



# PARTNERS OF THE HEART

A BLACK MAN  
A WHITE SURGEON  
A BLUE BABY  
AND A **MIRACLE**



## IMPACT PROPOSAL

Presented By:

SPARK | MEDIA

[ igniting social change ]

*“I think he is the most untalked about, unappreciated, unknown giant in the African-American community. What he helped facilitate impacted people all over the world.”*

*-Dr. Levi Watkins  
Johns Hopkins University*

# VISION

An exciting initiative to honor Vivien Thomas' legacy and to introduce his inspiring story to a new generation of youth. The program will include the following components:

- Creation of a library archive at the Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy in Baltimore with curated source material from *Partners of the Heart*, including original and archival footage, photographs, books and additional research donated by Spark Media.
- Creation of an annual event at the Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy entitled, "A Celebration of Excellence." The free event, which will also be open to the general public, will include a screening of *Partners of the Heart*.
- A post-film discussion will focus on orienting the Academy's high school students to understanding the history of the school's namesake and to enriching their understanding of opportunities available in the fields of medicine and science.
- Presentation of two modest scholarships to students based on submitted essays that answer the prompt: What does Vivien T. Thomas' story say to you?

# VISION *(continued)*

- Update and re-master of the “You Be The Surgeon” Blue Baby educational video game, to be made available free-of-charge on mobile devices through the Apple and Android stores. “You Be The Surgeon” incorporates Vivien T. Thomas’ voice to guide students on how to perform the historic Blue Baby operation. For more details on this simulation activity, please go to page 11.
- Re-packaging *Partners of the Heart*, including:
  - a) Re-mastering the documentary in HD and re-releasing it on Bluray, DVD and streaming platforms for easier accessibility and viewing;
  - b) Re-release and repackaging of *Partners of the Heart* soundtrack by award-winning composer Joseph Vitarelli to make the music available on streaming platforms;
  - c) Update and repackaging of a discussion and Viewers’ guide to accompany the film.

These materials will be distributed to the Academy and other Baltimore City high schools, along with copies of Vivien T. Thomas’ autobiography.

# THE FILM



Against the backdrop of segregation, Vivien T. Thomas, a black carpenter's apprentice with a genius for surgery, and Dr. Alfred Blalock, a renowned white surgeon, dared to defy medical gospel by forging a partnership that changed the course of medical history.

The two men's work together led to one of the century's major breakthroughs – a daring heart operation that saved thousands of children afflicted with a congenital heart defect called “Blue Baby Syndrome.” With only a high school degree, Thomas became a cardiac pioneer and a teacher to two generations of America's premiere heart surgeons at a time when he himself could not become one. His journey is a compelling, often overlooked story of personal triumph over the strictures of his time.

# THE FILM *(continued)*

In 2016, *Partners of the Heart* was selected to be part of the [NEH50](#) – a list of the most important and culturally significant projects funded by the National Endowment of the Humanities in their 50 year history. The film has also screened in hundreds of community centers, universities, and institutions and inspired the Congressional Black Caucus Spouses Foundation to sponsor a scholarship for at-risk youth with an interest in careers in medicine. Vivien T. Thomas' story has already made a significant impact in communities, but there is more that can be done to reach a new generation of youth by establishing programs to preserve and extend Thomas' legacy of determination and excellence against all odds.



Narrated by Oscar-winning actor Morgan Freeman (*Million Dollar Baby*) and featuring the voice of Emmy-winning actor Courtney B. Vance (*The People v. OJ Simpson: American Crime Story*), *Partners of the Heart* was broadcast on PBS's American Experience in 2003, and again in 2005. *Partners of the Heart* is the winner of numerous awards, including the prestigious Erik Barnouw Award for Best History Documentary, awarded by the Organization of American Historians.

# TRAILER

Click on the screen to view the trailer. Or copy and paste this link into your browser: <https://vimeo.com/188361824>



# VIVIEN T. THOMAS MEDICAL ARTS ACADEMY

When the Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy opened its doors in 2004, its mission was to create a nurturing, but rigorous learning environment to improve the performance of Baltimore high school students and prepare them for college and careers in science and medicine. Inspired by Vivien T. Thomas' extraordinary story, the school adopted his name and has dedicated itself to providing opportunities to today's youth that were not available to Thomas.

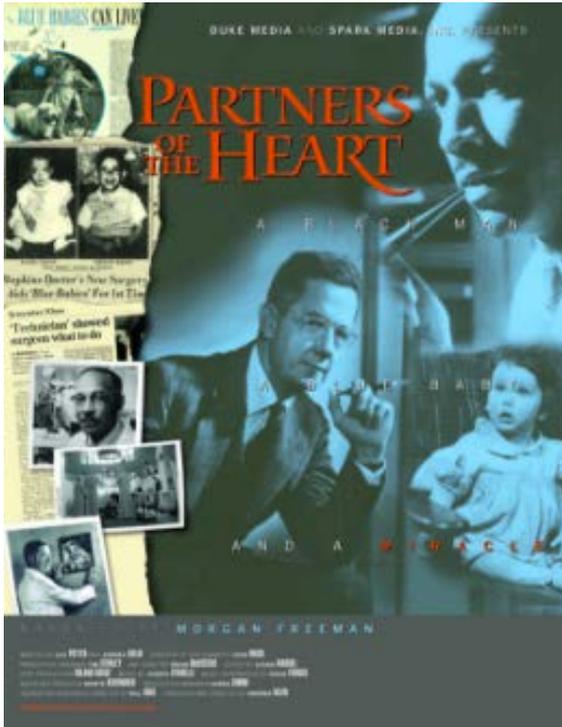


Community engagement is an important part of the Academy's mission, and they have embraced the opportunity to both inspire their students to succeed and honor their namesake by housing the Vivien T. Thomas Archive and participating in a "Celebration of Excellence" program.

*"I enthusiastically support Spark Media's proposal...this is a fitting time to collaborate with Spark Media to preserve and extend Dr. Thomas' legacy of determination and excellence against all odds – the guiding philosophy of the Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy."*

- Stephanie Farmer, Principal, Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy

# VIVIEN T. THOMAS ARCHIVE



During the production of *Partners of the Heart*, Spark Media collected rare footage of Vivien T. Thomas and Alfred Blalock and extensive archival footage and photographs from the locations featured in the film, including material from Baltimore in the 1940s and 1950s. Spark Media also filmed interviews with family members, colleagues, historians and authors, and filmed countless hours of original material throughout the city, including multiple trips to Johns Hopkins.

This rare source material will be donated to the Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy and will become the foundation for the Vivien T. Thomas Archive. With your support, we will be able to prepare and re-catalogue the material for use in the school library and provide training to Academy librarians and student docents.

Additionally, all the footage will be digitized and made available online for the general public to use. This archive will represent the most complete collection of materials on Vivien T. Thomas' life story and work, and will be of great historic importance to not only students, but also researchers and historians studying medical and/or Baltimore history.

# ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY COMMEMORATIVE EVENT

During February, we propose to hold an annual community event, an “Annual Celebration of Excellence”—focused on science and technology and held in honor of Thomas, whose brilliance, persistence and commitment to excellence led to extraordinary contributions to the world during a time when race trumped talent and defined societal roles. By celebrating his life and work, we intend to inspire the Academy’s future medical professionals and scientists to achieve beyond circumstance or expectation.

Targeting youth in Baltimore, the first Celebration will take place on February 23, 2017 at the Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy, and will include a screening of *Partners of the Heart*, followed by a discussion with director Andrea Kalin and author and long-time Baltimore reporter Fraser Smith, as well as physicians and medical students of color who will speak to the opportunities of pursuing careers in medicine and the sciences. A modest scholarship will be awarded to two students in Thomas’ name.

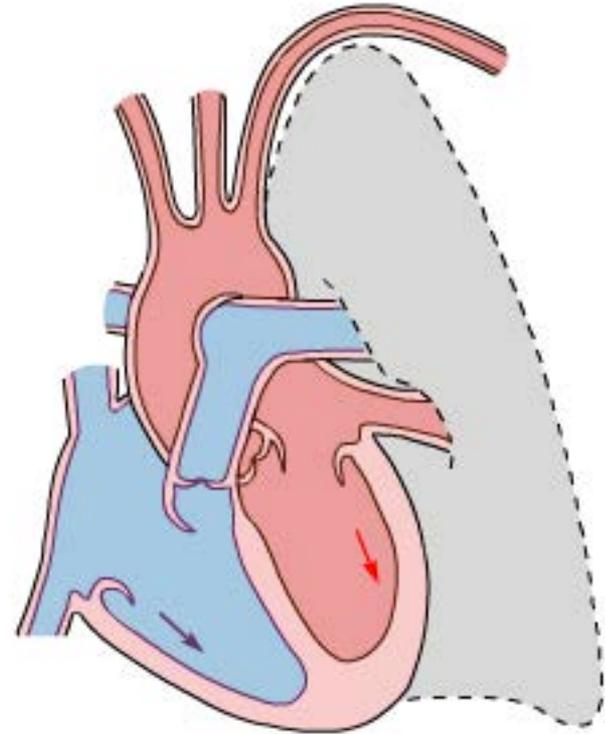


# MOBILE GAME

Educational experts agree that gaming is going to play a key role in the future of education, especially with the proliferation of mobile apps and devices. Spark Media was ahead of the curve in 2003 when we created ***You Be The Surgeon***, a flash-based game that taught students the details of the innovative operation that changed the course of medical history.

Acknowledging that gaming is a primary method to reach youth today, we aim to update ***You Be The Surgeon*** with modern graphics, and make it accessible free-of-charge for use on all mobile devices via the iTunes and Android online stores.

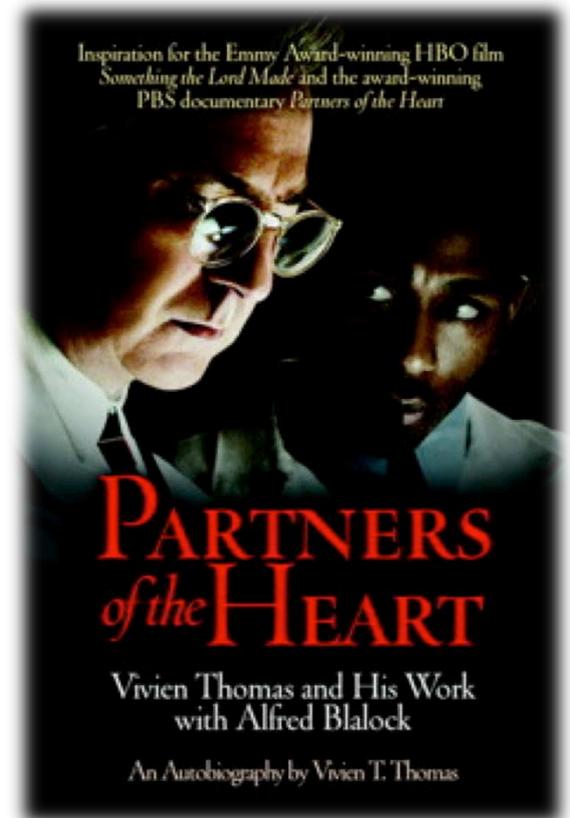
A link to the updated ***You Be The Surgeon*** will also be included in the educational guide and the project website.



# REPACKAGING

Spark Media aims to repackage its assets to reach a new generation of viewers, specifically high school students. The film will be restored and re-mastered in full HD (1080p). With updated design work and packaging, the film will be re-released on Bluray, DVD and digital formats.

Additionally, the educational viewers' guide that accompanied the film will be updated and adapted to better fit with best practices used in schools today. The film and updated educational guide will be the centerpieces of new screening kits for schools and community organizations, and will also include copies of Vivien T. Thomas' autobiography, updated posters and a copy of the re-released soundtrack CD, featuring music by Emmy-nominated composer Joseph Vitarelli (*John Adams*).



# ABOUT SPARK MEDIA

With deep roots in activist storytelling that fosters social and institutional change, Spark Media has garnered 85 prestigious film awards, several of them for *Partners of the Heart*. We do not simply tell stories; we crystallize social themes through our films and give voice to perspectives outside the mainstream. By building partnerships with stakeholders, we extend our ability to create change that will contribute to a better, healthier and more inclusive society.



For more information please click here:

[www.sparkmedia.org](http://www.sparkmedia.org)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/partners/>