

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*Regents Communication*

ACTION REQUEST

**Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement**

**Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir**

**Michael Awkward, Ph.D.**, Gayl A. Jones Collegiate Professor of Afroamerican Literature and Culture, professor of English language and literature, and professor of Afroamerican and African studies in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2021.

Professor Awkward received his B.A. (1980) degree from Brandeis University and his M.A. (1982) and Ph.D. (1986) degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. He joined the University of Michigan faculty as an assistant professor in 1986, and was promoted to associate professor in 1990, and professor in 1995. After serving on the faculties of the University of Pennsylvania and Emory University from 1997-2006, he returned to the University of Michigan in 2006.

Professor Awkward is the author, in addition to numerous peer-reviewed articles, of six monographs and one edited collection. Beginning with *Inspiriting Influences: Tradition, Revision, & Afro-American Women's Novels* published by Columbia University Press in 1991 to his latest monograph *Philadelphia Freedoms: Black American Trauma, Memory, and Culture after King* published by Temple University Press in 2013, Professor Awkward has been a clear voice of conscience and clarity and has brought the perspective of an African-American male feminist to bear on matters affecting African American literature, culture, and the arts. His is a perspective and voice that is both rigorous and poetic and his readers have sought him for both the historically nuanced and politically astute claims he makes as well as for the ways in which he articulates them. Reading Professor Awkward's books is a sheer delight even when the subjects he often covers – violence, trauma, and historical suffering – are not by any means pleasant. In addition to his writing, Professor Awkward has been an excellent teacher and mentor to several generations of younger scholars, many of whom are now leaders in the field. A highly sought speaker at other institutions, Professor Awkward has balanced his many external invitations with a consistent commitment to leadership and service at the university, including serving on the Humanities Divisional Executive Committee of the college and serving as director of what was then the Center for Afro-American and African Studies (now the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies).

The Regents now salute this distinguished scholar by naming **Michael Awkward, Gayl A. Jones Collegiate Professor Emeritus of Afroamerican Literature and Culture, professor emeritus of English language and literature, and professor emeritus of Afroamerican and African studies.**

Requested by:



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

May 2021