



Arkey Adams

August 9, 1979 - March 25, 2025

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of our dearest Arkey Karla Adams, who left us unexpectedly, but peacefully at her home in Chicago. Arkey, 45, was a cultural anthropologist, creative producer, daughter, sister, cousin, and cherished friend.

Born a Leo, Arkey arrived at Jackson Park Hospital to Cleo Anderson and Adrian Mayberry (née Adams) as the second child, in what would eventually become a lively family of six. She attended Mahalia Jackson and Jesse Sherwood Elementary School on Chicago's Southside. Arkey graduated from Englewood High School, and studied Anthropology and Philosophy at Loyola University, York University in Toronto, and Northwestern University.

With nearly two decades of diverse experience in Chicago's philanthropic and arts community, Arkey most recently contributed to the University of Chicago's Professor Eve Ewing's Afrofuturism compilation and was included in the 2025 Latino Policy Forum Multicultural Leadership Academy. Arkey also served as the Development & Special Projects Lead for The Black Arts and Culture Alliance of Chicago (BACA). During her tenure, she curated and facilitated "Of Purpose: The Ties That Bind" at Steppenwolf Theatre in 2024. Previously, Arkey was the Artistic Producer, Culturalist, and Strategy Designer at Lookingglass Theatre Company. In 2021, she was appointed to the

Chicago Cultural Accessibility Consortium Steering Committee.

While Arkey's collaborations spanned the globe, her heart remained with local institutions such as Access Living, The Field Museum, The DuSable Museum, The Chicago History Museum, The National Museum of Mexican Art, and Rootwork Gallery. Arkey was deeply committed to cultural literacy, accessibility, and intersectional frameworks, always centering the audience's lens in her work.

Arkey was the beloved daughter of Adriane K. Mayberry (née Adams) of Bloomington, IL; the loving older sister of Arlin Kara Adams and Ardell Kevin (Jeannette) Adams; and the adored "Auntie Key" of Malik Adams, Torii Lynn Adams, and Anna Adams. She was a dear cousin to Dorne Adams, Don'dre Adams, and Jamount Stewart.

Arkey was preceded in death by her father, Cleo Anderson, and her brother, Ardeen Kathan Adams.

A devoted and treasured friend to many, Arkey was a shining example of resilience, wit, and boundless creativity. Our beloved Arkey was a straight shooter who commanded the respect, admiration, and love of so many. She inspired all who knew her with her humor and unprecedented bravery. Arkey loved a good meal and could be found on any given weekend jamming to Aretha Franklin and Mary J. Blige. She lived her precious 45 years to the fullest, breaking barriers and rising above persistent health challenges to achieve her dreams.

The family wishes to extend a very special thank you to Dr. Robert Harland. Dr. Harland, affectionately known as the "kidney specialist with the golden hands," who saved Arkey's life. She trusted no other doctor and followed Dr. Harland to Arizona for surgery in 2021.

A celebration of Arkey's life is being planned for later this summer. The details will be shared on this website as soon as they become available.

In honor of Arkey's legacy, and in lieu of flowers, we ask that you consider making a donation to support her family during this difficult time. <https://gofund.me/671bf47a>.

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com.

Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album* ”



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - July 15, 2025 at 05:12 PM

“ Arkey was one of the first people I met after a bad breakup. My new friends, Steve and John, invited me to lunch with their friend, Arkey. I had just picked up the new book of poetry by Alice Walker, and I had it with me when I arrived. We hit it off right away, and over the years, I relied on Arkey to always challenge me and facilitate my growth. Later she told me the day we met she thought, “Who is this White boy with an Alice Walker book, and what is his deal?”

She is one of the smartest, most passionate, and beautiful people I have ever known. I know we never get enough time with the ones we love, but I feel this loss especially deeply. Though we kept in touch and talked via text, I never spent as much time with her as I would have liked. This only became worse with my move to Texas. Cause, I mean, do you think I could get her to visit Texas? 😞 I know, that for the rest of my life, there will be endless situations and events that occur where my first thought is, “I can’t wait to talk to Arkey about this.”

Be at peace, my friend. You deserve some peace.

The Taste of Grudge - Alice Walker

I.
 How many
 times
 life
 has
 seemed
 too steep
 a
 hill
 to
 climb
 how
 many times
 the hill
 has disappeared
 like mist.
 I am carried
 in arms
 that planned
 adventure
 for
 my life.
 I sit nowhere
 I am
 told
 to
 stand.

II.
You
will
concern
me
in
my dreams
&
in my
hour
of
death:
I love you
in & out
of
all
assignments.
Obviously
we
had
work
to
do.

III.
Do not fight
the despair
of
harming
me.
To my
kindness
you
have
been
rude
&
more.
Something
in life
evens
every
score
&
I am left
to
say

even
if I disappear
be
safe.

IV.
Let the
joyful
heart
that
knows
the
dance
return!
Sorrow has
banished
it,
grief
has
stilled
my feet.
But there
remains
internal
movement
toward
life's
margin
where
all
begins
again
in
solemn
beat.

V.
Who can
completely
stop
a gift?
My love
will flow
around
your
rocks
break

*your
dam
& live
in
all
the
trampled
plants
of
your
fouled
wilderness.
It is a bright
spring
glowing
rippling
overflowing
in
the
shade.
I do not
regret
that
I am
imperfect.
In each crack
there is
an orchid
growing
& chocolate
serves
me
when
I
slip
from
grace.
I do not
relish
perfection
or sainthood.
Flying
through
this
existence
as
myself*

*I honor
all
the
fierce
edges
I have
made
for
myself
&
the conundrums
I have
made
for
you.*

*VI.
There is
no God
but
love
which
is
what
I have become.
Just a part
a
tiny
part
of it
beyond
anger
beyond
blame
but
not
beyond
the
peace
still
possible
to
all
in this
world.*

VII.

*I do not
mourn
that is not
the feeling
I have
but rather
I feel
the
cool
darkness
inside
me
steady
as a
slowly
flowing
stream.
It glimmers
& glows
but little
yet
lights my way.*

*VIII.
You have hit
a wall
that
was
my
open heart.
Protection
(not closure)
has
sprung up
like
those
weeds
in
Mexico
we eat
in
salads.
It
just grows
there
sent
by*

*angels
the same ones
ageless
who are
always
looking out
for me.
I may die
tonight
perhaps you
are killing
me.
I do not
blame you
for anything.
You were
part of
the work
I was given
on
this
trip.
You did
your
part.
I did
mine.*

*IX.
The journey
of death
the journey
to death
I do not
fear.
When you smell
a rose
or see one
or
see a
doe
or jackrabbit,
a leaf,
a star
there
I
will be.*

Sooner
or later
& you
will see: No anger
followed me.
No injury.
No blame.

X.
Save yourself!
It can be done.
Even if the mind
is
shambled
sit still
place
your
back
against
a tree
like Buddha
& steady
it.
Silence it.
It wants
to go on
possessing
controlling
raging
dictating
lying.
But life's
too short!
You'll wake up
in the
night
one day
&
it will all
--this life--
be over!
What a waste
is any kind
of
grudge.
The taste
of

*grudge
destroys
completely
the
taste
of
cherries.
Wake up!
before it is
too late:
Rejoice
to have
the
noble
dwelling
of
your body
with all
its
teeth!*

*XI.
Let the wind
talk
to you
on the moor,
like
Jane Eyre
& your
sister's
heroes
in
books
that
threw
a lifeline
across
abyss after
abyss
of craziness.*

*XII.
We did what
we could
with what
was
forced*

*on us.
No regrets.
No blame.
The taste
of figs
cherries
peaches
mangoes
orange peel
scent
with blind
luck
& many
tribulations
we made it
to
this
world!*

XIII.

*Rise! Rising
as Maya
reminds us
is our
way
with
devastation.
There is
no
god
but
love
&
so
rising is
inherent
in
our
heartbeat
as we
move
carried or
knocked
about
by life.
This we know:
We were*

*not meant
to suffer
so much
& to learn
nothing.*

Michael Engles - May 02, 2025 at 12:59 PM

MO

“ *I met Arkey as a friend of a good friend, but over the years we'd always check in on each other. I came to know her as one of the most intelligent and funny people I knew. She knew about many things in general, but also would be one of the most knowledgeable about YOUR area of expertise as well. From the beginning she was always a great encourager and advocate. I pray that her family and friends are strengthened during this time and that Arkey's memory is a blessing.*

Moses - April 03, 2025 at 04:47 PM

HI

“ *On behalf of the Cultural Access Collab, we feel the loss of and love for our former Steering Committee member Arkey. Her passion and fire for cultural accessibility could be felt by anyone in her presence, and her impact will continue to ripple outwards. From all your CCAC/Collab colleagues, we extend deepest condolences to Arkey's family and close circle. Thanks for making this place a little better in your time here.*

Hillary - April 01, 2025 at 12:40 PM

KC

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Kamal Collins - March 31, 2025 at 12:19 PM

LH

“ *2 files added to the tribute wall*



Lydia Hamilton - March 31, 2025 at 10:35 AM

LH

“ Arkey was my roommate during my junior year at Loyola and a friend for life after that. Of everything that she was, I loved her intelligence above all. We would have joyful debates on all topics. She indulged in my love of celebrity gossip and could balance that with things that really mattered. She was sharp, deep hearted, and sincere.

I would like to extend my deepest condolences to the family.

Rest easy Key.

Lydia Hamilton - March 31, 2025 at 10:30 AM

DW

“ *Extending Condolences on Behalf on the Watkins Family.*

My daughter, Gelyn, introduced me to Arkey when they were in the Upward Bound Program together. Arkey was, an exceptional individual with a unique outlook on life. Arkey's intelligence, articulateness, and dynamic personality made her a compelling presence. She never saw the glass as half empty or half full, she viewed it in its present state: "The Now." Her approach to challenges was distinctive, as she concentrated on the present moment and discovered opportunities for growth and development. Arkey's spirit, wisdom, and optimism leaves an enduring impression on all who knew her. My prayer is that her remarkable legacy will continue to become a tribute of history to inspire and motivate others.

Evang. Demetria Watkins 🙏

Demetria Watkins - March 29, 2025 at 06:46 PM

HS

“ *Arkey was brilliant—seriously brilliant—and vibrant and fizzing with life. I can't believe she is gone. I was lucky enough to get to work with her at my theatre company and her brain and perspective expanded my mind. Arkey, I love you and will miss you so much.*

Heidi Stillman - March 29, 2025 at 01:54 AM

AA

“ I wouldn't be where I am now as a member of the City Council without Arkey being there from the beginning, always instilling a hope and confidence in what we were building together. To have known someone through various chapters of our lives and be able to reconnect and work together is a blessing, and I am saddened by her no longer being with us, even as I know she is at peace and free from pain. We love you and miss you, Arkey.

Andre Vasquez, 40th Ward Alderperson - March 28, 2025 at 08:00 PM



“ I remember Arkey as a brilliant and energetic teen in Upward Bound at Loyola University. I was so glad to have her under my wing as a mentee, and was proud to see the woman she became. I will miss our dinners and going to plays together. Love you, lil sis.

Tara Betts - March 28, 2025 at 01:58 PM



I had the pleasure to spend time with Arkey as she was a close friend to my son. It was an absolute pleasure because of her wit, intelligence and straight forwardness. Gone to soon...rest in peace, Arkey. Your brilliance and love for African people will always be remembered.

Francis Jeffers - April 07, 2025 at 04:29 PM