



Catherine Meeks

Teacher. Leader. Liberator. Midwife to the soul. Yours is a journey of the pursuit of truth, of telling stories across cultures, and answering a call to Beloved Community.

You earned a Bachelor of Arts in speech education from Pepperdine University, a Masters Degree in social work from Clark Atlanta University, and a Ph.D from Emory University.

You spent twenty-five years teaching African American Studies at Mercer University, where you served as Assistant Dean of Women, Instructor, and Assistant Professor. While at Mercer, the Mayor of Macon, Georgia, recruited you to lead the Youth Violence Prevention Task Force. That work brought you to the attention of Wesleyan College where you became the Clara Carter Acree Distinguished Professor of Socio-Cultural Studies, until you 'retired' in 2008.

The impactful journey of your thirty-four year academic career walked alongside an inspirational commitment to social justice and community. You were the Founding Director of the Lane Center for Community Engagement and Service at Wesleyan College, and the Director of Aunt Maggie's Kitchen Table, a family resource center located in a public housing facility, and winner of the Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Award for Community and Campus Partnership. You are the organizer of 'Standing on Their Shoulders: A Celebration of the Wisdom of African American Women,' a nine year project which identified and honored one hundred African American Women and published a book highlighting their lives. You are the founding member of the Center for Racial Understanding, and have organized city wide marches against violence, major community wellness fairs, and events such as weight loss programs for indigent women and food and clothing drives.

In 2017, after serving on the Anti-Racism Commission and the Commission on Spiritual Growth for the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, you became yet again a founding director, this time for one of America's most critical resources for racial reconciliation: the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing. You were integral to our work as we convened conversations around race among students and faculty at Seminary of the Southwest as we imagined our way forward in building the Beloved Community.

Your awards and recognitions are too numerous to fully list, and they span broadly across the disciplines of education, social justice, and public service. You have received the NAACP Earl Shiholster Freedom Fund Award, the W.E.B. DuBois Award for Distinguished Community Service, the Georgia Sociologist of the Year, and have been recognized as an outstanding educator within every community you have taught.

In 2022, you were named a Presidential Award Lifetime Achievement Honoree and awarded the President Joseph R. Biden Lifetime Achievement Award and the Presidential Volunteer Service Award medal.

The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church, says of you: "Dr. Meeks combines the penetrating insight and truth telling of a John the Baptist with the compassionate concern and pastoral reach of a good shepherd. In so doing she embodies what Dr. King in a sermon saw in Jesus of Nazareth, 'a tough mind and a tender heart.'"

In recognition of your transformational leadership, indefatigable vision, exceptional compassion, and steadfast faith in the promise of Beloved Community, the Board of Trustees of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest presents to you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.