

# HOW HER FEET KISSED THE EARTH

ARNA ELLIOT RATTRAY

On February 11th, 2023, Dr. Wendy McLean Cooke departed this earthly realm. What a joy and blessing to have had her light walk amongst us! We remember her laughter, wit, dedication to her calling as an educator, and tireless commitment to building community within and outside the walls of The UWI. Above all, we remember how her feet kissed the Earth as a mother, wife, daughter, sister, friend, poet, and lover of life. We hold the memory of her smile and we give thanks for her life.



In November I came home from one of our weekly visits from Wendy, pausing to reflect. I wrote:

We are all just making our way,  
Slow trotting, quick step march, loud thumping  
We are just making our way, through a land that can be so uncertain.  
But if we are lucky to journey with family and friends  
We make our way with laughter, hugs, caresses.  
For we are all just making our way.

The Social Work Unit at the Mona Campus is an absolutely special unit. We are privileged to not only be colleagues but greater than that we are family. We have woven tightly knitted bonds that are so strong — **we are family**. The passing of Dr. Wendy McLean Cooke is a loss of a family member, an older sister, a confidant, and a friend.

Wendy had a 21-year long relationship with the Social Work Unit at UWI, Mona. She began as a student doing her diploma in Social Work, then became an MSW student and in 2007, joined the staff. As they say, the rest is history. Wendy became the backbone of our unit, carrying its history and knowing the organisational structure of the entire programme out of her head—a database of knowledge for the Social Work Unit.

We remember her smile, her laughter filled the most hollow heart with spirit and energy. Wendy was a lady of the Earth, grounded by her belief in nature. Her favourite colour, naturally, was green. She was the ultimate lecturer, showing up to positively impact the lives of her students. Wendy left us to obtain her PhD at University of Tennessee, Knoxville successfully defending her thesis “A Narrative Case Study of the Transition to Parenthood for Jamaican Men who Parent their Partners Children” in June 2022 and returned in her official capacity to UWI, Mona Campus, Jamaica in time to

resume her duties in August. For so many reasons we looked forward to that day. She was home. She immersed herself right back into her passion - teaching.

Our hearts are broken and shoulders heavy as we now must live without her. We are torn - grief is a hard thing. Wendy taught us how to do hard things with grace and love – she taught us by her example. The world is going on but we want it to stop, even for a moment, to say - we lost a friend.

From our Social Work Unit family (every single past and present member), Amani, Azmahani, Ayele, Mel, Auntie Marlene, her mom, brothers, and sister, thank you for sharing her with us.

Arna Elliott-Rattray, MSW  
Lecturer  
Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work  
The University of the West Indies, Mona  
[arna.elliotttrattray@uwimona.edu.jm](mailto:arna.elliotttrattray@uwimona.edu.jm)