



## UPDATE ON THE PRAYING GROUNDS PROJECT

- The collection now contains 54 videotaped interviews.
- We launched our website in the Fall of 2006.
- We are in the process of digitizing approximately 50 years of annual program books for the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses.
- The University Library co-sponsored several African American History Month activities, including the first-floor "Praying Grounds" exhibition.
- Crystal Johnson is editing the first volume of "Piano Praise," a video presentation on the life and work of June Carol Wynn.
- Library Digital Productions is processing the papers of Rev. Alfred Waller, former pastor of the historic Shiloh Baptist Church.
- RASHAD received a \$1,500 grant from the Ohio Humanities Council.
- The CLASS Dean's Office agreed to provide more than \$14,000 for the oral history project and related activities.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR

BY REGENNIA N. WILLIAMS, PHD

Religion and spirituality have shaped human history in ways too numerous to describe in any one publication. It is my hope, however, that *Traditions and Beliefs*, a quarterly publication of the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD), will serve as a forum for the discussion of research, scholarly publications, and related activities. In the Arabic language, "RASHAD" means "good sense" or "good guidance," and we will strive to live up to our name.

For several years, individuals in the Department of History have worked with campus and community partners to implement programs dealing with issues related to religion and spirituality in history, and the response has been positive. From Dr. Michael Gomez's 2004 lecture on "African Muslims in Colonial and Antebellum America" to the ongoing "Praying Grounds" oral history project, people from many walks of life have demonstrated their interest in these subjects.

To date, our work has been interdisciplinary in nature. The Black Studies Program and the Religious Studies Department were among the many CSU offices to offer financial support for programs based in the Department of History. In 2006, Dr. Michael Tevesz, Director of the Center for Sacred Landmarks, met with us to discuss preliminary plans for this initiative, and he later offered invaluable advice on how to get started.

In the surrounding community, John Carroll University's Religious Studies Department hosted and co-sponsored the international academic conference, "Homegoings, Crossings, and Passings: Life and Death in the African Diaspora," in 2005. Thanks to JCU, the conference program included a brilliant keynote lecture by the renowned Duke University scholar, Dr. Karla FC Holloway. This year, we are pleased to be working with yet another community partner, Nancy Nolan Jones, Director of the African American Museum, as she collects and processes oral history narratives.

Interdisciplinary work will continue to be a top priority in fall 2007, when Prof. Barbara Walker (English) and Dr. Richard Klein (Urban Studies) join forces with me to launch a new Learning Community for incoming freshmen. "Cities, Sanctuaries, and Social Change in American History and Literature" will allow students to satisfy the University's General Education requirements, while they study the social impact of religion and spirituality in "African American History Since 1877" (HIS 216), "Cleveland: Past, Present, and Future" (UST 202), and "Freshman English" (ENG 101), where they will read, among other things, the literary works of James Baldwin (1924-1987). An internationally acclaimed writer, Baldwin spent many years as a "boy preacher" in New York's Harlem community.

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## NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

BY NANCY NOLAN JONES

Greetings from the African American Museum! We are busy developing our Millennium Reorganization Plan while the Crawford Road facility (pictured on page 2) is closed. We are particularly excited about the new educational focus and our efforts to document and preserve African American oral histories.

We launched the oral history project by interviewing three generations of family members working with the E.F. Boyd and Sons Funeral Homes. We conducted over twenty hours of oral history interviews, beginning with Mr. and Mrs. William F. Boyd, Sr.

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# THE SCHOLARS' CORNER

## PRAYING GROUNDS RESEARCH TEAM PARTICIPATES IN STARS CONFERENCE

Four members of the CSU Praying Grounds research team gave presentations at the 15th Annual Student Achievement in Research and Scholarship (STARS) Statewide Conference, March 9-11, 2007, in Bowling Green, Ohio. As the 2006 -2007 Lloyd O. Brown Research Fellow, Patrick Duhaney had the honor of delivering the opening address on Saturday morning.

Duhaney completed the requirements for his undergraduate degree in December 2006 (Sociology, Magna Cum Laude). He plans to pursue his doctorate at the University of Cincinnati.

Beverly Brown, Kevin Ray, and Geraldine Washington also gave presentations on different aspects of their Praying Grounds research, and Dr. Regennia N. Williams was named the 2007 STARS Mentor of the Year for her work

with the Praying Grounds research team.

As the description in the CSU undergraduate catalog suggests, "STARS is a faculty-driven, incentive-based mentoring program for high-ability students who are preparing for graduate school and ultimately for academic careers. Administratively, STARS is a consortium of 16 Ohio universities and two community colleges." Serreta Archer is Program Manager for the CSU STARS Program.



"The Negro church of today is the social center of Negro life in the United States."

- W.E.B. Du Bois, 1903

### FEATURED WEBSITE

The Center for Historical Studies at The University of Maryland

For information on their seminar series, "The Power of Belief: Religion in History," visit: [www.history.umd.edu/HistoryCenter](http://www.history.umd.edu/HistoryCenter).

### RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Williams, Regennia. "Of Griots and Grace: The Art of Oral History and the History of African American Religion." The Black History Bulletin 68, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 15-23.

## INTRODUCING THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR THE RASHAD INITIATIVE: KRISTEN HOEGLER

Kristen Hoegler will serve as the Assistant Director for the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD) during the spring of 2007. Hoegler graduated from the University of Toledo in 2005 with a B.A. in history and a B.E. in adolescent education. Her goal is to teach high school social studies in the Cleveland area after she completes the Master of Arts in History program at Cleveland State. Her research interests include African American history as it relates to community action and other projects relating to Greater Cleveland. She is currently examining the history of the Ludlow Community Association and evaluating its role as a model organization for planned integration.

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

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We also interviewed their children: Marina and her husband Owen, William Jr. (aka "Pepper"), and Marcella. We finished up with interviews of granddaughters Lisa and Victoria.

It was wonderful to learn more about family members' decisions to join the business, their different positions within the company, their views about the industry, and the Boyd family's commitment to community involvement.

By summer 2007, biographical sketches of all interviewees will be available through the African American Museum's On-Line Reference Library. The Museum also donated copies of these interviews to the CSU "Praying Grounds" Oral History Project, our new partner in the university community. We hope that you will enjoy using these materials as much as we enjoyed developing them.



### SAVE THE DATE!

Please plan to attend a panel discussion on "Religion, Race, and Rights: The View from Cleveland, Ohio in 1964" on Sunday, April 22, 2007, 3 p.m. at Cory United Methodist Church, 1117 East 105th St. This event is sponsored by RASHAD, the African American Museum, the Ohio Humanities Council, and *The Call and Post* newspaper. Admission is free!

## A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR

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Baldwin's knowledge of the influence of the church in African American social history provided him with abundant source material for many of his plays, novels, and essays.

Like Baldwin, we understand that there are many ways to study and teach others about religion and spirituality in history and culture, and we invite you to join us in exploring them.

## THE INITIATIVE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE HISTORY OF AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA (RASHAD)

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