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## 2009 "Most Influential African-American In Rochester"



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### Dr. Arlette Miller Smith

When your life teaches,  
Your heart sings, and  
Your soul writes,  
Then you have become acquainted with the passions of  
Arlette Miller Smith

**ARLETTE MILLER SMITH**, a native of Vicksburg, Mississippi, is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, adjunct faculty member in the Executive Leadership doctoral program, and co-director of the African American Studies (AFAM) minor at St. John Fisher College since June, 2008. Miller Smith began her work at Fisher in the summer of 1997 with a dual appointment as an assistant professor of English and associate dean for diversity initiatives. In June, 2002, she was appointed as the Dean who oversees diversity initiatives at the College. In August of 2002, diversity programs became the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Diversity Programs. Under Miller Smith's leadership a number of campus and community diversity-related projects evolved including the current Campus Climate Project, as well as the following: Campus Diversity Advisory Board (CDAB); the Distinguished Community Leaders' Forum; Campus Read Project; Pre-K @ College initiative; Gay Alliance Higher Education Series; Day of Celebration; the expanded Annual Martin Luther King Celebration; Project Build collaborative with the Rochester City School District.

Arlette is proud to have received from St. John Fisher's student body, the prestigious Father Dorsey Award given to a faculty member who contributes time and resources to the development of student programming initiatives and projects. She advises a number of student organizations, both formally and informally, including the gospel choir, Black Student Union and Fisher Pride. She also is the 2009 recipient of Fisher's Bricoleur Award for Diversity which recognizes distinguished campus and community service related to inclusive excellence.



Former Dean Miller Smith is the recipient of a number of community awards, including the 2008 Harriet Tubman Humanitarian Achievement Award “for the championing and service on behalf of improving the quality of life for the poor, the powerless, and the persecuted;” the Genesee Valley Girl Scouts of America’s 2005 Woman of Influence in the Arts Award; the Rochester Urban League’s Educator of the Year Award; the Links’ Outstanding Community Educator Award, and the Negro Business and Professional Club’s prestigious Sojourner Truth Award; and the 2009 African American Citizen of the Year Award from Rochester A.B.O.V.E. (Africans Between Oceans with Visions of Empowerment)

Arlette has served on several local boards and community initiatives including BOA Editions; Rochester City School District African & African American Council; Rochester Women’s Network (RWN); the Urban League of Rochester; the former Bi-Racial Community Partners Program (currently known as the Mosaic Partnership Program); the Commission on Race and Ethnicity; organizing committee of the AALDP (African American Leadership Development Program); and the New York-Penn Regional Red Cross Blood Services Board.

Miller Smith is the founder/executive director of AKOMA ([www.akoma.org](http://www.akoma.org)), Rochester’s African American Women’s Gospel Choir, which is comprised of more than forty-five women from more than twenty churches throughout the Rochester area.

Dr. Miller Smith also is a *BlackLiteraryHerstorian*---that is, she is a woman who chronicles the herstory of her African American people and their armored resistance to oppression and discrimination. Miller Smith’s “We in Anticipation of You” was selected as the opening poem for the 2009 publication of the book, *Go, Tell Michelle: African American Women Write to the New First Lady* (eds Peggy Brooks-Bertram and Barbara Seals-Nevegold). Miller Smith was introduced to and became passionate about literature, motivational speaking, and history by a cadre of committed teachers, family members, and friends in her birthplace: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Miller Smith received her undergraduate degree in English/African American Literature from Tougaloo College; her Masters in English from Michigan State University; and her doctorate in American Studies (Women’s Studies) from the University of Buffalo.

Miller Smith is married to Art, a retiree from Electronic Data Systems (EDS). They have two adult children and two grandchildren.