



# 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 6, Issue 1

*Hurston photo used with permission from the Zora Neale Hurston Trust*



## Hurston Conference scheduled for *September 19–22, 2012*

In September of 2012, RASHAD will host **Watching God and Reading Hurston**, an interdisciplinary academic conference. This Cleveland Chautauqua project will commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston's most famous novel. Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) was an anthropologist, a novelist, a folklorist, a playwright, and a history maker in her own right. A product of the Harlem Renaissance, she is often described as one of the greatest literary artists of the twentieth century. For more information on Hurston, please visit [www.zoranealehurston.com](http://www.zoranealehurston.com). The CSU conference will encourage participants to consider Hurston's contributions to world culture, especially as those contributions relate to the study of religion and spirituality in the history of Africa and the Diaspora. Dr. Cheryl A. Wall, the Board of Governors Zora Neale Hurston Professor of English at Rutgers University, will deliver the keynote address. For registration information and detailed information on the conference program, please visit <http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/hurston/>.

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Dr. Regennia N. Williams, Founder and Editor | Read more on the Internet!  
Website: [www.clevelandmemory.org/pray/](http://www.clevelandmemory.org/pray/) | Cleveland Chautauqua Blog: [rwilliams.csuelearning.org/](http://rwilliams.csuelearning.org/)

# Praying Grounds: The Tenth Year

*Dr. Regennia N. Williams*



*Photo: This collage, which appears on the Praying Grounds website, includes elements from photographs in the Cleveland Press Collection. The subjects in the foreground are (from left to right) the Rev. Earl Preston, Jr., Mary Holt, and the Rev. Dr. Wade Hampton McKinney. The Antioch Baptist Church and an unidentified woman are shown in the background.*

In June of 2003, five African American Christians agreed to share with me their life stories and information related to the histories of their churches. I interviewed each of these individuals in Instructional Media Services' television studio on the seventh floor of CSU's Rhodes Tower building, a location that, until 2003, I knew nothing about. In giving so generously of their time, Gladys Goodloe, the Rev. Earl Preston, Jr., Helen Turner Thompson, the Rev. Henry J. Payden, and June Sallee Antoine helped me launch **Praying Grounds: African American Faith Communities, A Documentary and Oral History**.

Over the years, the Praying Grounds project has created job opportunities for approximately twenty undergraduate and graduate student research assistants, and the videographers and other library staff members became some of my closest colleagues. Our research team continued to collect oral history narratives in the on-campus studio and, increasingly, in the churches and homes of our interviewees. Today, the Praying Grounds collection includes more than 100 studio-quality interviews of American-born Christians and Muslims in Ohio and Massachusetts and others from communities in Nigeria and Senegal. Together, the interviews, the transcripts, and related manuscript materials document the evolving role of religion in the social and cultural histories of an incredibly diverse group of faith communities.

Already, the Praying Grounds project has been the subject of conference presentations Ohio, New York, Louisiana, and Georgia. Interviews from this collection were included in the body of evidence analyzed in "Sing a Good Song When I am Gone," chapter four in *Homegoings, Crossings, and Passings: Life and Death in the African Diaspora* (2011).

Now that the project is in its tenth year, I have established the following goals for 2013:

1. Finish editing all of the interview transcripts;
2. Work with interns from the in Ohio Center for Broadcasting to process the Praying Grounds manuscript materials (all 38 boxes) housed in the Special Collections area of the Michael Schwartz Library;
3. Digitize the documentary evidence in the collection, and add it to the Cleveland Memory Project;
4. Update the website to reflect the above changes; and
5. Recruit and train a team of oral historians who will continue this important work throughout the global community.

I'm convinced that, in time, the project will serve as a model for others who share my interest in the history of religion and spirituality in Africa and the Diaspora.

For more information on Praying Grounds, please visit our website at [www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/](http://www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/).

# From Bandung to Baghdad: Africa and Asia in the Postcolonial Experience

By Ali A. Mazrui

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For more information, please visit: <http://www2.binghamton.edu/igcs/>.



Selections from Keynote Address at an international conference on “Fifty Years Beyond Bandung: Linkages Between Africa, Asia and the Diaspora,” sponsored by Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio, April 21–22, 2006. \*Published in *Traditions and Beliefs* with permission from the author.

The Bandung Conference of 1955 was the antithesis of the Berlin Conference of 1885. The Berlin Conference of 1885, hosted by Bismarck, was an assembly of imperial powers of the West scheming on ways to colonize Africa. The Bandung Conference of 1955 (70 years after Berlin) was an assembly of the colonized countries and formerly colonized, scheming on how to defeat the remnants of colonialism.

A distinguished German figure – Otto von Bismarck – hosted the assembly of colonizers on the eve of the partition of Africa late in the nineteenth century. In 1955 a distinguished Indonesian figure – Sukarno – hosted the assembly of the colonized on the eve of the decolonization of Africa.

In 1855 most of Black Africa was still free – but about to be subjected to colonialism. In 1955 most of Black Africa was subjugated – but about to experience the winds of liberation.

The five years – 1953 to 1957 – were pregnant with great formative events concerning relations between the West and the developing world. In 1953, the world witnessed the end of the Korean War – with a stalemate between the

mighty power of the United States leading a United Nations “coalition of the willing,” on one side, and communist North Korea supported by so-called “volunteers” from the People’s Republic of China.

That the Korean War ended in a stalemate and a ceasefire rather than the defeat of North Korea was one of the early shifts in power between the mighty Northern hemisphere and the much less developed Southern.

The following year witnessed another great indicator that developing countries need not necessarily be on the losing side of North-South conflicts. Events were unfolding which would constitute more than just a wind of change. A benign hurricane was about to shift the course of history.

The French colonizers of Vietnam were defeated by the Vietnamese in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The days of a French Empire in Asia were coming to an end. The Vietnamese militarily defeated the French 20 years before they defeated the Americans.

1954 was also the year when the Algerian War of Independence broke out. The same France which had been humiliated by the Vietnamese, now faced the challenge of North African nationalists in Algeria.

But 1954 was also a year pregnant with fundamental changes for the African Diaspora. In Washington, D.C. the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its momentous decision regarding *Brown versus the Board of Education*. The old racial doctrine of separate but equal was abandoned.

But these three winds or hurricanes of change in 1954 had divergent consequences.

In the U.S.A. *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* signified the beginning of the end of overt racial segregation of the country. The changes which followed made not only Black people freer but made the United States a more democratic society.

For Algeria 1954 turned out to be truly ironic. The Algerian struggle for independence (1954-1962) not only helped Algeria to attain sovereignty but helped France achieve greater stability.

Three years after Bandung (i.e., 1958), France faced the risk of a civil war in the streets of Paris – not because Algerian nationalists had come to France, but because the war in Algeria had precipitated a colossal crisis. The crisis eventually had the following consequences:

- (a) Charles de Gaulle ascended to power once again.
- (b) There was a constitutional change from unstable Fourth Republic to a more stable Fifth Republic.
- (c) De Gaulle asserted greater French independence from U.S. leadership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- (d) De Gaulle accelerated the march of France into a nuclear power.
- (e) De Gaulle strengthened French power and influence in the European Economic Community (now European Union).

By fighting for their independence Algerians changed more than the history of Algeria – they changed the history of France, Europe and the world.



The Vietnamese triumph at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 defeated France, but did not reunite Vietnam. The American phase of the war in Vietnam cost at least three million Vietnamese lives and nearly 60 thousand American lives. But Vietnam in the end illustrated that a poor and underdeveloped Asian country could militarily defeat a super power – the United States.

Afghanistan a decade later illustrated that an even poorer underdeveloped country could defeat another superpower – the Soviet Union. Indeed the defeat of the U.S.S.R. in Afghanistan may have been the most important cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The peoples of the Bandung legacy, when struggling for their independence, could dramatically change the course of global history. Another illustration was the anticolonial struggle in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau against Portuguese imperialism. By 1970 Portugal had become the most backward European country in Europe after Albania. Throughout its modern history Portugal had turned its back on every progressive force in European history.

Portugal resisted the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Reformation, the industrial revolution and the French and American revolutions.

And then Africans fighting for their independence led to the collapse of the old Fascist order in Lisbon. Portugal lost the colonies and gained democracy, modernity and European identity.

It remains to be seen whether the Iraqi insurgency will one day defeat the Americans in the same way as the North Vietnamese communists defeated the United States, or the Mujahidden in Afghanistan defeated the old Soviet Union.

But what some of the descendants of Bandung have already demonstrated is yet another fundamental change. In the past when developing countries fought the West militarily, the blood was spilled on the soil of the developing countries.

In Kenya Mau Mau fought the British on Kenyan soil. Not a single Mau Mau shot was fired in London. Angolans and Mozambicans fought the Portuguese – but blood was not spilled in Lisbon.

Vietnamese fought the French in Dien Bien Phu – not in the port of Marseilles. Malay communists fought against the British in the 1950s – but in the jungles of Malaya rather than the streets of Manchester.

In 1956 Britain and France invaded Port Said in Egypt and Israel invaded the Sinai. Once again, it was on the soil of the victim that blood was spilled.

The Mujahiddeen in Afghanistan engaged the Soviets in the hills of Afghanistan – not in Leningrad or Moscow. The Americans killed and were killed in the jungles of Vietnam – not in the alleyways of Chicago or Washington, D.C.

What was remarkable about September 11, 2001 was that militants from the Third World had brought the battle into the heartland of the most powerful Western country in history. At the World Trade Center and at the Pentagon, the Empire was struck back in the capital of the Empire itself.

The Pakistani Diaspora in London in July 2005 struck at the British railway infrastructure and killed people. Later in the same month the Diaspora of the Horn of Africa also struck at London.

In Spain in 2004 the railway system in Madrid was hit seemingly by North Americans. The Moors – who had been expelled from Spain in the fifteenth century – were back in Madrid not as conquerors but as fighters. Between the global North and the global South a new equilibrium had been inaugurated – an equilibrium of mutual vulnerability.

But Africans, Asians and the Diaspora have not always fought for their rights with lethal weapons. Other forms of resistance have been tried out by descendants of the Bandung conference. The historian E.H. Carr was wrong in bracketing Gandhism and Christianity together as “doctrines of non-resistance.”<sup>1</sup> What Gandhi provided to Black nationalism was the element of resistance to the passivity of imperial Christianity. Carr was certainly wrong in extending the description of ‘boycott of politics’ to Gandhism as well as to Christianity. If politics is an activity between groups rather than between individuals, then Gandhism was almost a politicization of Christian doctrine. As Martin Luther King, Jr., the African-American leader, put it:

Prior to reading Gandhi I had about concluded that the ethics of Jesus were only effective in individual relationships. The ‘turn the other cheek’ philosophy and the ‘love your enemies’ philosophy were only valid, I felt, when individuals were in conflict with other individuals... Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale....<sup>2</sup>

The Reverend Dr. King came to feel that Gandhism was “the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.”<sup>3</sup>

It is, in fact, one of the curious things of history that, outside India itself, the torch of Gandhism came to be passed not to his fellow Asians, but to Blacks both in the New World and in Africa. It is not without significance that the first non-white winners of the Nobel Prize for Peace were Ralph Bunche, Chief Albert Luthuli, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Archbishop Desmond Tutu – two Black Americans and two Black South Africans.

Perhaps Gandhi himself would not have been surprised. Quite early in his life he saw non-violent resistance as a method which would be well-suited for the African as well as the Indian. In 1924 Gandhi said that if the black people “caught the spirit of the Indian movement their progress must be rapid.”<sup>4</sup>

In 1936 Gandhi went even further. And to understand his claim one should perhaps link it up with something which was later said by his disciple, Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru said: “Reading through history I think the agony of the African continent... has not been equaled anywhere.”<sup>5</sup>

To the extent then that the black man had more to be angry about than other men, he would need greater self-discipline than others to be “passive” in his resistance. But by the same token, to the extent that the black people in the last three centuries had suffered more than any other, passive but purposeful self-sacrifice for the cause should come easier to them. And to the extent that the black people had more to forgive the rest of the world for, that forgiveness when it came should be all the more weighty. Perhaps in response to adding up these considerations, Gandhi came to the conclusion by 1936 that it was “maybe through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world.”<sup>6</sup> In fact it was not the torch of non-violence which Africa has inherited: Africa has independently manifested a short memory of hate. Kenyatta proclaimed suffering without bitterness; Ian Smith in Zimbabwe was forgiven by his Black victims; Gowon pacified the Nigerian civil war; and, finally, Nelson Mandela was magnanimous in South Africa. But what do we mean by Africa’s short memory of hate? Hate-retention varies by culture. Armenians, the Irish, the Jews have long memories of grievance. Africa’s short memory of hate has gone to the extent of trivializing its own entitlement to reparations for centuries of humiliation.

### **The Cooperative Factor: From Afro-Asianism to Nonalignment**

Four inter-related political forces helped to bring Africa and Asia closer together in the twentieth century, at least for a while. One was the bond of being fellow victims of European

racial and pigmentational arrogance (racial solidarity). Second was the bond of being fellow victims of European cultural and civilizational arrogance (cultural solidarity). Third was the bond of being fellow victims of actual and direct Western imperialism and colonization (anti-imperial solidarity). And fourth was the bond of attempted disengagement from the Cold War while it lasted (the solidarity of nonalignment).

The first two bonds (those of racial and cultural solidarities) resulted in historic Afro-Asian movements. The most famous was the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955 which brought together emerging leaders of the two continents in a shared struggle against Western hegemony.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly racial and cultural solidarity were closely linked to the struggle against imperialism - the third foundation of Afro-Asian solidarity. But in time imperialism was defined not simply as old style territorial colonization and annexation by Europe, but also as continuing Western hegemony and control, including the powerful and ominous shadow of the United States on other countries.

But by this extended definition of imperialism, it was not merely Asia and Africa which had been dominated by the West. It was also Latin America. The concept of “the Third World” entered the vocabulary of international politics in the 1960s. The First World was the world of technologically advanced capitalist countries economically led by the United States, Germany and Japan. The First World was politically led by the United States, Britain and France. The Second World in much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the world of technologically advanced socialist countries, led or dominated by the Soviet Union at the time, but encompassing also such healthier economies as that of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. (The Soviet Union has since disintegrated, and Czechoslovakia has split into Czech and Slovak Republics).

The Third World was the world of developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America - ranging from Brazil to Botswana, from Pakistan to Paraguay, from China to Chad. The People’s Republic of China insisted on being regarded as part of the developing world rather than being associated with either the Warsaw Pact or with the status of a potential superpower.

The extension of Afro-Asian solidarity to include Latin America had wide ramifications for the whole emerging paradigm of “North-South relations” in the global domain. It affected alliances in such United Nations fora as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and cooperation in the Uruguay Round, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the newly emerging successor to GATT, the World Trade Organization.<sup>8</sup>



*Dr. Ali A. Mazrui (front row, third from right) and other presenters at CSU's April 2006 "Fifty Years Beyond Bandung" conference*

The expansion of Afro-Asian solidarity to encompass Latin America was also part of the foundation of the Nonaligned Movement (NAM). However, it is worth remembering that the Nonaligned Movement included a European component right from the start. Its first conference was indeed held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, September 1-6, 1961. Other European members since then have included Cyprus and Malta.<sup>9</sup>

The purposes of the Nonalignment Movement were originally inspired by a concern about the arms race between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact. The original 25 members of the movement aspired to influence the world towards both disarmament and increasing decolonization.

Over the decades the Movement has retained the ambition of pursuing "peace, achievement of disarmament, and settlement of disputes by peaceful means." It has also remained committed to self-determination and independence "for all peoples living under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation." But the Nonaligned Movement has also increasingly emphasized "sustainable and environmentally sound development," the promotion of "fundamental rights

and freedom" and the quest for strengthening "the role and effectiveness of the United Nations."<sup>10</sup>

Above all the Nonaligned Movement has been advocating "a transition from the old world order based on domination to a new order based on freedom, equality and social justice and the well-being of all."<sup>11</sup>

Africa and Asia are still the senior continents in the movement and have hosted most of the conferences to date. Indeed, until the mid-1990s only one conference had been hosted in Latin America - and that was the conference in Havana, Cuba, in 1979. Moreover, the largest country in Latin America, Brazil, has not been a member of the Nonaligned Movement. On the other hand, the Movement admitted in June 1994 Africa's most industrialized and potentially most influential state on the world stage - the Republic of South Africa.

Just as the Afro-Asian solidarity movement suffered from a crisis of *raison d'être* as old style European colonialism came to an end, the Nonaligned Movement has been suffering from a similar crisis of ultimate purpose in the wake of the end of the Cold War. Some members have gone as far as to

recommend the dissolution of the Movement now that the world is no longer endangered by East-West tensions. Other members, in response, have championed a refocus on North-South relations at the global level - asking the movement to seek three paramount objectives. These are, first, greater and

healthier economic cooperation between North and South; second, greater and more self-reliant cooperation between South and South; and, third, a more general reform of the world system towards greater social justice and international equity.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> E.H. Carr, *The Twenty—Years Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1962).
- <sup>2</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958), 76–7.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India, 1924–1926* (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1927), 839–40. Consult also Pyarelal, 'Gandhiji and the African Question', *Africa Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. 2, July–September 1962. See as well the selection from Gandhi entitled "Mahatma Gandhi on Freedom in Africa," *Africa Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 2, July–September 1961. For a more extensive discussion by Gandhi on nonviolence consult Gandhi, *NonViolence in Peace and War* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1944).
- <sup>5</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, "Portuguese Colonialism: An Anachronism," *Africa Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 3, October–December, 1961, p. 9. See also Nehru, 'Emergent Africa', *Africa Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. I, April–June, 1961, 7–9.
- <sup>6</sup> *Harijan*, 14 March 1936. Mahatma Gandhi founded this weekly periodical.
- <sup>7</sup> On the Bandung Conference, see Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (Cleveland, OH: World Pub. Co., 1956).
- <sup>8</sup> Relatedly, consult Robert A. Mortimer, *The Third World in International Politics*, Second, updated edition, (Boulder: Westview, 1984); Marc Williams, *Third World Cooperation: The Group of 77 in UNCTAD* (London and New York: Pinter and St. Martin's Press, 1991); and Frans N. Stokman, *Roll Calls and Sponsorship: A Methodological Analysis of Third World Group Formation in the United Nations* (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1977).
- <sup>9</sup> A dated but still useful guide to the Nonaligned Movement may be found in D. R. Goyal (ed.) *Non-Alignment: Concept and Concerns* (Delhi: Ajanta Books International, 1986).
- <sup>10</sup> For an examination of the relationship between the United Nations and the Nonaligned Movement, see M. S. Rajan, V. S. Mani and C. S. R. Murthy (eds.) *The Nonaligned and the United Nations* (New York and New Delhi: Oceana and South Asian Publishers, 1987).
- <sup>11</sup> See *Final Declaration*, Nonaligned Movement, Belgrade Conference, 1989.



*Photo: Dr. Regennia N. Williams is pictured here with student visitors from the University of the Free State. This photo was taken in the CSU's Fenn Tower lobby in the fall of 2011. Pictured with Williams (left to right) are Tanya Carlitz, Teboho Mphunngua, Thabiso Letselabe, Hilda Mokoena (front) Johanna Haasbroek, and Reynecke Swanepoel.*



## CSU Delegation *Travels to* South Africa

Dr. Regennia N. Williams, founder and director of RASHAD, and eight other Cleveland State University delegates participated in the July 2012 Global Leadership Summit. Hosted by the University of the Free State (UFS) in Bloemfontein, South Africa, the Summit was related to the “Leadership for Change” initiative at UFS. The CSU delegation joined more than 150 students—along with faculty members and administrators from their home universities—at the two-week summit. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and numerous other awards, was one of the guest speakers on July 18, Nelson Mandela Day. The CSU delegates will share information on Summit outcomes with members of the CSU community during the fall semester of 2012. For additional information on the Summit, visit the UFS Summit website at <http://conferences.ufs.ac.za/content.aspx?id=206> or RASHAD’s website at [www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/](http://www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/).

**HOMEGOINGS, CROSSINGS, AND PASSINGS:**  
LIFE AND DEATH IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

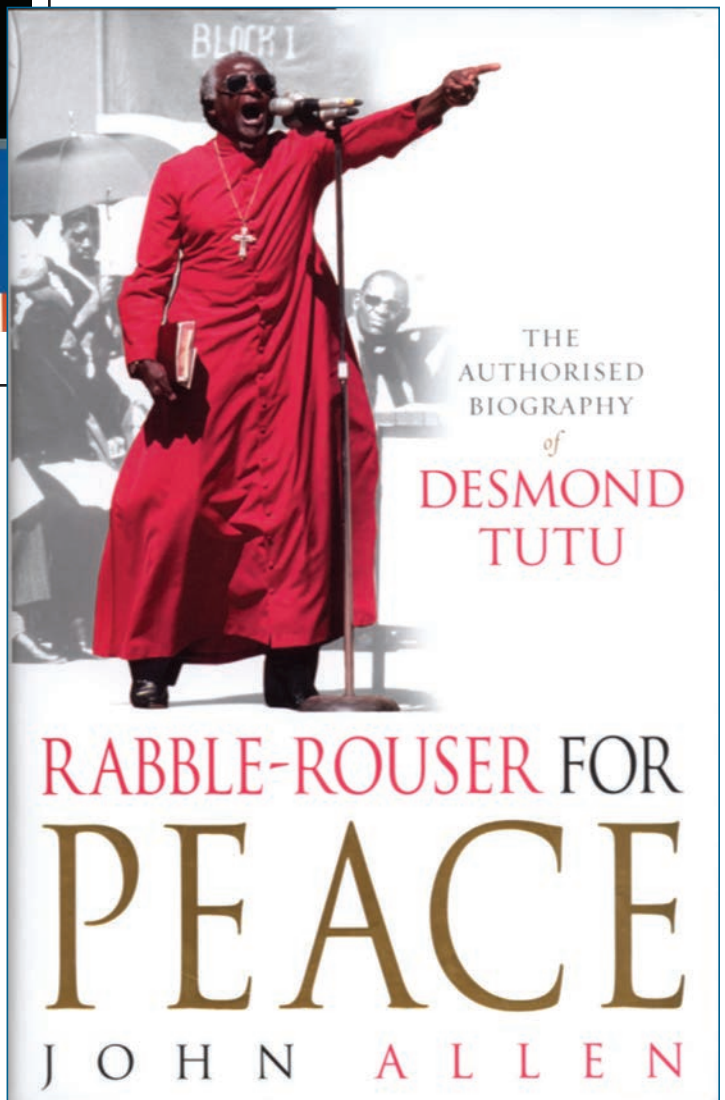


REGENNIA N. WILLIAMS, EDITOR

# Summer & Reads Rereads

This volume, edited and introduced by Dr. Williams, is a model of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the African Diaspora. The unique focus on the diverse life experiences of Africans in Diaspora through the lens of death complicates and enriches our understanding of what it means to come, to go, and to be “at home.”

Dr. Theodore Louis Trost  
Professor and Department Chair  
Religious Studies and New College  
University of Alabama



My summer reading list includes some titles that will, no doubt, be familiar to many. I invite you to join me in reading (or rereading) the following works of fiction and non-fiction, all of which are directly related to the exciting programs and other activities described in this issue of Traditions and Beliefs. **Enjoy!**

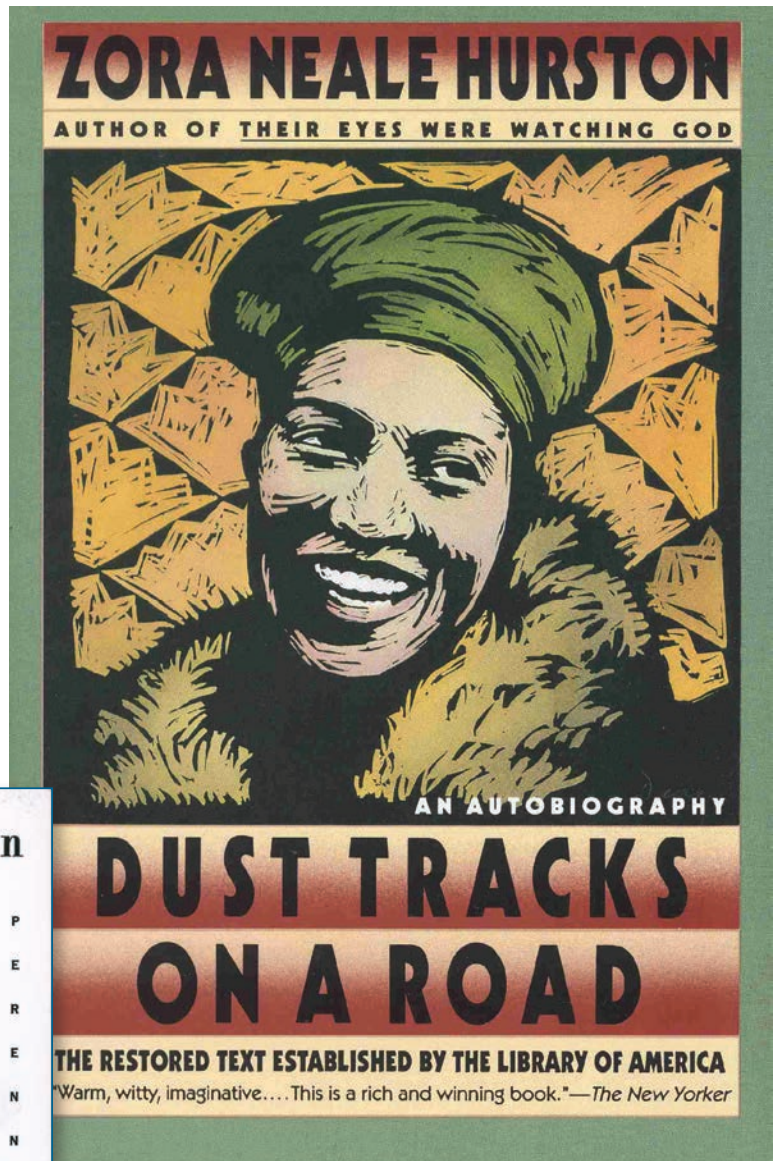
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*Their Eyes Were Watching God* belongs in the same category with [the works of] William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway, that of enduring American Literature.

*Saturday Review*

# RASHAD

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

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## Save the Date

The Spiritual Gifts Choir and the Gospel Travelers, one of Cleveland's top male quartets, will present a concert of sacred music on Saturday, September 29, 2012, 6:00 *p.m.*, in the Fine Arts Center at Mount Zion of Oakwood Village.

**Admission is Free!**

For more information,  
call (216) 523-7182.

*Non-Discrimination Statement - Cleveland State University is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in employment and education. No person at the university will be denied opportunity for employment or education or be subject to discrimination in any project, program, or activity because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, disability, disabled veteran, Vietnam era veteran or other protected veteran status.*