

Judy Abeo Neal



Sister Judy (Abeo) Neal is a daughter, sister, aunt and wife; born and raised into a middle-class family on the west side of Detroit. Her upbringing truly shaped the woman that she is today; being the youngest of six did not diminish her “voice” from being heard. That is one of her passions – encouraging and empowering individuals who feel their voice does not warrant power of influence that it truly does when used properly to challenge injustice in any form.

Sister Abeo recently celebrated 18 years of matrimonial bliss with Nathaniel Neal, her biggest supporter, source of strength, encouragement and college sweetheart. She is a proud graduate of Cass Technical High School; holds degrees from Northwood University (Associates in Banking & Finance), University of Detroit Mercy (Bachelors in Business Administration) and is a candidate in Marygrove’s Social Justice Master’s Degree Program.

April 2013 marked 14 years of service with Ford Motor Company, where she has held various positions which requires interaction and collaboration with multiple teams both domestically and globally to ensure deliverable deadlines are met. She was recently appointed to the Ford Fund Advisory Council where she will bring the voice of the community to the table.

Sister Abeo can best be described as a servant leader, one who creates a sense of shared vision with the people they lead. Servant leaders and the people are co-creators and co-owners of that vision. This involves a multidirectional process that is primarily about listening, not speaking. Sister Abeo is motivated by any form of disenfranchisement, which occur explicitly through law, or implicitly by intimidation.

Sister Abeo fundamentally believes the continued practice of disenfranchisement can only be reversed when we collectively engage those being affected. As a social justice advocate, she feels it is her responsibility to motivate those being impacted; that participation and influence are instrumental in reversing acts of disenfranchisement. When we collectively work to rebuild our communities, social justice will increase.

Standing up from injustice isn’t just about “boot’s on the ground”, it’s also about making sure “skirts” and “suits” infiltrate institutions and are engaged in how policies are shaped to ensure the voices of those communities most impacted are not forgotten.

In addition to volunteering her time and skills with both local and national organizations to create change, sister Abeo enjoys helping folks to understand their voting power and rights. Most recently she has dedicated numerous hours educating the un-insured about the Affordable Health Care Act - Obamacare.

Sister Abeo has always been comfortable taking charge and directing others to accomplish a given task. She is definitely a grassroots person - a get your hands dirty leader who doesn’t mind adding her “sweat equity” in order to get the job done, she is a servant leader. Servant leaders focus on meeting the needs of those that they lead, developing others to bring out the best in them, coaching others and encouraging their self-expression. This is an accurate definition of Sister Judy (Abeo) Neal.