



Tania Thomas, MD, by Jennifer Chaparro

8.28.2020

## These Renderings of Minority Women in Healthcare Will Make Your Jaw Drop

By Amy Preddy Hughes

“It brought tears to my eyes” are the words **Tania Thomas, MD**, Associate Professor, used when she first saw her portrait for the **Women of Color on the Front Lines** project.

The image is part of an art experiment pioneered by her friend Sarah Rowan, MD, of Denver Public Health in Colorado. Thomas and Rowan completed their residencies together at Yale and both went on to specialize in infectious disease.

When COVID-19 hit, Rowan noticed many tributes to front-line healthcare workers, but the imagery lacked faces of minority women. She was inspired to combine her passions for health and art to create Women of Color on the Front Lines. She asked women across the country to submit photos of themselves, which she then turned into vibrant illustrations, bringing recognition to the underrepresented group leading the fight against COVID-19.

“There was an outpouring of photos and support and recognition,” Thomas says. “I am not sure Sarah ever would have anticipated the flood of photos that she received. I think within a week, she had gotten over 100. I thought, ‘She has her hands full. There’s no possible way she can find time among all her other responsibilities, including being a public-health physician, to be able to draw all these beautiful portraits.’”

That was months ago. Now, the project boasts nearly 200 works of art in every media imaginable – watercolor, cross stitch, pastels, and more – crafted by a small army of artists that Rowan recruited to help.



wocfrontlines  
183 followers

[View Profile](#)



[View More on Instagram](#)



22 likes

wocfrontlines

Dr. Rana Awdish by Dr. Ekta Shah

Add a comment...



wocfrontlines  
183 followers

[View Profile](#)



[View More on Instagram](#)





Thomas describes the works of art: "You see some women that are bold and strong and ready to go, and you see others that have a glimmer of hope in their eyes. And then, you see other photos that show the worry, the fatigue, or show the family side of things. There is this professional and human tension of wanting to be on the front lines, and at the same time, the need to protect my family and stay safe."

The realistic rendering of Thomas tells a story for her, too. Every detail has a meaning. Thomas's image was created by **Jennifer Chaparro**, an artist in Denver known for her 3-D street chalk.



“It was amazing to see it created so meticulously,” Thomas says. “And it hit me pretty hard to see everything that it symbolized. Our world has changed so drastically in the past four to five months, and this is the new norm. There’s the goggles and the mask, but I’m also wearing this UVA Infectious Disease T-shirt. I wouldn’t typically wear a T-shirt to work. I would normally wear business professional attire, but in the COVID era, I have shifted a lot more towards wearing scrubs all the time, changing at work, and not bringing my clothes home.”

**“THERE IS THIS PROFESSIONAL AND HUMAN TENSION OF WANTING TO BE ON THE FRONT LINES, AND AT THE SAME TIME, THE NEED TO PROTECT MY FAMILY AND STAY SAFE.”**

**TANIA THOMAS, MD**

Thomas specializes in tuberculosis, so when the pandemic hit, her day-to-day duties completely shifted, but she was equipped and eager to help. She worked the COVID clinic in the Battle Building, partnered with Employee Health to support team members, helped develop UVA’s **convalescent plasma trial**, and assisted with the **community COVID testing events**.

Eventually, Thomas will shift her focus back to tuberculosis, and she anticipates some of the progress made with that disease will have been lost due to resources being funneled into COVID.

For now, Thomas is taking things day-by-day, balancing her responsibilities as a healthcare professional with her duties as mom and dealing with similar stresses that we are all feeling right now. In all the chaos, she is hopeful that the Women of Color on the Front Lines project will let those who are working endlessly behind the scenes know that they are seen.

“We’re all in this together, and we can do this,” Thomas says.

View the other pieces of art, and keep up with the Women of Color on the Front Lines project on their [website](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).

---

Comments (0)



---

## **In case you missed it**



4.7.2020

**A Message of Encouragement in Sidewalk Chalk: ‘Thank You Health Heroes’**



4.8.2020

**Chalk Art: A Fun Way to Thank Your Colleagues**

## Latest News



**UVA COVID Tracker Will Track Key Virus Metrics, Updated Daily**



**'More than Band-Aids for Boo-Boos': Why Every Virginia School Needs an RN**



**Strokes in Babies: Here's How the Body Rushes to the Rescue**



**UVA-Developed Artificial Pancreas Effective for Children Ages 6-13, Study Finds**



*Connect is an internal news site for UVA Health team members.*

[CONTACT US](#)

[SUBMIT A STORY](#)

KNOWLEDGELINK

UVA HEALTH BRAND



© 2020 BY THE RECTOR AND VISITORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.