

## African American Leaders in the PC(USA)

# Yenwith & Muriel Whitney



Yenwith “Yen” and Muriel Whitney (nee. Johnson) wed in 1951. Together, they journeyed into their shared life of service to the Presbyterian Church.

Before he met Muriel, Yenwith was a pilot in the Army Air Corps. He enlisted in 1943 at the age of 18 and was sent to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama for training. He went on to serve as a member of the 301st Fighter Group, one of four all-Black fighter squadrons in the 332nd Fighter Squadron of the 15th Air Force, and made history as a member of the

famed Tuskegee Airmen. When World War II came to a close in 1945, Yenwith had flown over 30 missions. After the war, he and 11 other former airmen went together to the offices of Eastern Airlines in New York to apply for commercial pilot positions. Though Yenwith and his contemporaries were decorated veteran war pilots, none were considered for jobs.



Yenwith met Muriel after graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1949. Muriel had been attending Mt. Olivet Baptist Church through her youth. In 1947, she served as the Vice Moderator of Westminster Fellowship of New York Presbytery. She regularly attended youth group meetings at the Church of the Master in New York, where she met Yen one evening.

In 1956, the Board of Foreign Missions appointed the Whitney’s to Cameroon, West Africa, where they were university professors. Upon their return to the US in 1966, Yen was appointed as Associate Secretary for Education of the UPCUSA’s Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations (COEMAR). He became Associate for Educational Services with the Program Agency of COEMAR in 1970. In 1978, the Whitney’s were living in Georgia, where Yen had taken the position of principal of Boggs Academy. That year, Muriel passed away.

Yen remarried, was appointed as the church’s liaison with Africa, retired in 1992, and moved to Sarasota, FL, where he was very involved with the Tuskegee Airmen Association. Yenwith passed away in 2011, and is buried beside Muriel at Mount Hope Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York.



Read more about Yenwith Whitney on the PHS blog [history.pcusa.org/about/blog/african-american-leaders-series](http://history.pcusa.org/about/blog/african-american-leaders-series)



Learn about the AALC Initiative [history.pcusa.org/aalc](http://history.pcusa.org/aalc)

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