



## Dr. Claudia B. Thomas

September 20, 1930 - May 12, 2018

Dr. Claudia B. Thomas, a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and public servant, passed away peacefully in her sleep after a long illness, surrounded by her loving family on May 12, 2018. Claudia was born in Shannon, North Carolina on September 20, 1930 to Claud and Mary Lee Bonds. Claudia's phenomenal success began at a very early age when she entered Bennett College at the age of 15 years old. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry and accepted a position with Ebony Magazine as her first job after graduation. She began her teaching career as a high school chemistry teacher in Asheville, North Carolina. Later in her life, she married Harry A. Thomas, a military officer, giving her the opportunity to travel and teach around the United States and overseas. One of her fondest memories was having past Lakewood Police Chief Larry Saunders as a student in one of her classes. Claudia and her husband eventually settled in Lakewood in 1963 when he retired from the military. Claudia, a passionate "life-time learner" continued her educational pursuits earning a Master of Science Degree in Educational Administration from Seattle University and a Doctorate in Organizational Development and Management from Union University. Since then, Claudia has dedicated her life to local school districts, her beloved Allen AME Church, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and greater Lakewood community.

Claudia served 42 years in public education as a Teacher, Vice Principal, and Principal, until she retired in 1994 after serving as the Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Bremerton School District. After concluding of her career in education she became an active participant in spearheading the efforts to incorporate Lakewood as a city. As a result, she was elected as one of the original members of the Lakewood City Council and served for five terms. During her time on the council, she was selected to serve as the Deputy Mayor for one of her dearest friends and mentors, General William Harrison. In 2009 she was bestowed the honor of serving as the Mayor of Lakewood, making her the first African American female mayor in the state of Washington. Her platform and agenda while in office was "Unity in the Community." She recognized the need for comprehensive services for Lakewood families and youth, compelling her to set aside one percent of the city's budget for human services, starting the Lakewood Youth Council, and working

tirelessly to as a cofounder of the Lakewood Human Services Collaboration with another dear friend, Andie Gernon. The collaboration of over 92 local agencies later known as Lakewood's Promise, was recognized nationally by America's Promise: Alliance for Youth, as one of the best collaboration models in the nation.

When asked to describe Claudia some would say: she was gifted with an ability to bring diverse groups together - she has inspired the dreamless and taught those they called unteachable - a model of service and a hope for our youth - a compassionate caring energetic leader outpacing people half her age - she sees a need and she goes about solving it - although short in stature, she stands head and shoulders above the best - one of the truest friends I ever had. Claudia had too many accomplishments in her lifetime to record. Always generous with her personal time, she was extremely proud of her membership in the following organizations: Sound Transit Board, American Leadership Forum, Governor's Commission on Substance Abuse, Lakewold Gardens Board, Clover Park Technical College Foundation, Senior Citizens Board, Allen AME Church Steward and Trustee Boards, Golden Member of Zoo Omega Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the NPHC-Tacoma Council, Lakewood First Lions Club, Lakewood Chamber of Commerce, Tacoma Branch of the NAACP, and Tacoma Urban League to name a few. The legacy she leaves her family and friends is abundant and unyielding; the memories of her are everlasting.

Claudia was preceded in death by her husband, Harry A. Thomas, and her brother Joel Bonds. She is survived by her children; Bryan Thomas (Lisa) of Lakewood and Lisa Boyd (David) of Steilacoom; grandchildren; Angela, Kris, Danielle, Cameron, Alexander, Amanda and Sydney, and great-children; Hadley and Andre; as well as a host of cousins, nieces and nephews. Claudia will be greatly missed by her family and friends who will always remember that her door was always open, and her table was always set with an abundance of good food.

A Memorial Service will be held for her at the Harrison Preparatory School Auditorium on June 2, 2018 at 10:00 AM followed by a Celebration of Life Reception at the Clover Park Technical College McGavick Center at 12:00PM. Claudia has asked that in lieu of flowers, please make donations in her honor to the Claudia Thomas Scholarship Fund of Ivy GATES, Inc.\*

Claudia Thomas Scholarship Fund  
c/o Ivy GATES, Inc.  
PO Box 111796  
Tacoma, WA 98411

\*Ivy GATES, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization and the charitable arm of Zeta Omega Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.



# Comments

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“ Words cannot sum up the life of an icon. Dr. Thomas was an icon. I already miss her. May you find peace in your eternal slumber.

Julius Brown & Family

julius brown - June 02, 2018 at 11:02 AM

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“ DR. CLAUDIA WAS MY PRINCIPAL BACK IN THE MID "70"S AT SEQUOIA JR HIGH IN KENT WA. ALWAYS FAIR AND POLITE EVEN THOUGHT I WAS A TROUBLE MAKER..I WILL NEVER FORGET THOSE WALKS TO HER OFFICE,,,R.I.P. MY FRIEND!!!

MARK WILLIAMS - May 28, 2018 at 11:24 PM

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“ Healing Tears - All White was purchased for the family of Dr. Claudia B. Thomas.



May 22, 2018 at 07:36 PM

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“ I am very saddened to learn of Dr. Thomas' passing. I helped put out campaign signs for her inaugural run for city council. We also attended the same church. So glad to have known her. Sincere condolences to the family from Charlotte, Ruby, Patricia and Ramone Kerney, and Yvonna Peterson.

Charlotte Kerney - May 22, 2018 at 05:52 PM

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“ It is with great sadness that I learn of Claudia's passing. I worked closely with her during the formation of the Lakewood Human Services Collaboration and Lakewood's Promise. She was a fierce warrior for the health and well being of Lakewood's children and families with her gentle spirit. I always admired Claudia, and am still honored to have known her and been a part of her mission in Lakewood.  
Renee Meyer

**Renee Meyer** - May 17, 2018 at 05:15 PM

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“ I had the pleasure of working with Mayor Claudia Thomas on many occasions during my service as a Lakewood Police officer.

Claudia was a fabulous person to work with; one of the City of Lakewood's top citizens. She made our city and the world, for that matter, a better place.

She will be missed.

Joseph Boyle

**Joseph Boyle** - May 17, 2018 at 10:53 AM