

# THE SCHOLARS' CORNER

## 'RELIGION, RACE, AND RIGHTS' PANEL



Panelists and program staff for the April 2007 "Religion, Race, and Rights" discussion held at the Cory United Methodist Church. Pictured here (left to right) are Nancy Nolan Jones, Gezus Zaire, Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle, Richard Peery, Prof. Nishani Frazier, and Dr. Regennia N. Williams.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Reddie, Anthony. *Black Theology in Transatlantic Dialogue*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Trost, Theodore Louis, ed. *The African Diaspora and the Study of Religion*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

West, Cornel and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., eds. *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

## THE PUBLISHED WORD AND THE WEBSITE



By Ramon Smith

The Praying Grounds master bibliography is a growing list of materials on African and African American religions. At this time, this list includes books, articles, and other sources. We will update the bibliography at the end of every semester, so visit our website often at [www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/](http://www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/).

## RASHAD

c/o The Department of History  
Cleveland State University  
2121 Euclid Avenue, RT 1915  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

(216) 523-7182, Telephone  
African.Diaspora@csuohio.edu, Email  
[www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/](http://www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/), Website

## TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS

Dr. Regennia N. Williams, Founding Director and Editor  
Kathleen Marcy, Associate Director and Contributing Writer  
Chaitanya Kadem, Contributing Writer  
Ramon R. Smith, Contributing Writer  
Atul Tanawade, Contributing Writer  
Jeffrey Ivey, Contributing Photographer  
Prester Pickett, Contributing Photographer  
Carey B. Yancey, Contributing Photographer

## NEW PUBLICATION



New World African Press will publish *Homegoings, Crossings, and Passings: Life and Death in the African Diaspora* in the spring of 2008. Edited by Regennia N. Williams and Donald Ramos, this book includes chapters on the history of African and African American religious traditions, funerary art, and more.

## CHURCH AND STATE

(continued from page 3)

Additionally, we digitized various printed programs, articles, and other documents for the archives. Our related library activities involved searches for books, journal articles, and web-based information.

### In This Issue . . .

Research and programming related to the 70-year history of the Wings Over Jordan choir continues in Cleveland and Chapel Hill.



Dr. Regennia N. Williams and Dr. Sam Barber in the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## PRAYING GROUNDS UPDATE



Cleva Webster and Maestro Glenn A. Brackens

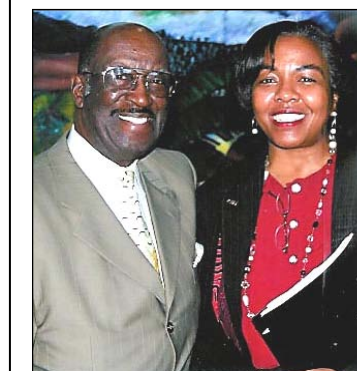
- In October, Mrs. Cleva Webster turned 90 years old. In November, she became the 90th person to share their life story with the Praying Grounds Oral History Project. Mrs. Webster is a former member of the Wings Over Jordan choir.
- Praying Grounds materials are now linked to other documents in the Cleveland Memory online archive, including articles from *The Call & Post Newspaper*.
- We digitized our collection of souvenir program booklets from the annual meetings of the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses (NCGCC). Library staff members are linking these materials to the Praying Grounds website.
- Mrs. Corene Robinson, President of the Greater Cleveland Choral Chapter of the NCGCC, donated her manuscript materials to our project. Bishop Kenneth Moales from NCGCC's national office gave us permission to make these materials available on the web. Search the on-line Cleveland Memory archive for the phrase "gospel music," and learn more about the 75-year history of the organization founded by Thomas A. Dorsey, the "Father of Gospel Music."

## A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF RASHAD

REGENNIA N. WILLIAMS PHD, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR

In Depression-era Cleveland, two African American men launched organizations that would play a vital role in shaping the history of religion and spirituality in this city and throughout America. In 1937, Reverend Glenn T. Settle, pastor of the Gethsemane Baptist Church, founded the WGAR Negro Hour Radio Choir, which later became the Wings Over Jordan choir. In that same year, Imam Wali A. Akram organized the First Cleveland Mosque, and the rest, as they say, is history! In 2007, the first year in the life of RASHAD, we joined hundreds of Clevelanders in celebrating the pioneering efforts and enduring legacies of Reverend Settle and Imam Akram.

The photographs and articles in this issue of *Traditions and Beliefs* provide abundant evidence of our work with Wings Over Jordan Alumni and Friends, Inc. The Wings Over Jordan 70th Anniversary Celebration is generating a lot of interest in our initiative, and our work is creating new opportunities for performing artists, educators, students, and scholars across the state and across the country, including those at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



John H. Foxhall, President of Wings Over Jordan Alumni and Friends, Inc., and Dr. Regennia N. Williams.

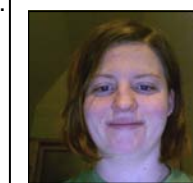
We are especially pleased to have the support of Dr. Sam Barber, whose Wings Over Jordan Manuscript Collection is housed in UNC's Wilson Library. Dr. Barber kindly agreed to allow us to use materials from this collection for educational activities planned for the Wings Over Jordan anniversary year.

In Cleveland's Islamic community, thanks to Kim Scott—the first Muslim narrator for the Praying Grounds Oral History Project—other Muslims are aware of our work, and they are interested in sharing their life stories with us. Toward that end, we are currently working with members of our city's Somali Bantu community to learn more about their history and culture.

In addition to the above activities, RASHAD co-sponsored a series of community programs, which included a panel discussion at the Cory United Methodist Church, lectures by Rev. Dr. R. Drew Smith and Nana Kwabena Brown, and workshops and concerts with Dr. Margaret Pleasant Douroux, Drene Ivy, and Dwight Fleming.

RASHAD research assistants are working with the staff of the University Library to organize and digitize the primary documents that will make possible the writing of a detailed history of African American faith communities in Greater Cleveland. In the spring of 2008, we will also complete a major research project, "Church and State." Needless to say, we are looking forward to the start of our second program year, and we welcome your continued support.

## MESSAGE FROM KATHLEEN MARCY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



In working with RASHAD, I have created biographical sketches based on the information received through the Praying Grounds interviews. These sketches outline the social, cultural, and religious activities of the interviewees. Many of the interviewees have expressed some connection to the Civil Rights Movement, particularly the involvement of churches in the election of Carl B. Stokes as mayor of Cleveland. Many interviewees also described the role that their church played in their communities and how the church helped Cleveland. I am currently focusing on the interviewees affiliated with the Wings Over Jordan 70th Anniversary Celebration.

In addition to these tasks, I served as the

assistant editor for this newsletter, I organized files, and I digitized materials for Cleveland Memory.

If you are interested in adding your oral history to the Praying Grounds / Cleveland Memory collection—or in supporting this project in some other way—please contact Dr. Williams in the CSU Department of History at (216) 523-7182.

In 2007, RASHAD programs were made possible with financial and in-kind support from Cleveland State University's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Department of History, Department of Music, Black Studies Program, Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, the University Library, and the Title III Learning Communities Grant. Additional support was provided by Wings Over Jordan Alumni and Friends, Inc., Cleveland Public Library, the African American Museum, Morning Star Baptist Church, The Call & Post Newspaper, and the Ohio Humanities Council.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR FIRST PROGRAM YEAR. . .



**Above:**  
 Todd C. Thompson directs the Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus during their September 2007 performance in Cleveland State University's Music and Communication Building.

**Right:**  
 Todd C. Thompson (left) and Maestro Glenn A. Brackens at the September 28, 2007 Wings Over Jordan 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Kick-Off Reception

**Below:**  
 Dr. Margaret Pleasant Douroux (standing), a nationally renowned pianist, composer, and choral director, is pictured here with some of the participants in her October 2007 gospel music workshop at Cleveland State University.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### In the Spirit, In Unity! A Celebration of the Negro Spiritual and a Tribute to The Wings Over Jordan

Throughout 2008, individuals and members of church, community, and school groups are invited to participate in this program by incorporating spirituals into their musical activities. If you would like to participate, call (216) 523-7182 to receive a copy of the information packet.

### Double Nickel Blues

World premier of a new play written and directed by Margaret Ford Taylor

Music by Maestro Glenn A. Brackens  
 Thursday, Friday, Saturday, January 31 and February 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9, 2008 at 8 p.m.  
 Sundays, February 3, and 10, 2008 at 3 p.m.  
 Admission: \$10.00, General Admission; \$5.00, with CSU Student ID.  
 Cleveland State University, Factory Theatre  
 1833 East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (Near East 24<sup>th</sup> and Chester)  
 For more information: (216) 687-2109  
 (continued on page 3)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

(CONTINUED)

### Oh, Mary, Don't You Weep

Play by Margaret Ford-Taylor and Joyce Meadows  
 Music arranged and directed by Maestro Glenn A. Brackens  
 Thursday, Friday, Saturday, March 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 2008 at 8 p.m.  
 Sundays, March 16, 23, 2008 at 3 p.m.  
 Admission: \$20  
 Cleveland State University  
 Factory Theatre  
 1833 East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
 (Near East 24<sup>th</sup> and Chester)  
 For more information: (216) 687-2109

### The Wings Over Jordan Alumni and Friends, Inc. Spiritual Workshop and Scholarship Awards Program

Saturday, April 26, 2008, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
 Cleveland State University  
 Music and Communication Building  
 2001 Euclid Avenue  
 Waetjen Auditorium and Rooms G15 and G17  
 Free Admission  
 For more information: (216) 523-7182

### Our City, Our Music, Our History: Touring Exhibit Throughout 2008

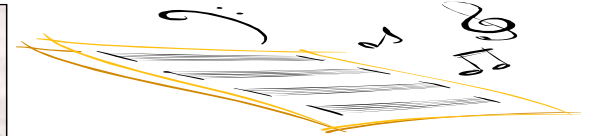
Taller Williams, Curator

\*Check Cleveland Public Library's on-line calendar of events for related programs in 2008 at [www.cpl.org](http://www.cpl.org).

\*Programs subject to change.



**Above:**  
 Nana Kwabena Brown (left) and his wife, Iya Marie Brown, are shown here with Dr. Regennia N. Williams. Dr. Williams presented the couple with a gift copy of *African Ceremonies* following Nana Kwabena Brown's October 30, 2007 lecture, "Traditional African Religions in African American Cultural History."



**Left:**  
 The Antioch Baptist Church hosted a successful contemporary gospel music workshop and concert in November. The program, another event in the Wings Over Jordan 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, featured recent compositions by Drene Ivy (pictured here).

## CHURCH AND STATE

RESEARCH PROJECT FOCUSES ON PUBLIC INFLUENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES



Chaitanya Kadem (left) and Atul Tanawade

By Chaitanya Kadem and Atul Tanawade

We contributed to the research project entitled "Church and State: Greater Cleveland's African American Faith Communities and Public Policy." We set out to compile a comprehensive list of religious institutions in the seven counties comprising Northeast Ohio. Mr. Brian McNamara in the Levin College's Northern Ohio Data Information Service Office (NODIS) provided us with a preliminary database from an earlier "Sacred Landmarks" project. Research involving the Internet, other printed lists, and newspapers produced additional data, including missing phone numbers for some institutions. We then organized the data into one master spreadsheet.

The database contains information on more than 3,000 religious institutions. In the spring semester of 2008, RASHAD will use this database to complete survey research designed to measure the public influences of African American churches. This survey work, part of Dr. Regennia N. Williams' sabbatical research project, is supported by the Office of the Vice President for Institutional Diversity.

On another note, we provided staff support for two programs organized by the History Department, where lectures were delivered by the Rev. Dr. R. Drew Smith and Nana Kwabena Brown. Both programs were well attended, and audience members—based on feedback in the program evaluations—were highly appreciative. (continued on page 4)



**The Rev. Dr. R. Drew Smith**, a prolific scholar and the founder and director of the Public Influences of African American Churches Project, delivered the first lecture in the History Department's Social History and the City (SHAC) series in October.