

## Cora P. Roberson



In 1968, Cora P Roberson was one of five candidates to seek election for a Gainesville City Commission seat. She was the first female to seek such honors.

Cora Roberson is a lifelong Gainesville resident, widow, mother of two daughters, a retired school teacher with a Bachelor's Degree from St Augustine's Florida Memorial College, and a M.ED from Tuskegee Institute.

She has led an active community life including serving as the Church Clerk, reporter and Sunday School teacher. She was the past vice president of a women's civic group, Camelliattes Club, as well as, chartering member (1951) and past president of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority's Delta Sigma Zeta chapter. It should be noted that her efforts in chartering this chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority was trailblazing, as it was the first Black Greek lettered organization in Alachua County. She was also instrumental in bringing Zeta to the University of Florida in 1974, which was the first Black Greek sorority on campus. She was also a staff member of the University of Florida 1966 Summer Institute in English and 1967 Institute of Teachers of Disadvantaged Youth.

Cora Roberson stressed more responsive government, closer city-county relations, expanded use of federal funds and development of a park near Tumblin Creek. She supported an open housing ordinance, a municipally-owned bus system, urban renewal and changing city government's personnel policies to open all areas and levels of employment to all citizens. Cora Roberson's City Commission campaign against four white male candidates included many hand lettered signs and posters, individually typed notices and letters, endorsements by the Gainesville Sun and ultimately, a run-off election against another life-long resident, Perry C McGriff, Jr.

Cora Roberson came within 819 votes of the winner, brought out 43% of the registered voters and forever changed Gainesville's political landscape; a campaign best summed up in the words of a telegram she received: "Congratulations for such a grand and courageous effort. Best wishes for your continual interest in the civic affairs of our city. You're still a winner in our book."

Cora Roberson served to break the glass ceiling for women and African Americans who followed in her footsteps in seeking elective office in Gainesville, Alachua County and all of North Central Florida.

Former City of Gainesville Mayor, Pegeen Hanrahan, proclaimed 11 October 2004 as Cora P. Roberson Day and invited all of the citizens of the city to join her in expressing appreciation for Ms. Roberson's courage and sacrifice, recognizing the depth of her contribution and acknowledging her responsible leadership and lifelong interest in the community.