

Composing a Life: Women Changing Church and Society

An Oral History Project
Sponsored by Women in
Theology and Ministry Program



CANDLER
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Composing a Life is an oral history project with the goal of engaging students, alumnae/i, and community leaders in the stories of women who have the potential to inspire and guide, to reveal the complex interplay of religion and culture in human life, to uncover realities of Christian tradition as embodied in diverse lives and contexts, and to raise theological and existential questions for further reflection.

In particular, the project seeks to:

- 1) preserve the stories of women who have built strong lives through their moral authority;
- 2) reflect on the challenges and contributions of women in the social fabric of history;
- 3) reflect on women's wisdom—meanings in their lives for the larger human community;
- 4) teach through oral history, by gathering and interpreting women's lives in classes, in events, and in the archives of Pitts Theology Library at Candler School of Theology.

The women pictured here are among those whose stories have been recorded through the Oral History Project. Their lives are reflective of many others who have made significant contributions to church and society and who serve as mentors, friends, and role models to others.

Women's **Stories**—building women's lore for the present generation and women's archives for future generations



"God's purpose in caring for you is so that God may use you, may trust you, may change the world with you."

—Leontine Kelly, Bishop, United Methodist Church

"The well-being of the women of my mother's generation and older depended on their quilt making. . . . This was holy work." —Roberta Bondi, Professor Emerita of Church History, Candler School of Theology



"As a child, I loved to read mythic tales and the Hebrew Bible. . . . Concerning the Bible, the Rabbis said, 'Turn it over, turn it over, for everything is in it.'" —Carol Newsom, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Old Testament, Candler School of Theology

"I went to Sunday school once in my life. There was a church opening in our neighborhood and one of my friends said, 'If we go to that church, we will get cookies.' And I thought, 'Free cookies, okay!'" —Soomee Kim, Student Life and Campus Ministry, Claremont School of Theology



Challenges and Contributions to the social fabric



"We must be partners with the Holy One in our own liberation and in the ultimate redemption of the world. . . . The world is a profoundly broken place." —Leila Gal Berner, Rabbi, Kol Ami, The Northern Virginia Reconstructionist Community

"I was a minister's wife who had already, in an early appointment, gotten my husband moved for my civil rights work." —Rose Thomason, Teacher, lay activist, author



"Teetering between life-affirming oration and death-dealing silence, black women have faced charges, challenges, critiques, chastisement, and confirmation of carrying the word of life to those who have selective hearing." —Teresa Fry Brown, Associate Professor of Homiletics, Candler School of Theology

"We can't get along because we fear each other. We've got to give that fear up. . . . We have to ask the God who saves us to remove this fear in our lives."—Karen Green 97T, Vice

President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Muhlenberg College



"What do we intend to leave as a legacy for posterity? This calls for a turning around—a conversion toward the humanity of the other. . . ."—Mercy Amba

Oduyoye, Professor of Theology, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana; Former Deputy General Secretary, World Council of Churches

"I am very excited about the Interreligious Council and the work we have been able to do in building interreligious respect and understanding."—Susan

Henry Crowe 76T, Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life, Emory University



"We see ourselves [in the local church] as a light to the community. We had an attempted suicide that we were able to help avert. Our newest ministry is our afterschool program and our fatherhood initiative."—Carolyn Abrams 92T,

Pastor, H. A. Brown Memorial United Methodist Church, Mississippi

Women's Wisdom

—meanings for the larger human community

"If you're going to address oppression at any level, then you have to address oppression on all levels."—Ayanna Abi-Kyles 01T

05T, Program Associate, Women in Theology and Ministry, Candler School of Theology

"I think Jesus gives us some help . . . enabling us to see the need to move from servant to friend."—

Jacqueline Grant, Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Systematic Theology, Interdenominational Theological Center



"Keeping Sabbath reminds us that we are not in control of our own lives. God is."—

Bridgette Young, Associate Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life, Emory University



Teaching Through Oral History



"I can identify the first times when I knew the Church was calling forth gifts from me that I didn't know were mine to give. While a teenager, the Church asked me to do things that were grown-up kinds of things."—Laura

Mendenhall, President, Columbia Theological Seminary

"The grace of God gives you your life. . . . Nothing is ever hopeless, ever."—Sani

Armstrong, Associate Council Director, California-Pacific Annual Conference, UMC



"In one of my classes, I asked, 'What is one of the most important issues we face in our community today?' The answer came back, 'Our youth and our families.' Well, what shall we do about it?"—Anne

Stratty Wimberly, Professor of Christian Education and Church Music, Interdenominational Theological Center

The Gathering of stories continues . . .



"Never underestimate the battles won and lost in the previous generation."—Nan Self,

Pastor and Former Secretariat of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, United Methodist Church

For upcoming events, women's stories, resources, and further details, see: <http://www.candler.emory.edu/OHP>

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