



Darrell Eugene Gholar

November 7, 1961 - December 16, 2025

Darrell Eugene Gholar was born on November 7, 1961, at the Amarillo Air Force Base in Amarillo, Texas, to Willa Gholar and S.L. Gholar. He transitioned from this life on December 16, 2025. During his early years, Darrell lived between England and Texas before ultimately settling in Chicago, Illinois.

At the age of 11, Darrell accepted Christ and was baptized at Mount Pisgah Baptist Church by Reverend Joseph Wells, a faith that remained an important foundation throughout his life.

Darrell attended Chicago's Dunbar Vocational High School, where he distinguished himself as both a scholar and an elite athlete. He wrestled and played football, earning recognition as an IHSA Wrestling State Finalist in 1980 and an AAU Wrestling National Runner-Up. He was named captain of both the football and wrestling teams, demonstrating early leadership and dedication.

Following high school, Darrell attended the University of Minnesota, where he began a remarkable collegiate wrestling career. He was named to the Freshman All-American Team and served as team captain for two years. Darrell graduated in 1985 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in World Literature. Darrell's wrestling career continued at the highest levels of competition. He became a three-time United States Greco-Roman National Champion, served as Captain of the 1986 United States World Team, and was an alternate for the 1988 Olympic Team. He also shared his expertise as an assistant coach

at the University of Minnesota (1985–1986) and Drake University (1986–1987).

In 1998, Darrell transitioned into professional fighting. In 2000, he captured the World Vale Tudo Championship as a middleweight and held the title until retiring from professional competition in 2001.

Beyond athletics, Darrell was a gifted writer, poet, and creative visionary. He was a finalist for the Jerome Fellowship in Playwriting and a recipient of a Walt Disney Pictures Screenwriting Fellowship. Upon completion of the fellowship, he was offered a position writing for Walt Disney Pictures' Touchstone Division. During this time, he wrote and directed *The Dancer* at the Ivar Theatre in Hollywood and co-produced the full-length feature film *Looking for Bruce*. In 2003, Darrell was named one of the world's top 200 living poets and was invited to read his work in Washington, D.C., at the National Society of Poets National Convention.

In 2023, Darrell was honored with the Medal of Courage by the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, Illinois Chapter, recognizing both his athletic achievements and his enduring impact on the wrestling community.

Darrell Eugene Gholar leaves behind a legacy of faith, discipline, creativity, leadership, and excellence. He is survived by his loving parents, Willa Gholar and S.L. Gholar; his brothers and sisters Dimitri Gholar (IL), Duane Gholar (TX), Deirdre Gholar (TX) Mark Allen (CA), Aasha Francis (Justin)(FL.), Aaron Gholar (IL), Jarrell Turner (Leslie (IL.)), Adrianna Gholar- Frazier (Shannon (IL), a host of niece, nephews, extended family members, and cherished loved ones.

Cemetery Details

Restvale Cemetery

11700 S Laramie Ave
Alsip, IL 60803

Previous Events

Public Viewing

JAN 2. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

Calahan Funeral Home Landmark Chapel
7030 S. Halsted
Chicago, IL 60621

Visitation

JAN 3. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

St. John Baptist Temple
9319-29 S Cottage Grove Ave
Chicago, IL 60619

Funeral Service

JAN 3. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

St. John Baptist Temple
9319-29 S Cottage Grove Ave
Chicago, IL 60619

Burial/Interment

JAN 3. 1:00 PM - 1:30 PM (CT)

Restvale Cemetery
11700 S Laramie Ave
Alsip, IL 60803

Tribute Wall

DB

“Darrell was one of the greatest friends I had. Lifelong since 1981. We met in the dorm at the University of Minnesota. We met again in the U of M locker room. He was a wrestler and I was in track and field (as was my brother, Elliot). During a mental block, while studying, I went down to break room in the dorm to get a candy bar and I looked at this man and I said to myself, that is a wrestler! He saw me and said, "What's up?" as we were some of the few blacks in the dorm and on campus. He was sitting on the table. We exchanged names and then the conversation just flowed. It was an instantaneous friendship bond. In our life, we spent a lot of time together, very often pursuing women as young adults (ha, ha). As mature adults, we reconnected as brothers from another mother. I visited him often in Hutchinson, MN barbequing, watching movies, chewing the fat and socializing with residents at his apartment building. As great as a friend that Darrell was to me, he was even a greater person.



Donald Brown - March 15 at 11:58 AM

CZ

“ To the family of Darrell, from his friends in Iowa, we are shocked and sadden
. My name is Charles Zanders Sr. I met and coached with Darrell at Drake university in Des Moines. I introduced him to my family and friends and became a member of the family. He loved my wife Margaret's fried chicken and Bar-B-Q. We've stayed in contact through the years and I last talked to him in December 2025. His first words were always " how's Margaret"?
He always said he was coming to visit me and and live in Des Moines. We both knew it.was unlikely due to his health but dreams, prayers and hope help us get through life. I know he's happy because he once again can be iron man. I'm missing him and praying for his soul. God bless you.

Charles W Zanders - February 17 at 09:07 AM

“Darrell Gholar is one of the best men you will ever meet. He is a World Champion in mixed martial arts (vale tudo). He was also named one of the world's 200 greatest living poets. What a beautiful combination! Just think about that for a moment. He could beat Mike Tyson and was a beautiful, creative artist and scholar who wrote Hollywood screenplays and some of the world's best poetry. I have known "Campeao" (Champion in Portuguese) as he is affectionately known in Brasil for over three decades and in the United States, Brasil, and the Caribbean. I have had the privilege of meeting and speaking with presidents, Kings and queens, music and athletic superstars, and many Hollywood Stars and celebrities. Honestly and as God is our witness, Darrell Gholar, just walking and talking with him, is the greatest of them all. To be able to call him my dear friend and brother is one of the best honors I have ever experienced.

He loved his family and his people. He loved and respected his awesome mother and amazing father. He would tell me stories of their humanity and example and it would bring a tear to your soul...the beauty of just plain old good folks. One of Darrell's ancestors "Gamby Gholar," I think it was his great-great- great-grandfather was the pastor to Nat Turner, that beloved freedom fighter and American hero. Gamby, came from West Africa and got his name from Gambia and The Gambia River. He was Mandingo, a brilliant and proud people who are descendants of the Mali empire, one of the greatest and richest empires the world has ever known. Greatness runs deep and long and strong in the Gholar family. May God bless them always.

Darrell was and is such a beautiful spiritual warrior. I say is because his spirit is still with us. We will honor him by how we treat ourselves and each other. The tears we shed will be of the beautiful memories and the love that he shared with us, which we reflect onto him.

As a person, Darrell is such a joy to be around and it's nice to know that you have one of the world's greatest warriors by your side. I

believe that he trained perhaps 12 world champions in MMA (ultimate fighting), many of whom are household names. He was brought to Brazil to train the first family of Brazilian jiu-jitsu, the Gracie family, in wrestling, especially wrestling takedowns and defense.

Darrell is a peaceful man though. He is always in a good mood, quick to laugh, quick to find the humor in things, constantly caring for the little man in the street, especially children, sharing his charismatic personality, his greatness as a champion and human being, and making people everywhere feel special. Basically as a world champion and a person who radiated God's love, joy, kindness, and goodness, his brilliant in a light signed all over the world, everywhere he went. You felt good because of how he made you feel. Be you a homeless person, a Hollywood producer, a doorman, a child trying to make it through another day or find your way, a celebrity, he loved people and people loved him. He was a lot like the great Muhammad Ali in that way. Blessed are the peace-makers and the bridge-builders.

*The fun, the jokes, the laughter, the great meals, the partying, the enjoyment of beautiful music throughout the African diaspora, be it in Hollywood, Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, or the Caribbean, life is a joy and the world is a better place because Darrell Gholar are lived and lives. If you want to be like him or know what it's like to be around him, read Rudyard Kipling's poem, "If."
We love you Darrell Gholar!*

Walter Morgan - January 03 at 01:12 PM

WM

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Walter Morgan - January 03 at 12:04 PM

WM

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Walter Morgan - January 03 at 11:59 AM

WM

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Walter Morgan - January 03 at 11:54 AM

SM

“*Darrell and I were teammates at the University of Minnesota. We had many grueling practices competing against each other. After wrestling we kept in touch. Darrell will be greatly missed He was an amazing wrestler and better person. Prayers for Darrel as he now has no pain and He will take care of Darrell.*

*Steve Martinez
Gopher wrestler*

Steve Martinez - December 29, 2025 at 05:44 PM