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## Friends and students remember longtime John Marshall professor

BY **JERRY CRIMMINS**  
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A memorial service was held last week for Yvette M. Barksdale, a longtime associate professor at The John Marshall Law School.

Barksdale, 54, died in her South Loop home March 14, apparently from natural causes, her friends say.

"She was buried in Detroit next to her mother," said Ellen E. Douglass, her lawyer and friend.

Barksdale, who was on leave from teaching at the time of her death, became a faculty member at John Marshall in 1989.

A biography put together mostly by Shelvin L. Hall, presiding justice of the 1st Division Appellate Court, said Barksdale spent "innumerable hours mentoring" her students.

"She was well known as a scholar of administrative and constitutional law" and also taught a law and diversity seminar at the school, the biography says.

Barksdale had served as a research consultant to the Administrative Conference of the United States and as a committee vice chairwoman of

the American Bar Association's Section of Administrative Law and Regulatory Practice.

She also wrote a quarterly Recent Articles of Interest column for that section's Administrative & Regulatory Law News.

She had been a board member of the Black Women Lawyers Association of Greater Chicago and received from that group the "President's Award for Outstanding Service" in 1993.

"Yvette was a fierce proponent of equal rights for the disadvantaged and completely committed to diversity in the legal profession," Hall said.

"Her heart was with the Midwestern People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference. She never missed a meeting of that conference from its founding in 1989."

"She single-handedly refused to let it die when she chaired the 2003 annual meeting" of the Midwestern People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference, Hall said. She "pulled it together and made sure it continued."

"She was a very exuberant, very voluble, engaging personality."

Barksdale was born in Detroit on Feb. 5, 1958, says the



**Yvette M. Barksdale**

biography that Hall wrote along with Barksdale's childhood friend from Detroit, Edith Carter.

Barksdale was adopted at an early age and raised by Cornelia and LeRoy Barksdale. She got her early education at the Roeper School, a school for the gifted in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. She "received Christ and began living a strong spiritual life at an early age," her biography says.

She received her undergraduate degree from Oberlin College, majoring in mathematics.

After college, she worked at

General Motors in the development of CAD/CAM software (computer-aided design, computer-aided manufacturing), her biography says.

She then decided to go to law school and got her law degree from Yale University in 1982. She practiced law in New York City until she switched to teaching law.

At least 50 people attended the memorial service last Thursday at the First United Methodist Church, Hall said, including past students and John Marshall colleagues.

Among the speakers, "one of her students spoke about her and what a difference Yvette made in her life," Douglass said.

The memorial service was organized by Hall, by John Marshall professor Linda R. Crane and by Douglass.

Douglass said Barksdale "was devoted to her friends. She had a wicked sense of humor. She had an infectious smile. Her eyes would flash ... She was just a special person."

She was a "brilliant legal scholar and teacher for more than 25 years," Crane said.

Barksdale is survived by three cousins and other relatives.