

DR. M. SHAWN COPELAND
(Biographical Summary)

M. Shawn Copeland is Professor *Emerita* of Systematic Theology, the Department of Theology and the Program in African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS) at Boston College.

Professor Copeland has taught theology at St. Norbert College, Yale University Divinity School, Marquette University, and as a summer-adjunct at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies, Xavier University. In addition, she has held visiting positions at Harvard Divinity School, Boston College, and Emory University's Candler School of Theology. She is recognized as one of the most important influences in North America in drawing attention to issues surrounding African American Catholics.

M. Shawn Copeland was born in Detroit, Michigan, and attended parochial elementary and secondary schools in the city. She graduated from Madonna College (now Madonna University) with a B. A. in English and received the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) in Systematic Theology from Boston College (Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts) where she wrote a dissertation on Bernard Lonergan's idea of the human good. At Boston College, Copeland was a University Fellow in the Department of Theology, a Danforth Graduate Fellow, a Fellow of The Fund for Theological Education (FTE), and a Bradley Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Politics and Religion.

She has served as Convener of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS), an interdisciplinary learned association of Black Catholic scholars. She was the first African American and first African American woman to serve as president of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), the primary professional association of more than 1,000 Catholic theologians in the United States and Canada. She has served the American Academy of Religion (AAR) as Co-Chair of the Program Unit on Women and Religion, a member of the Steering Committees of the Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Group as well as the Black Theology Group, and a member of the Grant Committee on Research Proposals.

Professor Copeland's **research** interests run in three intersecting lines: The first focuses on shifts in theological understanding of the human person or theological anthropology and accords particular attention to body, gender, and race; suffering, solidarity, and the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. The second line of inquiry interrogates the African American Catholic experience, and aims to thematize an African American Catholic theology. Here her research attends to theological method and history, religious and cultural Africanisms in black vernacular experience, spirituality and the process of traditioning. The third line of research takes up issues pertinent to political or praxis-based theologies and analyzes the religious, cultural, and social (i.e., political, economic, and technological) conditions under which human persons seek to realize their humanity.

Professor Copeland has **lectured** extensively in the United States not only in seminaries, colleges, and universities, but also in parish settings. In **academic venues**, she aims to introduce listeners to African American historical, cultural, and intellectual experience and to bring that experience into critical dialogue with various aspects of

Christianity; to inculcate deep regard and solidarity for the ‘neighbor’ and to foster respect and appreciation for human difference. In **local church settings**, she seeks to support congregants in their growth in a life of Christian discipleship, to clarify justice as a constitutive dimension of the Gospel message, and to underscore the significance of advocacy for social justice in bringing about the common good. In addition, she has **lectured** internationally in Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Nigeria, and South Africa.

An award winning writer, Professor Copeland is the author of *Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience* (Orbis Books, 2018), *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Fortress Press, 2010), and *The Subversive Power of Love: The Vision of Henriette Delille* (Paulist Press 2009). She is the principal editor of *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience* (Orbis Books 2009), editor (with Laurie Cassidy) of *Desire, Darkness, and Hope: Theology in a Time of Impasse, Engaging the Thought of Constance FitzGerald, OCD* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2021), (with Jeremy Wilkins) of *Grace and Friendship: Theological Essays in Honor of Fred Lawrence* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2016). With Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has co-edited two volumes of the international theological journal *Concilium*: *Violence Against Women* (1/1994) and *Feminist Theologies in Different Contexts* (1996/1) which have been translated into Dutch, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

She has authored 135 articles, reviews, and book chapters and has served on several editorial boards including the international theological journal *Concilium* (1991-1996), the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (1991-2004), *The Ecumenist* (1999-2007), and *Horizons, A Journal of Theology* (2012-2016).

M. Shawn Copeland is an elected member of the Society for the Study of Black Religion (SSBR), the Society for Values in Higher Education (SVHE), and the American Theological Society. She is the recipient of six (6) honorary degrees (Emmanuel College, Boston, Massachusetts; Holy Names College, Oakland, California; The Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, Berkeley, California; Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, Illinois; Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, Missouri; and Fairfield University, Fairfield, Connecticut).

Copeland has been recognized for outstanding contributions to theology and to Catholic intellectual life by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) with the Monika Hellwig Award (2021), by the Catholic Theological Society of America with the John Courtney Murray Award (2018), by the University of Dayton with the Marianist Award (2017), by the Women’s Consultation in Constructive Theology with the Ann O’Hara Graff Memorial Award (2014), by the Black Religious Scholars Group as a ‘Womanist Legend’ (2012), by Mount St. Joseph College, Cincinnati, Ohio with the Elizabeth Seton Award (2011), by the Black Religious Scholars Group of the American Academy of Religion with the Distinguished Scholar Award (2009), by Barry University with the Yves Congar Award for Excellence in Theology (2000).

In 2018, two of Copeland’s former graduate students, Dr. Robert J. Rivera and Dr. Michele Saracino edited a *festschrift* celebrating her contributions to theology and theological education. *Enfleshing Theology: Embodiment, Discipleship, and Politics in the Work of M. Shawn Copeland* is composed of essays by seventeen (17) international scholars exploring Copeland’s theological work.