

WME AUTHOR IS FEATURED SPEAKER AT VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

DR. CLAUDIA THOMAS, AMERICA'S FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON, SPEAKS ON ACHIEVING DIVERSITY TO AUDIENCE AT VCU'S TOMPKINS-MCCAW LIBRARY FOR THE HEALTH SCIENCES

- *The National Library of Medicine's Opening Doors: Contemporary African American Academic Surgeons Traveling Exhibit Now Open at VCU* -

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (November 5, 2008) - Dr. Claudia Lynn Thomas, America's first black female orthopedic surgeon, was the featured speaker at Virginia Commonwealth University's African American Academic Surgeons exhibit on Thursday, November 6, 2008. The event was held in the Hermes A. Kontos Medical Sciences Building Auditorium. Dr. Thomas's speech was entitled, "Overcoming Life's Challenges and Championing Diversity," and focused on the importance that all facets of the American society fairly represent the gender and ethnicity of its population. A reception and book signing followed the presentation.

The Tompkins-McCaw Library at VCU is currently hosting the National Library of Medicine's Opening Doors: Contemporary African American Academic Surgeons traveling exhibit, in which Dr. Thomas is featured. The exhibit, which opened on November 1st, will be on display until January 28, 2009.

The Opening Doors exhibition was developed and produced by the National Library of Medicine and The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture. It was created to celebrate the achievements in medicine by highlighting pioneer African American surgeons and educators who exemplify excellence in their fields and believe in continuing the journey of excellence through the education and mentoring of young African Americans pursuing medical careers. Additional information on the exhibit can be found at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/aframsurgeons/index.html>.

Dr. Thomas was presented the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) 2008 Diversity Award for her "preeminent role in the black community and also in the field of orthopedics." She has been acknowledged for her role in increasing the number of minorities and females within the orthopedics profession. In addition to her speaking schedule, Dr. Thomas reaches out to schools in her local Florida area to build relationships with the students, demonstrating the opportunities available through education and perseverance.

Dr. Thomas's autobiography, *God Spare Life*, chronicles her life's journeys and struggles, including life-threatening kidney cancer and transplant surgery in the 1990s, surviving Hurricane Hugo in 1989, and life as an activist and student at Vassar in the late 1960s, among many other things. For more information on Dr. Thomas's incredible story, visit her website and blog at www.GodSpareLife.com.

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY: To schedule an interview with Dr. Thomas, American's first African American female orthopaedic surgeon and author of *God Spare Life*, please contact D-D Flannery at 585-703-6243 or dd@flannery-pr.com.