Thomas-EL Talks About:

- His Book, *I Choose to Stay*
- and Upcoming Disney Movie
- How to Improve Corporate and Community Partnerships
- Why He Owes His Life to Teachers and Principals
- How He Motivated His Students to Reach for an MBA Instead of the NBA

www.ichoosetostay.com
PHILADELPHIA, PA — Loyalty. Perseverance. Leadership. These virtues, and the dedication of being driven by a purpose larger than the self, are the themes of *I Choose To Stay*, a memoir written by award winning principal, chess coach and mentor Salome Thomas-EL. The book, published just last year, has garnered the attention of Walt Disney Pictures, which has agreed to distribute a movie based on Thomas-EL’s life story. A humble yet dedicated educator, he revived the chess team of an inner-city Philadelphia middle school and led them to victory at the national championships.

“Right from the beginning, I worked on a single principle,” says Thomas-EL. “These students would never know they couldn’t be successful — I would inspire them to believe they could win.” At the time, Thomas-EL had no idea how well that simple philosophy would pay off. *I Choose to Stay* will be excerpted in the upcoming book, *Chicken Soup for the African American Soul*, and also received the 2004 Silver Angel Award in the Print category from Excellence in Media (EIM).

EIM is a California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of quality family oriented programming. It has been described as “the greatest, unique and caring media outreach in the world today.” The Excellence in Media award places *I Choose To Stay*, a best-seller, among the ranks of other awardees, Primetime ABC News New York, Joan of Arcadia, and National Geographic Explorer.

*I Choose To Stay* (Kensington — March 2003) is based on a choice Thomas-EL made in November 1997 to turn down a promotion and remain at Vaux Middle School, despite a $25,000 raise and the power to influence a greater number of students, if he transferred to another school. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger was so impressed by Thomas-EL and his students during a visit — one girl on the team defeated the Governor in a chess match — that he awarded the school a $20,000 grant. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a strong supporter, wrote the foreword to *I Choose To Stay*.

The Disney movie will be produced and directed by brothers Greg and Gavin O’Connor, along with Tim Chambers at Solaris Entertainment. They were most recently teamed together for the hit movie “Miracle,” an inspirational story about the 1980 Gold Medal winning USA Olympic Hockey team.
Salome Thomas-EL

A Teacher Fights for America’s Inner City Schools

Salome Thomas-EL was born and raised in the inner city of Philadelphia and has been a teacher in the Philadelphia School District since 1987. He received national acclaim as a teacher and chess coach at Vaux Middle School, where his students have gone on to win world recognition as Eight-Time National Chess Champions.

Salome Thomas-EL, a graduate of East Stroudsburg University and currently a doctoral student, has studied in Cambridge and London, England. He was honored with the Marcus A. Foster Award as the outstanding School District Administrator in Philadelphia and received the University of Pennsylvania’s distinguished Martin Luther King Award. Salome has appeared in Reader’s Digest and Black Enterprise Magazine, and has been a guest on “The O’Reilly Factor,” C-SPAN Book TV, The Tavis Smiley Show, CNN and NPR Radio.

Inspiring and warmly human, Salome Thomas-EL is a true hero. His lecture, “I Choose to Stay: A Teacher Fights for America’s Inner City Schools,” is moving and full of hope, and proves beyond a doubt that a commitment to teaching and mentoring in our schools can result in excellence and success for those children most of society has abandoned.

Currently, Salome is Principal of John F. Reynolds Elementary School in Philadelphia. As part of his commitment to opening the world up to show his students that there are other ways to be than those to which they have been exposed, Thomas-EL takes them to visit colleges and then attends their graduations. Reflecting on how it feels to see a young person he has mentored walk down the aisle toward a real future instead of to an early grave, Thomas-EL has said: “I’ve been to too many funerals; I need to go to more graduations.”

“This is a story about courage, determination, compassion, love and the ultimate fight . . . Salome has touched many people and will affect many more in generations to come.”

— From the Foreword by Arnold Schwarzenegger
What They’re Saying

“This is a powerful story about what an inspirational teacher can do to open new horizons for economically disadvantaged young people.”

William H. Gray, III, President, United Negro College Fund

“Grounded in his inner city roots . . . and the children he educates.”

Black Enterprise

“. . . an inspiring read, one that would uplift and rejuvenate the most battle-worn teacher.”

NEA Today

“. . . an intensely moving story of loyalty and courage”

Author Jonathan Kozol

“Thomas-EL doesn’t believe in limits and uses chess to empower young minds”

Investors Business Daily

“One cool teacher makes all the right moves and turns his kids into champions.”

Reader’s Digest

“The simple power of one man’s unflagging dedication and against-all-odds success.”

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Ask Any of Them

Just a few satisfied clients

- America’s Foundation for Chess
- Charlotte – Mecklenberg Schools
- Chicago Public Schools
- CITF
- Claflin University
- Coca Cola Company
- Depauw University
- Drexel University
- East Stroudsburg University
- Educational Testing Service
- Essence Magazine Festival
- Hampton University
- Kansas City Schools
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- Lee County, Florida Schools
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- NCTM
- Nichols College
- North Carolina Central University
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