



*Remembering
Quandra Prettyman*

Sunday, January 9, 2022
1:00-2:30 pm EST



Biography

Born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, Quandra Prettyman was the daughter of two school teachers. A curious, adventurous child, she saw the world as her playground. After studying history at Antioch College (1950-54) and English at the University of Michigan (1955-57), Quandra made New York City her home base: she worked in publishing and began teaching while initiating a lifetime of travel abroad, with regular trips to Amsterdam. Her welcoming apartment on the Upper West Side, in which every room was a library, showed her passion for making visible the parts of life buried in archives and books. Quandra herself was living history, often sharing stories of her friendships with luminaries like Coretta Scott King and James Baldwin and teaching newcomers the history of Black Barnard. Her home was a salon where gossip, knowledge, food, and drinks were served in abundance. It was also a haven for friends and students who needed a sudden place to stay or a shoulder to lean on.

Professor Prettyman joined the Barnard College Department of English in 1970. In addition to teaching writing, she created courses new to the College (and sometimes new to the field) such as The Harlem Renaissance; Slavery: the Woman's Experience, Black and White; Minority Women Writers in the US (Native American, African American, Latina, Asian American); Literature of the Great Migration; and Early African American literature 1760-1890. Even after Professor Prettyman's official "retirement," she continued teaching, offering "Explorations in Black Literature: 1760-1890," as recently as the fall of 2019. A poet since her college days, her work appears in Arnold Adoff's *The Poetry of Black America* (1973), among other venues. She edited *Out of Our Lives: A Selection of Contemporary Black Fiction* in 1975. Her lifelong interest in cookbooks and recipes led her to publish one of the earliest academic articles on African American Foodways, "Come Eat at My Table: Lives with Recipes" published by *Southern Quarterly* in 1992. In 2019, the Africana Studies department created the Quandra Prettyman Prize, given to a graduating senior, who like Quandra, embodies intellectual curiosity, generosity of spirit, constant growth, and a belief in the generative power of community.

Professor Prettyman passed away on the morning of October 21, 2021. She is survived by her daughter, Johanna Stadler, her sister, Waltyn Prettyman, her stepchildren, Sean Yau-Smith and Michelle DiPalma, and numerous honorary grandchildren.

Cohosts

Chloe Lewis

Professor Monica L. Miller, Barnard College

Speakers in order of appearance

Darrell M. Gray, MD, DD

Professor Sue Riemer Sacks, Barnard College

Mary Cox, Community Safety - CARES Department, Barnard College

Professor James Basker, Barnard College

Lourdes López (BC '80)

Justine Hope Blau

Marilyn S. Mobley, PhD (BC '74), Professor Emerita of English and African American Studies, Case Western Reserve University

Amber L. Abrams (BC '04)

Sacha Y. Telfer (GS '22), poetry reading from *A Safe House*

Professor Pam Cobrin, Senior Lecturer, English Department, Barnard College

Emmanuelle St. Jean (BC '04)

Beth Ebrahimpour

Professor Yvette Christiansë, Barnard College

Professor Kim F. Hall, Barnard College

Professor Alex Watson, Barnard College, poetry reading from *A Safe House*

With Thanks

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations be made to support the [Quandra Prettyman Prize](https://barnard.edu/quandra-prettyman-prize) at Barnard College: <https://barnard.edu/quandra-prettyman-prize>

Condolence messages can be sent to QuandraPrettyman@gmail.com or to the English Department / Barnard College / 3009 Broadway / New York, NY 10027.

The family wishes to thank the Barnard Center for Research on Women, especially Hope Dector, for their generous hosting of this remembrance and care for Quandra's legacy.

Music: "Once Upon a Time" by Ahmad Jamal and "On Green Dolphin Street" by Miles Davis.