



VANESSA K PIERRE

Garden Coach & Educator, Food Security Advocate & Edible Activist

About

Vanessa Pierre is a garden coach, educator, and food activist in the DC Metro area. When she is not performing her functions of being a mother to three beautiful children and working full time, she runs an organization whose mission is to build strong, self sufficient, empowered and healthy minority communities through food & gardening education, demonstration, & advocacy. Her brand, Homestead Hustle & Healing, is an online platform with local community initiatives, whose mission is to end food insecurity among minority populations. In addition to her work through Homestead Hustle & Healing, she focuses her work to end food insecurity in the priority zip codes located in East Montgomery County, Maryland.

Relevant Volunteer Work

- Gardening Subcommittee Member, Montgomery County Food Council
- Rooting DC - 2021 - Tech Volunteer
- PG County Master Gardener Association - Master Gardener Intern
- Takoma Park Farmers Market - Market Volunteer (Calverts Gift Farm)
- Homestead Hustle & Healing - Founder & Executive Director

Community Associations/Affiliations

- Client Leadership Council Member, Capital Area Food Bank
- Co-Chair, Parent & Youth Engagement Committee, East County
- Board Member, Food Security Advisory Board, Montgomery County Food Council
- Board Member, Crossroad Community Food Network
- Founder & Executive Director, Homestead Hustle & Healing
- Ambassador, Community Advocacy Institute, Montgomery County Community Action Agency

Relevant Education

- Community Advocacy Institute - October 2019 - April 2020
- Beginning Farmer Training Program - January 2021 - Current
- Master Gardener Training- Prince Georges County - October 2020 - December 2020

Advocacy Efforts

- MoCo Grows - Organize and facilitate a three-day free gardening education conference to combat food insecurity in Montgomery County
<https://www.homesteadhustlehealing.com/mocogrows>
- Written Testimonies
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1f-6zbUQpacO9TSSR_PGQYzxmgMGqeZQN?usp=sharing
- Budget Hearing Testimony 2020 re Farmers Markets
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2020/20200416/testimony/20200416-testimony27.pdf>
- HB101 Heat and Eat Bill Video Testimony
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELjagn56RK8> @ 3:08:54
- Budget Hearing Written Testimony in Support of Additional Funding for Community Gardens
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-1XUT9Pj9MYwI6EqLHcgaqRWcL9VIZE2/view?usp=sharing>

Relevant Articles and Features:

- Capital Area Food Bank
<https://www.capitalareafoodbank.org/2020/10/22/voices-of-advocacy-vanessa-pierre/>
- NPR (DCist)
<https://www.npr.org/local/305/2020/11/13/934608568/why-one-maryland-resident-wants-communities-of-color-to-try-homesteading>
- Washington Gardener
<https://issuu.com/washingtongardener/docs/jan2021-washingtongardener-issuu>
- Washington Post
https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/national/as-dcs-hunger-crisis-deepens-volunteers-step-up/2020/11/20/86dfd670-2174-4adf-859d-e2e8d154528a_video.html
- 1000 Women Strong - #Unsung Heros Feature
<https://www.facebook.com/1KWomenStrong/photos/a.142903320927185/211029454114571/?type=3>

Social Links

- Instagram: <https://instagram.com/homesteadhustlehealing>
- Facebook <https://facebook.com/homesteadhustlehealing>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/homesteadtoheal>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/vkpierre>

Vanessa Pierre - Biography

Vanessa Pierre is a garden coach, educator, and food activist in the DC Metro area. When she is not performing her functions as being a single mother to three beautiful children and working full time, she runs an organization whose mission is to build strong, self-sufficient, empowered, and healthy minority communities through food & gardening education, demonstration, & advocacy.

Her brand, Homestead Hustle & Healing, is an online platform with local community initiatives, whose mission is to end food insecurity among minority populations. She is a member of the Food Security Advisory Board of her local Food Council, as well as a Client Leadership Councilmember for the Capital Area Food Bank.

She hasn't always lived in the Capital Region. Vanessa comes from a Caribbean community in South Florida. Growing up, she spent most summers with her family in Borobridge, a little-known town in Jamaica where she says "farming is wealth." Her grandparents had a lot of land and animals, and everything was fresh. They often fed members of the community who visited the house.

After graduation from the Community Advocacy Institute in April 2020, Vanessa testified in front of the local legislature in support of a Farmers Market that would bring healthy, culturally appropriate foods to her underserved community of White Oak.

"Fresh and healthy foods are no longer an option. Chips are cheaper than apples," Pierre said in her testimony. "[The Council's] work through the 2017 food security plan to address access and availability is commendable, and that forward-thinking is part of the reason I love it here. But we can do more."

Taking her own advice to do more, she began offering free bi-weekly workshops for beginning gardeners, live Q&As called "Master Gardener Mondays", as well as hosting her panel series, 3H Table Talk, to showcase strategies to grow in and out of the garden.

In February 2021, she decided to show her support once again in support of Maryland Legislation, the Heat & Eat Bill to put more money into the hands of SNAP benefit recipients as well as energy assistance.

Vanessa is very much of the mind that change must come from action and legislation.

"For me, change is two-pronged. Boots on the ground and heels behind the podium.

Her current initiatives include bringing a Farmers Market to her neighborhood with culturally appropriate foods, developing a gardening school curriculum for Title I elementary schools in her area, and continuing to increase community knowledge of the benefits of growing your own food.