

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
UDC RESOLUTION 2026 - 11

SUBJECT: CONFERRAL OF HONORARY DEGREE UPON DC COMMUNITY LEADERS

WHEREAS, pursuant to D.C. Code §38-1202.06(3), the Board of Trustees has the authority to award degrees and to establish policy concerning the award of honorary degrees; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 8B DCMR §315.2, the President, upon consultation with the Chief Academic Officer and the Faculty Senate, has recommended that Dennis and Zandra Chestnut of Groundwork Anacostia River, DC, be awarded honorary degrees for their visionary environmental leadership, deep commitment to community empowerment, and lasting contributions to civic engagement and youth development in Washington, DC; and

WHEREAS, Dennis and Zandra Chestnut are lifelong residents of Ward 7, Dennis and Zandra Chestnut have worked together for decades to restore the Anacostia River, protect local green spaces, and inspire a new generation of environmental stewards; and

WHEREAS, Dennis, a master carpenter and vocational educator, is the founding executive director of Groundwork Anacostia River, DC, while Zandra has served as a vital board member, helping guide the organization's mission and growth; and

WHEREAS, together, they have built one of DC's most impactful environmental organizations, creating signature programs like the Green Team youth initiative, the Marvin Gaye Park Trail Connector, and the Bandalong litter traps, which have removed tons of debris from the Anacostia River and their shared leadership reflects a powerful model of community-based action; and

WHEREAS, beyond Groundwork, Dennis and Zandra remain active in local and regional efforts, with Dennis serving on multiple advisory councils and boards, and Zandra contributing to civic and environmental initiatives that center equity and access; and

WHEREAS, their work has earned widespread recognition, including numerous national and local awards, and has been featured in books, documentaries, and articles that highlight their role in restoring the health of the Anacostia River and transforming the natural and social landscape East of the River; and

WHEREAS, they serve as outstanding role models and a source of inspiration for the University's students, no matter their field of study; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 8B DCMR §315.3, the Board of Trustees must approve the recommendation of Dennis and Zandra Chestnut of Groundwork Anacostia River, DC by an affirmative vote of three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the members present at the meeting of the Board following the meeting at which the recommendation was made.

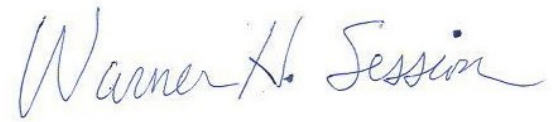
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the University of the District of Columbia now approves the recommendation of awarding the degree of Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters to Dennis and Zandra Chestnut of Groundwork Anacostia River, DC, with all the honors, privileges, and duties pertaining thereto.

Approved by the Academic & Student Affairs Committee:

March 3, 2026

Approved by the Board of Trustees:

March 10, 2026

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Warner H. Session". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Warner H. Session
Chairperson of the Board

Dennis and Zandra Chestnut
Groundwork Anacostia River, DC
Founders and Executive Directors

Dennis L. Chestnut

Dennis Chestnut is a native Washingtonian, and a lifetime resident of Ward 7. Dennis is a master carpenter and vocational educator by profession, his dedication to youth development, community improvement and civic duty has led to his involvement with many civic and conservation projects. He has a passion for conservation and the environment, and has advised many community, business and government leaders on civic ecology and civic engagement issues.

Growing up in Ward 7, Dennis became connected to the many green spaces, parks, streams, and the Anacostia River, where he learned to swim as a child. Dennis is the retired founding executive director of Groundwork Anacostia River DC. Among the many programs and projects developed by Groundwork, the Green Team program, the Green at Parkside, the Marvin Gaye Park Trail Connector, and the Bandalong litter traps stand out.

Managing four litter traps resulted in the removal of tons of trash and floatable debris from the Anacostia River, becoming one of Groundwork's signature programs.

Dennis is a board member with the East of the River Steelband, Lyles Brothers Sports Foundation, Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens where he chairs the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee.

Dennis is a Senior Fellow of the Chesapeake Region Environmental Leadership Program, an appointee to Mayor's Leadership Council for a Cleaner Anacostia River and Urban Forestry Advisory Council. Dennis is a founding member of the National Capitol Region Anacostia Watershed

Stewards Academy, and the Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee. Dennis has received numerous awards including the Greater Washington Interfaith Partnership Vision Award, the Lankford/Giles/Vaughn Minority Architect Award for Community Activism, the Ward 7 Health Alliance Community health Champion award 2015, the DC Appleseed 2019 Sustainable Living and Leading Award, the 2019 River Network River Hero, the 2020 Cox Communications Trust for Public Land Cox Conserves Heroes Award, the Chesapeake Conservancy 2020 Lifetime Champion Award, and most recently the Mayor Bowser Spirit of Service award 2022. Dennis has also appeared in numerous publications, books and video documentaries that highlight his work on restoring the health of the Anacostia River, improving the natural resources in the East of the River communities, and developing high quality youth programs.

Zandra Chestnut

Catching nature in its finest is the goal of photographer Zandra Chestnut. Taking advantage of the local parks and neighborhoods in her hometown of Washington, DC, Zandra looks for the "close up" views, and with timing and luck, captures the best of nature. This lotus blossom, titled "Urban Lotus" and hundreds more are in full bloom in July and August, along with acres of lily pads and aquatic plants courtesy of the National Park Service Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. The gardens are walking distance from her Hillbrook Community. "Mer-Max Park" captures the falling waters of the spectacular fountains at Meridian-Hill/Malcolm X Park in downtown Washington, DC at 16th and W Streets, NW.

"My photographic eye was developed early in my teens and put on the shelf during my years as a working wife/mother with children. Advancements in the digital camera world make it more affordable and simpler to capture what my creative eye sees. Now, in retirement, I utilize a Nikon D40X DSLR with interchangeable zoom lenses and enjoy the affordability, ease and simplicity of using the computer to enhance and highlight my work. I take my cameras with me on trips, whether business or pleasure. My best photo opportunities come from within the many communities of Ward 7, the greenest ward in Washington, DC."

Serving as a board member of the visionary Ward 7 Arts Collaborative, an organization with the mission of fostering awareness of, support for, and participation in the arts among community residents and visitors of all ages and to preserve and enhance the local community's cultural and entertainment heritage, Zandra is connecting her love for photography with her involvement in her community.