

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Ruth Hassell-Thompson

PERSON

Hassell-Thompson, Ruth, 1942-

Alternative Names: The Honorable Ruth Hassell-Thompson;

Life Dates: November 6, 1942-

Place of Birth: Mount Vernon, New York, USA

Residence: Mount Vernon, NY

Work: New York, NY

Occupations: Policy Advisor; State Senator

Biographical Note

Civic leader and political official Ruth Hassell-Thompson was born on November 6, 1942 in New York City to Branon Hassell and Thelma Crump Hassell. She attended Bronx Community College in the Bronx, New York and Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York.

In 1963, Hassell-Thompson began working as a pediatric nurse and substance abuse counselor at Montefiore Mount Vernon Hospital in Mount Vernon, New York, where she worked for thirty-six years. Between 1971 and 1980, she worked for the Westchester Community Opportunity Program, serving in a number of positions, including director of an infant daycare center and assistant to the executive director. Then, from 1980 to 1987, Hassell-Thompson served as executive director of the Westchester Minority Contractors Association. Hassell-Thompson joined the Mount Vernon City Council in 1993, where she served as council president and acting mayor of the City of Mount Vernon. In addition, Hassell-Thompson served on several council committees, in addition to serving as vice chairperson of the Urban Renewal Board and Real Estate Board. In 2000, she was elected as the Democratic representative of New York's 36th District in the New York State Senate. Serving for eight terms, Hassell-Thompson was instrumental in the passage of New York's marriage equality legislation. She also chaired the Crime Victims, Crime and Corrections Committee and was a ranking minority member on the Consumer Protection and Judiciary committees. In 2016, Governor Andrew Cuomo appointed Hassell-Thompson as special advisor for policy and community affairs of New York State Homes and Community Renewal.

In addition to her political career, Hassell-Thompson served as president and CEO of Whart Development Company, Inc. and The Gathering, a women's center in Mount Vernon. She also served as a health educator for the Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center and as a consultant to Automotive Consultant, Inc. Hassell-Thompson was the recipient of two honorary degrees from Mercy College and Eastern Theological Consortium. In 2007, she was appointed by the Akwamu Traditional Council in the Eastern Region of Ghana as their Mpuntuhemaa, or Queenmother for Development. Hassell-Thompson also received the Joseph P. Gavrin Memorial Award.

Hassell-Thompson has two daughters.

Ruth Hassell-Thompson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 7, 2016.

Related Entries

Nathan Hale School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Diploma -

Montefiore Mount Vernon Hospital [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1962 to 1998]

Nurse, Counselor, Healthcare Coordinator

Y Med Infant Day Care Director [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1971 to 1978]

Nurse, Counselor, Healthcare Coordinator

Whart Development Co. [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1987 to 1993]

President and CEO

Mount Vernon City Council [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1993 to 2000]

Legislator

New York State Senate [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2000 to 201607]

Legislator

New York State House of Representatives [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2016 to ?]

Administrative

Zonta International Inc. [MEMBEROF]

[from 1975 to ?]

Member

Westchester Black Women's Political Caucus [MEMBEROF]

[from 1976 to ?]

Former Chapter President

Kiwanis [MEMBEROf]
[from 1992 to ?]

Member

The Gathering [MEMBEROf]
[from 1996 to 2001]

Founding President

For Women Only [MEMBEROf]
[from 2002 to ?]

Member

National Foundation for Women Legislators [MEMBEROf]
[from 2002 to 2016]

Regional Director

National Black Caucus of State Legislators [MEMBEROf]
[from 2004 to 2016]

Justice Committee Member