

Whitney Elizabeth Houston, We will “Always Love You!”

Written by Forward Times Staff
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World Mourns Angelic Singer

It was the unthinkable. On the eve of the 54th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, a six-time Grammy Award winner and one of the most celebrated artists in music history is found dead.

Within hours, plans for an event that would mainly have celebrated Adele, the 23-year-old British singer who won all six categories for which she was nominated, were overshadowed by sad tributes to the majestic Whitney Houston, dead at the age of 48. The Los Angeles coroner had still not released the cause of her death this week.

Because of her addictions of the past, rumors of a possible drug overdose and even possible drowning abounded as she was found in a hotel bathtub filled with water, officials confirmed in televised interviews. Paramedics and her associates on the scene tried to revive her but to no avail.

Her life's work overshadows speculation as her musical tributes fill the airwaves and will live on in the hearts of her fans around the world and those who knew her personally in diverse communities.

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“Like the rest of the world I am terribly shocked and saddened by the passing of Ms. Whitney Houston. I watched her grow up singing in the church choir under the leadership of Rev. Thomas,” said the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. in a statement. “Her mother is an outstanding singer, singing with the phenomenal group the Sweet Inspiration. Whitney was one of the outstanding voices of our time. There is a hole in the sky and void in the music world. I am praying for her family.”

Legendary music artists, including Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight, Stevie Wonder, and Chaka Khan, the Michael Jackson family and a relative Dionne Warwick all articulated the shock of a family of Black music artists.

The Jackson family, who experienced similar devastation at the death of Michael, issued a statement saying, “We honor and celebrate the life of one of the world’s most gifted vocalists and talented entertainers, Whitney Houston...Although we are all saddened by her sudden passing and will miss her, we respectfully ask everyone to please consider her family at this time of difficulty by granting them the patience and comfort they need to mourn their loss in peace.”

The official statement was tweeted Monday by Janet and Randy Jackson, according to [eurweb.com](#).

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Despite gossip, speculation and deep concern over Houston’s death, her musical gift, which included the singing of the National Anthem at Super Bowl XXV in 1991, is being celebrated from American to South Africa to Europe to Australia and around the world.

“May she rest in peace,” said a statement from former South African President Nelson Mandela, extending his condolences to Houston’s family and friends. His note was in remembrance of her having dedicated her performance of “Greatest Love of All” to him during a 1994 dinner at the White House, according to CNN.{jcomments on}

Whitney Houston’s appeal was multi-generational. Her music included power-packed love ballads, but also Gospel. “I’ll Always Love You” has become known as her signature song. But, the last song she sang publically was “Yes, Jesus Loves Me.”

“She gave voice to the inspiration of a generation,” said National Urban League President/CEO Marc Morial. “She will be remembered among history’s great talents who were taken far too young, in the pantheon with Billie Holiday, Judy Garland and Michael Jackson.”

Morial said in a statement that at the height of her fame, “Houston represented a grace and glamour unique in the world of pop and R&B entertainment, and she showed courage and strength in her struggles in her personal life.”

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At deadline on Monday, reports said her mother, gospel singer Cissy Houston, wanted Houston’s body flown to New Jersey to be buried in the state of her birth. At that time, it had not been announced who would give the eulogy. She is also survived by her singer ex-husband Bobby Brown to whom she had a tumultuous marriage. They had one daughter, Bobbi Kristina, now 18.

Meanwhile, tributes continued to pour into the media. “The world is saddened by this great loss,” said the Rev. Al Sharpton. Sharpton said he would call for a national prayer for her family and the memory of Whitney Houston on Sunday, the morning before the Grammys. “The world should pause and pray for the memory of a gifted songbird.”

A private service will be held on Saturday, February 18th, noon, at her childhood New Jersey church, New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, according to Carolyn Whigham of Whigham Funeral Home.