



## Dr. Necia Desiree Harkless

June 25, 1920 - January 8, 2015

Necia Desiree Harkless was born on June 25, 1920 in Detroit, Michigan; the first child of James McConnell Harkless and Ethel Williams Harkless. She received a B.A. Degree (education and social services) at Prairie View State and Agricultural College (Hempstead, Texas) in 1942, A B.A. in piano, organ, and musical theory at Detroit Institute of Musical Arts in 1960, a M.A. in education at University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois in 1969, and Ph.D. in education at Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan in 1974. After graduation from college, Necia became a case worker for the Michigan Department of Social Welfare from 1946 to 1956. She also decided to teach children to play piano at the Detroit Institute of Musical Arts from 1954 to 1964. She then taught kindergarten in the Detroit Public Schools from 1965 to 1968, focusing on early childhood education. She developed a curriculum guide for early childhood teachers at a time when the federally supported Head Start programs were not year round. Later, after obtaining her M.A., she conducted research in education at Wayne State University during studies for her doctorate.

In 1974, Necia became an Associate Professor of Education at University Kentucky until 1981. While there, she developed the first undergraduate courses for kindergarten and preschool certification. From 1981 to 1985, she taught graduate at Georgetown College, influencing the lives of some of Kentucky's best teachers. Necia also contributed to curriculum development projects in two Universities in Nigeria, was a state delegate to the Women's

Year Conference in Houston, Texas and a U.S. representative at the World Conference on Young Children in Melbourne, Australia.

After retiring from Georgetown College in 1985, Necia became a Donovan Scholar at University of Kentucky. With a grant for “refueling and retooling “, Necia then pursued her longtime passions for cultural ethnography and fine arts. Under directed studies with Dr. Williams Y. Adams, she spent the next 25 years researching Nubia, and in 2006, published her book “Nubian Pharaohs and Meroitic Kings: The Kingdom of Kush.” During these years, Necia became a member of the International Nubian Society, and regularly attended their periodic meetings in Europe and the U.S. In addition, in 1995, Necia published a collection of her poems and images of the Black Madonna. She also exhibited her art in Georgetown’s Anne Wright Wilson Art Gallery and elsewhere.

In 2006, Church of the Good Shepherd honored Necia celebrating Black History Month at a Solemn Evensong and Concert. For that occasion, Necia composed an Anthem on Psalm 139 which the choir premiered. Necia studied organ with Dr. Sculyler Robinson, and for her 90th birthday in 2010, gave an organ recital at Good Shepherd. She also studied jazz and for her birthday in 2012, gave a concert at Natasha’s Restaurant. The same year, Necia was honored by Kitty Watson Dougoud as a Teacher Who Made A Difference during a ceremony at University of Kentucky.

Necia was a member of the Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, Advisory Board of the Governor’s School for the Arts, Lexington Art League and The American Civil Liberties Union.

Necia’s marriages to McKinley Wilson, Roy Nembhard, and Marvin Coker ended in divorce. She survived by her brother James M. Harkless of Washington, D.C., nieces: Sharon (James) Pitts of Asheville, NC, Suzanne Harkless of El Cerrito, CA, Marianne Harkless of Cambridge, MA, nephews Charles (Aileen) Harkless of New York, NY, Guy (Bertha) Harkless of Amsterdam, Netherlands, great-nieces; Josephine Harkless, of Amsterdam,

Netherlands, Gabrielle Harkless of Amsterdam, Netherlands, great-nephews;  
Hassan (Janita) Pitts, Carbondale, IL Jamil Pitts, Asheville, NC Owen  
Harkless, Perry Harkless both of New York, NY and Ben Harkless of El  
Cerrito, CA. She also is survived by many loving Harkless second cousins.

# Tribute Wall

AT

“ There is FAKE art being sold in mass quantity through different auction houses that Necia was supposedly gifted by artist Sam Gilliam. This is surely one of the biggest scams in the current era.

Art Truth - December 06, 2025 at 11:31 AM

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*Absolutely fake art. According to James Harkless , brother of Necia Harkless ,Washington DC , Necia never had art by Sam Gilliam . He was her heir and would absolutely know the truth of this scam . Further to the point , James Harkless has stated that HE knew Sam Gilliam and owns work by him based on a friendship in Washington DC. There are still fakes coming out from the source in Kentucky and being sold at auction in Kentucky , Ohio ,Chicago , LA and Lambertville NJ. To date aprox. One Million Dollars worth have sold .*

Lowe - December 29, 2025 at 12:12 PM