

# Alice Thomas

FULFILLING A LONG-STANDING DREAM BY PUBLISHING HER LIFE STORY



In 2019, 89-year old Alice Thomas accomplished a longstanding dream: to tell her life's journey by publishing her story.

In "Surviving Racism: A Memoir of Life, Love, and Faith - The Charles & Alice Thomas Story," she tells the heart-wrenching story of how she and her family have persevered through racism. Despite obstacles and struggles—or perhaps because of them—Alice became a Civil Rights pioneer and activist in West Chester, demonstrating

courage, generosity and perseverance that are boundless.

In the 1950s, newly married Alice and Charles Thomas settled in West Philadelphia because no one would sell them a home in West Chester. Although Dr. Thomas graduated from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and worked as a pharmacist, that made no difference.

Later in the early 1970s, while raising two daughters, Alice began working at Henderson High School

in West Chester, while Dr. Thomas owned his own pharmacy in the Borough.

During her 35 years at Henderson High School, Alice found her calling working with and breaking down barriers for minority students—serving as their voice. But her efforts were not always appreciated. Once her office was moved to an end closet next to the gym. After the community protested, the superintendent moved her office back to the Guidance Department.

Throughout it all, Alice kept her mission in mind. "I always want to give our students a positive identity at the school—to make sure they realize they can do anything anyone else can do."

When she noticed a lack of minority representation in extracurricular activities and student government, she helped to found Henderson's Black Student Union in 1978. Her efforts led to the eventual election of four African American officers to student government. Yet sadly, these

student leaders' photos were left out of the school yearbook. Again, the community rallied and a second yearbook was printed, this time recognizing the African American students.

At her 1998 retirement, West Chester's mayor, Clifford DeBaptiste, created a scholarship to honor Alice's longstanding commitment to education. Each year, scholarships are awarded to Henderson High School graduates pursuing further education. Through the Alice Thomas Scholarship Fund at the Chester County Community Foundation, students have even more chances for a bright and successful future.

Alice perseveres, turning tribulation into triumph. Her victory is having a life filled with love, peace and satisfaction and making our world better for everyone to live together to fulfill their dreams, one step at a time.

Always vigilant. Never silent. Alice Thomas knows education is the key to success.

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