

A:JPAS Tribute: Bertha Maxwell-Roddey: Founder, the National Council for Black Studies



Bertha Maxwell-Roddey was born June 10, 1930 in Seneca, South Carolina. Roddey graduated from Oconee County Training School and received degrees from several colleges: a Bachelors of Arts from Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina, a Master of Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and a doctorate from Union Graduate School (now the Union Institute & University) in Cincinnati, Ohio. She worked in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system in North Carolina as a teacher and principal and was the first African American to serve as an administrator in a predominately white school. She became the first chair of the Afro-American and African Studies Department at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 1960. She started the first Head Start program in Charlotte, NC; co-founded the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts and Culture; founded and served as the first chair of the National Council for

Black Studies [first housed at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte organized by the Black Student Union] (NCBS); and co-founded the Theodore and Bertha M. Roddey Foundation. She has served on more than 50 boards and commissions and received numerous awards for her dedication. Her most cherished awards include the Thurgood Marshall Award of Education, Order of the Long Leaf Pine, Elizabeth Catlett Delta Legacy “Women Making a Difference,” and Eagle Fly Free Award from the Institute for the Advancement of Multicultural & Minority Medicine. Actively involved in the Gamma Lambda Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Maxwell-Roddey served as Charlotte Alumnae Chapter President, National First Vice President, and the 20th National President. She worked with Habitat for Humanity, leading the process of building more than 350 houses in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. She retired from academics as the Frank Porter Graham Professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She is married to Theodore Roddey. She is the mother of one daughter, Tawanna Proctor and has four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. In 2008, the Africana Studies Department at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte inaugurated the annual Maxwell-Roddey Lectures to honor Dr. Maxwell-Roddey’s pioneering contributions to the development of Africana Studies as an academic discipline at University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

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