



Richard (Meri Ka Ra) Byrd



The Dedication and Commitment of Meri Ka Ra and Erica Byrd



Rev. Dr. Richard (Meri Ka Ra) Byrd

When Rev. Richard and Erica Byrd came to the Christ Unity Center in Los Angeles in 1989, they soon learned that “[all around us was turmoil](#)” and they knew they were “[totally dependent on Spirit](#)” for answers. They could have grown the church just enough so that it could move west, to a more suburban, middle-class area. But that isn't what they did.

Richard and Erica Byrd received a vision and made a dedication and commitment to “[grow where you are planted](#).” When they committed and dedicated themselves to helping challenged people, Spirit began to send people into their life that revealed answers and provided tools to address the turmoil. By chance Richard Byrd heard on the radio about an African scholar who was to speak in Los Angeles the following week. After attending his lecture, Richard Byrd was able to meld “[an African perspective to my spiritual \(Unity\) understanding](#).”

Immediately, three blessings began to flow into the world:

First, they “[found tools that could help my people](#).” Meri Ka Ra read to me [two readings on the Law of Mind Action](#). These readings are pure metaphysical truth, without a word of Unity, but in a form particularly digestable to the African soul. As a board member of the Unity Urban

Ministerial School, I often find myself asking “What is Urban Ministry today?” We need look no further than to the [KRST Unity Center of AfRaKan Spiritual Science](#).

Second, they found ways to bring healing to Unity's legacy of racism. The 1993 program “[The African American in Unity](#)” framed the problem. Despite best intentions, we still struggle to find a way forward. I am pleased that this center remains part of our Unity

denomination and that it retains *Unity* as part of its name. As Meri Ka Ra says, “[there is a great opportunity for Unity to take the leadership role through embracing the rest of the truth.](#)”

Finally, they brought the spirituality of Charles Fillmore forward, perhaps full circle, back to the Egyptian spirituality from which Charles first caught sight of Truth. Eric Butterworth recognized the same spiritual pathway as being the foundation for Hebrew and Christian theology ([clip 10](#)). But it has been Richard and Erica Byrd who have “brought Unity home” (my words) to a pathway free from cultural limitation, accessible to everyone.

I recently interviewed Rev. Byrd at the church at 78th and S Western Avenue in Los Angeles. Our 90 minute interview, plus much more information, is here, freely available to anyone who wants to receive some of these three blessings. If what you find here resonates with you, know that the KRST Center of AfRaKan Spiritual Science views itself as a university. It has a rich pool of teachers. 4-5 classes are held each week, by different teachers, addressing concerns ranging from everyday issues like diet and finances, to transforming consciousness and manifesting one's divinity. The blessings of KRST Unity Center are open to all persons.

Today, the day this profile is published, is December 7 2017, exactly 125 years since [Charles and Myrtle Fillmore made their Dedication and Covenant](#). I have never visited or known of any Unity church where the dedication to truth and transformation is as great as I found at KRST Unity Center of AfRaKan Spiritual Science. The story of Richard and Erica Byrd, and the evolution of Christ Unity Center to KRST Unity Center of AfRaKan Spiritual Science, shows how Spirit responds when Dedication and Commitment is made. As he says in the interview, “[Your commitment is what is going to save your life.](#)”

“I will never be a minister”



Rev. KB Byrd, AME Minister, Grandfather

The predominant figure in Richard Byrd's life is his grandfather, KB Byrd. The elder Rev. Byrd was a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, arguably the most prestigious and independent African-American mainline Protestant denomination. My interview of Rev. Byrd started and ended with reference to his grandfather.

In the early segments, Rev. Byrd shares [the virtues he learned by the age of five from his grandfather](#) and his appreciation for the [resourcefulness of the elder Rev. Byrd's work](#) as a builder and achiever. Eventually Richard resolved to “[never be a minister](#)” because he didn't want to be ruled by a bishop. From this, we can see that Meri Ka Ra would eventually have a long career leading an independent ministry.

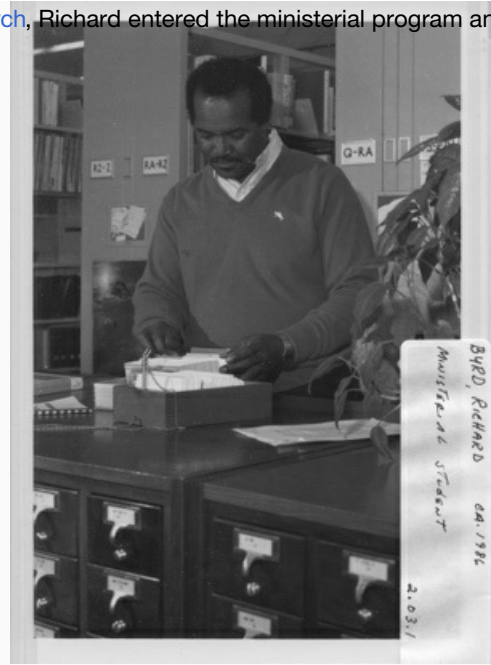
Our interview concludes with [Meri Ka Ra's reflection about his ministry](#) and about what his grandfather would have thought of his ministry. When he was 14 years old, Richard Byrd, like Solomon, asked for wisdom. That has led to the gift of the practice of truth, for which he is grateful.

“To be for one what grandfather had been for many”

As a young adult, Richard rejected the orthodox teachings of the AME church but continued to attend because of family ties. Eventually he came across Edgar Cayce's biography and from that book and by attending small “cult study groups,” he began “[to find some answers.](#)”

He soon found answers in another “cult” teaching—Unity—where he attended and taught classes with his friend [Wentworth Jenkins](#). He overcame his resolution to never be a minister by visiting several of the churches his grandfather had served and his desire to “[be for one what his grandfather had been for many.](#)”

Despite his children telling him that they did not feel accepted in their Unity church, Richard entered the ministerial program and was eventually ordained in 1987 (2nd row, 5th from right).



As a ministerial student

“What Am I? Who Am I?”



In his final year of ministerial training, Richard wanted to combine his natural gift of singing with ministry. That intention was not accepted by his instructor. He was not sure he would graduate and become ordained. But Richard found himself and his dream defended by several people for whom he is grateful—especially Sadye Thomas, Dorothy Pierson and Ruth Mosley.

Although his dream of pursuing music in Chicago did not happen, Richard Byrd was the winner of the “New Faces in Jazz” category in the 1984 Entertainer Awards, presented in The International Jazz Hall of Fame.

“What Am I?” © Richard Byrd: Aquarian Concepts Co.

Toward the end of our interview, Rev. Byrd reflected on his musical gift. He recited the words of “What Am I?” and sang a bit of Barbara Streisand's “Here's to Life”.

“Totally dependent on Spirit”

After graduation, Rev. Byrd moved to New Zealand, where for 14 months he co-ministered a church that had been without a minister for several years. He left, somewhat discouraged, feeling that he had gone there to escape racism. He also reflected on “coming on too heavy handed” as a minister, and left with the awareness that he “didn't know what he was doing.”

He soon accepted a call to become the minister of Christ Unity Center of Los Angeles. He approached that ministry with a different

awareness—that he was totally dependent on Spirit in order to be successful.

Shortly after beginning his ministry there, he returned to Kansas City to marry Erica, the joy of his life and his partner in the long ministry at what would become KRST Unity Center for AfRaKan Spiritual Science.



Richard and Erica Byrd married 1989

“You better be in for a calling”



Ma'at and Unity Wings—corner of 78th and S. Western Avenue

The photograph you see above, Unity Wings with *Ma'at* in the center, is from an impression found on the concrete sidewalk at the corner of 78th and S. Western Avenue, where the church is located. The same impression is found inside one of the church buildings, where dining and social gatherings occur.

You can hear Meri Ka Ra reflect on what this means in several segments—[Two readings on the Law of Mind Action](#), [The order of service at KRST](#), [Ma'at](#), [The value of spiritual principles](#) and [the particular example of the Sphinx](#) he provides.

But what this means for his congregants and for us in Unity is, as stated above, a threefold blessing—a message of empowerment for a knocked-down people, a message of healing from racism and a message of enlightened consciousness based on ancient wisdom that Charles Fillmore desired but never took full circle.

Meri Ka Ra, Rev. Erica and their team have been learning and applying African spiritual principles for over 25 years. Their knowledge runs deep and their commitment to the teaching is absolute. And, as stated above, KRST Unity Center of AfRaKan Spiritual Science views itself as a university. Would you like to learn more? If so, call them and ask for a remote learning opportunity. However, beware. As he said “[you better be in for a calling, because your commitment is what is going to save your life.](#)”

“Ashé!”

You can watch the KRST Unity Center service online each Sunday at <https://www.krstunitycenter.org/watch-us-live> - Live at 10:30 Pacific time or shortly after as a replay. A link to last Sunday's service, Dec 3 2017, is live now. The replay doesn't come close to conveying the energy I felt in the room, but it will give you a taste.

The service I attended was 3 hours and 30 minutes. The music and drumming was captivating. Much of the service was open to participation by congregants—and the congregants took the opportunity—to read the affirmations in English, Spanish, and in three classical African languages (this Sunday's affirmation was “Spiritual understanding is always available through my Christ self”), to share

<https://www.truthunity.net/people/richard-byrd>



Rev. Erica Byrd gives meditation at KRST Unity Center of AfRaKan Spiritual Science

how the Ten Virtues were playing out in their lives, to sing, to dance, to drum, to welcome and to holler back [Ashé!](#). Rev. Erica's Meditation brought order and harmony and established a consciousness for The Empowerment Message by Met-TiMaat SMST SA-T BESET, a very talented speaker, dancer and teacher. She was electric!

If you live nearby or find yourself flying in to LAX, know that the church is only a 20 minute ride from the airport, and [Roscoe's House of Chicken and Waffles](#) in Inglewood is right on the way ;)

A center based on principle and virtue

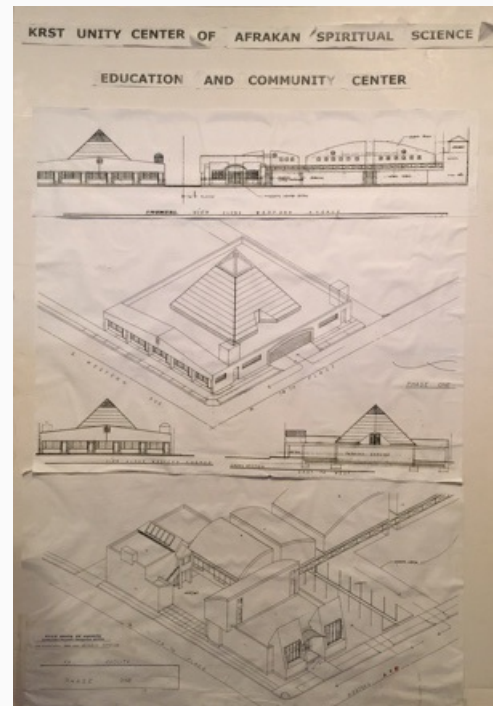
Rev. Richard and Rev. Erica welcomed me and freely shared in this interview their understanding of Truth principles as revealed through African Spiritual Science. I am grateful to them in so many ways. One of the eight principles of African Spiritual Science is Reciprocity. So I want to share the following with you.

Tucked away behind the Wall of Ancestors (where photographs of beloved people who have passed on is displayed) is a 4x3 foot poster that depicts a vision for a new educational and community center for the KRST Unity Center for AfRaKan Spiritual Science. Click on the image to see an enlarged picture.

The Mission and Purpose of KRST Unity Center of AfRaKan Spiritual Science is to provide a loving and supportive atmosphere for personal and spiritual growth for all people to learn how to apply the KRST principles to master their lives. The KRST Principle is the Kemetic (Ancient Egyptian) principle of the Christ—the transformative power of the all that is within each and every person and being.

The Principles of Ma'at, which every member memorizes and speaks to, are Truth, Justice, Righteousness, Propriety, Harmony, Order, Balance and Reciprocity. The Ten Virtues are Control of Thought, Control of Action, Steadfastness of Purpose, Identify with a Spiritual Life or Higher Ideals, Evidence of Having a Mission in Life, Evidence of a Call to Spiritual Orders or the Priesthood, Freedom from Resentment when Under Persecution and Wrong, Confidence in the Power of a Master as Teacher, Confidence in One's Own Ability to Learn and Readiness or Preparedness for Initiation.

No one asked me to bring this out, but I know that the community would like to make some progress in seeing this vision of a new educational and community center become manifest. If you will, open the enlarged picture and spend some time imagining it being erected at the corner of 78th and S. Western Avenue in Los Angeles.




Vision for KRST Unity Center of AfRaKan Spiritual Science at 78th and S. Western Ave.

Imagine people in the community stopping by and learning about these principles of Ma'at and the Ten Virtues. Imagine and envision people in the community learning the KRST Statement of Being:

SPIRIT IS ALL; Both Invisible and Visible;
One Presence; One Mind; One Power is ALL.
This That is ALL Is Perfect Life, Perfect Love, and Perfect Substance.
I am an Individualized Expression of the ALL.
I am ever one with its Perfect Life, Perfect Love and Perfect Substance.

If you do that, then you will help manifest the dedication and commitment made by Rev. Richard and Rev. Erica 25 years ago to “grow where we are planted.”



 Reverend Richard Meri Ka Ra Byrd made his transition into the Ancestral Realm on Sunday December 5, 2021. Reverend Byrd served as Senior Minister of Christ Unity Center/KRST Unity Center of Afrakan Spiritual Science for 33 years and dedicated his life to Spiritual Principles and Life Enrichment to his congregation and the community at large. As per his direction, the mission of the Center will continue its operation under the leadership of Associate Ministers Reverend Erica Ni Ma'at Byrd and Reverend Abut Semsut Sa-t Beset.

The board and members are grateful for your affirmative prayers, thoughts and gifts as you use this time to reflect on his life. They already know that this loss is deeply felt by many in our community and he would want us to remember to stay strong and to love one another. All donations and contributions should be made payable to: CUC/KRST Unity Center of Afrakan Spiritual Science 7825 S Western Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90047 323-759-7567 Cash App and PayPal info can be found on the KRST Unity website @ www.krstunitycenter.org

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