

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

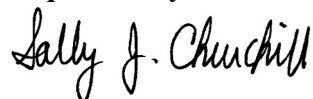
Deborah Smith Pollard, Ph.D., professor of English literature and humanities in the College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters, University of Michigan-Dearborn, retired from active faculty status on April 30, 2023.

Professor Smith Pollard received her Ph.D. degree from Michigan State University in 1994. She joined the University of Michigan-Dearborn faculty as an assistant professor in 1995, and was promoted to associate professor in 2001, and professor in 2012. Professor Smith Pollard is a highly respected scholar in the field of contemporary gospel music. Her book, *When the Church Becomes Your Party: Contemporary Gospel Music*, covers the changes that have occurred in the genre, including the growth of the praise and worship movement in the Black Church, the view of what is “acceptable” church and performance attire, the rise of gospel musical stage plays, and Christian rap music. It was named a Michigan Notable Book in 2009; chapters from the book on praise and worship and Christian rap have been reprinted in highly reviewed anthologies. Articles she has written have been published in other anthologies, including *Rhythms of the Afro-Atlantic World* (University of Michigan Press). Her recent article, “All I See Is Your Booty and Cleavage: Sex and the Contemporary Gospel Song,” was published in the top-ranked *Journal of the Society for American Music* (2021). Professor Smith Pollard’s work on African American literature has also appeared in peer-reviewed journals, among them *Commission on English Language Program Accreditation* and *College Language Association Journal*. Her forthcoming book is titled *How “Oh Happy Day” Remains the Most Universally Recognized Gospel Song*.

A founding member of the African and African American Studies Program and its director for six years, she created and taught popular courses, among them Introduction to African American Literature, Black Men in America, and Introduction to Gospel Music. She has overseen 20 independent study projects, assisted 12 students with Meeting of Minds undergraduate presentations, and served as faculty leader for a student visit to Nigeria. She served as chair of the Department of Literature, Philosophy, and the Arts, co-chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, and a member of College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters’ Executive Committee and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. Her teaching and research have overlapped with her 40+-year run as a gospel radio personality in Detroit. She has earned a national Stellar Award as the Gospel Announcer of the Year in 2004 and the Michigan Heritage Award in 2021.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **Deborah Smith Pollard, professor emerita of English literature and humanities**.

Requested by:



Sally J. Churchill, J.D.
Vice President and Secretary of the University

March 2023