

## Exclusive Interview With The Librarian: Dr. Jessie Smith Ph.D

Written by Patricia Turnier  
Friday, 31 August 2012 15:52

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Dr. Jessie Carney Smith was born on September 24, 1930 in rural North Carolina, the segregated South, during the Jim Crow era. She grew up after the onset of the Great Depression. Her parents, James and Vesona (Bigelow), graduated from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College. Her father had a small business in Greensboro, North Carolina. Dr. Smith, who also had a twin brother, is one of four children. She began her formal education in 1935, at the tender age of four, as a "primer" student in a schoolhouse part of the small community Mount Zion, near Greensboro. As a precocious child, she was double promoted from first grade to third grade and continued at Mount Zion through the seventh grade before going to James B. Dudley High School in Greensboro.

Dr. Smith was raised with a strong work ethic and managed to turn adversity into opportunity during segregation. It is noteworthy to mention that despite segregation, Dr. Smith's parents ensured that she and her siblings attended concerts, art exhibits, and other cultural events available to them in Greensboro. These experiences definitely shaped Dr. Smith and enabled her to develop a knowledge of different cultures. Not pursuing a higher education was not an option in Dr. Smith's familial environment. In this regard, she attained degrees during a time when females, especially African-Americans, were not expected to achieve so well. She is the author of several publications: books, edited works and research articles. In addition, she is recognized for her work as a librarian and educator.

She earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from North Carolina A&T and began graduate study at Cornell University. She soon married and had a son. She then attended Michigan State University where she obtained her master's degree in 1955 in child development. She also received a master's degree in library science from George Peabody College at Vanderbilt University in 1957, and a Ph.D. in library science from the University of Illinois in 1964. Dr. Smith distinguished herself by becoming the first African- American to receive a Ph.D. in library science from that institution, and she is part of the American intelligentsia. In addition to her outstanding academic accomplishments, Dr. Smith has managed to read two languages, French and German.

Dr. Smith was a consultant to the Office for Civil Rights in the desegregation of higher education institutions in Florida, Kentucky, Missouri and North Carolina. She also served as consultant and proposal reviewer for the U.S. Office of Education and the National Endowment for the

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Humanities. In 1965, she joined the library administration and faculty at Fisk University, succeeding Arna Bontemps as head librarian, and built a lifelong career. Later, she was named Dean of the Library. Other educators and librarians generally refer to her as “Dean of Black Libraries.”

A widely published researcher and writer, Dr. Smith began exploring her passion for writing as a means of bridging the gaps in scholarship. Once she created a niche for herself in the American academic community, she immersed herself in researching the history of African-American people. Armed with a great pride of her heritage, she increasingly turned toward writing and editing books that showcased the accomplishments of Black individuals throughout history. She also espoused the habit of collecting news items that recorded the accomplishments and contributions of contemporary African Americans in America and abroad.

On a mandate to study libraries in Black colleges, through a fellowship from the former Council on Library Resources, Dr. Smith completed her first published work in 1977. In this regard, her publication, *Black Academic Libraries and Research Collections: an historical study*, has been used heavily in determining funding support for these college libraries. By 1980 she had published two dozen educational pieces and bibliographies.

In 1990, Dr. Smith’s compilation *Statistical Record of Black America*, was cited among the 30 best referenced volumes of the year by *Library Journal*

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Notable Black American Women

(Gale Research) was published in 1991. It represented two decades of research with 500 biographies. In 1996, Dr. Smith published

Notable African American Women

Book 2 and Book 3 in 2003. Furthermore, she published other wondrous books such as *Black Firsts: 2000 Years of Extraordinary Achievement* in 1994;

*Statistical Record of Black America* in 1995;

*Black Firsts: 4000 Ground-Breaking, Pioneering and Historical Events* and

*Powerful Black Women*

in 2003. Notable people such as poet Nikki Giovanni and the producer/educator, Dr. Camille Cosby, wrote the foreword in some of Dr. Smith’s books. For instance, Dr. Camille O. Cosby penned the foreword of

*Powerful Black Women*

. It is important to note that in 1999 Dr. Smith contributed an article to Nikki Giovanni’s work

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entitled

*Grand Fathers*

, which chronicled African-American grandfathers and their legacies.

*Grand Fathers*

featured John Harvey Bigelow, Dr. Smith's maternal grandfather, who lived to be 101 years old.

In 2006, Dr. Smith published the 2 volume set

*Encyclopedia of African American Business*

, a comprehensive source of historical and contemporary information on the business aspect of Black life in America. Furthermore, she contributed articles to the first and second editions of historian Darlene Clark Hine's amazing encyclopedia

*Black Women in America*

, published by England's Oxford University Press. The books of Dr. Smith should be translated into several languages including French, Spanish, German and so on.

Dr. Jessie Smith has visited and/or lectured in many parts of the world. For instance, she attended the internationally renowned Pugwash Conference in Nova Scotia (Canada); she was a consultant at College of St. Mary, San Juan (Puerto Rico) and Interamerican University, Hato Rey, (Puerto Rico). She also lectured in a workshop for minority colleges in Hato Rey, Puerto Rico; she was the chairperson of the library section. In addition, she participated in the Conference on Manding Studies (University of London in England); she lectured and directed a librarians' conference workshop in Tokyo, Japan for the United States Army. She was a book reviewer and a program participant on Blacks in Hamilton, Bermuda. She did an educational tour of Dakar, Senegal. She has also lectured in her country at many venues, such as the Library of Congress, University of Illinois, Cornell, University of Wisconsin, Jackson State University, Howard University, and Savannah State College where she led a faculty workshop and was the keynote speaker.

Dr. Jessie Carney Smith is currently the Dean of the Library and, since 1992, also William and Camille Cosby Professor in the Humanities at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. She is among the leading authorities on research regarding African-Americans' history. As a librarian and researcher, she has amassed for decades a wealth of information about the contributions of Black America from colonial days to present.

Dr. Smith has appeared on various television talk shows, including *Today* in Bermuda in 1980; *Nashville's Jumpstreet*

in 1981,

*Black Pulse*

in 1982, and on Black Entertainment Television in 1992. On National Public Radio's

*Talk of the Nation*

in February 2003, she spoke about

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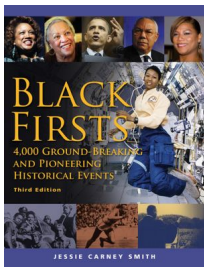
### Black Firsts

with Neal Conan. She also has earned several honors and awards, including the *National Women's Book Association Award* in 1992 and the *Martin Luther King Black Authors Award* in 1982. In 1997, she received the key to the city of Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

In summary, Dr. Smith is a writer, librarian and scholar. Her curricula are inspiring because she managed to obtain four degrees in an era when circumstances prohibited many women from acquiring even one degree. She has given us one of the most authoritative resources on Black America for libraries, homes and schools. Her works explore the historical contributions of African-Americans to the United States. Respected as a reviewer, an author and editor, Smith's critiques have been featured in *College and Research Libraries*, in *Journal of Library History* and others. Her special reports have been commissioned by bodies like the State of North Carolina, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, and Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Among her more notable U.S. projects was her supervising of "I've Been to the Mountain Top: A Civil Rights Legacy" at Fisk University, 1984-86. For this federally-funded lecture program, she brought to Fisk prominent civil rights leaders Coretta Scott King, Lerone Bennett and James Farmer.

### *Mega Diversities*

had the honor to interview Dr. Smith. Here she talks mainly about her professional path.



### PATRICIA TURNIER, LL.M TALKS TO DR. SMITH Ph.D.:

**P.T.** You are a trailblazer. In 1964, you became the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. in library science from the University of Illinois. Who inspired you to become a librarian? In other words, did you have a mentor?

**Dr. S.** During segregation, I was exposed to history from the vantage point of my African-American heritage. This circumstance definitely influenced me later to dedicate my professional life to the study of African-American history and culture. At Fisk University, my predecessor and mentor was Arna Bontemps, an African-American writer, Head Librarian and a

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noted figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and Richard Wright were among his lifelong friends. I worked with Bontemps and I loved the respect he had for librarians. He valued their professionalism and it definitely encouraged me to enter the profession. I learned a lot from Bontemps' experience. He developed important collections and archives of African-American literature at Fisk, including the Langston Hughes Collection. I succeeded Bontemps in 1965. Fisk is small and I always enjoyed being in this kind of intimate setting. It appealed to me. About becoming the first African-American to receive a terminal degree in my field from my alma mater, I didn't realize that I was a trailblazer at the time, and it took me time to grasp what it meant to get this degree as a female. I was an anomaly during the era of racial segregation in the South. There were people from my community who started the terminal but failed to finish it. I was proud to be able to complete my studies. Furthermore, it was enjoyable to realize that I became a pioneer, despite the hurdles and challenges that I had to face based on race and gender.

**P.T. Often, African-American history is not considered as being part of American history. Some even think that it is not a serious subject. What was your driving force to continue pursuing a career in Black history studies and not listen to naysayers?**

**Dr. S.** I think that it was just a part of my life. Since my childhood, I was infused with Black history and Black heroes. I had great pride in the achievement of my people. These experiences definitely shaped me into embracing a lifelong career in Black history. I grew up during the segregation era. In this epoch, Black history was taught from grade school through college and we were armed with exaltation of our heritage. African-American history in my college was a required course. During my youth, my teachers introduced me to poems written by Black people. I discovered the lyrics of Black composers and so on. When I arrived at Fisk, I fell in love with its Black collection. I was exposed to the writings of Richard Wright, W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Lorraine Hansberry, Langston Hughes, etc. I definitely took advantage of these resources available to me and I wanted to specialize in Black bibliography. It was important for me to contribute and share my knowledge. It was a natural thing for me to do in the sixties, a time where things were changing significantly in terms of race relations in America. I always believed that African-American history is American history. It cannot be dissociated. In this regard, throughout the years I established a niche for myself in the American academic community. I immersed myself in researching the history of Black people. I espoused the habit of collecting news items that recorded the accomplishments of past and contemporary Black people in the United States and abroad.

**P.T. What was your first experience with Black history and when did you decide to pursue lifelong research in this field?**

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**Dr. S.** As I mentioned previously, since my childhood I was exposed to Black history. I would say the first defining moment for me was when I discovered the magnificent collection that we have at Fisk. Seeing other researchers come at the library, discussing their work really inspired me. As a future librarian, I decided to mix my knowledge of library science with Black history. I later taught a course called Black Bibliography at Peabody College in Nashville and I loved it. There were Black and White students in the course and we all enjoyed it. I was told that some of the White students continued their studies in this realm and the Black students were happy to have a Black professor in the program. They learned a lot and it was really rewarding for them, likewise for me. Afterwards, I did a survey on Black college libraries. It was a very important and classic study. In addition, it was pioneering because it was the first time it had been done. It gave a real picture of what our libraries are like. It was published afterward under the title, *Black Academic Libraries and Research Collections: An Historical Survey*. This research definitely gave me the energy to do more in this realm.

**P.T.** Alex Haley's book, *Roots*, inspired you in 1979 to create a training program at Fisk University for librarians to help people research their roots. Did you try, via the DNA test, to find valuable information regarding your genealogy? If so, what can you share with the public about your roots?

**Dr. S.** First of all, I want to say that I loved being involved in this program in 1979. Alex Haley's book created a lot of interest in genealogy. I became involved with DNA tests just last year. Someone came on campus and did DNA testing related to that, but unfortunately the person didn't give me the results.

**P.T.** Really?

**Dr. S.** Yes, seriously. I kept asking and nothing concrete came out of it. The tester failed to follow up with some of us who wanted to find out about our roots.

**P.T.** This is surprising.

**Dr. S.** I might search for another way to find the answers.

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**P.T. Among western countries, there are colleges for women mostly in the Anglo-Saxon world, especially in the U.K. and the U.S. In the U.S., these institutions have been in existence since the 19th century in the mainstream and African-American communities. As a researcher in Black history how do you explain this phenomenon in your country?**

**Dr. S.** The separation by gender in these institutions became a vital and core aspect of life in the United States. Institutions of higher education for women were primarily founded during the early 1800s, many as teaching seminaries. Seminaries educated women for the only socially acceptable occupation at the time: teaching, and it was decided that only unmarried females could be teachers. The early proponents of education for females in the mainstream were Sarah Pierce (Litchfield Female Academy, 1792), Catharine Beecher (Hartford Female Seminary, 1823), Zilpah P. Grant Banister (Ipswich Female Seminary, 1828) and Mary Lyon. Women's academic institutions were created in response to a need for advanced education for females at a time when they were not admitted to most institutions of higher education. While the majority of women's colleges are private institutions, there were a few public colleges. So, in the beginning it was mainly females from the elite who had access to education. Wesleyan College was the first established and chartered college for women in 1836. Historically Black colleges and universities for females were developed in the Southern United States because of Jim Crow laws. Spelman College located in Atlanta, Georgia was founded in 1881 and received its collegiate charter in 1924 and holds the distinction of being America's oldest historically Black college for females still in existence. It is noteworthy to mention that most historically black colleges and universities were founded after the Civil War.

To summarize, there was discrimination on the basis of gender and race, in other words against females and Blacks. This means that African-American females were facing double oppression. So, two types of institutions in the U.S. were created for higher education to serve the needs of these two groups. In this regard, schools were segregated for a long time under the Jim Crow system. During slavery, Blacks were forbidden to get an education. However, the Black church was involved and did a lot in terms of education for my people. At first, it was done undercover since it was illegal. Overall, the reason why there are more female colleges in the U.S. is probably because they were more pro-active and had better access to resources in spite of the hurdles they had to face.

**P.T. In the past, you have served as a consultant to the Office for Civil Rights in the desegregation of higher education institutions in Florida, Kentucky, Missouri and North Carolina. How do you assess the actual situation of Black America in higher education and in the job market regarding tenure positions in universities for instance? If improvements are required, can you elaborate?**

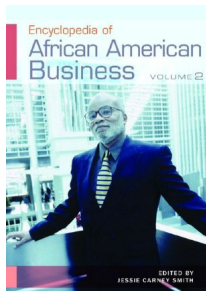
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**Dr. S.** I was hired as a consultant to determine what was happening in higher education of Black America. People wanted a comparative study between the evolution of African-Americans and the mainstream who were in colleges. We found out that there were people who didn't want Blacks to go into libraries on the campus of the White schools. When we visited mainstream institutions, the Blacks who spoke to us wanted their names to remain confidential. They wanted us to know what was really going on. When we did the final report, it resulted in bigger subventions to Black state colleges. Things changed with the report in the 70s. Black institutions and their libraries received more money. New academic programs were added along with more resources to support the programs. The government tried to avoid duplicating programs between White and Black schools in the same cities, so a consensus was arrived at this regard. This gave broader options to the students.

Currently, in higher education, many improvements are needed. Salaries are not always equal between Black and White institutions, or by genders. I observed that more men than women are tenured in private and public institutions. There is a tendency to hold back females. I think it is important to have parity by gender as well as race. Nevertheless, I am glad to see that more women are holding distinguished chairs. I am the Dean of the Library at Fisk University. I have been the William & Camille Cosby Professor in the Humanities since 1992. I am happy to see such improvements. These types of recognition happen in Black and White institutions but we need to see it more in the Ivy League schools for instance. We need to observe, in terms of gender and race, a more realistic representation on consultant boards, etc.



**P.T.** For decades, you amassed a wealth of information on prominent Black women from colonial days to the present. What is your assessment of current African-American females regarding their progress in different realms? Do you think that there are other glass ceilings which need to be shattered? In other words, is there specific area(s) where you would like to see more Black women?

**Dr. S.** From the time I started to do research on Black women till now, I definitely see progress. We have an African-American First Lady. I didn't think that I would see this in my lifetime. She is not only the First Lady but an accomplished woman with an A.B. from Princeton and a J.D. from Harvard. In other words, she has two degrees from Ivy League institutions, a first among all First Ladies in my country. It is far from being banal.



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I noticed as a librarian that, with time, the information on Black women has become more accessible. This is definitely a great improvement. In academia, Dr. Ruth Simmons became the first Black president of an Ivy League institution, Brown University and equally important the first female. In 1992, she was vice provost of Princeton University and in 1995 she became the president of Smith College which made her the first African-American woman to head a major college or university. She holds numerous honorary doctorates; some of them are from Ivy Leagues such as Harvard. In 2001, *Time* (magazine) named her as America's best college president. Other eminent Black women have visible and prominent positions such as Dr. Condoleezza Rice. In medicine, Dr. Patricia Bath is a trailblazer and inventor in ophthalmology. She developed and tested a model for a laser instrument that could be used to remove cataracts. Her invention is called a Laserphaco Probe. Dr. Bath received a patent for her invention on May 17, 1988 and became the first African-American female doctor to receive a patent for a medical invention. Later, she received other patents here (in the U.S.) and in two other continents, Europe and Asia. She also served as the White House Counsel for a National and International Blindness Prevention Program. Earlier, I was talking about women who held distinguished chairs. In this regard, in 1983 Dr. Bath chaired a residency training program (that she developed) at Drew-UCLA. This made her the first woman program director of a postgraduate training program in the United States. In addition, in 1974 Dr. Bath became the first woman ophthalmologist to be appointed to UCLA School of Medicine Jules Stein Eye Institute

1. These females that I named are great examples of women who never let their race or gender interfere with their ambition.

Beforehand, many Black women could not teach courses and now they hold distinguished chairs as I mentioned. Seeing them become dean and president of Colleges such as Dr. Malveaux (who recently left her position as the president of Bennett College for women) is great. I believe that several glass ceilings have been shattered. We see women in businesses and serving on the board of big corporations. There are Black female executives in the largest companies of Corporate America, such as Ursula Burns, the CEO of Xerox, who made history as the first African-American woman CEO to head a Fortune 500 company, or Tracey Thomas Travis (CFO, Principle Accounting Officer, Senior VP of Finance) for Ralph Lauren Corporation.

In terms of improvement, I would like to see more Black women presidents of mainstream institutions such as Harvard or Yale. I observe more Black women getting recognition in higher ranks in government. As I said before, we had the first African-American female Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice. However, it would be great to see a Black female as a Judge on the Supreme Court in North America (Canada and the U.S.); and a Governor of one of the U.S. states. These would be important firsts. So, in the legal and political system other glass ceilings need to be broken.

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In the business field, according to *Black Enterprise* (magazine) in 2011, 2.1% of African American women were serving on corporate boards of the nation's 100 largest publicly traded enterprises. In addition, very few Black females created and possess their own enterprise which is ranked among the top 100 in Black America. This means automatically that almost none of us are in the top of the list of *Forbes*.

In 2011, again according to *Black Enterprise*, together African-American men and women made up 6.3% of corporate directors. In 2012, African American Women make up 2.1% of the directors. Men are about 80% on all board seats. So, there is a lack of gender diversity on corporate boards. Furthermore, Asian Pacific Islander females represented 0.5% of directors in the top enterprises of Corporate America in 2011 and Hispanic females, 0.9% for the same year. So, melioration is required in corporate America because these inequities with structural barriers have been out there for decades. American corporations should espouse more diversity at the senior levels, etc.

**P.T. Name one to three African-American *sheroes* of all time and tell us why. Actually, I should say *sheroines* [Laughs].**

**Dr. S.** It is difficult to name one to three because there are so many. If we go back to the time of Harriet Tubman or [Sojourner Truth](#), they were *sheroines*. The females from that era risked their lives in some cases to save others and they were admirable. Some White men, such as John Brown, lost their lives also. What these people were doing was much more courageous in their time compared to now. I can make the same comment between the Civil Rights Movement and today. Rosa Parks and her husband, for instance, lost their jobs for what they were fighting for at the time. Many civil rights workers were being put in prison, etc. Others sacrificed their own families to help children in great need. In the desegregation of Little Rock High School, the courage of Ruby Bridges as a child was amazing.

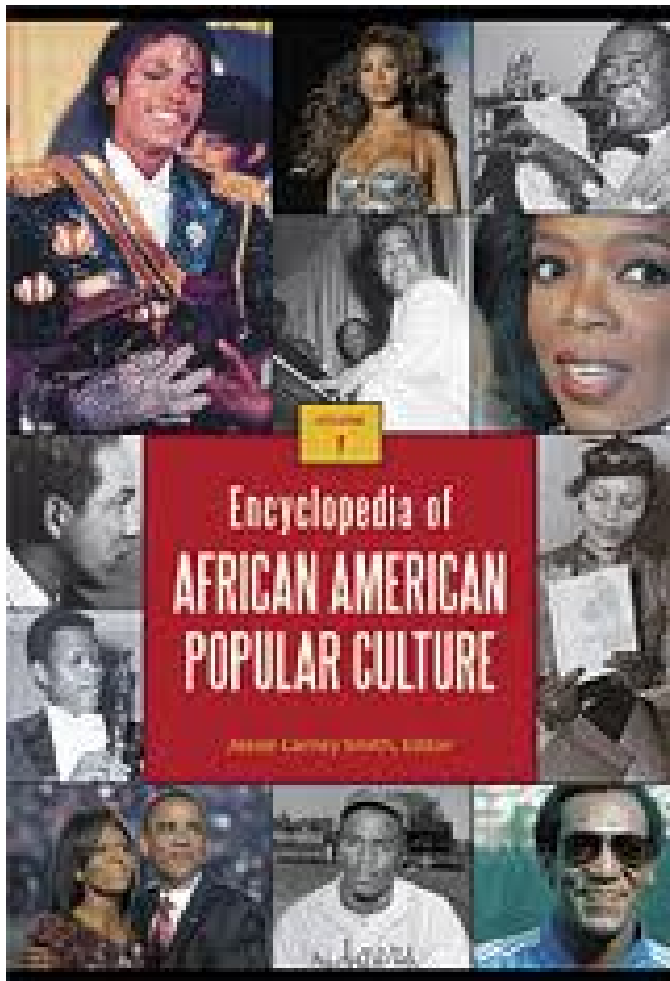
I also have a high respect for African-American females who worked as maids during the Jim Crow era. They were the backbone of Black America and were paid a pittance, \$5 a week, in the homes of families whose income was an average \$100,000 a year. They went through so much. They sacrificed themselves because they believed in a better day in the future for Black America. People need to know the true picture of what they went through. Some were sexually abused, most exploited. Agencies were controlling the lives of these women who could not be at home with their own children.

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**P.T. Some of these women even disappeared.**

**Dr. S.** Absolutely! There are many people that we don't know who are *sheroines*. So, as you can see it is difficult for me to name one to three African-American *sheroines*



**P.T. What message do you want the public to take away from your latest book Encyclopedia of African American Popular Culture (4 volumes)?**

**Dr. S.** I really enjoyed editing it. At first we planned for only 2 volumes. The publishers became excited and raised the number of volumes to 4. It took 3 years to complete everything; this was a collaborative effort because many scholars actually wrote the articles. When I was first approached about this project, I was reluctant because I found popular culture difficult to define.

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I realized afterwards that it includes so many elements that are a part of our daily lives—our music, art, history, and so on. So I tried to include as many subjects as possible. In the end, I forgot to add Phil Ivey, a poker player. This shows that popular culture has few boundaries. So, the book showcases our culture in different realms: hip-hop, religion, art and so on. I want the readers to know that it is another way to look at our history and I want them to grasp other elements of the positive views about African-American culture.

**P.T. You probably have a future book project. If it is the case, can you share with the public what it will be about?**

**Dr. S.** I am working on a book with one of my colleagues, Dr. Lean'tin Bracks, Ph.D, Chair of the Department of Arts & Languages and Discipline Coordinator for English. She is also the Associate Professor of African American Literature. The book will be about Black women of the Harlem Renaissance. I can't wait to develop it more. It is so exciting. In addition, I am completing the third edition of third edition of *Black Firsts*. It has been fun to do. The book should be on the market in late 2012 or early 2013.

**P.T. I bought and read the first edition. I looooved it.**

**Dr. S.** Thank you!

**P.T. What message do you have for young people who want to follow in your footsteps?**

**Dr. S.** My profession can be an exciting vocation. As a young person, develop projects that you are passionate about. This is what I always do. I like to put spice in my work [Laughs]. I want it to be inspiring. Stay away from projects which are boring to you because it is going to show and you won't make the effort to conduct it thoroughly. For instance, my bestseller *Black Firsts* was not the first book on this subject but the most comprehensive one. I believe it was well received because I documented in-depth my sources (with dates...) which didn't go unnoticed. People like to find accurate information so the work that you put out there requires a methodology. We don't have enough young people who write and we need to hear their voice more. It is possible for them to start a project in high school that they will pursue for the rest of their lives.

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I credit my family and its values for shaping my personal and professional path. My father's work ethic definitely influenced my own drive for accomplishment. I believe if I didn't have such an addiction to work ... to study, I would not have achieved whatever I accomplished, and that is what it takes to go far. So, my advice for young people is to embrace projects that they love, which will allow them to make a contribution (in the domain of their choice), to grow and learn professionally.

**P.T. Thanks Dr. Smith for this great interview, it was a real honor to speak to you! We can't wait to read your future books.**

**Dr. S. It was a real pleasure to speak to you. When you approached me, I said to myself I have to sit for this interview. I wish you a lot of success.**

**P.T. Likewise, I wish you a lot more success.**

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### **Education:**

North Carolina A & T: B.S. in Home Economics (1950)  
Michigan State University: M.A., Child Development (1956)  
George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University: M.A. (L.S.) Library Science (1957)  
University of Illinois: Library Science Ph.D. (1964)

### **Selected Experiences:**

Professor and university librarian at Fisk University as a librarian since 1965  
Director, I've Been to the Mountain Top: A Civil Rights Legacy, funded by the Public Programs Division, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1984-86.  
Director, The Chicago Renaissance: Themes in the Black American Experience, planning grant, Humanities Projects in Libraries and Archives, National Endowment for the Humanities, October

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1, 1988-March 31, 1989.

Director, "A Zora Neale Hurston Festival," funded by the Tennessee Humanities Project, September 1 - December 31, 1991.

Professor in the Humanities, William and Camille Cosby since 1993

Director, Fisk University and the African American Experience, funded by the National Historical Preservations and Records Commission, 2003-05.

Director, "Rosenwald Rural Schools Photographic Project," A Save America's Treasures Project funded by the National Endowment of the Humanities, 2005-2007.

Dean of the Library at Fisk University since 2010

### **Campus Committees (selected):**

Committee on Commencement, Convocations, Festivals, Homecoming and Cultural Programs; Educational Policy; Library and Learning Resources; Planning and Institutional Development; Promotion and Tenure; President's Advisory Council; Dean's Advisory Council; Liaison Officer, National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education/Aid to International Development (NAFEO/AID), 1984-86; 1995-96 and member of the committee 1999-2000, 2000-01, 2006-07, 2007-2013; Chair, Committee on Commencement, 1995-97; Chair, The Committee on the Inauguration, 1997; Co-chairperson, The Committee on the Inauguration, 1999-2000; Follow-up Committee to the Institutional Self-Study, 1999; faculty representative to the Fisk Board of Trustees, 2000-2001, Provost Council, 2008-.

### **Community Activities:**

Board of Trustees, Gammon Theological Seminary, 1995-2006

Board of Directors, Ladies of the Hermitage, 1997-2000

Member, Archives and History Committee, Clark Memorial United Methodist Church, 2004-present

Chair, Library Committee, Clark Memorial United Methodist Church, 2009-present

Chair, New Members/Fellowship Friends Committee, Clark Memorial United Methodist Church, 2005-2011

### **Organizations:**

NAACP

American Library Association

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Pi Gamma Mu (National Social Science Honorary)  
Beta Phi Mu (National Library Science Honorary); National President, 1976-77  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority  
Links, Inc. (President, Hendersonville Area Chapter, 1983-85; 1985-87)

### Selected Works by Jessie Carney Smith

- "A Statistical Study of the Birth-Rate of Children Born out of Wedlock in the State of Tennessee, 1944-1954," (master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1955)
- "Patterns of Growth in Library Resources: In Certain Land-Grant Universities," (doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1964)
- "Minorities in the United States: Guide to Resources," 1973
- Ethnic Genealogy: A Research Guide, 1983
- Images of Blacks in American Culture: A Reference Guide to Information Sources (1988)
- Statistical Record of Black America (editor, with Carrell Horton, 1990) *Listed in Library Journal* as one of the thirty best references of 1990). 2nd ed., 1992; 3rd. ed., with Robert L. Johns, 1994. 4th ed., with Carrell P. Horton, 1996
- Notable Black American Women, Gale Research, Inc, 1991.
- Epic Lives: One Hundred Black Women Who Made a Difference, Visible Ink Press, 1992.
- Black Firsts: 2,000 Years of Extraordinary Achievement, (1994)
- Historical Statistics of Black America (Two Volume Set) (editor, with Carrell Horton, 1995)
- African American Breakthroughs: 500 Years of Black Firsts, UXL, 1995.
- Notable Black American Women, Book II, Gale Research, Inc, 1996
- Powerful Black Women, 1996
- Black Heroes of the 20th Century, 1998
- Notable Black American Men, 1998
- The African American Almanac (editor, with Joseph M. Palmisano, 2000)
- Reference Library of Black America (editor, with Joseph M. Palmisano, 2000)
- Black Heroes, 2001
- Notable Black American Women, Book III : Cumulative Indexes, Gale, 2002.
- Notable Black American Men, Book II, Gale, 2006 Named one of the New York Public Library's "Best of Reference" titles for 2000; also included in the "Booklist Editors' Choice '99) as one of the best reference sources, in Reference Books Bulletin/Booklist). Book III, 2006.
- Encyclopedia of African American Business, 2 vols. Greenwood Press, 2006
- Freedom Facts and Firsts: 400 Years of the African American Civil Rights Experience, 2009
- Encyclopedia of African American Popular Culture. 4 vols. Santa Barbara: Greenwood/ABC-CLIO, 2011.
- Black Firsts. This third edition will be available on amazon.com Jan. 1st, 2013

### Other Writings:

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"Blacks and Libraries," in: *ALA Yearbook. Chicago*: American Library Association, 1977-1989.

"Foreword," *Bibliography of Black Music, Vol. 1: Reference Materials*, by Dominiqué-Rene de Lerma. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.

"Julia Ringwood Coston." In *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*. Ed. Darlene Clark-Hine. Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1993.

"Charlayne Hunter-Gault." In *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*. Ed. Darlene Clark-Hine. Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1993.

"Halle Tanner Dillon Johnson." In *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*. Ed. Darlene Clark-Hine. Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1993.

"Colorful Women, Women of Color: African American Women and Tennessee History." *Tennesseesee Business* 6 (1995): 13-20..

"Black Women, Civil Rights, & Libraries." In *Untold Stories: Civil Rights, Libraries, and Black Librarianship*. Ed. John Mark Tucker. Urbana: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois, 1998.

"Women's Liberation Movements." In *A Celebration of 60 Years of Student Activism in Pursuit of Social Justice at Bennett College, 1937-1997*. The Bennett College Social Justice Series. Ed. Millicent E. Brown and Lea E. Williams. Vol. 1 (Fall 1998): 40-47.

"John Harvey Bigelow." In *Grand Fathers*. Ed. Nikki Giovanni. New York: Henry Holt, 1999.

"Introduction." and guest editor. *African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations*. By Kathlyn Gay. Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2007.

Horton, Carrell, Jessie Carney Smith, and Marilyn McGee Talbert. *Still on the Journey: A History of Clark Memorial United Methodist Church: 1865-2010*. Nashville: Clark Memorial United Methodist Church, October 2010.

"From Andrew Carnegie to John Hope Franklin: Library Development at Fisk University." *Tennesseesee Libraries* 59 (February 2010).

*Still on the Journey: A History of Clark Memorial United Methodist Church 1865-2010*, with Carrell P. Horton and Marilyn McGee Talbot. Nashville: Clark Memorial United Methodist Church, 2011.

"African American Firsts," pp.73-107; "Education," pp. 745-803; and "National Organizations," pp. 499-559. In *African American Almanac*, 11th ed. Detroit: Gale Cengage Learning, 2011.

"Foreword," *Who's Who among African Americans*. 24th ed. Detroit: Gale Cengage Learning, 2011; 25th ed., 2011; 26th ed., 2012.

"Foreword." Bracks, Lean'tin, ed. *African American Almanac: 400 Years of Triumph, Courage and Excellence*. Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 2012.

## Honors:

National Urban League Fellow, 1968, 1976  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Black Author's Award, April 2, 1982



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Certificate of commendation for outstanding educational and community achievements, State of Tennessee, House of Representatives of the Ninety-Fourth General Assembly, the Senate concurring, House Joint Resolution no. 385, May 22, 1985

Academic or Research Librarian of the Year Award (plaque and \$3,000 cash; for publishing, contribution to ACRL libraries, and to the profession), Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, July 6, 1985

United Negro College Fund Distinguished Scholars Award, 1986

Distinguished Alumni Award (for contributions to research, education, and librarianship), Department of Library Science, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, 1987

Distinguished Alumni Award, 1990, GLIS, University of Illinois, May 1990

Women's National Book Association Award, 1992

Candace Award for Education, 1992

Named William and Camille Cosby Professor in the Humanities, Fisk University, 1992

Anna J. Cooper Award, *SAGE* magazine, 1992

Frances Neel Cheney Award (in recognition of significant contribution to the world of books and librarianship), Tennessee Library Association, 1994

Key to the City, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1997

Belle Ringer Image Award (for exceptional leadership and as a role model for young women), Bennett College for Women, March 16, 1997

Living Legends Award, Pentecostal Tabernacle Church, Nashville, Tennessee, 1998

Research Career Award (in recognition of a distinguished career in research and the creation of new knowledge), Fisk University, April 9, 1998

Distinguished Service and Leadership Award, Black Women in the Academy, June 26, 1999

Certificate of Recognition, Masjid Al-Islam and Clara Mohammad School, Nashville, Tennessee, March 3, 2007

Global Heritage Award, Global Education Center (for preserving cultural heritage), February 11, 2011

Outstanding Achievement in Higher Education, Greater Nashville Alliance of Black School Educators, June 4, 2011

Global Heritage Award, Global Education Center (for preserving cultural heritage), February 11, 2011

Outstanding Achievement in Higher Education, Greater Nashville Alliance of Black School Educators, June 4, 2011

### **Selected Television and Radio Appearances:**

Interview, "Today in Bermuda," television show, Hamilton, Bermuda, May 1980

"Jumpstreet," talk show, WSMV, Ch. 4, Nashville, October 1981

"Mornings on 5," talk show, WTVF, Ch. 5, October 1981, January 1986, February 1992

"Midday News," talk show, WTVF, Ch. 5, October 1981

WSIX, radio talk show, Nashville, October 1981

WPLN, public radio station, interview, Nashville, October 1981, February 1993, February 1994

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"Action News Tonight," Ch. 5, Memphis, Tennessee, October 23, 1982  
"Nashville's Black Heritage: Contributions to Early Nashville," on "Black Pulse," talk show, WVTV, Ch. 17, Nashville, March 1982  
"Ann Holt at Large," WNGE, Ch. 2, Nashville, September 1983  
"In the Black," WSM Radio, February 12, 1984; March 5, 1985; February 1986  
"Silhouettes," WSMV, Ch. 4, Nashville, February 1986  
"Face to Face," WKRN, Ch. 2, Nashville, February 1986  
BET Television, Spring 1993  
February 20, 2009, 1-hour interview, "Lynn Rivers Show" on NPR affiliate, WEMU-FM (Eastern Michigan), Producer: Clark Smith; Host: Lynn Rivers

### Selected Biographical Listings:

*Who's Who in Library and Information Services*, 1982  
Wellesley College, "Black Women's Educational Policy and Research Network Newsletter," vol. 1, no. 6 (August/September, 1982): 8-10  
*Black Writers*, 1994  
*Who's Who of American Women*, 1994  
*World Who's Who*, 1995  
*Facts on File Encyclopedia of Black Women in America*. Vol. 4. Business and Professions, 1997.  
*Who's Who among African Americans*, 1998  
*Dictionary of American Scholars*, 1999  
"A Fisk Gem within Our Midst." *Fisk Campus News 2* (June 15, 1999): 1.  
Contemporary Black Biography, Vol. 35, 2003  
*Who's Who In America*, 1969; 65th ed., 2011  
*Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2004 Supplement  
*Black Women in America*, 2nd ed, 2005  
"Six Black Women Who Influenced My Life: A Journey in Spiritual and Intellectual Formation," by John Mark Tucker. In Warren Lewis and Hans Rollmann, eds. *Restoring the First-Century Church in the Twenty-First Century: Essays on the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement in Honor of Don Haymes*. Wipf & Stock, 2005.  
National Visionary Leadership Project (filmed interview), 2006.

### Foreign Assignments:

Attended Pugwash Conference, Pugwash, Nova Scotia, August 1968; served as Chairperson of

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Library Section, Conference on Manding Studies, University of London, London, England, June 1972; directed workshop for librarians' conference, United States Army in the Pacific, Tokyo, Japan, June 1973; book reviewer and program participant on "Black Bermudian," Civic Hall, Hamilton, Bermuda, May 1980; educational tour, Dakar, Senegal, December 1984

### Professional Organizations and Activities:

Biomedical Library Review Committee, National Library of Medicine, 1972-76  
Chairperson, Board of Directors, Cooperative College Library Center, 1990 – 2000.  
Member, Symposium on Women in Tennessee, Women's Center, Vanderbilt University, 1993-95  
Member, Advisory Board, JSTOR Project, Southern Education Foundation, 1997 – present  
Advisory Board, *Dictionary of Library History, 2nd Supplement*, 1999 – 2002.  
Advisory Board, *Oryx Dictionary of Education*, 1999–2004.

### *Reviews for Encyclopedia of African American Business [2 volumes]:*

"Some 250 entries, presented by Smith, provide information on the Black business community and Black business leaders in the United States from the beginning of the 18th century to the present. Entries include biographical information on such figures as Hank Aaron, Marcus Garvey, Booker Washington, and Oprah Winfrey, as well as a host of others whose fame is more circumscribed to the business world. The encyclopedia also presents many topical and thematic essays, ranging from profiles of Black involvement in particular industries to descriptions of particular African American business-related organizations. Prior to their presentation, entries are listed in a variety of manners in order to aid the reader to locate particular topics."

- Reference & Research Book News

"With over 250 entries, this work provides an overview of the US Black business community and leaders from the 18th century to the present. Edited by Smith, it comprises entries authored by librarians and archivists. In addition to the well-known individuals (e.g., Oprah Winfrey, Wally Famous Amos) one would expect, this volume includes architects, auto industry and music executives, bankers, beauty industry officials, civil rights activists, philanthropists, and more. It includes major historical overviews, e.g., *Black Businesses in Large Cities: A History*, *Black Press: Newspapers in Major Cities*, *Blacks in Agriculture*, and *Faith-Based Entrepreneurship*. Entries by topic and occupation are provided. The wide variety of topical coverage is evident in

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the titles of entries such as Barbecue Establishments, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Economic Boycotts and Protests, Roadside and Street Vending, and Shoe Shine Establishments. Selected essays include photographs, statistical tables, or charts. All provide a brief listing of resources for further reading. This work is well conceived and well executed. It will serve as an excellent introductory guide to African American business. Recommended. Academic and public libraries; all levels."

- Choice

"Like a census report, this encyclopedia provides wide and in-depth coverage of African-American businesses, those currently in existence and those that existed historically....All of these contributions allow readers to be catapulted back to that era and give them an opportunity to experience what it was like for Black business owners during those times. For those who have long searched for a comprehensive source on African-American business ownership, this is it."

- Multicultural Review

The books of Dr. Smith are available on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), .ca or [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

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For more thorough information on Dr. Bath go to [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography\\_26.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_26.html)