



Roberta Flack (born February 10, 1937, Black Mountain, North Carolina, U.S.—died February 24, 2025, Manhattan, New York) was an American rhythm and blues (R&B) singer known for the number-one hits "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" (1972) and "Killing Me Softly with His Song" (1973), and for her duets with soul music singer Donny Hathaway. "Where Is the Love" (1972) and "The Closer I Get to You" (1977). Flack excels at telling stories through her music, which draws on an eclectic variety of jazz, gospel, soul, folk, and classical music influences.

Early Years

Flack was raised in Arlington, Virginia, by her father, Laron Flack, who worked as a draftsman and played the piano and the harmonica, and her mother, Irene (née Council) Flack, who was a church pianist and organist. Roberta Flack found early musical inspiration in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

In contrast to the more ecstatic sounds of some southern U.S. churches, the African Methodist congregations favoured longlined hymns and the cultivation of meaningful quietude in its music, which would later become a cornerstone of Flack's work She was musically precocious. "At age three, may be four, there was me at the keys of that church piano picking out hymns we would sing, like 'Precious Lord, Take My Hand," she recalled in a 2023 autobiographical children's book When her father brought home an old upright piano that he had repaired, Flack learned to play songs while sitting on her mother's lap. She started studying piano at age nine and began exploring and absorbing a wide range of jazz, R&B, and popular music.



During her teenage years she trained as a concert pianist, harbouring a special affection for composers Johann Sebastian Bach, Robert Schumann, and Frédéric Chopin. In 1952, at age 15, she obtained a full scholarship to study music at Howard University, where she later met her friend and future duet partner Hathaway. She worked toward a degree in music education while leading her sorority's vocal ensemble and directing a production of the opera Aida, graduating in 1956. She started graduate studies in music, but, when her father died in 1959, she left school and took teaching jobs in North Carolina and later in Washington, D.C.

<u>Career</u>

Still <u>yearning</u> to perform, she began accompanying opera singers on piano at the prestigious Tivoli Opera House club in the <u>Georgetown</u> section of Washington, D.C., in 1962. One evening in December 1967, she was instructed by her boss, who wanted to dear the busy room for new customers, to stop playing the usual opera music and switch to <u>Christmas carols</u>. At first, she just played piano but soon found herself humming and then <u>singing</u> "The Christmas Song."

The audience applauded and asked her to sing another song. Flack declined, but, in an interview with The Washington Post in 1989, she recalled that moment as "my <u>cue</u> that people would listen to me as a singer." She began performing several nights a week as a singer and pianist in local clubs, and she quit her teaching job to focus on her music career.

Her dub performances were attended by top musicians, such as Burt Bacharach, Ramsey Lewis, and Johnny Mathis. In 1968 Flack performed at a benefit for the Inner City Ghetto Children's Library Fund in Washington, D.C., and gained notice from jazz musician Les McCann, who later wrote in the liner notes of her debut album First Take (1969), "Her voice touched, tapped, trapped, and kicked every emotion I've ever known. I laughed, cried, and screamed for more." McCann arranged for Flack to audition for Atlantic Records producer Joel Dorn, for whom she played more than 40 songs from her extensive repertoire.

Career (cont'd)

First Take was recorded over a period of just 10 hours at Atlantic Studios in New York City with a backing band of top-tier jazz musicians, including bassist Ron Carter, guitarist John ("Bucky") Pizzarelli, and drummer Ray Lucas. The album weaves textures of soul and folk music, and Flack's wellselected track list includes a slower take on the traditional gospel song "I singer-songwriter Jesus," Told Leonard Cohen's poetic ballad "Hey, That's No Way to Say Goodbye," and folk singer Ewan MacColl's 1957 love song "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face."

In 1970 Flack released her sophomore album, Chapter Two, a critically acclaimed recording that includes her interpretations of "Until It's Time for You to Go," written by folk singer Buffy "Just and Sainte-Marie, Like Woman" by singer-songwriter Bob <u>Dylan</u>. Chapter Two was produced by Dorn and R&B pioneer King Curtis and arranged by Hathaway. On her 1971 album Quiet Fire, Flack explores the slower, softer side of soul music with renditions of "Bridge over <u>Troubled Water</u>," composed singer-songwriter Paul Simon, and "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" by the songwriting team of Carole King and Gerry Goffin.

In 1971 actor and director <u>Clint</u> <u>Eastwood</u> chose "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" to accompany a love scene in his directorial debut film <u>Play</u> <u>Misty for Me</u>. Atlantic released the song as a single in early 1972, and it spent six weeks at number one on the Billboard Hot 100 chart before winning a <u>Grammy Award</u> for record of the year in 1973. At the same ceremony, Flack and Hathaway won a Grammy for best pop vocal by a duo for the song "Where Is the Love" from their <u>seminal</u> duet album Roberta Flack & Donny Hathaway (1972).

Flack reached the height of her success with the ballad "Killing Me Softly with His Song," which was composed by songwriters Charles Fox and Norman Gimbel. Before recording the song, she performed it at a 1972 where it concert, received positive tremendously audience response. Singer-songwriter Marvin <u>Gaye</u> advised her to refrain from performing the song in public again until she recorded it. Released in January 1973, the song reached number one on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, and it eventually earned Flack another Grammy for record of the year. She was the first performer to win two consecutive Grammy Awards for record of the year, a feat that was not accomplished by any other artist until 2001.



She captured another number-one hit with "Feel Like Makin' Love" (1974), composed by singer-songwriter Eugene McDaniels. She continued to have chart success in the 1970s with her album Blue Lights in the Basement (1977), which featured the <u>romantic</u>ballad "The Closer I Get to You," another duet with Hathaway. She became a key figure in the emerging Quiet Storm soul music <u>genre</u>, which embraced romantic lyrics and smooth, slow-tempo, jazz-inspired elements. In 1981 she composed and produced the soundtrack album for comedian <u>Richard Pryor</u>'s film Bustin' Loose.

Flack continued to record and tour during the first two decades of the 21st century. She hosted a national radio show, Brunch with Roberta Flack, from 1995 to 1998. She was honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1999.

She founded the Roberta Flack School of Music in New York City in 2005, which offers educational initiatives to underserved students, and established the Roberta Flack Foundation in 2010. which supports musical education and various social causes. She received a lifetime achievement award at the 2020 Grammy Awards ceremony. In 2022 her publicist announced that Flack had been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis(ALS) and could no longer sing. She authored the autobiographical children's book The Green Piano: How Little Me Found Music (2023) with writer Tonya Bolden and illustrator Hayden Goodman.

THE ROCK WEEKLY

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Before there were 911 calls. ambulances and paramedics, there was the Freedom House Ambulance Service. A group of Black men and women from an underprivileged Pittsburgh neighborhood, who came together in the 1960s to change the course of history and pave the way for modern-day emergency medicine. Their story is the subject of the "Heroes on Call" documentary, which seeks to bring the contributions of these pioneers to the forefront of emergency medical history-- where it belongs.

The State of Emergency Response in the 1960s

In the 1960s, there was no such thing as a paramedic. When an emergency struck, people would call a seven-digit number and speak to a dispatcher who would send either the police, firefighters or a funeral home.

The responders had only the most basic training, acting as a transportation system, providing no medical assistance en route. The person having the emergency would often be in the back of the vehicle alone, until they reached a hospital.

The use of police officers as first responders became particularly problematic when responding to emergencies in majority Black or brown neighborhoods. Some accounts show the police refusing to enter such areas or claiming that the injured person was not sick enough to be transported to the hospital.

However, data on the amount of preventable deaths proved the problem was widespread. In 1966, a report showed that Americans at home had a higher risk of dying from gunshot wounds and traumatic injuries than Americans in Vietnam.

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FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH



The Birth of Freedom House Ambulance Service

A group of medical trailblazers decided something had to be done about the state of emergency medicine. Dr. Peter Safar, the "Father of CPR" and esteemed anesthesiologist; Phil Hallen, the head of a medical charity, Jerry Esposito, the owner of a private ambulance company, and Jim McCoy, a civil rights leader and president of Freedom House Enterprises, a civil rights organization, all joined forces to create Freedom House Ambulance Service.

In 1967, they piloted a program in which citizens of Pittsburgh's Hill District with no medical training would embark upon a 32-week course in all things emergency medicine. By 1972, they had 35 crew membersfielding 7,000 callsayear.

As a group, they became one of the first ambulance services to administer Narcan for overdoses, the first to use oxygen tanks and defibrillators inside the ambulance and the first to intubate patients outside the hospital. By 1975, Freedom House was chosen to serve as the model for the national emergency service system.

The End of an Era and Ongoing Challenges

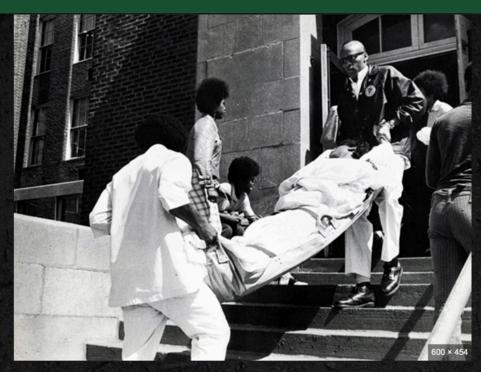
Despite the incredible success of Freedom House, their mission was cut short in 1975 as they were disbanded and consumed by the newly minted Pittsburgh Emergency Medical Services. From there, the paramedics faced institutional racism and discrimination, which caused many to leave the EMS system, and the field, forever.

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THE ROCK WEEKLY

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Honoring Their Legacy Through "Heroes On Call"

Fifty years later, their story is being told through the lens of John Moon, a former Freedom House paramedic and the retired deputychief of Pittsburgh EMS; Chief Amera Gilchrist, who leads Pittsburgh EMS today, and Dr. Rickquel Tripp, a leader in emergency medicine in Pittsburgh. Discover more about the trailblazing Black men and women who changed the face of medicine forever, in "Heroes On Call."

Freedom House Video



★ Join Us in Serving Our Community! ★

The Rock Christian Center invites you to be a blessing at our Monthly Feeding the Homeless Ministry ♣□

New Date: Saturday March 22, 2025

(Time: 9:45 AM

Location: McPherson Square 15th & I NW, Washington, DC <u>click here to join</u>

Come share love, hope, and a warm meal with those in need. Together, we can make a difference!

Everyone is welcome! Bring a friend and let's serve our community with joy. See you there!



Men of Strength Bible Study is Back! 6

Mark your calendars! The Men's Bible Study, Men of Strength, are on Tuesdays at 7 PM via The Rock Bible Study Zoom.

Join us as we grow together in faith, wisdom, and fellowship. Don't miss this opportunity to strengthen your walk with God!

@ Zoom: 840 8027 0538 Code: 123456

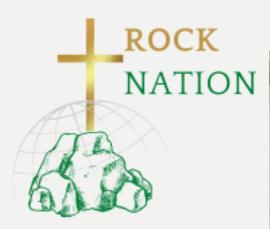


✓ Exciting News! Nighttime Devotionals Are Here!
 ✓ Looking for some peaceful, reflective time with God before you rest?
 ✓ The Rock Christian Center now has Nighttime Devotionals available on our YouTube channel!
 ✓ Tune in to refresh your spirit and draw closer to the Lord as we guide you through evening prayers and reflections to end your day on a powerful note.

Value of the listen here: The Rock Christian Center YouTube Channel Subscribe now and don't miss out on our weekly devotionals! **

#NighttimeDevotional #TRCC #SpiritualGrowth

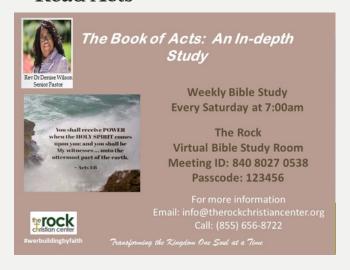
#EveningReflection #FaithJourney #SubscribeNow



SATURDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Join us for our Saturday morning bible study at 7:00 am for an indepth study of The Book of Acts. This book provides a bridge for the writings of the NT. It joins what Jesus "began to do and to teach" as told in the Gospels with what he continued to do and teach through the apostles' preaching and the establishment of the church. It is also a bridge that ties the church in its beginning with each succeeding age.

*Read Acts





WELCOME BACK!

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Ministry Meeting

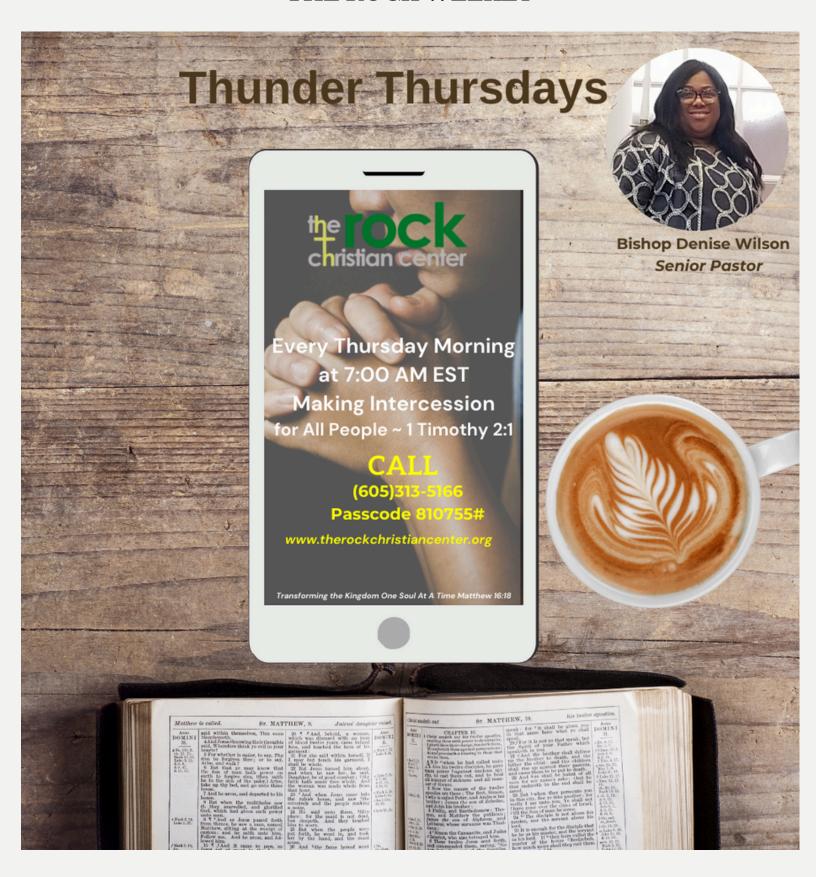


Are you a ministry leader here at The Rock? Have you scheduled a meeting for your ministry? Members are you apart of a ministry here at The Rock? If you are please be on the look out for ministry meetings where you can be apart of the planning for upcoming events.

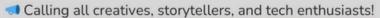


The youth department could use the help of our parents in the congregation. Please see Rev. Malika to see how you can be apart of a growing ministry in our church.

THE ROCK WEEKLY









Ready to make a difference and unleash your creativity? Join us at The Rock Christian Center's Multimedia Ministry!

✓ Use your talents to inspire, uplift, and connect with our community!

✓ Gain new skills, and be part of something truly special!

 Volunteer today and let's grow together! Message us to learn more or sign up now! ★★



CONTACT: Rev. Ferguson