



BESSIE MAE JACKSON

MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE SERVICE AWARD

Bessie Mae Jackson is a lifelong educator. A life member of ASALH, she served as national secretary and is the New York state director and former president of the Bronx Branch. She received a B.S. degree in early childhood education in 1966 and a master's degree in curriculum development in 1976 from Columbia University Teachers College. While in college, she founded the NYC Day Care Workers Union Local 1707. After graduation, she joined the NYC Board of Education as a first-grade teacher. Ms. Jackson retired in 1988 but never really stopped working. She took on the roles of activist, founder of the African American History and Culture Center in the Bronx, host of the *Smiling Through Tears* talk show about racial injustice, playwright, poet, and advocate. In 2020 at age 94, after 16 years of advocacy to create a new NYS holiday to honor those who fought to end slavery, she witnessed the enactment of Abolition Commemoration Day.