

The

# RASHAD

Center, Inc.

*Traditions & Beliefs*

## Summer 2020 Newsletter

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Featuring the Williams Family Singers
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## Place Matters: Central Avenue, Church History, and the Contributions of Two Generations of Gospel Music Lovers



*In August 1959, Nathaniel Williams, Sr. and Lonzrine Williams (top, c. 1955) were both founding members of Cleveland, Ohio's New Joshua Missionary Baptist Church, which was located at 7701 Central Avenue for many years. Their six children, (left to right, c. 1995): Lana, Lisa, Regennia, Kimberly, Irma, and Nathaniel Jr.) trace their musical roots to New Joshua and perform together as the Williams Family Singers.*

### ***Traditions & Beliefs***

The *Traditions & Beliefs* Newsletter  
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*(On the cover: Statuary Art, St. Adalbert / Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church in Cleveland, Ohio. Photograph by Regennia N. Williams)*

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### *From the Editor . . .*

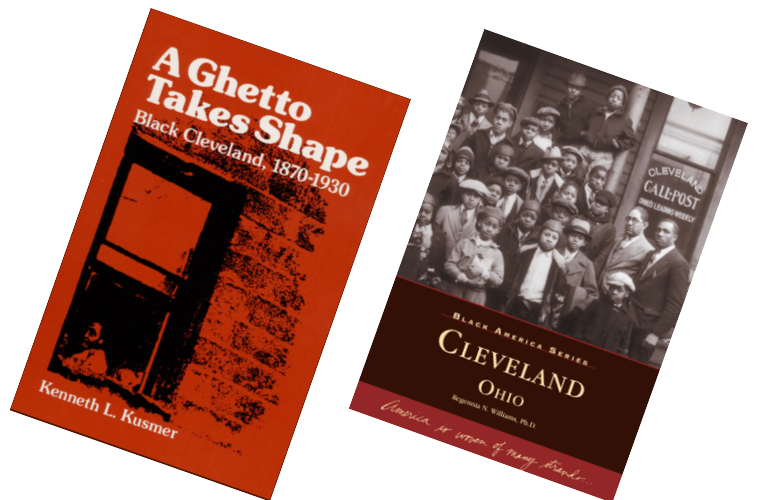
#### **Silver Anniversary Celebrations in the Time of COVID-19: Writing a New Chapter in the History of Black Cleveland**

Practicing good hand hygiene, social distancing, working remotely, sheltering in place, avoiding large crowds, meeting via Zoom or Free Conference Call, and challenging injustice. These are among the things that have become commonplace in the era of COVID-19. As a result, both writing history and participating in live performances of gospel music have been especially difficult for those who enjoy the mass choir sound and live performances that I had envisioned for my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary summer of “Teaching African American History through Sacred Music.” What actually materialized, however, was the pilot for the Internet television series that board member Theresa Ann Bumpers envisioned, “C-L-E / Arts and Culture TV,” one of the tools that RASHAD will use in the future for its virtual educational programs. With fewer than 10 dedicated people—including Theresa, five members of the Williams Family Singers (pictured below with vocalist Jennifer Holliday, second from left, in a 2011 archival photo), and genius videographer Alexander Garret, we couldn’t go wrong! You can read more about this project in this issue. We look forward to sharing the entire television series in 2021—and writing a new chapter in the history of Black Cleveland that will complement our existing publications.

**Happy Silver Anniversary Summer, and . . .**

Take care, be well, “act justly,” and God bless!

*Regennia*



*The above titles have done much to inform readers about the history of Black Cleveland, but there is still a need for more research.*

## Launching “C-L-E /Arts and Culture TV”



*Program host Theresa Ann Bumpers, a member of RASHAD’s Board of Directors, is pictured here during the opening segment.*

Hello! My name is Theresa Ann Bumpers, and I have the privilege of introducing our new television series, “**C-L-E / Arts and Culture TV.**” This program was produced by the Center for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (The RASHAD Center, Inc.), an international nonprofit organization designed to expand an intergenerational audience’s appetite for excellence in the arts and humanities-- past, present, and future.

RASHAD is the brainchild of Dr. Regennia N. Williams, and the television series is the joint effort of yours truly, Theresa Ann Bumpers, and Dr. Williams. Please join us for each episode, as we present new artists, whose revelation of their gifts is still fresh, and some seasoned artists who have demonstrated the gifts that God created in them for many years. Our first program was filmed in the beautiful sanctuary of the St. Adalbert / Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church, where Father Gary is Pastor.

The featured guests were the Williams Family Singers, under the dynamic leadership of Pastor Nathaniel Williams Jr. *(Continued on page 6.)*

*Theresa Anna Bumpers interviewed Pastor Nathaniel Williams, Jr. for the pilot project.*





(Above, left to right)

*The flags of the church, Black America, and the United States of America are displayed in the sanctuary of St. Adalbert / Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church.*



(Above) Four of the sisters in the Williams Family Singers are pictured in stills from the program video. They are (clockwise from the top left) Irma, Lana, Regennia, and Lisa.

(Left) Pastor Nathaniel Williams, Jr. plays the piano while Pastor Irma J. Williams sings the solo on “How I Got Over.”



*Members of the Williams Family Singers, (left to right) Irma, Lana, Lisa, and Regennia.*

*(Continued from page 4.)*

I want to thank Rev. Williams for those exciting musical selections from his talented family. Families that enjoy being together, performing together, and growing together always lift me. In addition to his work with his family and various churches, Pastor Williams also served as the pianist and chorus master for the debut performance by the Spiritual Gifts Gospel Chorus, which took place at Cleveland State University just over 25 years ago. In the summer of 2020, RASHAD wrapped up the Silver Anniversary Celebration of the inaugural season for that group.

In the future, we are going to be blessed with more exciting presentations by Cleveland families and individuals. Our invited guests include pianist and vocalist Ms. Lucretia Colston Bolden and her daughter Lacreteria Bolden (also known as “Ti Ti”), a Central State University alumna, a vocalist, and a gifted and talented multi-instrumentalist.

Please know that RASHAD also plans to explore the work of other diverse artists, including those specializing in dance, graphic arts, photography, and the literary arts. We would like for you to share your ideas with us about potential guests who are outstanding in their fields. Please remember to follow us on Facebook at **C-L-E / Arts and Culture TV**, and visit the **RASHAD Center, Inc.’s** blog site.

Thank you for your support, and remember, as Duke Ellington used to say, “We love you madly!”

*Theresa Ann Bumpers*



*This view of downtown Cleveland’s lakefront includes the Rock N Roll Hall of Fame and Museum (center), a popular destination for anyone in search of arts programming in the city. (Photograph by Regennia N. Williams.)*

## *From the Archives . . .*

### **The Season That I Knew Lou Ragland**

By Theresa Ann Bumpers.

Whenever I learn about the death of a contemporary, it makes me think about my own mortality and what I am doing to thicken the horizontal line between then and now. After all, time goes on, whether we put anything in that space or not. Such was the case when I learned of the death of Lou Ragland (1942-2020). I met Lou about 43 years ago, when my oldest son was a baby. Lou had a vision for developing a record company. Although he wanted to be the first featured artist, he didn't want to deal with the necessary administration of this brand new company. All he wanted to do was write music and sing.

So he put together a board of directors, whose task was to manage every aspect of Spiritual Motion in Harmony

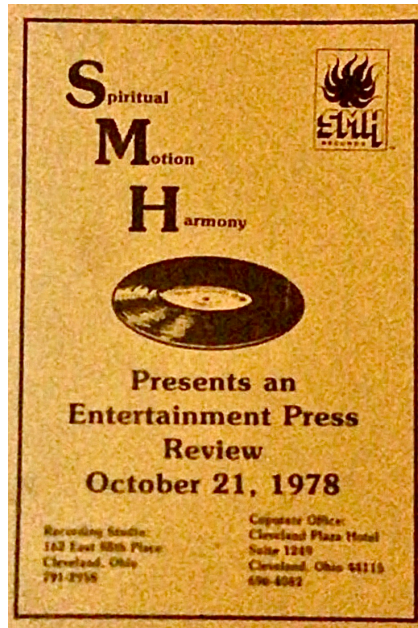
(SMH), which was the name that Lou created for the record company. Fannie Lewis was the president, yours truly, Theresa Ann Bumpers, was the Vice President / Secretary, and Kay Zucker was the Treasurer.

At our first business meeting, I had to bring Alex, my four-month-old son. All through the pre-meeting chatter and Lou's opening comments, Alex slept. But as soon as Fannie Lewis went to the blackboard, Alex started crying and would not be consoled by me. I was so embarrassed that I offered to leave. Even so, the late, great Fannie Lewis would not hear of it. She stopped writing and said, "Parents should always allow their children to be part of anything important that they are doing." Then she said, "Give me that baby!" She took Alex on one arm and continued writing on the board with the other arm the steps we needed to take to introduce our new company to the public. We were so excited. Finally, the day for the debut came, but Lou Ragland did not perform. He had recently begun a spiritual journey, and he was not permitted to perform on that day.

I don't know why he did not tell us in advance, however, I do know this: "Profound disappointment can only create the illusion of failure, but only the dreamer can kill the dream." Our lives are witnesses to that fact. In the first place, we wanted to help people, including our attorney Lillian Greene.

Clevelanders know that Fannie Lewis went on to become an outstanding councilwoman, representing ward 7 for almost 30 years. I continued my career as a comprehensive educator for the Cleveland Public Schools, and I teach and perform music to this day. Kay Zucker continued her career as a sought-after market researcher for Cleveland and the Metropolitan Statistical Area. Lou Ragland, of course, went on to compose many of the songs that he sang and recorded and was considered an outstanding artist and sought-after entertainer in Las Vegas and other cities for four decades after he left Cleveland.

Lou Ragland passed on in his adopted hometown of Las Vegas on August 19, 2020, but his vision and artistry live on through his recordings.



*The above pages are from the program booklet for the record company launch. Pictured on the "Board of Directors" page (clockwise from the top left) are Fannie Lewis, Theresa Ann Bumpers, Kay Zucker, and Lou Ragland.*

*Coming Soon . . .*

## **Autumn Leaves and Gospel Gold**



### **An October 2020 Sneak Preview of Our Online Television Series**

Please follow C-L-E / Arts and Culture TV on Facebook  
to receive program announcements and updates.

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