

## **Dennis L. Chestnut**

### **Biography**

Dennis Chestnut is a native of Washingtonian, DC, a lifetime resident of Ward 7. He is a master carpenter and vocational educator by profession, the carpentry internship instructor at the Academy of Construction and Design at IDEA Public Charter High School. However, his dedication to youth development, community improvement and civic duty has led to his involvement with many civic and conservation projects, and enriching experiences.

Growing up in the far-northeast section of Washington, DC, Dennis became connected to the many green spaces, parks, streams, and the Anacostia River, where he learned to swim as a child. He became a lover of the outdoors, has a passion for conservation and the environment, and has advised many community, business and government leaders on civic ecology and civic engagement issues.

In 2007, Dennis founded Groundwork Anacostia River DC, and led the organization as its Executive Director until his retirement in 2017. One of Groundwork's signature program is managing its Bandalong Litter Trap program, which has removed (literally) tons of trash and debris from the Anacostia River.

Dennis is a board member of the East of the River Steel Band, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, United for a Healthy Anacostia River Coalition, the National Capitol Region Anacostia Watershed Stewards Academy and the Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee. He is a Senior Fellow of the Chesapeake Region Environmental Leadership Program, and an appointee to Washington, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser's Leadership Council for a Cleaner Anacostia River and the Urban Forestry Advisory Council.

Dennis has received numerous awards, including the Greater Washington Interfaith Partnership Vision Award, the Lankford/Giles/Vaughn Minority Architect Award for Community Activism, the DC Appleseed Sustainable Living and Leading Award, and most recently the 2019 River Network River Hero.

He has also appeared in numerous publications and video documentaries that highlight his work on restoring the health of the Anacostia River, improving the East of the River communities, and developing high quality youth programs.

While Ward 7 and areas east of the Anacostia River have been described as the “*Greenest*” Ward and section of Washington, D.C. outside of the National Mall, they also face some of the most environmentally challenging conditions in the city. This is the reason why Dennis has committed himself to restoring the health of the Anacostia River, improving the natural resources located in this community and throughout Washington, D.C., and connecting the residents, schools, businesses, civic and community organizations to the many outdoor resources and natural environment through tangible on-the-ground projects that *Change Places and Change Lives*.