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

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

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** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]

D MIn. degree

**Union Theological Seminary** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]

M Div. degree

**Howard University** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S. degree

**Washington High School** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]
Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine [Student Of] [from ? to ?]

Certificate in Clinical Pastoral Education

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

Assistant pastor

St. John’s United Holy Church [Employee Of] [from ? to ?]

Pastor

Virginia Union University [Employee Of] [from ? to ?]

Campus minister

Union Theological Seminary [Employee Of] [from ? to ?]

Professor

Drum Major Institute [Employee Of] [from ? to ?]

National minister

Kittrell College [Employee Of] [from 1956 to 1957]

Professor

Riverside Church [Employee Of] [from 1989 to ?]

Senior minister

Student Interracial Ministry [Member Of] [from ? to ?]

Member
Richmond Urban League [MEMBER OF]
[from ? to ?]

President

Interfaith Metropolitan Education, Inc. [MEMBER OF]
[from ? to ?]