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**GATHERING OF YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN SCHOLARS  
HIGHLIGHTS NEED TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY AT THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS**

- ***'Faculty of Future' Get Tips on How to Clear Obstacles in Professional Path***
- ***One-Third of Theological Schools Report They Have No Faculty of Color***

**WHO:** Emerging African-American scholars in religion, biblical studies and theology who are 2006 recipients of The Fund for Theological Education (FTE) Doctoral Fellowships, selected competitively from applicants nationwide.

**WHAT:** 2006 FTE Doctoral Fellows Conference

**WHEN:** June 9-11, 2006

**WHERE:** Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn.

While an increasingly diverse North American population needs multiracial religious leaders capable of serving multiracial, multicultural communities, neither the faculties nor the student bodies of theological schools are as racially inclusive as population trends suggest they need to be:

- More than one-third of the 251 Association of Theological Schools (ATS) member institutions report they do not have a single person of color on their faculties.
- About 90 percent of faculty and 75 percent of doctoral students in graduate religion and theology programs are white, according to a survey by the American Academy of Religion.
- Racial/ethnic persons comprise approximately 30 percent of the U.S. population. Only about 13 percent of faculty and 22 percent of students enrolled in ATS schools are racial/ethnic persons. ATS schools are not enrolling students of color at the proportion of their presence in the larger society, and faculties have achieved less racial/ethnic diversity than student bodies.

To improve diversity in the field, The Fund for Theological Education (FTE) is awarding fellowships this year to 40 African-American students to help them successfully complete their Ph.D.s in religion, biblical studies and theology. These 2006 FTE Doctoral Fellows will convene at Yale Divinity School June 9-11.

"It's ironic that graduate religion and theology faculty – so vital to building cultural understanding and respect among all people – lack diversity themselves," says Sharon Watson Fluker, FTE vice president of doctoral programs and administration. "To produce a diverse faculty tomorrow, the pipeline needs to be filled with diverse students today. This conference offers an opportunity for our Doctoral Fellows to network, to overcome obstacles and to build a sense of community."

The FTE conference offers students one-on-one sessions with established African-American faculty who will serve as their mentors, as well as tips on preparing for job interviews, navigating academic politics and surviving the Ph.D. journey. They will also discuss *“God Talk: Interdisciplinary Studies and Emerging Scholars.”*

**Robert M. Franklin**, Presidential Distinguished Professor of Social Ethics at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, will open the conference with a keynote address. **Emilie M. Townes**, the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of African American Religion and Theology at Yale Divinity School, will serve on the conference faculty, together with:

- Dale P. Andrews, Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Homiletics, School of Theology, Boston University;
- Theodore W. Burgh, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, University of North Carolina-Wilmington;
- Leslie D. Callahan, Assistant Professor, Religious Studies Department, University of Pennsylvania;
- Judy Fentress-Williams, Assistant Professor, Hebrew Bible, Virginia Theological Seminary;
- Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Professor of African American Studies and Sociology, Colby College;
- Eddie S. Glaude, Professor, Department of Religion, Princeton University;
- Emmanuel Y. Lartey, Professor of Pastoral Theology, Candler School of Theology, Emory University;
- Yolanda Y. Smith, Assistant Professor of Christian Education, Yale Divinity School.

"Pursuing the call to teach or do research as an African American in the academy can be a long and lonely road," says Watson Fluker. "The success our students have in overcoming obstacles to become professors and scholars is essential to diversity in theological education."

FTE is a leading ecumenical advocate for excellence and diversity in Christian ministry and theological scholarship. Its work supports the next generation of leaders among pastors and scholars, providing \$1.2 million annually in fellowships and other support to gifted young people from all denominations and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Since its 1954 founding by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Atlanta-based organization has awarded more than 5,700 fellowships in partnership with others committed to quality leadership for the church and the academy.

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