



Mr. Arturo Scott Bagley

August 1, 1965 - June 15, 2026

Arturo Scott Bagley (age 60) died peacefully the morning of June 15, 2026, surrounded by his loving community after a six-month journey with stage four squamous cell bladder cancer. Preceded in death by his parents, Arthur Moten Bagley (1924-2011) and Edythe Rose Scott Bagley (1924-2011), Mr. Bagley was born and raised in Cheyney, Pennsylvania. After attending Catholic elementary school, he matriculated into high school at Westtown School, a Quaker college-preparatory school. In later years, he reflected often on the foundations of intentional community, social justice, spiritual practice, and care of the world that both traditions instilled in him. He went on to earn degrees from Emory University (B.A. with high honors, History) where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, Yale Law School (J.D.), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (M.A., U.S. History). His interest in U.S. history and African-American history, in particular, was sparked by observing his parents who were both university professors and active in the Civil Rights Movement. In his early career, Mr. Bagley worked as an attorney at Susman Godfrey, LLP, in Houston, Texas. There, he met his best friend, Jorge Ramirez, and served as Jorge's best man at his wedding. Friends for 36 years, Jorge came to accompany Arturo in the last weeks of his life offering comfort and support as his friend's health failed. Mr. Bagley left law practice and worked as an editorial intern at Philadelphia Magazine; a documentary researcher on the documentary film *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography in Four Voices*, for which he received an Emmy nomination for outstanding research; as a history research

and teaching assistant and manuscript collection processor at UNC Chapel Hill; and as an adjunct lecturer and professional writing tutor at Lincoln University.

Realizing his true calling as an educator and historian, Mr. Bagley established himself as a talented U.S. history teacher first at Tower Hill School in Delaware for 11 years before joining the Upper School History Department at Rivers School in Weston, Massachusetts, in 2017. He brought an extraordinary depth of knowledge that enabled students to think deeply about the complexities of our world. He emphasized developing analytical thinking skills and fostering empathy within his students while encouraging them to consider and express their opinions freely while backing them with facts and evidence to support their positions. He developed popular electives including “The Evolving Presidency,” “Civil Rights in the United States,” “Race and the Supreme Court,” and “Justice” which explored how people’s perceptions of present-day controversies are shaped by various philosophies of what is “just”. He also crafted and hosted the Rivers Civil Rights Trip to Alabama and Georgia to help students understand the importance of history and place in context and was the Model UN advisor chaperoning trips to UConn and Columbia University each year. It is perhaps fitting that his last public address was as keynote speaker at Rivers’ Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance in January 2026 where he discussed examples of ordinary citizens moved to fight for progress and equality within a functioning democracy and spoke of his personal connection to his aunt, Coretta Scott King, and his “Uncle Martin.” As a close observer of lived history within his family, he served on the Board of Directors of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change for several years.

Arturo Bagley was a life-long avid Philadelphia Eagles and 76ers fan and regularly pointed out any connection celebrities and officials had to his beloved Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He held an extensive, deep, and nuanced knowledge of U.S. history and culture including film and television, romantic comedies, sports, food, music, theatre, and literature that peppered

his conversations with friends, colleagues, and students. A scholar of the presidency, he visited all but two of the presidential libraries and countless other presidential sites across the country. Most importantly, he was an engaging, empathetic, humorous, and kind person who drew people to him throughout his adult life. He was renowned for his lunch table conversations at Tower Hill and Rivers and thoroughly enjoyed two weekly Berkshire breakfast and coffee groups. When his life partner, Holly, moved from Boston to the Berkshires with work, Arturo reordered his own life frequenting the Berkshires and gathering even more people into his always-welcoming circles of friendship and conversation. He spanned the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regularly attending the John F. Kennedy Library Forum in Boston and holding multiple season theatre passes in the Berkshires. A dog person, he was rarely without his faithful Roja nearby, and he learned to navigate cats after meeting Holly. He was curious about life and enjoyed new places, people, restaurants, and experiences with relish. A member at Church on the Hill, United Church of Christ, in Lenox, Massachusetts, Arturo served as treasurer, lay reader, and pick-up choir member. Wherever he lingered, others felt seen, heard, supported, and respected in his wake. With his loved ones, he was a compassionate, beautifully warm soul who made life better just by being present.

He is survived by his life partner, Holly C. Benzenhafer of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, his cousins Martin Luther King III and Bernice King both of Atlanta, Georgia, as well as an abundant community of students, alumni, parents, colleagues, friends, and individuals who crossed his path and are better for it. They are his legacy.

A funeral service will be held on Saturday, June 27, 2026, at 11:00 AM at Church on the Hill, UCC in Lenox, Massachusetts, the Reverend Liz Goodman, presiding. A reception with story sharing will follow. Burial will be in Marion, Alabama, near his parents at a later date.

Memorial gifts may be made to Church on the Hill, at Donate and to The

Rivers School Annual Fund for Financial Aid in honor and memory of Arturo's life and work at gift online. Please include a note indicating that your donation is made in honor of Arturo Bagley.

Upcoming Events

Service

JUN 27. 11:00 AM - 11:45 AM (ET)

Church on the Hill
Main Street
Lenox, MA 01240