

# ADA EDWARDS

Ada Edwards is a humanitarian who fights for the rights and empowerment of all people. A former Houston city council member, Edwards is also a respected spiritual leader and ordained minister, pillar in the community, highly demanded speaker, successful entrepreneur, and devoted mother of five and grandmother of 14.

Edwards was elected in 2001 to Houston City Council to represent the district she calls home (District D), and re-elected two subsequent times, thus serving the maximum three terms (six years). As a council member, she chaired three of the city's most critical committees: the Housing and Community Development Committee, the Flooding and Drainage Issues Committee and the State of Emergency HIV/AIDS Task Force. Edwards also served on six other committees while in office.



## Current Activities

As the assistant director for the City of Houston's Department of Housing and Community Development, Edwards is motivated by a commitment to develop partnerships of service within neighborhoods and organizations in Houston. To this end, Edwards works diligently to strengthen and preserve the character and history of Houston communities. Within the framework of the Houston HOPE program, Edwards is working with city departments and community organizations to revitalize Houston's neighborhoods by recapturing their historic significance utilizing structures and archived information.

More specifically, her responsibilities include providing direction and support for Houston Hope and neighborhood revitalization projects, assisting in setting CDBG priorities, providing organizational support for Super Neighborhoods, increasing affordable housing, promoting and preserving neighborhood schools, and working with non-profit organizations to improve Houston's offender reentry programs.

A widely published freelance writer and broadcast journalist with over 30 years of experience on commercial and public radio, Edwards produces and hosts a weekly news and public affairs program, *Dialogue with Ada Edwards*, on Praise 92.1 FM (KROI) on Saturdays from 7-10am. She is currently a member of the NAACP, the Union Community Fund (AFL-CIO), the American Indian Movement, and the African Community Organization. She is also affiliated with SHAPE Community Center and the Houston Area Women's Center.

A long time advocate for youth education and empowerment, Edwards serves on the boards of the Joint City County Commission on Children and Youth, William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Power (WALIPP), and the advisory board for Mothers for Clean Air. In addition, Edwards is a Senior Fellow with the Institute for Sustainable Peace.

## Past Activities

Community issues have always been a hallmark of Edwards's activities. For example, she was the founder and co-chair of the Ida Delaney/Byron Gillum Justice Committee, a grassroots community advocacy coalition that provided both legal and social-action support for citizens. Edwards was also the founder of the Houston chapter of the Free South Africa Movement, the Student Coalition against Apartheid (a statewide student coalition) and served as an organizer for the AFSCME Local 1550.

Before her stint in public office Edwards formed and coordinated a grassroots addressing Houston City Council on behalf of communities affected disproportionately by HIV/AIDS. In 1981 Edwards founded the Jua Corporation, a production distribution company of educational videos and audio tapes on African history, culture, economics and politics.

A popular lecturer and keynote speaker at numerous local, national and international events Edwards's travels have taken her to countries such as Cuba, Egypt, England, the Bahamas, Nicaragua, Angola, Ethiopia, China, Jamaica, Zimbabwe and Ghana, as well as extensive tours throughout cities in the U.S.

## **Awards**

Edwards has been the recipient of awards too numerous to chronicle. A sampling of her honors include being inducted into the Houston Hall of Fame by the Ancient Egyptian Arabic order Nobles Mystic Shrine of North and South America, and receiving the Woman of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Award from the Texas State Chapter of NOW.

Moreover, because of her tireless dedication towards the cause of eradicating HIV/AIDS, St. John's Downtown United Methodist Church in 2006 named one of their buildings and ministries in her honor—the Ada Edwards Center for Hope.

In addition, because of her stellar service to communities, individuals and institutions in need, the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church named Edwards a recipient of the Dr. Woodrow Smith Jr. National Community Service Award in 2009.

In the words of Houston's Mayor Bill White speaking on Edwards' transition from City Council to her current position, "The city of Houston has benefited tremendously from the leadership and knowledge of Ada Edwards. We want to continue to use her skills to make Houston better."

## **In Her Own Words**

"Organization, mobilization and inspiration are three words that best describe my life's work over the past twenty years. My strengths lie in my ability to effectively communicate and work with community organizers, elected officials, business and professional groups, and to envision change, develop process and implement action."