

Farwell to the Flesh & Welcome to the Spirit of Gail Aska

Hello I am LaDon James. I am an emeritus Community Voices Heard (CVH) board member, former co-chair of the board, and lifetime member of CVH.

Today, this evening, I speak of Gail Aska as my friend and extended family member. Gail was a sister of the circle, aunt of the village, mother of the community and grandma to non-elders.

Gail lived with Diabetes and poor health from the time that I met her, in late 1994. She was able to overcome many obstacles and touched many hearts with her powerful presence.

Now, she is an ancestor in spirit. This means she is now as present as she may want and need to be. She is more powerful because she is amongst great friends, family and allies who have also passed on to next realm and have become ancestors. So, she like them is still alive in spirit and present in our honoring the spirit of ancestors.

Our remembering her in life gives power to her spirit.

I want to recall two funny yet serious sides of Gail.

First, I remember an argument in the third trimester of CVH's embryonic life. I am referring to the time prior to the birth of CVH as its own organization.

Gail stepped into an argument between two members over a CVH matter. At this time, CVH was a complete women's organization with a few token men. Back to the

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story, with lots of flare and attitude Gail stomped her foot, snapped her finger and rolled her eyes and said unh-ah...I know you didn't. Everyone started laughing at Gail's outburst and others came closer to see what was going on. Gail asked both sides to tell their side of the argument. Then she called for a group vote and the matter was done. The two who were in a heated argument did not let the anger fester and we all moved on.

Second, my last encounter with Gail was so typical of Gail. She just had surgery and was clearly in discomfort. Yet, she talked and joked about politics. This conversation was prior to the New York City Mayoral election; you remember the election with no options. We talked about issues facing New Yorkers and the impact of complacency.

Ah, the power of Gail in the flesh with ailments. Oh, the unlimited power of Gail as an ancestor with no ailments.

Gail, I remember you and honor your spirit.

Thank you.