



*Melvene L. Coney*  
*1950-2003*

Melvene L. Coney was a founding board member of the Margaret Walker Alexander National Research Center, where she assisted with the first fundraising effort to generate the Center's NEH Endowment. Melvene was also a dedicated financial member of the Center who chaired the 2001 Annual Martin Luther King Convocation and always volunteered to participate in activities of the Center.

Melvene was born in Magnolia, MS (Pike County) on February 7, 1950. She is the second child of Clarece Dillon Coney and the late Eddie Eugene Coney. She shared a great family life with six siblings, including four sisters and two brothers and gained many colorful memories as a child growing up at the 4-H Club Camp that was managed by her parents in Sharon, Mississippi.

Melvene attended Luther Branson Elementary School, Velma Jackson High School in Madison County and completed her high school education at Holy Child Jesus High School in Canton, MS in 1967. She matriculated to Jackson State College where she received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology in 1971. During her college years she was an active soldier in the fight for civil rights and participated in organizing numerous rallies, interstate marches and other activities to help in the intense fight for equality for oppressed persons. She often recounted the vivid witnessing of injustices and her intimate brush with great harm during the era's unrest at Jackson State that claimed the lives of two of her colleagues. This was the propulsion of her commitment to serve the community.

She went on to obtain her Master of Arts Degree in Social Science in May 1967 from Jackson State University and gained employment with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission where she continued her commitment to seek equality for others.

Melvene faced her biggest enemy when cancer invaded her body at the tender age of thirty-four. She made no pit stops to feel sorry for herself or give up hope, but sought treatment, underwent radical surgery and kept on with her mission to help others and live to the fullest.

After her stint at EEOC, Melvene was elated to take an appointed position as Interim Director for Alumni Affairs at Jackson State University. She maintained this position from June 2000 until February 2001 and was later appointed to serve in her final position as Special Activities Coordinator.

Melvene received many awards, honors, commendations and accolades for her work through various community organizations. She was proud to have been appointed by Governor Kirk Fordice as the first African American member of the Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium Commission. She served a five-year term through 1999. She was always a "hands on" public servant throughout the years.

She was an active member and worker in many organizations throughout the years. She was chosen as Jackson State University's Alumna of the year in 1992 and was elected as National President of the Jackson State University and Alumni Association, Inc. where she served diligently from July 1, 1992 through June 30, 1996. She was a diligent member of Leadership Jackson, Jackson Challenger, International Training in Communication Group, and was a former President of the Metro Section of the National Council of Negro Women.

Despite a new diagnosis of cancer in 1999, Melvene stayed true to her passions and passed along strength to others who observed her unflinching commitment to community service and the pursuit of happiness. Her passions were New Hope Baptist Church, family, friends, her bowling associations, her community, her sorority Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., JSU Tiger Football and the students of Jackson State University.