

## THEODORE CARTER DELANEY JR.



**T**heodore Carter DeLaney Jr. — teacher, historian, mentor, exemplar — your personal story will forever be etched in the long history of Washington and Lee University. Yours is a story of courage and character, of principle and perseverance, of commitment and civility, and we honor you as the embodiment of the spirit and soul of this institution.

Born and raised in the segregated South, mere footsteps away from this very spot, you experienced Lexington in the Jim Crow era and endured the many indignities of that time. You attended Lexington's all-black public school, Lylburn Downing, from second through twelfth grade.

After high school, you studied for a year in a Franciscan monastery, returning home after determining that was not to be your calling. You first joined the Washington and Lee community as a 19-year-old when you got a job on the campus as a custodian. That was three years before the first African American students were enrolled as students. Professors in the Biology Department quickly recognized your potential and hired you as their lab technician. For the next two decades, you were an integral member of the campus community, indispensable to faculty and staff and admired by students.

Encouraged by members of the faculty, you took advantage of the university's benefit that permitted staff to take a free class per term and began pursuing your bachelor's degree at a rate of one course per year. You eventually quit your job to become a full-time W&L student at the age of 40 and graduated cum laude in 1985 with a major in history.

You then taught at The Asheville School for several years, before earning your Ph.D. in American history from the College of William and Mary. After a short stint teaching history at the State University of New York at Geneseo, you returned to Lexington and your alma mater in 1995 as an assistant professor of history.

During 24 years on the Washington and Lee faculty, your impact has been extraordinary. Your mentorship of students is legendary. You have devoted countless hours to counseling, advising and encouraging students, whether they were members of one of your classes or not. You introduced new courses in the histories of the disadvantaged, disenfranchised and oppressed — from your distinctive Spring Term courses that traced the route of the Freedom Riders to a course on gay and lesbian history.

You co-founded the Africana Studies Program, served as head of the History Department, and held the Redenbaugh Term Professorship. You have been instrumental in recent efforts to help the institution better understand its own history. Not only did you design and teach a course on the history of the university, but you also served on both the Commission on Institutional History and Community and the Working Group on the History of African Americans at Washington and Lee. Your research into John Chavis, the first African American known to receive a college education in the United States, was instrumental in bringing his remarkable story to the fore at Washington and Lee, his alma mater.

Ted DeLaney — colleague, friend, neighbor, role model — your colleagues have declared that you represent the very essence of all that we value in higher education, and this university has been far better for your presence in our midst these past 56 years. We are honored to bestow upon you the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.

*May 2019*