



## Spotlight On... Thelma Jones

St. A's has an awesome lifelong community activist in Thelma Jones. You might recognize Thelma by her elegant long tunics. But she's a faithful St. A's worker bee

who you can find wherever hard work is to be done, especially projects related to celebrating Thurgood Marshall's legacy.

Thelma grew up in Snow Hill, NC and graduated from Durham College. Activism is in her blood; her parents were advocates for voting and civil rights, and all of her siblings took on various causes. Thelma came to DC to work for the World Bank. During her thirty-three years at the Bank, she led many community relations initiatives. In 1999, on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, Thelma founded the World Bank/IMF African-American Association to sustain and enhance their community outreach. The Bank provided or sponsored her education and training in Spanish, youth development, and non-profit management (Georgetown University)

Thelma's calling and spiritual walk have been all about "making a difference while inspiring others and encouraging them to give back as well." Nearly thirty years ago, Thelma began attending St. Augustine's with Walter Brooks and other fellow activists who were members. The church's commitments to serving the Southwest community and promoting social justice made it home. Thelma has worn many hats here:

spearheading Marshall events; babysitting; serving on the Altar Guild and Lectors; working our yard sales; and recruiting speakers for our Grounds for Discussion meetings.

A virtual Southwest Mayor, Thelma has actively worked or partnered with too many organizations to mention to support our community's less fortunate members, especially youths. A partial list includes the: Southwest Neighborhood Assembly; DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; Southwest Youth Activities Task Force; Black Benefactors; National Congress of Black Women; American Cancer Society; Susan G. Komen for the Cure; Smith Center for Healing in the Arts; and Thurgood Marshall Center. Her roles have included securing funds and resources from foundations and public bodies, and providing support to fellow cancer survivors.

Her hard work has been successful and merited public recognition. Thelma received the Mayor's Community Service Award for Lifetime Achievement. Notably she served as a panelist – with Dr. Jill Biden, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, and Jennifer Aniston – at the White House during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and received the White House Champion of Change Award. She is frequently interviewed and featured in the media. Thelma has written hundreds of articles for the Southwester community newspaper. As a property owner at River Park, she embraces the economic development planned for Southwest. However, she is concerned that the poor, often public housing residents – particularly those

east of Delaware Avenue – are not adequately represented at meetings where decisions are made that could lead to their being displaced. And Thelma laments the likely loss of affordable housing and rising housing and property costs that threaten to undermine our community's diversity.

For R&R, Thelma reads extensively, often biographies and self-help books, attends social events, and travels. She has pleasant memories of trips to West Africa and Costa Rica, and hopes to return soon. She was unable to travel for a few years as she struggled with breast cancer which she beat in 2007, only to succumb to lymphodoma: a consequence of her cancer surgery. She's now healthy enough for long flights, so we may soon miss her for a few Sundays, and then get to hear about her travels.

Thelma has a green thumb and lots of TLC to share. "One of my favorite hobbies is growing plants, as I gain a great sense of accomplishment in nurturing and seeing the plants grow from babies to their full potentials. In general, that's what I like about much of my work: whether it's mentoring youths or helping cancer patients. Seeing them grow or become better is quite rewarding and satisfying. Currently, I own 60 plants, and regularly grow and donate plants to family and friends." She is the proud mother of a son who works for a private development firm on Southwest's Waterfront and is a proud and doting grandmother.

Please reach out to Thelma at coffee hour to learn more about her community involvement and in-depth knowledge of how Southwest evolved toward its promising renaissance. She may bring out the inner activist in you, or recruit you to assist with one of her ministries.