



SHARE

DAVID DINKINS

Former New York City Mayor David Dinkins Dies at 93

The first and only Black mayor of New York City died of natural causes just a month after his wife Joyce Dinkins died at 89

Published November 23, 2020 • Updated 54 mins ago



Spectrum

SPECTRUM INTERNET®

More speed for more devices



SHARE

Ad: 0:03

The former mayor is believed to have died of natural causes at his home in the city that he led from 1990-1993.

David Dinkins, New York City's first and only Black mayor, has died at 93.

Two senior NYPD officials confirmed to NBC New York that Dinkins' health aide found him unresponsive in his Lenox Hill apartment Monday night, having apparently died of natural causes. The former mayor died a little more than a month after his wife, [Joyce Dinkins](#), passed away.

Dinkins briefly practiced law in New York City before he began his career in politics as a district leader and was elected a Harlem state Assemblyman in 1966. He went on to serve as President of the Board of Elections and City Clerk before winning election as Manhattan Borough President in 1985.

News



23 HOURS AGO

New Restrictions Start Wednesday for NY Clusters; COVID Field Hospital Opening in NYC



8 HOURS AGO

Midtown Trump Tower To Have Reduced Security After President Leaves Office in January

Dinkins, who also served in the Marines in Korea, ran for mayor in 1989 and defeated Mayor Edward I. Koch and he went on to defeat Rudy Giuliani by the narrowest electoral margin in New York City history: 47,000 votes.



SHARE

0:43


Former First Lady of NYC Joyce Dinkins Dies

Joyce Dinkins, the former first lady of New York City, has died at 89.


During his term as mayor from 1990 to 1993, Dinkins vowed to be "mayor of all the people of New York," and declared: "We are all foot soldiers on the march to freedom."

Former mayor and President Donald Trump's personal attorney Giuliani extended his condolences to Dinkins' family early Tuesday in a tweet.

"He gave a great deal of his life in service to our great City. That service is respected and honored by all," Giuliani wrote.



Rudy W. Giuliani ✓
@RudyGiuliani



I extend my deepest condolences to the family of Mayor David Dinkins, and to the many New Yorkers who loved and supported him.

He gave a great deal of his life in service to our great City.

That service is respected and honored by all.

12:04 AM · Nov 24, 2020 ⓘ

♥ 22.3K
 💬 3.5K people are Tweeting about this



SHARE

Daniel Danon, a businessman who became involved in Democratic politics and was among the first Black men to serve in the state Assembly, inspired him. Among them was New York Attorney General Letitia James.

"The example Mayor David Dinkins set for all of us shines brighter than the most powerful lighthouse imaginable. For decades, Mayor Dinkins lead with compassion and an unparalleled commitment to our communities. His deliberative and graceful demeanor belied his burning passion for challenging the inequalities that plague our society," James wrote in a statement.

"Personally, Mayor Dinkins' example was an inspiration to me from my first run for city council to my campaigns for public advocate and attorney general. I was honored to have him hold the bible at my inaugurations because I, and others, stand on his shoulders."

In his own inaugural address, Dinkins spoke lovingly of New York as a "gorgeous mosaic of race and religious faith, of national origin and sexual orientation, of individuals whose families arrived yesterday and generations ago, coming through Ellis Island or Kennedy Airport or on buses bound for the Port Authority."

But the city he inherited had an ugly side, too.

AIDS, guns and crack cocaine killed thousands of people each year. Unemployment soared. Homelessness was rampant. The city faced a \$1.5 billion budget deficit.

Dinkins' low-key, considered approach quickly came to be perceived as a flaw. Critics said he was too soft and too slow.

"Dave, Do Something!" screamed one New York Post headline in 1990, Dinkins' first year in office.

Dinkins did a lot at City Hall. He raised taxes to hire thousands of police officers. He spent billions of dollars revitalizing neglected housing. His administration got the Walt Disney Corp. to invest in the cleanup of then-seedy Times Square.

In recent years, he's gotten more credit for those accomplishments, credit that Mayor Bill de Blasio said he should have always had. De Blasio, who worked in Dinkins' administration, named



SHARE

Results from his accomplishments, however, didn't come fast enough to earn Dinkins a second term.

After beating Giuliani, Dinkins lost a rematch by roughly the same small margin in 1993. Political historians often trace the defeat to Dinkins' handling of the Crown Heights riot in Brooklyn in 1991.

The violence began after a black 7-year-old boy was accidentally killed by a car in the motorcade of an Orthodox Jewish religious leader. During the three days of anti-Jewish rioting by young black men that followed, a rabbinical student was fatally stabbed. Nearly 190 people were hurt.

A state report issued in 1993, an election year, cleared Dinkins of the persistently repeated charge that he intentionally held back police in the first days of the violence, but criticized him for not stepping up as a leader.

In a 2013 memoir, Dinkins accused the police department of letting the disturbance get out of hand, and also took a share of the blame, on the grounds that "the buck stopped with me." But he bitterly blamed his election defeat on prejudice: "I think it was just racism, pure and simple."

Born in Trenton, New Jersey, on July 10, 1927, Dinkins moved with his mother to Harlem when his parents divorced, but returned to his hometown to attend high school. There, he learned an early lesson in discrimination: Blacks were not allowed to use the school swimming pool.

During a hitch in the Marine Corps as a young man, a Southern bus driver barred him from boarding a segregated bus because the section for blacks was filled.

"And I was in my country's uniform!" Dinkins recounted years later.

While attending Howard University, the historically black university in Washington, D.C., Dinkins said he gained admission to segregated movie theaters by wearing a turban and faking a foreign accent.

Dinkins' election as mayor in 1989 came after two racially charged cases that took place under Koch: the rape of a white jogger in Central Park and the bias murder of a black teenager in Bensonhurst.