

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr.

PERSON

Smith, J. Alfred (James Alfred)

Alternative Names: Reverend Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr.; James Alfred Smith ;

Life Dates: May 19, 1931-

Place of Birth: Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Residence: Brentwood, CA

Occupations: Pastor

Biographical Note

Reverend Dr. James Alfred Smith, Sr. was born on May 19, 1931 in Kansas City, Missouri. His mother, Amy Gates Smith, was born outside of Clarksdale, Mississippi and migrated north to Kansas City, Missouri. Smith's father, Clyde Anderson, was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, and worked in the Pullman sleeping car industry. Smith graduated from R.T. Coles High School in Kansas City in 1948 and obtained his license to preach in the same year.

Reverend Smith was called to the ministry in 1951. In 1952, he received his B.S. degree in elementary education from Western Baptist College. Reverend Smith also received his bachelor's degree in divinity in 1959 from the Missouri School of Religion and his master's degree in theology, church, and community in 1966. He also earned his master's degree in American Church History from the American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley, California in 1972. Reverend Smith earned his doctor of ministry degree from the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary Simi Valley, California in 1975.

Reverend Smith was named senior pastor of Oakland, California's Allen Temple Baptist Church in 1971. He was elected president of the Progressive Baptist State Convention of California in 1979, and president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention in 1986. Smith joined the teaching faculty at the American Baptist Seminary of the West as professor of Christian Ministries in 1992. He is the author of several books including *On The Jericho Road: A Memoir of Racial Justice, Social Action, and Prophetic Ministry*, *Speak Until Justice Wakes: Prophetic Reflections*, and most recently *Sounding The Trumpet: How Churches Can Answer God's Call to*

Justice. He retired from the Allen Temple Baptist Church in 2009 and is succeeded by his son, Rev. James Alfred Smith, Jr.

Reverend Smith has received several awards and honors for his work. The Oakland Tribune named Smith the Outstanding Citizen of the Year in 1990. In 2001, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Greenling Institute, a public policy organization in Berkeley, California. The East Bay Agency for Children awarded Smith the Humanitarian of the Year Award also in 2001. Smith presented the Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith Conference on Church and Social Action most recently in 2015 in Columbia, Missouri

Joanna Goodwin Smith, Reverend Smith's first wife, passed away in 2007. He remarried the Reverend Bernestine Smith, Pastor of Allen Temple Arms I and II.

Related Entries

R. T. Coles Vocational/Junior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Western Baptist Bible College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S.

University of Missouri [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.D.

University of Missouri [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A.

American Baptist Seminary of the West [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A.

Graduate Theological Seminary [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

Fuller Theological Seminary [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Visiting Professor

Lincoln Elementary School [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1952 to ?]

Principal

Allen Temple Baptist Church [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1971 to 2009]

Senior Pastor

American Baptist Seminary of the West [EMPLOYEEOf]

[from 1975 to ?]

Acting Dean

American Baptist Churches of the West [MEMBEROf]

[from ? to ?]

President

Progressive Baptist National Convention [MEMBEROf]

[from 1986 to 1988]

President

James Alfred Smith, Sr. Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.