My wonderful mother, Barbara Leon, died yesterday afternoon. I was fortunate to be able to be with her along with my sister, Theta, who was a tremendous support. And she had a final visit with granddaughter, Ella, just a couple hours before her passing.
I am deeply saddened and mourning the loss, while also feeling some relief, after the last 6 years watching and supporting her through navigating Alzheimer's disease.

Mom is one of the kindest people I've ever known. She cared deeply for strangers and kin alike. She was fiercely committed to social and global justice. She loved to read and write, including having a gift for poetry. She loved my father, who she was with for over 5 decades before his death, deeply. She was shy, steadfast, caring, and silly, at times. A traveler, a nature lover, a good cook.

While Alzheimer's changed many things about my mother and our relationship. And there were some very hard times and periods along the way. In the end, I am grateful that my mother was largely content and happy. Everyone who knew her, even in those later years, remarked on how kind and sweet and happy and good natured she was. That part of her never really changed.

She also found in Alzheimer's relief from a terrible nerve pain condition she suffered most of her adult life. At some point her brain simply forgot to send those pain signals. A gift.
While I would never have chosen this path for her, it feels like a gift to have been able to get to be there for her. I think often of the Ram Dass concept that we are all just walking each other home, and I'm grateful to have been able to walk beside her.

An addendum to add that I did not walk with her alone and I am beyond grateful to the caregivers who took care of her bodily and emotionally, to hospice who were a guiding force in these last days, and to my wonderful friends, family and this community who helped and cared for Ella and lift me up every day