

## **Audrey R. Johnson-Thornton**

### **American Women's Heritage society Underground Railroad Museum**

**Audrey R. Johnson-Thornton** is truly a “*woman of distinction*”, in every sense of the word. For more than 30 years she has dedicated herself to community involvement in order to improve the lives of others. Her leadership and adeptness as a visionary are easily recognizable through the many accolades she has received throughout her illustrious career, as well as by the constant outpouring of genuine love and respect by the Philadelphia Community at large. **Audrey Johnson-Thornton’s** immeasurable abilities and strong sense of character are exceeded only by each accomplishment she continues to surpass. She has served as president, chairperson, director and an active member of countless civic, political, community and religious organizations.

As the Founder and President of the *American Women’s Heritage Society, Inc. (AWHS)*, in 1986, she initiated the restoration of the national historical landmark, *Belmont Mansion* (c.1648 located in West Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, Pa. **Mrs. Johnson-Thornton’s** skill and determination saved the Mansion from extinction in September 1986. At that time she and the members of AWHS became stewards of the Mansion. *AWHS made history by being the first African American women’s organization to achieve this distinction.* In 2006, they celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of maintaining this **Crown Jewel of Fairmount Park**, Belmont Mansion.

**Audrey Johnson-Thornton’s** visionary leadership, expressed through the AWHS mission, is dedicated to the education of the Philadelphia’s multi-cultural community in history, preservation, fine arts, literature, dance and music through exhibits and programs at the Belmont Mansion. *Mrs. Johnson-Thornton recently published a book entitled “The Crown Jewel of Fairmount Park – Belmont Mansion”* which depicts 300 years of the history of the Mansion, the Peters family, and Richard Peters involvement in the anti-slavery movement, as President of the Pennsylvania Abolitionists Society. *Through research and investigation, it has been discovered that Belmont Mansion had a direct connection to the Underground Railroad.* Construction has been completed on Belmont Mansion to establish this historic landmark into an Underground Railroad house museum which opened to the public in July 2007. This museum tells the story of the historical relevance of Belmont Mansion which was officially recognized as the First Freedom Station in Pennsylvania under the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. It has been certified by the Network to Freedom Program under the National Park Service as an Underground Railroad Museum.

**Mrs. Johnson-Thornton** has relentlessly dedicated herself to community involvement over the past 40 years. Her zealous energy and labor is an inspiration to all who come in contact with her. She is a community activist, organizer and administrator in health and human services, women’s issues, youth concerns and historical preservation on the local, national and international level. She received an appointment to the *Board of the Whitehouse Historic Society*. She was recently appointed by Governor Rendell to serve on the Preservation Pennsylvania Commission. She has served as Commissioner on the Mayor’s Commission for Women, Founder and President of Timberlake Camp and Ski Lodge, Inc. Timberlake Camp served over 15,000 underprivileged

children in a residential camping environment. As a delegate to the United Nations Decade for Women's Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, **Mrs. Johnson-Thornton** organized "**Future World Women**", a group dedicated to developing an international network with African sisters. She has served on the International Women's Committee for "We the People" Conference and the Committee on Black Women and the Constitution. This organization was formed to showcase the contributions of black women during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Philadelphia.

Her outstanding record of community service extends to African Americans United for Life, Philadelphia Chapter, where she served as Chairperson and Organizer. This organization was created to increase the number of African Americans in the National Bone Marrow Donor Registry, and designed to fight such diseases as leukemia and aplastic anemia. Within its first year 12 prospective matches were discovered.

In the year 2002, **Audrey R. Johnson-Thornton** took on the task of coordinating the **63<sup>rd</sup> National Convention of the National Association of University Women, Inc. (NAUW)** held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 31 – August 7, 2002.

She has received numerous awards including Mary McCloud Bethune Award, Tribute to Black Women Community Leaders, Zeta Point of Light Award, NAUW Outstanding Leader Award, The Tribune's 2007 Most Influential African Americans and continues to be listed in whose Who of American Women to name a few.

She is a graduate of Antioch University with a BA in Human Services and a Master's in Public Administration from Goddard University. Mrs. Johnson-Thornton has additional course work from Temple and Nova Universities.

**Mrs. Johnson-Thornton** is the wife of Bernard Thornton, Sr. She is the mother of three daughters, has four granddaughters and one great granddaughter. She and her family are communicants of St. Luke's Episcopal Church located in Germantown where they reside.

Audrey R. Johnson-Thornton is a current or past member of the following committees, associations and organizations:

*2000 African American Women*  
*African American Chamber of Commerce*  
*African American United for Life (Bone Marrow Program)*  
*All Wars Memorial Committee*  
*American Women's Heritage Society, Inc.*  
*Canterbury Society, St. Lukes Church*  
*Chapel of the Four Chaplains Trustee*  
*Coalition of African American Cultural Organizations and Latino Affiliations*  
*Fairmount Park Council for Historic Sites*  
*Member Forum of Executive Women*  
*Friends of Philadelphia Park*  
*International Women's Day Committee*  
*Lincoln University Trustees*  
*Mayor's Commission for Women*  
*Metro City YWCA Board of Trustees*  
*National Association of Media Women*  
*National Association of University Women*  
*National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Philadelphia Chapter*  
*National Council of Negro Women*  
*National Congress of Black Women*  
*National Trust for Historic Preservation*  
*Philadelphia Multi-Cultural Affairs Congress*  
*Philadelphia Urban League Guild*  
*The Philadelphia Orchestra Cultural Diversity Initiative*  
*Commissioner Preservation Pennsylvania*  
*Member Network to Freedom under the National Park Service*  
*Member Quest for Freedom Program*  
*Timberlake Camp & Ski Lodge, Inc.*  
*Top Ladies of Distinction*  
*West Philadelphia Partners for the Arts*  
*Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Beta Delta Zeta Chapter*  
*Board member of the Whitehouse Historic Society*

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