

The Professor Yolanda Smith Scholarship

Yale Divinity School

Remembering Yolanda Smith At Yale Divinity School

Prior to her untimely death from cancer in 2016, Yolanda Smith was renowned at Yale Divinity School as a gifted liturgical dancer, a beloved colleague and mentor, and a learned voice of conscience.

Dr. Smith joined the faculty at YDS in 2000, serving in various roles as an assistant professor, research scholar, and lecturer, even while undergoing bouts with cancer in 2008 and 2015. As a scholar, her attention was on the practice of Christian education with focuses on the arts, womanist theology, and the influence of these disciplines on the African-American experience. Harold W. Attridge, former Dean of the Divinity School, remembered her as “a lovely colleague and a friend to all she knew.”

One of her lasting achievements while at YDS was a project undertaken with Moses N. Moore, Jr '77 M. Div.—“Been in the Storm So Long’: Yale Divinity School and the Black Ministry – One Hundred and Fifty Years of Black Theological Education.” Dr. Smith’s research took the form of a website and several scholarly articles examining the long history of Black students at YDS, and it has continued to be a source of material for YDS during events like Black History Month.

Perhaps her most enduring impact during her time at YDS was on the lives of her students. Alisha Jones '07 M. Div, who studied with Yolanda, remembered: [she] was a sought-after academician and minister who understood the demands of being multi-vocational, especially the challenges people of color face as we serve in the academy. I will never forget the advice that she gave me as I headed to the University of Chicago to pursue doctoral research, prompting me to think about what I should value most during my journey and I share her words with my advisees to this day: “Do you want to finish fast? Or do you want to finish well? My hope is that you will finish well.”



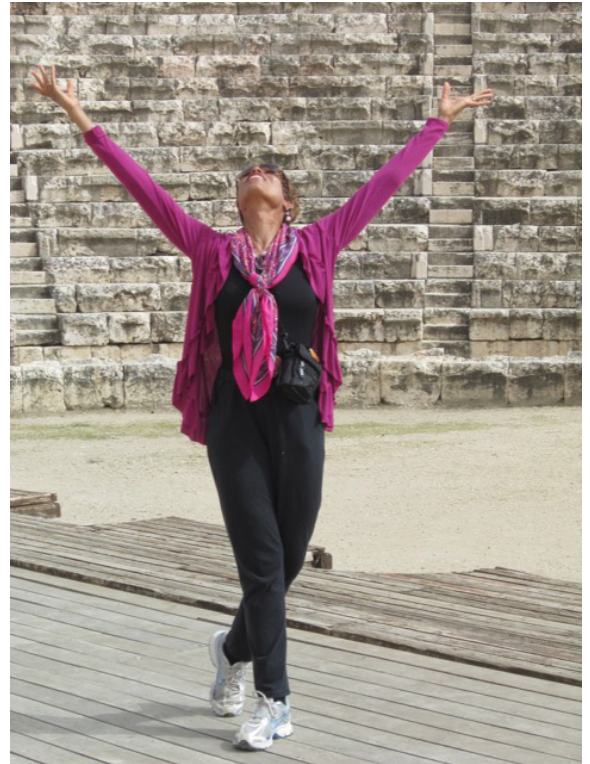
“She engaged life so fully, so completely, so thoughtfully, so prayerfully, so fully faithful, in ways that taught me so much about the joy and the embrace of living, and that is what I will always remember Yolanda for.”

— Dr. Emilie Townes

CONTRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR YOLANDA SMITH'S LEGACY

Yale Divinity School is proud to announce the Professor Yolanda Smith Memorial Scholarship fund, organized to support students at YDS with a demonstrated interest in and commitment to African-American religious traditions, or who exemplify Professor Smith's commitment to promote social justice through public theology. We have currently raised \$42,000 of our \$50,000 initial goal to create a new endowed scholarship.

- Once we reach our initial goal of \$50,000 of committed gifts, the fund will be matched with an additional \$25,000 from a new Scholarship Challenge fund at YDS. The funds will be invested in the Yale Endowment as a permanent scholarship fund. Each year thereafter, earnings from the Professor Yolanda Smith Scholarship will be distributed to a student or students at Yale Divinity School. Typically, 5.25% of a fund's value is awarded on an annual basis.
- Gifts can be made over a five-year period, and will be matched from our challenge fund on a 2:1 basis:
- Moreover, once we reach \$100,000 of committed gifts, the fund will be matched with \$50,000 from a new Scholarship Challenge fund at YDS. As we increase the Professor Yolanda Smith Scholarship fund, so will the impact of the scholarship on future students.



To make a gift to the Yolanda Smith Scholarship fund at Yale Divinity School, please contact James Ebert '97 MDiv in the Development Office at james.ebert@yale.edu or call 203 432 8127. To make a gift online visit: divinity.yale.edu/giving