

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr.

PERSON

Forbes, James A.

Alternative Names: Reverend Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr.;

Life Dates: September 6, 1935-

Place of Birth: Burgaw, North Carolina, USA

Residence: New York, NY

Work: New York, NY

Occupations: Minister

Biographical Note

Reverend Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr. was born on September 6, 1935 in Burgaw, North Carolina to James A. Forbes, Sr. and Mabel Clemons Forbes. Forbes was raised as one of eight children in Raleigh, North

Carolina. He received his B.S. degree in chemistry from Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1957. At Union Theological Seminary in the New York City, Forbes wrote his master's thesis on Pentecostalism and the Renewal of the Church, and obtained his M.Div. degree in 1962. Forbes earned his clinical pastoral education certificate from the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond in 1968. Forbes earned his D.Min. degree from Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in 1975.

Following his graduate studies at Union Theological Seminary, Forbes returned to Raleigh, North Carolina, where he worked briefly in his father's church, Providence United Holy Church. In 1962, Forbes became a student intern at Olin Binkly Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and went on to pastor Holy Trinity Church in Wilmington, North Carolina; St. Paul's Holy Church in Roxboro, North Carolina; and St. John's United Holy Church of America in Richmond, Virginia. After earning his Clinical Pastoral Education Certificate from the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, Forbes worked as campus minister for Virginia Union University in Richmond. In 1973, Forbes became a director of education for Interfaith Metropolitan Theological Education Inc. in Washington, D.C. In 1976, Forbes joined the faculty at Union Theological Seminary as its Brown and Sockman Associate Professor of Preaching. Forbes became the Union Theological Seminary's first Joe R. Engle Professor of Preaching in 1985. In 1986, Forbes gave the Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale University, informing his 1989 publication, *The Holy Spirit & Preaching*. Union Theological Seminary named Forbes the first Harry Emerson Fosdick Adjunct Professor of Preaching in 1989, the same year he was installed as fifth senior minister of Riverside Church in New York City. His installment rendered him the first African American senior minister of one of the largest multicultural and interdenominational congregations in the United States. Following his address at the 2004 Democratic

National Convention in Boston, Massachusetts, Forbes led an interfaith rally and demonstration at Riverside Church as part of the Church's Mobilization 2004 campaign. In 2007, he formed the Healing of the Nations Foundation, a non-partisan, non-profit, national ministry of healing and spiritual revitalization. That same year, Forbes retired as senior minister emeritus of Riverside Church. He authored *Whose Gospel?: A Concise Guide to Progressive Protestantism* in 2009.

Forbes was the recipient of fourteen honorary degrees, including D.D. degrees from Princeton University, Trinity College, Colgate University, and University of Richmond. In 1996, Newsweek recognized Forbes as one of the twelve "most effective preachers" in the English-speaking world.

Forbes and his wife, Bettye Forbes, have one son, James A. Forbes III.

Reverend Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 21, 2016.

Related Entries

Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

D MIn. degree

Union Theological Seminary [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M Div. degree

Howard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S. degree

Washington High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

**Virginia Commonwealth University School of
Medicine** [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Certificate in Clinical Pastoral Education

Olin T. Binkly Memorial Baptist Church [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Assistant pastor

St. John's United Holy Church [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

pastor

Virginia Union University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

campus minister

Union Theological Seminary [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

Drum Major Institute [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

national minister

Kittrell College [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1956 to 1957]

Professor

Riverside Church [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1989 to ?]

senior minister

Student Interracial Ministry [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Richmond Urban League [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

President

Interfaith Metropolitan Education, Inc. [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]