



# Holmes, Barbara Ann

SEP 9, 1943 - OCT 15, 2024



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# Holmes, Barbara Ann

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**T**he world has lost a profound spiritual leader, scholar, advocate for justice, wife, mother, sister, and friend with the passing of Dr. Barbara Ann Holmes, who transitioned peacefully on October 15, 2024. Her life's work, a blend of activism, theology, and contemplative spirituality, leaves an enduring legacy that has touched countless lives across disciplines.

Barbara came into the world on September 9, 1943, in East Orange, New Jersey, to her parents Thomas and Mildred Holmes. As a young child, Barbara lived in New Jersey until the family moved to Connecticut where she attended junior and senior high school and was a member of Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church (UCC). Barbara graduated from the University of Connecticut where she obtained the first of many degrees. While there she was a cheerleader for the UCONN teams and attacked the role with true vigor and energy!! She briefly worked as a teacher in New Haven and Washington, D.C. Her interest and talent in acting enabled her to travel and explore the world as an actress in a Leonard Bernstein play in Europe and on stages in different venues in Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, Georgia.

Her academic journey was as diverse as her life's work. She earned a Ph.D in Ethics from Vanderbilt University, a Masters in Divinity from Columbia Theological Seminary, and a JD from Mercer University's Walter F. George School of Law. These achievements shaped her career as President of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota) and her time as Vice President of Academic Affairs at Memphis Theological Seminary.

Always ready to listen and support, Barbara would tell a funny story to make you laugh and smile. It is how most will remember her. Creative in all things Arts, Barbara painted as a young woman, always finding ways to show her creative passions. In one of her very early paintings, an image of two babies, one black, one white, each expressing a curiosity about the other, showed her thinking on equality and justice for everyone. She challenged traditional boundaries of religion, mysticism, and spirituality, creating space for more inclusive, cosmic views of existence, emphasizing the



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importance of justice as integral to spiritual life. Multi-talented, Barbara also tried her hand at tap dancing, macrame and wood carving, all with sincere enthusiasm! That was Barbara ... seeing life through her unique lens and sharing her perspective through art. Her sons, Jason and Marcus, inherited her love of the Arts. Jason is inspired by music and Marcus' talents are in cinematography.

Barbara also enjoyed the quiet life with her husband George, lake fishing on a nice day, spending time in their mountain cabin, writing, teaching, and listening to gospel music. Barbara embraced life with a combustion of energy, and she was blessed with a variety of talents not often found in one individual. "Babs" or "Babsie" is how she was known to those closest to her. She gave as good as she got and created her own original personal names for others to convey her deepest love for them.

A private collector of unique African Masks and Art, Dr. "B" as she was known in academic circles, had a library of books covering a wide range of topics. An accomplished professor and theologian, lawyer and counselor, her life's work left an indelible mark on the academic and faith communities, as she dedicated her career to exploring the intersections of African American spirituality, mysticism, and social justice. Dr. Holmes was known for her deep and thoughtful approach to spirituality in the Black Church, focusing on how contemplative practices could inspire both individual healing and collective action. Her books, such as *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church and Race* and *the Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently*, are considered groundbreaking works that examined spirituality through the lens of race, cosmology, and community. Through her teachings and writings, she encouraged others to rethink the traditional boundaries of religion and to recognize the power of contemplative practices in times of personal and communal crisis.

Barbara was not just an academic. She was also a committed activist and spiritual guide, working with homeless missions, HIV/AIDS support groups, and international ministries in Kenya and Japan. She committed her life to Christ at a Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW) convention in August 1977. Her spiritual journey took her to Latter Rains Apostolic Church (Dallas, TX) and churches in Miami, Florida. Ordained in both the United Church of Christ (UCC) and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), she embodied the idea that spirituality must be lived out in service to others. Her compassion and dedication to justice were constants throughout her life.



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Dr. Holmes' work has been widely recognized for its ability to bridge the gap between contemplation and action. She believed that moments of crisis often serve as catalysts for spiritual growth and collective resilience. Her teachings continue to inspire those seeking to navigate the complexities of modern life with a sense of hope, justice, and purpose.

Dr. Barbara Ann Holmes leaves to cherish her memory her beloved husband George Ford, her loving sons Jason Stokes and Marcus Stokes (Kathy), her siblings, Eileen Clay (Covington, GA), Susan Winfield (Washington, DC), Mildred Williams (Silver Spring, MD), Thomas Holmes (Atlanta, GA), and a host of nieces and nephews, family and friends.

She will be remembered for her visionary leadership, her commitment to justice, and her ability to inspire both quiet reflection and transformative action. Dr. Barbara A. Holmes' legacy will live on through her writings, her students, and the countless lives she touched throughout her extraordinary life. May her soul rest in peace, and may her teachings continue to guide us through the unfolding mysteries of life. She will be missed deeply by her family and friends and we will keep her in our hearts forever ... until we meet again.

<https://www.tributeslides.com/tributes/show/87755SCNF488HWWJ>





# Events

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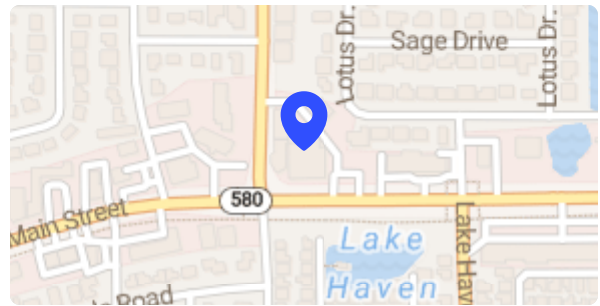
## Service

 **Tuesday**, October 29, 2024

 11:00 AM ET

 **Moss Feaster Funeral Home and Cremation Services - Dunedin**

1320 Main Street, Dunedin FL 34698





## Tribute Wall

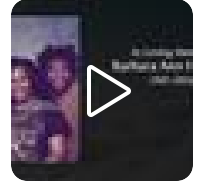
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**Moss Feaster Funeral Home & Cremation Services** shared a **Video**.

November 10 at 9:24 AM



**Anonymous** sent a Joyful Memory to the Holmes family.

October 25 at 12:13 PM



**Anonymous** sent a Beautiful Dreams to the Holmes family.

October 24 at 10:11 AM





## Media

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**Moss Feaster Funeral Home & Cremation Services** shared a **Video**.

November 10 at 9:24 AM





# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Barbara by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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