



Henry “Hank” Thomas

Henry “Hank” James Thomas is vice president of the Hayon, Inc. Group, which owns and operates three McDonald’s restaurants in the Atlanta area and president of Victoria Hospitality Properties, Inc. which developed four Marriott Hotels.

Thomas is a veteran Civil Rights foot soldier and one of thirteen original “Freedom Riders,” the heroic civil rights activists who traveled throughout the South on Greyhound buses in 1961, protesting segregated facilities at bus stations along the way. Thomas is also a Viet Nam War Purple Heart recipient.

As a Civic leader, Thomas has served on the boards of the APEX Museum, the Butler Street YMCA, Atlanta’s Boys and Girls Club, and the Atlanta Youth Academy, and other civic & service organizations in the Atlanta area since 1968, including the NBMOA. He’s a past Vice Chair of the Piney Woods School (one of two remaining African American boarding schools in the States) in Jackson, MS.

Thomas received the distinguished “Buffalo Soldier” Award from his alma mater, Howard University. He is the recipient of two honorary degrees- Doctor of Human Letters- Talladega College (AL) and Tougaloo University (MS). This year (2011), Thomas was inducted into the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame (Trumpet Foundation Award; received the Margaret Walker Center (Jackson State University, Jackson, MS) “For my People” Award; and received the Rabbi Perry Nussbaum Civil Justice Award.

Currently, Thomas serves on the Board of Trustees of Morehouse Medical School (Atlanta) and Talladega College (Talladega, AL). He has established scholarship funds at the Piney Woods Boarding School, Howard University and Morehouse School of Medicine.

Thomas is a life member of the NAACP, an active fundraiser for the UNCF and a retired member of the 100 Black Men of DeKalb County.

In addition, Thomas serves as the National Chair of the Mississippi Freedom Riders 50th Reunion Foundation which successfully hosted The Freedom Riders and the Public in Jackson, May 22-26, 2011. The Foundation endowed a Freedom Riders Scholarship at Tougaloo University (Jackson) and a Civil Rights Museum in conjunction with the City and State.

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