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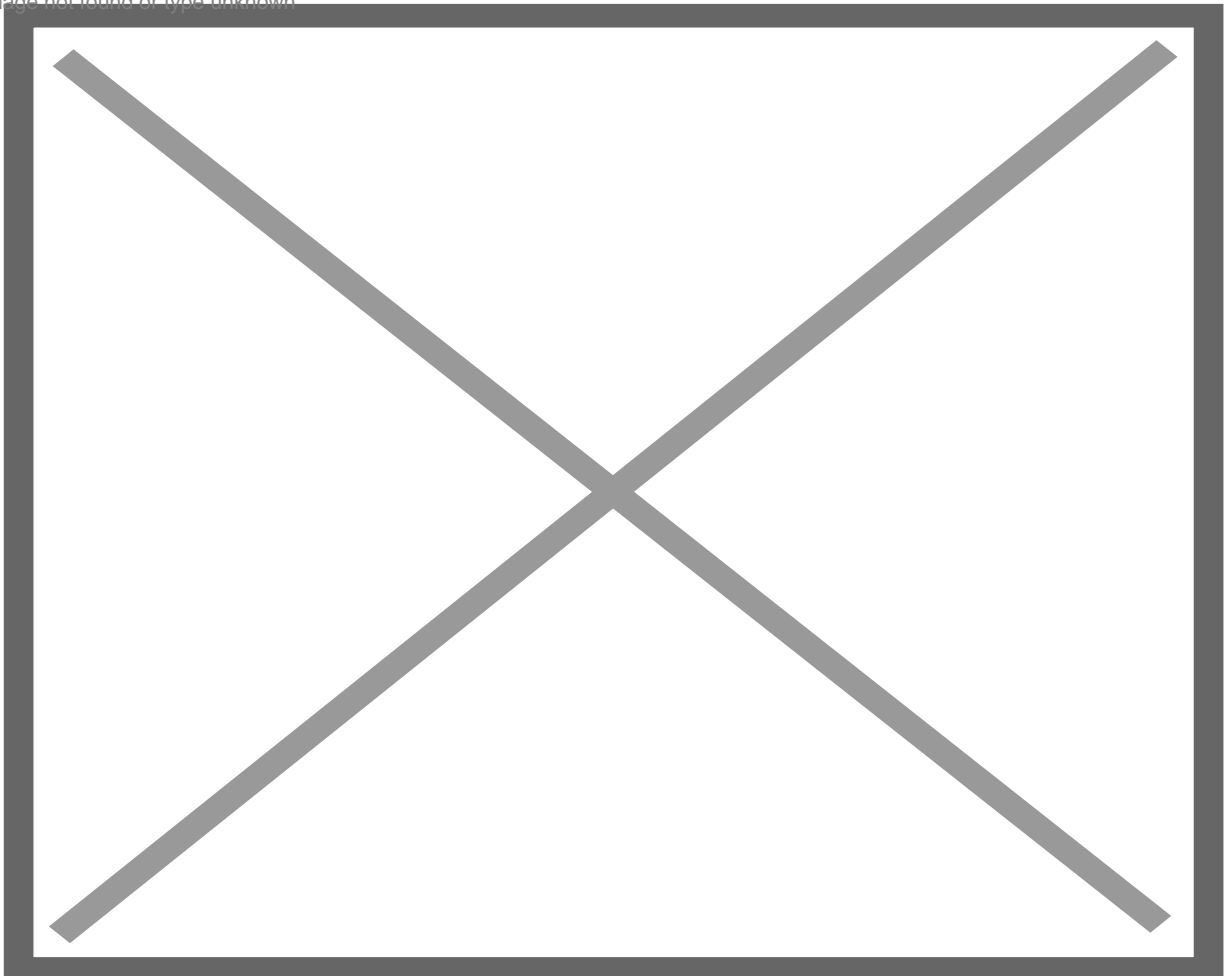
St. Thomas Native Teresa Hodge Named National Education Association's 2025 Higher Educator of the Year

Dr. Teresa M. Hodge, a CAHS graduate and daughter of Judge Vern Hodge, was honored by the NEA for her lifelong advocacy, groundbreaking work at NASA, and leadership in higher education—crediting her success to ancestral resilience and hard work.

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Teresa M. Hodge, 2025 NEA Higher Educator of the Year.

The National Education Association's Higher Educator of the Year is “an Afro Caribbean West Indian woman from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands who graduated from Charlotte Amalie High

School at 16 years old.”

That was how Teresa M. Hodge, Ph.D, described herself as she took to the podium to address delegates at the NEA's Representative Assembly on Saturday.

Ms. Hodge, daughter of Vern Hodge, the territory's Presiding Judge Emeritus of the Superior Court, shared with the nearly 7,000 delegates her father's most well-known adage among Virgin Islanders – “nothing is so complicated that it cannot be simplified by hard work.”

Not only did she transmit these words of wisdom to her fellow educators, but Ms. Hodge served as a living demonstration of how those words in action could lead to outstanding success. She outlined her academic journey from CAHS to Hampton University, where she played clarinet, became a section leader in the marching band, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in mathematics and subsequently a master's degree in applied mathematics.

Her hard work at university landed Ms. Hodge a two-year internship at the NASA Langley Research Center in Virginia, where she “created and ran computer programs for wind tunnel simulations.” Ms. Hodge noted that her segue from “programming and research into the field of teaching and learning” followed the path of black female computer scientists who preceded her through history: Dorothy Vaughn, Katherine Goble Johnson and Mary Jackson. “You may know them as the Hidden Figures,” she said.

Ms. Hodge, who has been firmly ensconced in the education sector for the past quarter-century as an associate professor of mathematics, spent much of her time on the microphone acknowledging how much of her present success is rooted in the past. She pointed out how she now “stands upon the shoulders and the graves of so, so many who came before me and many others of my generation, the ancestors who took action for me, fought for me and advocated for me at a time when basic rights were not granted to people who looked like me, speak with an accent like me, or wear their hair like me.”

Because of their sweat and sacrifice, Ms. Hodge says she is now able to “continue to act, continue to fight, and continue to advocate for the rights of our higher education professionals.”

Being named NEA Higher Educator of the Year for 2025 will now allow Ms. Hodge, the President of United Faculty of Florida, a larger platform from which she says she will “use my voice to bring awareness to and for higher education issues across this nation.”

“I will, boldly and unapologetically shine the light of truth wherever there are lies,” the professor and union leader vowed, before again returning to her history and thanking the community that shaped her into the person and educator she is today.

“May we all learn to build the same kind of resilience our ancestors did as we face our current adversities,” Ms. Hodge exhorted her fellow educators. “May we endeavor to build our power through allyship with our community partners...and may we continue to fight for the respect we deserve as professionals in our respective fields.”

In a practical demonstration of using her national platform to push for positive change, Ms. Hodge also spared a moment to advocate for the adoption of pets from shelters, “as a cat mom to seven wonderful rescues” herself. She ended her remarks by singing a few lines from Sam Cooke's iconic song. “It's been a long, a long time coming, but I know a change gon' come.”