

## **Ruth Stutts Njiiri** (March 1929 – November 2022)

**Ruth Stutts Njiiri** died in November 2022 at the age of 93. Njiiri was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, and attended Springfield Public Schools, where she later taught until her retirement in 2003.

After completing high school, Njiiri moved to New York City, where she met and later married Kariuki Njiiri, who was from Kenya. They moved with their family to Kenya in 1958 and became involved in the independence movement led by anti-colonial activist and politician Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. Njiiri served as Kenyatta's personal secretary throughout his tenure as the country's first prime minister and then president. While there, she also helped found the Kenya Children's Library and assisted in organizing the Kenya Student Airlift, a project enabling African youth to attend colleges and universities in the United States.



Njiiri returned to the U.S. in 1968 to complete her bachelor's and master's degrees at Springfield College and then earned a doctorate in international education in 1975 from UMass Amherst. After obtaining her doctorate, she returned to New York City to work for the Phelps Stokes Fund, developing programs for primarily Historically Black and Native American colleges and universities.

In addition to her teaching career, Njiiri was a longtime board member of the Springfield Museums Association, where she initiated the Uhora Award, which recognizes African Americans from the Greater Springfield area who have shown exceptional devotion in their voluntary activities. She was also a longtime member of the Cottonwood Foundation Inc., which since 1960 provided startup grants to small non-profit organizations around the world. [11-23]