

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF

*Augusta E.  
Thomas*



TAMPA, FLORIDA

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2024



IN LOVING MEMORY OF

AUGUSTA  
THOMAS



AUGUST 14, 1933 - SEPTEMBER 27, 2024

# *a Note from the Family*

Dear Family and Friends,

Thank you for joining us today to celebrate the life of our beloved Augusta. Your presence here is a testament to the love and support that you have shown her throughout the years. We are deeply grateful for the outpouring of affection during this difficult time.

Last year, we were fortunate to gather to celebrate Augusta's 90th birthday, surrounded by those who loved her. That joyful occasion remains one of our cherished final memories, and we feel incredibly blessed to have shared it with all of you.

Thank you once again for honoring Augusta's life with us today. Your love means the world to our family.

With heartfelt gratitude,

*The Thomas Family*

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF

# *Augusta E. Thomas*



## **WELCOME**

James D. Marshall, III

## **EULOGY READING**

### **POEM READING**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 read by Noni Marshall

“A Mother’s Love” read by Jenine Marshall

“I Am Free” read by Jackie Gilley

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Veda J. Thomas Bawo

## **PRAYER**

Reverend Dr. Cynthia El-Amin

## **OPEN MIC**

We invite family and friends to share their cherished memories, stories, and reflections about Augusta.

## **LUNCH IS SERVED**

# Augusta E. Thomas

Born Augusta Louise Edwards on August 14, 1933 in Chiefland, Florida, Augusta Thomas passed away at her home in Tampa on September 27, 2024, at the age of 91. Augusta showed great promise from a young age. At 14, a local educator recognized her potential and invited her to live nearby to attend a high school with college-preparatory courses. Her academic excellence earned her a scholarship and, by the age of 16, Augusta was a freshman at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College (FAMC, now FAMU), where she graduated summa cum laude. While at FAMC, she became a proud member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, later remaining an active member of the Beta Sigma Zeta alumnae chapter as a Life Member. Augusta cherished her lifelong friendships with her sorority sisters and was especially proud of her contributions to organizing the Sir Debonaire Balls in the 1980s.

After graduating from FAMU in 1954, Augusta earned a Master's degree in Guidance Counseling from Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta). In 1977, she furthered her studies, obtaining an Ed.S. from the University of South Florida.

Augusta's professional career was as impressive as her academic journey. She worked as an adjunct and then assistant professor of Social Work at the University of South Florida, but her most recognizable role was as the Executive Director of the Tampa Urban League, where she served for 16 years.

During her tenure, she was instrumental in programs like Save-A-Youth and launching the NOW television program. Her leadership in providing technical training for Black workers enabled many to secure jobs that offered living wages, allowing them to support their families.

# Augusta E. Thomas

Though the United Way was a major donor to the Tampa Urban League, Augusta took pride in directing the Urban League's resources in a way that best suited the Black community, not blindly adhering to the wishes of funders who were often more comfortable with more moderate approaches. In the mid-1980s, she took a sabbatical to pursue a Ph.D. at Florida State University. She also attended classes at USF. Ultimately, she reached the status of what is known in academia as ABD (All But Dissertation). Unfortunately, family commitments sabotaged her efforts to complete and defend a dissertation.

Before and subsequent to her Urban League tenure, Augusta dedicated a total of 30 years to serving as a social worker and school counselor in Hillsborough County schools. Through her guidance and grant-writing abilities, she positively impacted the lives of countless students, creating special programs and securing vital resources for her community.

Augusta's personal life was equally rich. She had a passion for classical music, often treating her family to Handel's Messiah during the holidays. She was also an accomplished gourmet cook, known for her signature dishes, including chicken marsala, gumbo, and a deeply beloved extra deep dish lasagna.

Her culinary talents extended to replicating meals she savored at fine dining establishments, wowing her family with her knack for recreating the dishes at home.

# Augusta E. Thomas

Augusta was preceded in death by her parents JL Edwards and Viola Powell and her 10 siblings: Frank, Ivory, John Henry (Hakim El-Amin), James Robert, Isaiah, and William Donaldson, Luella Washington, Beatrice Tate, Addie Watts, Margaret McClendon; her father and mother-in-law Louis Thomas Sr. and Mary Elizabeth Thomas; her brothers and sisters-in-law Frankie Owens, Frances Thomas, Leslie Thomas, Jessie Thomas, Louis Thomas, Jr., Wyatt Thomas, Mary Cohen, James Walker; her stepdaughter, Gilda Thomas; and her stepson, Larry Thomas. She is survived by her husband Johnnie Thomas; her children, Veda Bawo, James Daniel Marshall, III (Marisa); her stepchildren, Mary Ann Kirton, Gerald Thomas (Earthine), and Jenifer Thomas; former sons and daughters-in-law Alieu Bawo, Jenine Marshall, Marie Martin Thomas, Ira Thomas; her brothers and sisters-in-law Girt Lee Walker, Daisy Barton, Wilson Thomas (Edith), Charlie Thomas (Elaine), Marjorie Thomas, Emma Thomas, Precious Thomas. She also leaves behind numerous grandchildren—Ericka Kirton, Dwayne Thomas, Michelle Thomas, Robert Thomas, Gerard Thomas (Danielle), Brittney Robinson, Noni Marshall, Biram Bawo, Abubakar Bawo, Papaya Marshall, and others—as well as a host of great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, Sorors and lifelong friends.

Augusta Thomas lived a full and meaningful life, marked by her love for her family, her community, and her unwavering commitment to education and service. Her legacy will live on in the countless lives she touched. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

# *When Great Trees Fall*

by Maya Angelou

When great trees fall,  
rocks on distant hills shudder,  
lions hunker down  
in tall grasses,  
and even elephants  
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall  
in forests,  
small things recoil into silence,  
their senses  
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,  
the air around us becomes  
light, rare, sterile.  
We breathe, briefly.  
Our eyes, briefly,  
see with  
a hurtful clarity.  
Our memory, suddenly  
sharpened,  
examines,  
gnaws on kind words  
unsaid,  
promised walks  
never taken.

Great souls die and  
our reality, bound to  
them, takes leave of us.  
Our souls,  
dependent upon their  
nurture,  
now shrink, wizened.  
Our minds, formed  
and informed by their  
radiance,  
fall away.

We are not so much maddened  
as reduced to the unutterable  
ignorance  
of dark, cold  
caves.

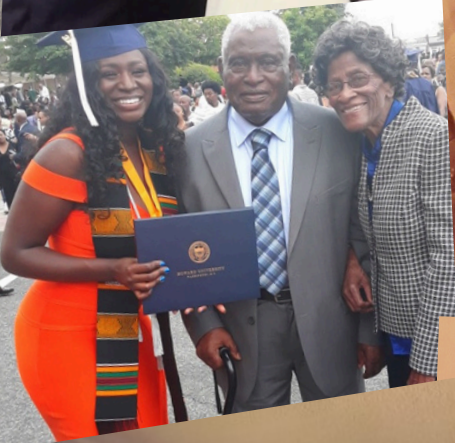
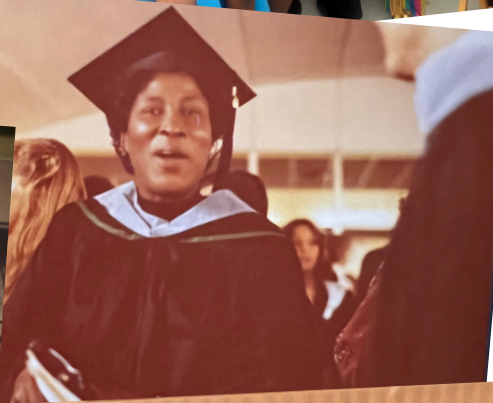
And when great souls die,  
after a period peace blooms,  
slowly and always  
irregularly. Spaces fill  
with a kind of  
soothing electric vibration.  
Our senses, restored, never  
to be the same, whisper to us.  
They existed. They existed.  
We can be. Be and be  
better. For they existed.

# *When Great Trees Fall*

Picture by Papaya Marshall  
Augusta's Youngest Granddaughter







*Wherever a beautiful  
soul has been,  
there is a trail of  
beautiful memories.*

