

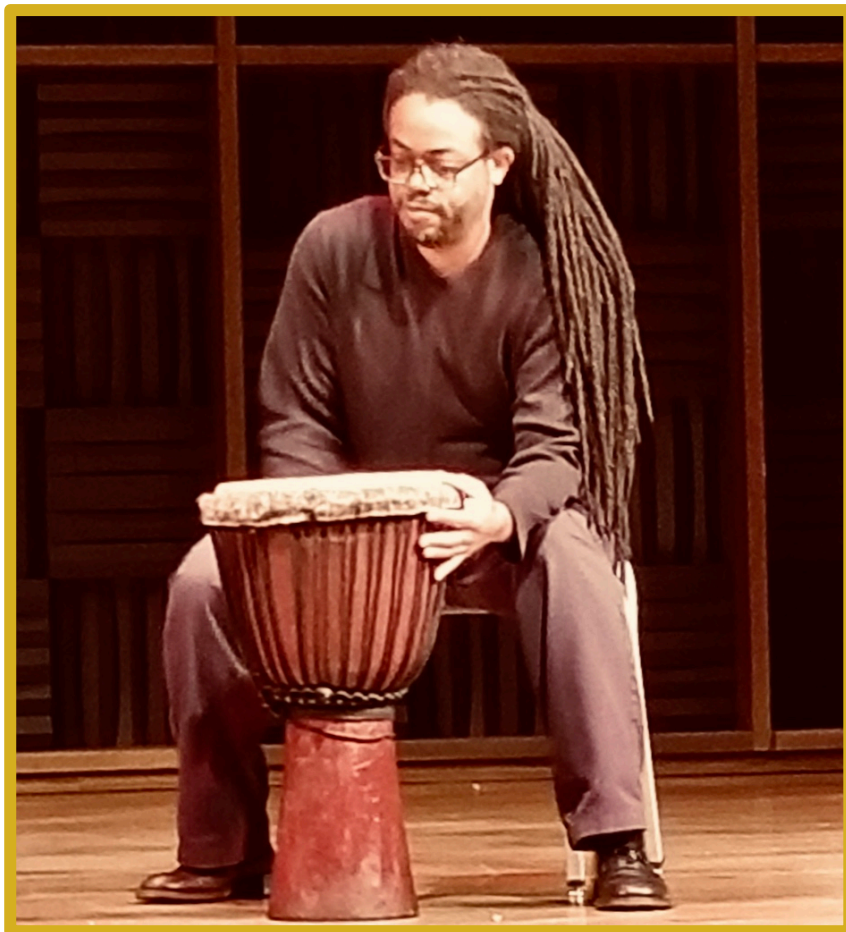
# The RASHEAD

Center, Inc.  
*Traditions & Beliefs*

Summer / Fall 2019 Newsletter  
Regennia N. Williams, PhD  
Founder, Director, and Editor  
\*On the Cover:  
ICCD at the Cleveland Museum of Art







## *Prelude:*

“The 400 Years of African-American History Commission Act, signed into law January 8, 2018, established a 15-member commission to coordinate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in the English colonies. The Commission’s purpose is to plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities throughout the United States.”

The activities of Spiritual Gifts International continue to focus on the contributions of African and African-descended individuals to world history and culture, especially as those contributions relate to Black sacred music.



*Drummer Chester Starks prepares to perform with Spiritual Gifts International in CMA’s Gartner Auditorium on Sunday, October 6, 2019. (Photo courtesy of Letrese Robinson.)*

To find out more about the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities, visit <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1892/africanamericanhistorycommission.htm>.

# Traditions & Beliefs

The Traditions & Beliefs Newsletter

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The RASHAD Center, Inc.

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*\*On the Cover: Regennia N. Williams stands near artist Emeka Ogboh’s installation **Àmà: The Gathering Place** in the Ames Atrium of the Cleveland Museum of Art. (Photo by Rodney Carpenter.)*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

International Cleveland Community Day at The Cleveland Museum of Art	4
The New South Africa: Lessons from the Free State	6
Professional Development, Publications, Graduations, and More	7
The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs: Call for Submissions	8
A Life-Changing Faculty Residency at Howard University	9
Books, Library and Museum Talks, and Gospel Music History	10
Archives, Spirituals, Our Past, and Our Future	12



*Spiritual Gifts: A Professional Black Sacred Music Repertory Ensemble, Inc. and The RASHAD Center, Inc. joined forces to create the Spiritual Gifts International Family and Friends Ensemble. The group performed on Sunday, October 6, 2019, during the International Cleveland Community Day (ICCD) Concert in the Cleveland Museum of Art's (CMA) Gartner Auditorium. This reunion performance commemorates the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Spiritual Gifts concert at Cleveland State University in 1994. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary partnership will conclude with a concert, the annual meetings for both partners, and the election of officers in June 2020. Pictured from left to right are Dwight Fleming, Chester Starks, the Reverend Dr. Lillian Robinson, Lana J. Miller, Kelly Wilson, Theresa A. Bumpers, Regennia N. Williams, Fontella Pierce, Carol Brown, and Steve Ritchey. Pianist Derrick Spiva also performed. (Photo Courtesy of Chester Starks.)*



# *Interlude: Black Sacred Music and History*

## Spiritual Gifts International at the Cleveland Museum of Art



The **Spiritual Gifts International Family and Friends Ensemble** joined more than 30 other performing arts groups in participating in the International Cleveland Community Day (ICCD) Festival at the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA). The vocal ensemble's presentation in the Gartner Auditorium (pictured below) included the following examples of Black sacred music from the United States of America and South Africa: "Perfect Praise," "Total Praise," "Ride Up in the Chariot," and "Siyahamba."

In keeping with the agreement reached during his "micro-interview" via telephone (and confirmed via email), Chester Starks also drummed *with* the recorded Nigerian folksongs that were part of artist Emeka Ogboh's installation *Àmà: The Gathering Place*. As part of its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary outreach efforts, Spiritual Gifts also hosted an information table in the atrium, where Regennia N. Williams (left) displayed program booklets and other materials from the Praying Grounds Archive. Those who visited the table were able to select free copies of sheet music from **GIA's African American Church Music Series**. –RNW (Photos courtesy of Letrese Robinson and Regennia N. Williams.)







*Special thanks to everyone who supported our contribution to CMA's International Cleveland Community Day Festival and Concert, including (clockwise, from the top left) Derrick Spiva (foreground) and Deidre McPherson, CMA's Director of Public Programs (background); Chester Starks; (left to right) Lana J. Miller, the Reverend Dr. Lillian Robinson, and Regennia N. Williams; Fontella Pierce; Kelly Wilson and Dwight Fleming; and Carol Brown (center). (Photos courtesy of Desmond Davis, Letrese Robinson, and Regennia N. Williams.)*





## A Fulbright Specialist Project in the New South Africa

In 2019, citizens of South Africa observed the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the election of President Nelson Mandela and the birth of democracy in their majority black nation. Like others around the world, I, too, looked forward to celebrating this important milestone, despite ongoing concerns about, among other things, government corruption, social and economic inequality, and efforts on the part of the African National Congress (the party of President Mandela) to regain voters' confidence in the wake of the February 2018 resignation of President Jacob Zuma.

With support from the U.S. Department of State for my Fulbright Specialist Project, I traveled to South Africa in July 2019 in order to serve as the co-instructor for an Oral History Module at the University of the Free State (UFS). While on the Qwaqwa campus, I also conducted research for "The South African Praying Grounds Project," which focused on the evolving role of the church in South Africa since 1994. I plan to add the interviews to a larger Praying Grounds collection that is housed as Cleveland State University.

At UFS and throughout the surrounding communities, I met citizens who were somewhat disappointed by the state's inability to address many of the aforementioned concerns and unsettled by immigration issues and the rising tide of xenophobia in Johannesburg. Nevertheless, the individuals that I interviewed were clear about what needed to be done to improve the quality of life for the South African masses, with several including the provision of jobs and quality housing on their list of top priorities for the national government.

My first narrator, Brother Paul (second from right in the top left photo) is a member of the UFS Shepherd Center's Certificate Program and pastor of Qwaqwa's Courageous Faith Church in Zion. He and other South African clergymen are pictured with Prof. Du Bois (far right in the same group photo) of the UFS School of Theology. The other photos of Brother Paul, myself, and members of Courageous Faith (in uniform) were taken following the August 11, 2019, morning worship services at the church.

—RNW (Photos courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)





## Saying “Yes!” to Performances, Presentations, Professional Development, Publications, and Graduations



(Left to right) Dr. Regennia N. Williams, Dr. Clevette Ridguard, and Dr. Tracey Smith-Bryant at the August 2019 MC Governance Training Program. (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Regennia N. Williams.)

My work with **The RASHAD Center**, **Spiritual Gifts**, and in various community and academic settings has taught me a lot about life and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition to inviting you to follow **Spiritual Gifts** on Facebook, read about some of the ensemble’s recent teaching and learning activities in Ohio, and join us at our upcoming meetings at Cleveland Public Library’s Hough Branch, I want to publicly thank the visionary leaders of Maryland’s **Montgomery College** (MC) for encouraging faculty members to take advantage of a variety of professional development opportunities—regardless of whether those opportunities are in another part of the state, another part of the country, or another part of the world.

Following my six-week **Fulbright Specialist Project** at South Africa’s University of the Free State (UFS), I participated **Governance Training at Montgomery College**, and, like other Part-Time Faculty Associates (PTFAs) at MC, I served as one of the presenters for our fall 2019 **Professional Development Conference** in Germantown, Maryland.

I believe in going the extra mile when it comes to professional development that benefits both instructors and learners. As far as the Fulbright program is concerned, I couldn’t agree more with Dr. Sanjay Rai, MC’s Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and a 2019 Fulbright alumnus. In the spring of this year, Dr. Rai wrote:

For the next academic year, we will aggressively compete to have our faculty, students, and staff engaged in these outstanding [Fulbright] professional development opportunities. I see them as necessary to providing a comprehensive global education to our students’ success in the 21st century.

I wish everyone the best in their professional development endeavors.



**Aisha Asare**  
(Photo Courtesy of  
Regennia N. Williams.)

Also, please know that Volume 6, Issue 1 of *The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs* is now available. The theme for this issue is

“President Nelson ‘Madiba’ Mandela, The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the New Millennium: Social Movements 2.0.” The list of contributors includes academic scholars, public scholars, librarians, entrepreneurs, and social justice activists. My MC colleague Enas Elhanafi, for example, contributed an insightful essay on transformational leadership. This entire publication is accessible online at <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/jtb/vol6/iss1/>.

Finally, congratulations to **Aisha Asare**, contributing writer and editorial associate for *The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs*, on her December 2019 graduation from the University of Maryland Baltimore County with an MIS degree. Aisha is also a successful entrepreneur and a mother.

**Thanks, everyone, for working with me! You are always welcome.**

Sincerely,

*Regennia N. Williams, PhD*





## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Revised October 27, 2019

### **Jazz, Jobs, and Justice: From the American South to South Africa and Beyond, c. 1960-Present**

*for*

*The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs*  
2019-2020 Issue

Regennia N. Williams, PhD, *Editor-in-Chief*

***\*Abstracts Due by March 1, 2020; Invited Manuscripts Due by August 31, 2020***

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the late Grover Sales defined jazz as “America’s classical music.” Sales also understood, however, that the composers, performers, and consumers of this American-born music could be found throughout the global community, including the American South and post-apartheid South Africa. The list of artists with ties to the American South, for example, includes Milt Hinton, Hank Jones, and Lester Young. Among the South African jazz artists who gained a worldwide following are Abdullah Ibrahim, Miriam Makeba, and Hugh Masekela. Evidence from 20<sup>th</sup>-century cultural history suggests that in the hands of many of the aforementioned musicians and their contemporaries, art became a powerful tool to both challenge injustice and transform existing social orders.

In recognition of the international influences of jazz and in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the August 1619 arrival of the first Africans in the English colonies, the RASHAD Center, Inc. will publish a special issue of *The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs (JTB)* titled ***Jazz, Jobs, and Justice: From the American South to South Africa and Beyond, c. 1960-Present***. JTB welcomes publishable manuscripts that reflect the diverse viewpoints of scholars, artists, and activists on the evolving role of jazz in world culture. This publication will be in direct keeping with the spirit of the “400 Years of African American History Act,” which promotes “programs and activities throughout the United States that recognize and highlight the resilience and cultural contributions of Africans and African Americans.”

***JTB is a peer-reviewed open access journal.*** We publish scholarly articles, essays, creative writing, book reviews, and K-12 curriculum materials. Manuscripts for articles and essays should be **typewritten, single-spaced**, approximately 5,000 words in length (including Turabian-style footnotes and bibliography), and prepared using *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (University of Chicago Press, 8th Edition). Poems, book reviews, and the introductions to lesson plans should not exceed 750 words.

For consideration, **please submit the 250-word abstract for your proposed submission by March 1, 2020** via the journal’s official website, <http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/jtb/>. The creation of a password-protected account is required). **Authors will be notified of the decision regarding their abstract by May 1, 2020, and the deadline for submitting invited manuscripts is August 31, 2020.**

If you are interested in writing a book review or have other questions or concerns, please see the “Policies” section of the *JTB* website, and contact Dr. Regennia N. Williams at [regennia@gmail.com](mailto:regennia@gmail.com) or [r.williams@csuohio.edu](mailto:r.williams@csuohio.edu).



## One-Week Faculty Residency at Howard University's Center for African Studies



The human and library resources at Howard University in Washington, DC have the most amazing ways of energizing and inspiring me. During every visit to this historic campus, I discover something new and exciting, and my fall 2019 visit for a one-week faculty residency with the Center for African Studies was no exception to this rule.

From the books and other materials in Founders Library (pictured below), home of the renowned Moorland Spingarn Research Center, and the wonderful curriculum materials in the Center for African Studies to my one-on-one conversations with Dr. Wheeler Winstead, the Center's Assistant Director (shown with me in the picture on the left), every residency-related activity was enlightening and enjoyable.

In addition to learning of Dr. Winstead's connections to members of Cleveland's civic leadership, I was also especially grateful for the opportunity to audit the graduate seminar taught by Dr. Mohamad S. Camara, "Africa in World Affairs." Professor Camara, who serves as chair of the Department of African Studies, also shared reference copies of the course syllabus and assigned readings with me.

This residency made it possible for me to incorporate new materials into my fall 2019 teaching activities at Montgomery College. –RNW (Photos courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)





## Books, Library and Museum Talks, and Gospel Music History



On most days, just knowing that 2019 is the **Smithsonian Year of Music** is enough to make me smile, and that has everything to do with the fact that the Smithsonian museums and centers have long had a reputation for producing excellent programs.

When I had the opportunity to deliver a “Tuesday Talk” on September 17<sup>th</sup> as part of the Year of Music series, I felt that the whole world—or at least everyone in the Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage—was smiling with me!

We had a great time discussing “Come Sunday: Mahalia Jackson, Duke Ellington, and the Sweet Sound of Collaboration.” Since September was also Gospel Music Heritage Month, we also treated ourselves to the sweet sound of Miss Jackson’s marvelous voice. Please see the group photo on the left for a selection of some of the aforementioned smiles. For more information, visit <https://music.si.edu/smithsonian-year-music>. --RNW





Libraries and museums in the DMV and Ohio remain open to those of us who want to make sure that the world continues to celebrate African art, African American jazz, and the contributions of the artists who are featured in **Washington, DC Jazz** (Arcadia, 2019). Shown above (counter-clockwise from the left) are the building (top) and some of the audience members (bottom) who attended my book talk at DC's Francis A. Gregory Public Library; the reference desk promotional sign for my October 17<sup>th</sup> talk at the Maple Heights, Ohio Public Library; one of my post-talk photos at Ohio's Garfield Heights Public Library; and, last but not least, "Totem," the awesome work of contemporary African art that is the subject of a series of 2019-2020 gallery talks that I am giving at the Cleveland Museum of Art. --RNW (All photos on this page courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)



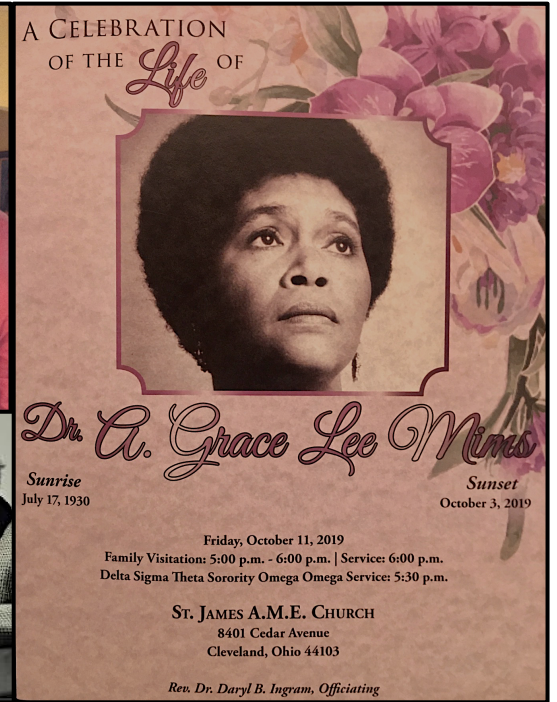
**Congratulations** to "Dub" (left) and Frederick Burton, (Shown above in a 2005 file photo), co-founders of the **Gospel Music Historical Society (GMHS)**, narrators for the Praying Grounds Oral History Project, and co-producers of the first annual GMHS Black Tie Gala on November 2, 2019. Among the gala's honorees and presenters were (clockwise from the top left) "Dub" Burton, Helen Turner Thompson, Lillian Hortense Wilborn, and Pastor Michael Thompson of the Gospel Travelers.



## Postlude: Archives, Spirituals, Our Past, and Our Future



Congratulations to **Dr. Babette Reid Harrell** on the successful defense of her dissertation, "Preserving the Negro Spiritual: A Case Study of the Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus," and her upcoming spring 2020 commencement exercises at Boston University. Dr. Harrell's sources included interviews from *Praying Grounds: African American Faith Communities, A Documentary and Oral History Project* and many other primary and secondary source materials. (Photo by Anton Albert, courtesy of Spiritual Gifts.)



The world continues to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. A. Grace Lee Mims (1930-2019), soprano vocalist, mentor, teacher, member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and host of WCLV Radio's "The Black Arts" program for 43 years. (Photos courtesy of Jeff Ivey and Regennia N. Williams.)

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Blog: <https://rashadcenter.wordpress.com/>



Spiritual Gifts International will hold its upcoming meetings and rehearsals at Cleveland Public Library's Hough Branch, 1566 Crawford Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44106. Please watch for detailed announcements on RASHAD's Facebook page.

## Wanted: Transformational Leaders and Dedicated Members

In keeping with their bylaws and missions, **Spiritual Gifts and The RASHAD Center** will hold their annual meetings, elect new officers, and continue to strengthen their standing committees in June 2020. If you want to find out more about our work and, perhaps, join either organization as an officer, a committee chair, or an enthusiastic member, **please consider working with us right now, during the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary partnership year--and following or keeping in touch with us on Facebook.**