



Mercedes Richards

Astrophysicist

1955-2016

Prof. Richards was a Jamaican astrophysicist and a pioneer in her study of computational stellar and planetary astrophysics. She is especially known for her work on interacting binary star systems and as the first to use tomography in astronomy, exploring the flow of matter between stars during accretion.

Born in Kingston Jamaica, she grew up instilled by her parents with the importance of observational deduction and precision. In a gender-segregated high school, she was inspired by female teachers. Through college she persevered, earning her PhD at the University of Toronto, in spite of the discriminatory attitudes of the all-male faculty. She built her career, eventually moving to Penn State, where she was well-known for her research and outreach.