

# THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*Regents Communication*

Adopted by the Regents

May 20, 2010

## ACTION REQUEST

**Subject:** Report of Faculty Retirement

**Action Requested:** Adoption of Retirement Memoir

**J. Mills Thornton III, Ph.D.**, professor of history in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, will retire from active faculty status on May 31, 2010.

Professor Thornton received his A.B. degree from Princeton University in 1966, and his M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale University in 1969 and 1974, respectively. He joined the University of Michigan faculty as an assistant professor of history in 1974, and was promoted to associate professor in 1977 and professor in 1982. He held the Richard Hudson Research Professorship in History during 1992.

Professor Thornton is a scholar of American history and the history of the American South. He was particularly interested in the importance of the history of the individual states of the union as a source of political identity and formation. His first book, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1861*, published in 1978, was awarded the prestigious John H. Dunning Prize by the American Historical Association (1978) and the James F. Sulzby Prize by the Alabama Historical Association (1979). Making his mark as a historian of slave society in nineteenth-century Alabama, he became a noted expert on the Thomas Jefferson-Sally Hemings affair and a major historian of the politics surrounding the civil rights movement and local activism. His prize-winning study, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma, Tuscaloosa* was published in 2002. Professor Thornton was an active teacher who taught a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate courses. Professor Thornton was named the Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions by Cambridge University (2007-08).

The Regents now salute this distinguished teacher and researcher by naming **J. Mills Thornton III professor emeritus of history**.

**Requested by:**



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**Sally J. Churchill, J.D.**

**Vice President and Secretary of the University**

**May 2010**