

Denise Matthews-Turner



Denise Matthews-Turner (she/her) is a Black feminist organizer and teacher. Denise is Co-Executive Director of City Life/Vida Urbana, a grassroots community organization committed to fighting for racial, social and economic justice and gender equality; and where community leaders build collective power to effect systemic change.

Denise grew up in a small southern New Jersey town in an intergenerational household with her mother, grandparents, aunts, uncle, cousin. It's where her sense of community was formed and where she was nurtured by a host of Black women; early teachers, neighbors, aunties, her mother and grandmother. It's where she was encouraged to explore and to question; and to stand up for herself; where her granny told her; "you're gonna learn something every day".

Denise moved to Boston in the early 70's to attend Boston University, graduating in 1978. Denise's 45 years working in Boston communities includes the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, ABCD, YouthBuild USA and various employment and youth services programs. It is Denise's current work at City Life/Vida Urbana that drives her. Denise marks 2018 as the year of her movement origin story. Invited by her Director to attend a Black Feminist Organizing School at the Highlander Center in Tennessee, she made the connection to that host of Black women who nurtured her; and committed to supporting the leadership of the Black women at City Life. Denise facilitates City Life's Black Feminist Praxis Circle that was formed in 2019 as part of that commitment.

Denise is a fabric artist, avid sports fan; loves music and dancing; and shares her passions with friends and her husband of 32 years.