



Traditions & Beliefs

A Quarterly Publication of the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD)

Volume 9, Issue 1

Reflections on Academic Life & Legacies

“In the Arabic language, ‘RASHAD’ means ‘good sense’ or ‘good guidance,’ and we will strive to live up to our name.”

*Dr. Regennia N. Williams,
Debut Issue of RASHAD’s
Traditions & Beliefs Newsletter
(Spring 2007)*



*Top: Regennia N. Williams (left) and Judge Sara J. Harper. See related story on page 2.
Bottom: Richard Davis, award-winning bassist and oral history narrator. See page 7 for more information.*

There is something about approaching the end of one leg of life’s journey that always causes me to pause, and reflect on some of the most memorable milestones along the way. Now that I have submitted my letter of resignation to the Interim Chair of Cleveland State University’s Department of History (effective the last day of the 2015 spring semester), I feel compelled to share some of those reflections with readers of the *Traditions & Beliefs Newsletter*. Among other things, I have really fond memories of the following milestones:

- 1993, Received my first contract to teach in the Department of History
- 2001-2002, Directed the Award-Winning Langston Hughes Centennial Celebration
- 2003, Launched *Praying Grounds: African American Faith Communities, A Documentary and Oral History Project*
- 2007, Earned tenure and launched the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD) and *The Traditions & Beliefs Newsletter*
- 2008, Founded *Spiritual Gifts: A Professional Black Sacred Music Repertory Ensemble*
- 2009-2010, Received Fulbright Fellowship for research on the recent social history of religion among Nigerian women and teaching at Nigeria’s Obafemi Awolowo University; published the debut issue of *The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs*, and created the RASHAD Endowment Fund

continued on page 6

Traditions and Beliefs Newsletter Fall 2014 Table of Contents

- 1 Reflections on Academic Life & Legacies
- 2 Community Birthday Reception for Judge Sara J. Harper
- 3 Preliminary Praying Grounds Inventory
- 6 Preliminary Praying Grounds Inventory *continued* & Reflections on Academic Life and Legacies *continued*
- 7 On the Road with RASHAD
- 8 Save These Dates!

Dr. Regennia N. Williams, Founder and Editor | Read more on the Internet!

Website: clevelandmemory.org/pray | Cleveland Chautauqua Blog: rwilliams.csuelearning.org

Happy 88th Birthday to Judge Sara J. Harper

In 2007, Ms. Ebony Cooper, a research assistant for the Praying Grounds Oral History Project, interviewed retired Judge Sara J. Harper in the sanctuary of the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church. In August of 2014, RASHAD joined others in celebrating Judge Harper's 88th birthday at the Outhwaite Homes Community Center. Judge Harper, a former Girl Scout, spent part of her childhood in the Outhwaite Homes. Today, she is the founder and director

of the Sara J. Harper Children's Library, which is located in the Outhwaite Homes Community Center. The program included the world premiere of a video, "The Sixties and the Struggle," with excerpts from Judge Harper's Praying Grounds interview, music by the Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus, and remarks by Judge Harper, Judge Pamela A. Barker, and the Rev. Dr. Larry L. Harris, Sr., pastor of the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church.



Left to Right, Top to Bottom: Maestro Glenn Brackens directs the Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus. The Rev. Dr. Larry Harris congratulates Judge Harper. The cake! The Harper Sisters (left to right) Constance, Sara, and Gloria Jean. Chief Natoya Walker Minor presented Judge Harper with a proclamation from the City of Cleveland. Members of Girl Scout Troop 75217. Judge Pamela Barker addresses the audience.



Praying Grounds: African American Faith Communities, A Documentary and Oral History Project

Preliminary Inventory

Prepared by

Dr. Regennia N. Williams, Founder and Director &
Mr. William D. Simpson, Volunteer Program Associate

August 2014

Description:

In the summer of 2003, Dr. Regennia N. Williams, a faculty member in the Department of History at Cleveland State University, launched Praying Grounds: African American Faith Communities, A Documentary and Oral History project. With cash and/or in-kind support from United Pastors in Mission, CSU's Instructional Media Services, Library Special Collections, the Black Studies Program, and her own resources, Dr. Williams began to collect documentary evidence related to African American religious history and recordings of oral history narratives. Mrs. Gladys Goodloe, one of the original members of the renowned Wings Over Jordan Choir and a member of Cleveland's Antioch Baptist Church, was the first interviewee. As a result of its weekly and daily broadcasts, national concert tours, and USO-sponsored tours during World War II, Wings Over Jordan gained an international audience. Initially, Mrs. Goodloe was one of the group's youngest members, having joined the choir when she was a student at Cleveland's Central High School. In addition to her oral history, Mrs. Goodloe allowed Williams to make digital copies of numerous Wings Over Jordan-related documents, and those items are now available at www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/.

Over the years, Praying Grounds has received additional support from Wings Over Jordan Alumni and Friends,

Inc., the Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus, CSU's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, the Department of History, the Ohio Center for Broadcasting, and, under the umbrella of the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD), the Ohio Humanities Council, an independent, nonprofit organization funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities; and others.

The Praying Grounds collection now includes over 100 hours of studio-quality oral history interviews, primary and secondary sources related to the Wings Over Jordan Choir (Rev. Glenn T. Settle, founder), the radio and television archives for "I Believe in God Ministries" (Rev. Fred Robinson, founder), materials related to Dr. Williams' 2010 Fulbright research in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, and hundreds of items related to the history of African American religion and sacred music. Currently, Dr. Williams is working with CSU's Michael Schwartz Library to digitize the entire Praying Grounds oral history collection, and make it available online via EngagedScholarship@CSU.

For more information on Praying Grounds, call (216) 523-7182, write to r.williams@csuohio.edu, or visit www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/.

Preliminary Praying Grounds Inventory

Continued

Brief Description of Materials in Each “Praying Grounds” (PG) Box

- PG 1**
Praying Grounds Oral History Project: Completed “Informed Consent Forms” and “Deed of Gift” Forms, Including Documents for Members of the Wings Over Jordan Celebration Choir and Wings Over Jordan Alumni and Friends, Inc.; “I Believe in God Ministries” Release Forms
- PG 2**
Praying Grounds Oral History Project: Digital Video Discs (DVDs) of Interviewees, A - L
- PG 3**
Praying Grounds Oral History DVDs, M - Y
- PG 4**
Miscellaneous Praying Grounds Interview Tapes, Concert and Studio Tapes for Spiritual Gifts and The Messengers of Joy; Spiritual Gifts Program DVDs, “Religion, Race, and Rights” (Cory United Methodist Church) DVDs
- PG 5**
VHS Tapes of Praying Grounds Interviews
- PG 6**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: Audio CDs and Cassette Tapes
- PG 7**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2003
- PG 8**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2004, Part 1 of 2
- PG 9**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2004, Part 2 of 2
- PG 10**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2005, Part 1 of 3
- PG 11**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2005, Part 2 of 3
- PG 12**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2005, Part 3 of 3
- PG 13**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2006, Part 1 of 2
- PG 14**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2006, Part 2 of 2
- PG 15**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2007, Part 1 of 2
- PG 16**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2007, Part 2 of 2
- PG 17**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, 2008
- PG 18**
The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, Miscellaneous / No Dates, Box 1 of 2

Preliminary Praying Grounds Inventory

Continued

Brief Description of Materials in Each “Praying Grounds” (PG) Box

PG 19

The “I Believe in God Ministries” Radio and Television Recording Collection of the Rev. Fred Robinson: VHS Tapes, Miscellaneous / No Dates, Box 2 of 2

PG 20

Long-Playing Gospel Record Albums and One 45 Record – “Beams of Heaven” / “Move on Up a Little Higher,” by Rev. Walter Humphrey (Cleveland’s Boddie Label)

PG 21

Spiritual Gifts’ Morning Star Workshop Audio Compact Disc (CD), Miscellaneous Paper Documents

PG 22

Various Audio CDs (Mostly Gospel Music)

PG 23

GIA Sheet Music

PG 24

Hymnals, Miscellaneous Sheet Music, Gospel and Spiritual Anthologies

PG 25

Hymnals: *The African American Hymnal* (GIA, Spiral Bound and Regular); Canvas Hymnal Bags

PG 26

Hymnals: *Total Praise*

PG 27

Photographs: Including First Year for Praying Grounds (2003) w/ Gladys Goodloe of the Original Wings Over Jordan Choir and RASHAD (2008)

PG 28

Audio Compact Discs and Cassette Tapes

PG 29

Miscellaneous Digital Compact Discs and VHS Tapes

PG 30

Miscellaneous Paper Documents

PG 31

Documents Related to The Messengers of Joy Choir (MOJ), The Spiritual Gifts Choir, The Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD) — Including Newsletters and Program Booklets

PG 32

Church Histories in Folders; Numerous Miscellaneous Documents

PG 33

Miscellaneous Paper Documents Related to African American Sacred Music (Programs, News Clippings, Etc.)

PG 34

Folders Containing Materials Related to African American Religious History, A-C

PG 35

Folders Containing Materials Related to African American Religious History, C-I

PG 36

Folders Containing Materials Related to African American Religious History, J-P

PG 37

Folders Containing Materials Related to African American Religious History, R-Z

PG 38

Program Folders / Information Packets; *American Legacy* and *American Legacy Woman Magazines*

PG 39

Materials Related to the Wings Over Jordan Choir, Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus, and Wings Over Jordan Alumni and Friends, Inc.

Preliminary Praying Grounds Inventory

Continued

**All 39 boxes were inspected, renumbered, and reorganized. Processors grouped materials into the following categories:*

- Correspondence
- Minutes from Meetings
- Financial Records
- Miscellaneous Documents (A-Z)
- The Wings Over Jordan Choir
- “I Believe in God” Ministries
- Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD)
- Funeral Programs
- Local Church Histories (By Congregation)
- History of African American Sacred Music
- History of African American Religion
- History of African Religions
- History of Praying Grounds
- Community Events
- Academic Conferences and Workshops
- *American Legacy Magazines*
- *American Legacy Woman Magazines*

**Subsets of the larger collection (audio-visual materials, photographs, etc.) are grouped together and cross-referenced throughout the finding aid. Oversize exhibition materials related to Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Duke Ellington, and others were removed.*

Processing will continue through 2015. For more information on the collection and related volunteer opportunities, please contact Dr. Regennia N. Williams at r.wiliams@csuohio.edu.

Reflections on Academic Life & Legacies

continued from page 1

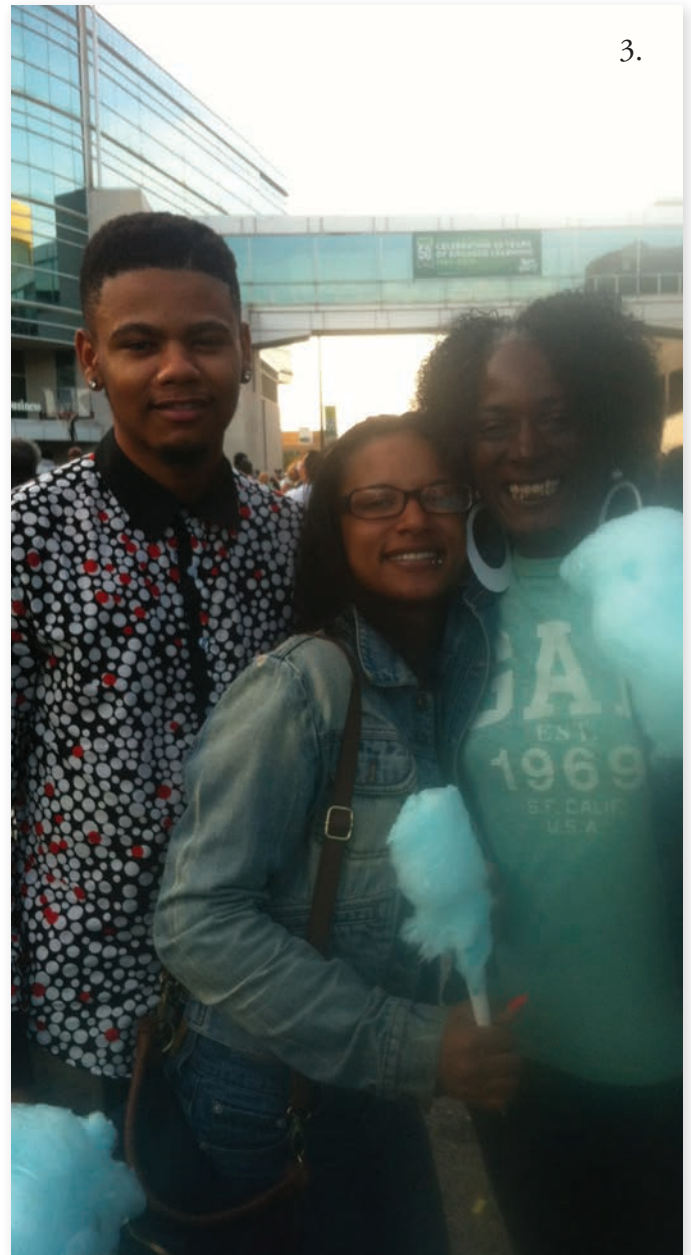
- 2012, Directed “Watching God and Reading Hurston: An International, Interdisciplinary Academic Conference”
- 2014, Planned the Community Birthday Reception for retired Judge Sara J. Harper, one of Cleveland’s most celebrated public servants and someone who has supported my research since the 1990s; worked with an incredible group of colleagues in University Marketing, University Archives, and Library Special Collections to produce *CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY: 50 YEARS – Proud Past, Unlimited Future*

After more than 20 years on the faculty—and a total of 35 years on the CSU campus, I am now officially in legacy mode. I am currently focusing on completing the processing of the Praying Grounds manuscript collection in the Michael Schwartz Library and strengthening the companion Cleveland Memory digital archive. This issue includes important updates on our progress to date.

Thank you for saying yes to Praying Grounds, RASHAD, and Spiritual Gifts, and please keep in touch. My CSU email address (until May 13, 2015) is r.williams@csuohio.edu. After that, I will still be a proud CSU alumna, library patron, and director of Praying Grounds, Spiritual Gifts, and RASHAD, but you will need to contact me off campus at Regennia@gmail.com or rmwbusinessenterprises@gmail.com.

—RNW

On the Road with RASHAD



1. CSU alumna Byrdie Lee and Bishop Arthur Williams are shown here at the November 1, 2014 meeting of the Wilma Ruth Combs Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE). The meeting was held at the Saint Andrews Episcopal Church, and the late Ms. Combs, a member of Saint Andrews, was interviewed in 2004 for the Praying Grounds Oral History Project.

2. Dr. Paul Ortiz (left), President of the Oral History Association, is shown here with Prof. Richard Davis at OHA's annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin. Dr. Regennia N. Williams interviewed Davis, who was named one of this year's Jazz Masters by the National Endowment for the Arts, on October 11, 2014 at OHA's Awards Dinner.

3. CSU History Department student and former RASHAD research assistant Ramone Smith (right) is pictured here with her children at CSU's 50th Anniversary Block Party on September 19, 2014.

Photos courtesy Regennia N. Williams.

RASHAD

Initiative for the Study of Religion
and Spirituality in the History of
Africa and the Diaspora

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www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/

Save These Dates!

Thursday, December 18, 2014, 8–11 *am* and 1–6 *pm*
**RASHAD's Holiday Coffee, Tea,
and Hot Chocolate Breaks**
CSU, Fenn Tower Ballroom *Do drop in!*

Thursday, December 18, 2014 at 11:30 *am*
Black Faculty and Staff Holiday Gathering
CSU, Fenn Tower Ballroom

Friday, December 19, 2014 at 7:00 *pm*
"Christmas Joy" Concert
*Featuring the Williams Family Singers and
the Spiritual Gifts Gospel Choir*
Hundredfold / Church of the Prophecy, 11213 Buckeye

Saturday, December 20, 2014 at 11:00 *am*
**The Holiday Spirit: A Soulful
African American Christmas Celebration**
Western Reserve Historical Society, 10825 East Boulevard
**Admission – Call (216) 721-5722 for more information.*

Sunday, January 18, 2015
Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Concert
Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall
11001 Euclid Avenue
**Free. Limited number of tickets available on a first-come first-
served basis. Call (216) 231-1111 for more information.*

Thursday, February 12, 2015 at 7:00 *pm*
Women of the Harlem Renaissance
Lecture by Dr. Regennia N. Williams and
Dramatic Readings by Other Guests
Maple Heights Library, 5225 Library Lane
(Near Broadway and Libby)

**All events are free, unless otherwise noted.*