

Connie R. Mitchell

Connie Rose (Cohn) Mitchell, was born in Memphis, Tennessee. Her parents, the late Joseph R. Cohn, Sr. and the late Cleopatra Evans Cohn moved the family to Tulsa, Oklahoma in the 1950's. She was the elder child and only girl in the family which included her brothers Joseph, Jr. (deceased) and Clifton Charles. Her and brother, Clifton, still resides in Tulsa.

She was educated in Tulsa Public Schools and graduated from Booker T. Washington High School. While in high school she participated in many extracurricular activities which included singing in the school chorus, acting in plays each year, and being a member of the student government association. After graduation she enrolled at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio where she majored in English. Connie earned a master's degree in Liberal Studies at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. She was among the very first persons of color to graduate with a MALS degree at Dartmouth.

After graduating from Central State, she began work as an English teacher with Detroit Public Schools. She also served in the classroom as a reading specialist and a computer specialist. Working at Noble Middle School for 26 years brought her some of her fondest career memories. While a classroom teacher she earned many distinctions, among them being chosen as one of Detroit's first two teachers selected to participate in Dartmouth College's Computer Learning and Information Processing Program, Detroit Public Schools Teacher of the Year, Post-Newsweek/WDIV Teacher of the Year, Michigan Teacher of the Year Nominee, and Wayne County RESA Golden Apple Teacher of the Year in 1994 and 1995. Her greatest joys came, however, when a struggling student finally "got" how to read or developed enough self-confidence under her tutelage to become a successful student.

In 1994, Connie made professional history when she was named one of the nation's first (of 86 in the nation) National Board Certified Teachers, having completed a rigorous assessment of her work as a classroom teacher. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards asked her to travel to Washington, D.C. where she helped announce the first such teachers at a national press conference. She later served on the National Board's Board of Directors for 8 years. She also served as a member of the Advisory Boards for Eastern Michigan University and Wayne State University. Probably the greatest highlight of her career as an educator came in 1995 when she met and was photographed with President Bill Clinton. The picture with the president is one of her most precious possessions.

In 1995, she left the classroom to become the Teacher Advocate for Detroit Public Schools' Division of Human Resources. There she guided student teachers and newly hired teachers as they embarked upon their careers with the district. She then became the Director of the Office of Teacher Development which was the umbrella for the Educators' Enrichment Academy, the National Board Certification Mentoring Program, the New Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program and a host of other professional development classes and programs designed to assist and support classroom teachers. During this time she was also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Detroit-Mercy. She retired from Detroit Public Schools after 36 years of service in June of 2005.

Retirement was illusive for her, however. She was, for 6 years, employed by Eastern Michigan University as a University Supervisor of student teachers. In this capacity, she oversaw the final stages of development of students who wished to become teachers, providing them with knowledge about teaching and observing them as they implemented what they had learned as emerging educators.

She has been a member of St. James United Methodist Church of Westland for 43 years. She served as Chairperson of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, Secretary of the United Methodist Women, Chairperson of the Status and Role of Women Committee and the Director of the Sanctuary Choir. She is often called upon to share her musical talents as soloist and pianist.

An Inkster resident since 1971, Connie has found ways to be involved in the life of the community through her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.- Eta Iota Omega Chapter-Inkster and the Michigan Metro Chapter of Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc.

Community service is extremely important to her and she tries to serve wherever and whenever asked if it means that someone will be helped. She represented the city of Inkster on the 2004-2007 Wayne County Airport Authority Airport Noise Study Committee. She was elected to the Inkster Public Schools Board of

Education in 2005 and served as the Treasurer and as a Councilwoman for the city of Inkster. She was honored by the Inkster Summerfest Committee, named a Mother of the Year by the Inkster Christians In Action. She is also a Precinct Delegate, an Executive Committee Member of the Wayne County Democratic Black Caucus, and was elected in May of 2016 as a member of the Inkster Charter Commission. Additionally, she is Co-Chair of the Inkster Task Force, a 501c3 community service organization. She also serves as Recording Secretary for the Inkster Community Block Club. Finally, her interest in social justice issues prompted her to join the League of Women Voters – Dearborn/Dearborn Heights where she served as a member of the Board of Directors

On a personal note, Connie loves gardening and traveling and has created the “Children’s Learning Garden” which sits on an expanse of city property across from her home. During the summer, children and adults grow fruits, vegetables and flowers in storage bins and enjoy watching everything grow while learning gardening skills.

She has been married to George C. Mitchell, Sr. for 49.8 years (June 5, 2021 marks their 50th anniversary). They have two adult children, George. Jr. and Carlotta and adopted daughter, Malaysia.