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## Honorary Doctorate

Ruth E. Thomas

Ruth Elma Thomas is a widely respected linguist, community activist and educator, with numerous honors and awards for her outstanding achievements in education, government and community service. Her contributions to elevating the standards of higher education in the Virgin Islands are well-known throughout the community and have left an indelible mark on public education in the Territory.

Ms. Thomas started her higher education at the City College of New York, then transferred to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she graduated with a B.A. in English in 1949. She returned to St. Thomas and began teaching at her alma mater, Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS), serving for thirty-three years until her retirement as Principal in 1982. Two study leaves earned her a M.A. in linguistics in 1957 and an Education Specialist degree in secondary school administration in 1970, both from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.



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Formal retirement did not lessen Ms. Thomas' involvement with education or service to the community. A partial listing of her post-retirement activities includes part-time teaching at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI); consulting and administrative work with the V.I. Community Action Agency; memberships with the League of Women Voters and the V.I. Partners for Health; board memberships at the University of the Virgin Islands, Foundation for the Reichhold Center for the Arts, the Girl Scouts, and the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands. In recognition of her exemplary service to UVI, Ms. Thomas was named Trustee Emeritus of the UVI Board of Trustees and an Emeritus member of the Foundation for the Reichhold Center.

In recognition of her service to her community, Ms. Thomas' work and qualities have been recognized by many groups such as CAHS reunion classes, the Business and Professional Women's Club, the Nevis Benevolent Society, and the St. Thomas-St. John Chamber of Commerce. Most notably, in 1998, legislation designated that the auditorium at CAHS be named the Ruth E. Thomas Auditorium.

Other than "educator," there is one word that people think of in reference to Ms. Thomas — it is "family." Ms. Thomas believes completely in the importance of family for everyone and for communities. She is popularly called "Cousin Ruth" by many; even by persons who are not related to her, because of her well-known advocacy of knowing and recognizing one's relatives. In 1989, she organized the Thomas-Skelton-Stout families into a resource and social group, resulting in many getting to know of or understand their relationships to each other. It has resulted in two extraordinary and very commendable projects in the form of a publication of two full-scale genealogies of the Thomas and Skelton families by Letitia Penn-Rodgers.

A special joy for Ms. Thomas has been her lifelong membership in Christchurch Methodist and contributing to its growth and development. She is a founder of the Methodist Women's Club and has been for many years a class leader, with her present class being #49. Other special joys include sports, with Ms. Thomas being an avid Yankees baseball fan and University of Michigan football fan. She also enjoys photography, gardening, common sense-speaking and writing. In recent years, Ms. Thomas has served as a regular Monday morning commentator on Radio Station WSTA's "Sound Off," which has developed a large fan base, and has published anthologies of her commentaries and poetry.

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# Fifty-Third Annual Commencement



**ST. CROIX**  
Thursday, the Eleventh of May  
Two Thousand and Seventeen  
Half after One O'clock in the Afternoon  
Campus Grounds  
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

**ST. THOMAS**  
Friday, the Twelfth of May  
Two Thousand and Seventeen  
Half after One O'clock in the Afternoon  
Sports and Fitness Center  
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

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