

## Dr. Lena Edwards Artist Statement

Chloe Becker

Dr. Edwards is portrayed with a blue cloak with twelve stars on it, as a reference to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and other Marian depictions; this maternal reference stands for her work as an obstetrician-gynecologist.<sup>35</sup> The two arms with the stigmata and red cross in her cloak are a reference to the Franciscan coat of arms, as Dr. Edwards was born on St. Francis's birthday, and took vows in the order in 1940.<sup>36</sup> I chose for the Tau symbol to be red and look more like a cross to resemble the red cross medical symbol, further depicting Dr. Edwards's medical impact. The two hands in the coat of arms are also symbolic of the communities that Dr. Edwards most especially advocated for. She was known for working to increase healthcare access for people in poverty; she especially focused on underfunded Black communities who had minimal access, and for migrants, as she worked with a Latinx migrant community in Texas in her later years, establishing a hospital and drastically reducing their infant mortality.<sup>37</sup> I want to stress that there is a wide variation of skin tones within the Black community as well as within the Latinx community; thus, either hand is meant to represent the Black and Latinx communities that Dr. Edwards centered her work in, showing two possible variations of those skin tones. The background above her is a quilt; I was inspired by Faith Ringgold's quilting as a way to show Dr. Edwards's Black pride, as quilts were vital in passing on African ancestry for enslaved people, and have continued to be an important art form for honoring African American ancestry and culture.<sup>38</sup>

The FutureChurch resource packet for Dr. Lena Edwards can be found here:  
<https://www.futurechurch.org/women-witnesses-for-racial-justice-downloads>

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<sup>35</sup> "Our Lady's image on the Tilma," Our Lady Guadalupe Church, <https://olg.cc/about/about-our-patroness/our-ladys-image-on-the-tilma/>;  
"Dr. Lena Frances Edwards," Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School, <https://www.drlenaedwardscharterschool.org/Content2/6>.

<sup>36</sup> Jack Wintz, OFM, "The Franciscan Coat of Arms," Franciscan Media, <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/the-franciscan-coat-of-arms/>;  
"Dr. Lena Frances Edwards Biography," Changing the Face of Medicine, 2015, [https://cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/physicians/biography\\_96.html](https://cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/physicians/biography_96.html).

<sup>37</sup> "Dr. Lena Frances Edwards Biography."

<sup>38</sup> Street Story Quilt, Faith Ringgold," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/485416>;  
Shantay Robinson, "The Quilting Tradition," Black Art in America, November 9, 2018, <https://www.blackartinamerica.com/index.php/2018/11/09/the-quilting-tradition/>.