

MIZZOU

The magazine of
the Mizzou Alumni Association

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Alumni Profile

A multi-faceted gem

As her nursing and law degrees suggest, Mavis Thompson, BSN '79, JD '90, has always had a variety of professional interests. Elected president of the National Bar Association in August 2009, the St. Louis native's career has traversed nursing, law, politics and volunteer work. But as a young girl, Thompson knew she wanted to teach.

"My family had a saying: 'Each one must teach one,' " she says. "I was always eager to pass it along, whether it was to my dog or my dolls."

After graduating from the School of Nursing (now the Sinclair School of Nursing), Thompson became a labor and delivery nurse in Washington, D.C. Following in the footsteps of her mother — a nursing assistant in the Gateway City — caring for others came naturally. Her work on Capitol Hill led to a lot of legal research, and soon she was back at Mizzou earning a law degree. Later, she graduated from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

"I get bored very easily," Thompson says. "If I don't have five or six goals to juggle at the same time, I don't feel like I'm challenging myself."

Now she is a solo practitioner, the prosecuting attorney for Berkeley, Mo., and spokesperson for the National Bar Association — the largest and oldest association of mostly black attorneys.

Thompson has been a leader throughout her career, becoming the first African-American to earn a citation of merit at the nursing school in 2004. She worked as the Missouri assistant attorney general for former attorney general and current Gov. Jay Nixon, BA '78, JD '81. She serves on several nonprofit boards, and she has received the Lloyd Gaines Award, the Judge






Mavis Thompson, BSN '79, JD '90, president of the National Bar Association, has worked in health care, law, politics and in the nonprofit sector during her career.

Theodore McMillan Award, and five times the NBA Presidential Award for outstanding service.

Thompson eventually fulfilled her ambition to teach. She taught obstetrical care, medical and surgical nursing, and critical care nursing as recent as the fall 2009 semester at the Chamberlain College of Nursing in St. Louis.

“I have a lot of folks that call me their adopted mother or aunt,” says Thompson, who was the May 2010 commencement speaker at the School of Law. “I’ve had a wonderful and blessed life.” — *Marcus Wilkins*

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Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone: 573-882-5916 |
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Last updated: Feb. 15, 2013