

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Henry Mitchell

PERSON

Mitchell, Henry H.

**Alternative Names:** Reverend Henry Mitchell;

**Life Dates:** September 10, 1919-January 15, 2022

**Place of Birth:** Columbus, Ohio, USA

**Residence:** Ewing Township, GA

**Occupations:** Religious Leader;

## Biographical Note

Religious leader and religion professor Reverend Dr. Henry Mitchell was born on September 10, 1919, in Columbus, Ohio, to Bertha and Orlando Mitchell. He received his B.A. degree from Lincoln University, in Oxford, Pennsylvania, his B.D. and M.Div. degrees from Union Theological Seminary, in New York, New York, his M.A. degree from California State University, Fresno, and his Th.D. degree from Claremont School of Theology, in Claremont, California.

Mitchell served from 1945-1959 as a denominational staff person in Northern California and then as pastor of Second Baptist Church in Fresno, California, and Cavalry Baptist Church in Santa Monica, California. In 1969, he became the first Martin Luther King Jr. Professor of Black Church Studies at the consortium of Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Bexley Hall, and Crozer Theological Seminary. He also served as professor of religion and Pan-African Studies at California State University, Northridge and academic dean and professor of history and homiletics at the Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. In 1988, Mitchell and his wife, the late Reverend Dr. Ella Pearson Mitchell, began team teaching as visiting professors of homiletics at the Interdenominational Theological Center. They became well known for their team teaching and preaching style, where they would speak to their audience in dialogue with each other. They also mentored students in the Doctor of Ministry program at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

Mitchell served as the founding director of the Ecumenical Center for Black Church Studies, in Los Angeles, and wrote a book on the history of the African American church called Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years , Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art , a history of African American preaching styles, Fire in The Well , a collections of sermons Mitchell and his wife have

given, and Together For Good: Lessons From Fifty-Five Years of Marriage , Mitchell and his wife's joint autobiography. He has also co-authored the book Preaching for Black Self-Esteem .

Mitchell was awarded an honorary D.D. degree by the American Baptist Seminary of the West and an honorary L.H.D. degree by Lincoln University. He and his wife also were the recipients of the 2008 Union Theological Seminary Trailblazer Award.

Reverend Dr. Henry Mitchell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 16, 2010.

Mitchell passed away on January 15, 2022, at the age of 102.

## Related Entries

**East High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Eastwood School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**East Pilgrim Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**The Ohio State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**California State University, Fresno** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Claremont School of Theology** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

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

**Lincoln University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**North Carolina Central University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Dean of the Chapel**

**Northern California Baptist Convention** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Field secretary**

**Second Baptist Church** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Pastor**

**Calvary Baptist Church** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Pastor**

**Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1969 to 1974]

**Professor**

**Ecumenical Center for Black Church Studies** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1976 to 1982]

**Founder, President, Dean, Instructor**

**Proctor School of Theology** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1982 to 1987]

**Academic Dean and Tenured Professor**

**Interdenominational Theological Center** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1988 to 2000]

**Rochester, New York School Board** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Chairman**

**Richmond Theology Consortium** [MEMBEROf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Chair**

**Fresno Council of Churches** [MEMBEROf]  
[from 1959 to 1966]

**President**

**Northern California Baptist Convention** [MEMBEROf]  
[from 1960 to 1969]

**Executive Board Member, President**

**Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission** [MEMBEROf]  
[from 1963 to 1965]

**Chairman**