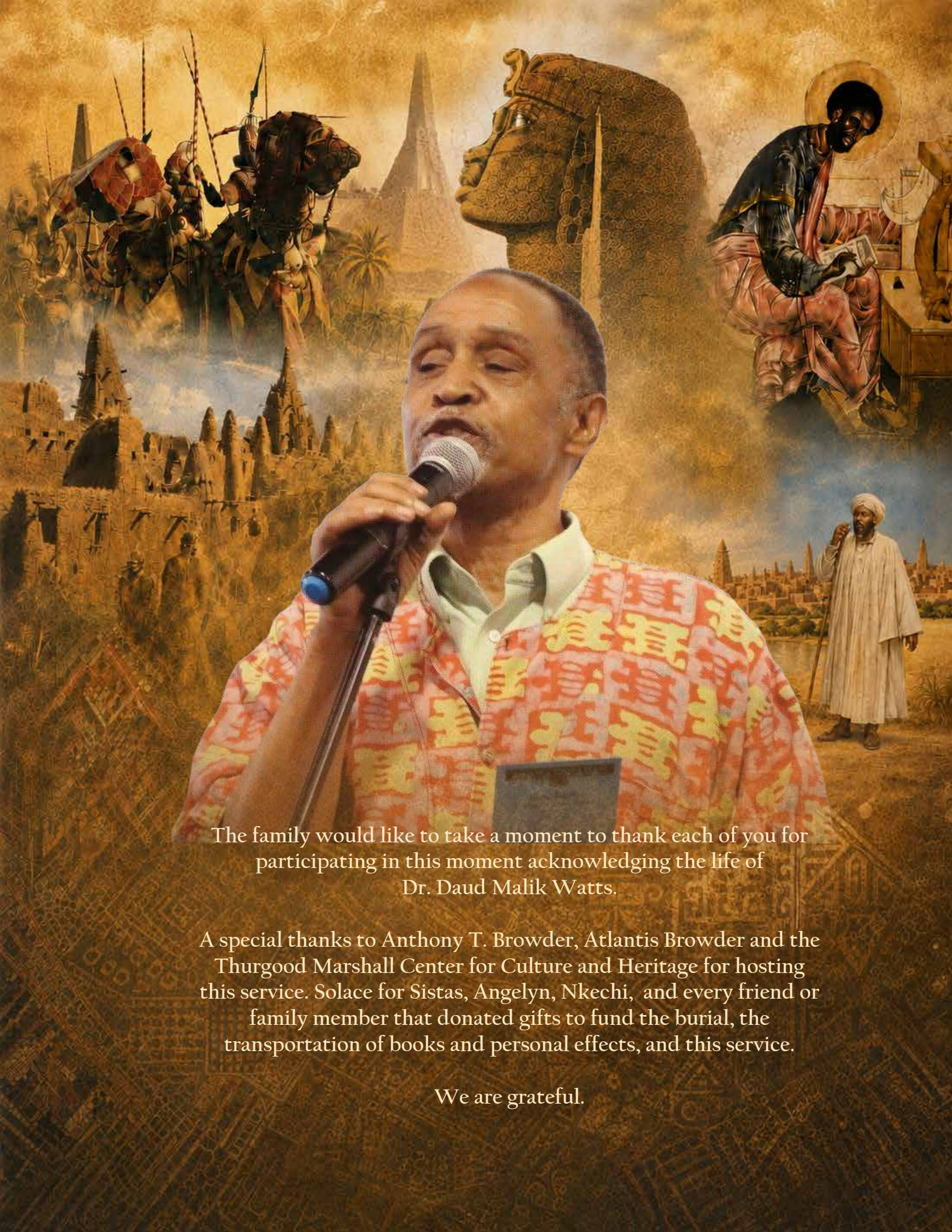
At the time of his death, he was working on his final publication, *Four Score and Seven Years of Massive Slave Escapes*. The final unpublished work was an adaptation of his dissertation, with the alternative title being *The Big Black Jailbreak: African American History 1775–1865*. The book was written to challenge conventional narratives about enslaved Black people's resistance and self-liberation. of lectures, 7 publications, 3 degrees and a lifetime in 75 years.





Donate or Purchase





The family would like to take a moment to thank each of you for participating in this moment acknowledging the life of Dr. Daud Malik Watts.

A special thanks to Anthony T. Browder, Atlantis Browder and the Thurgood Marshall Center for Culture and Heritage for hosting this service. Solace for Sistas, Angelyn, Nkechi, and every friend or family member that donated gifts to fund the burial, the transportation of books and personal effects, and this service.

We are grateful.