

The

RASHAD

Center, Inc.

Traditions & Beliefs

Spring-Summer 2021

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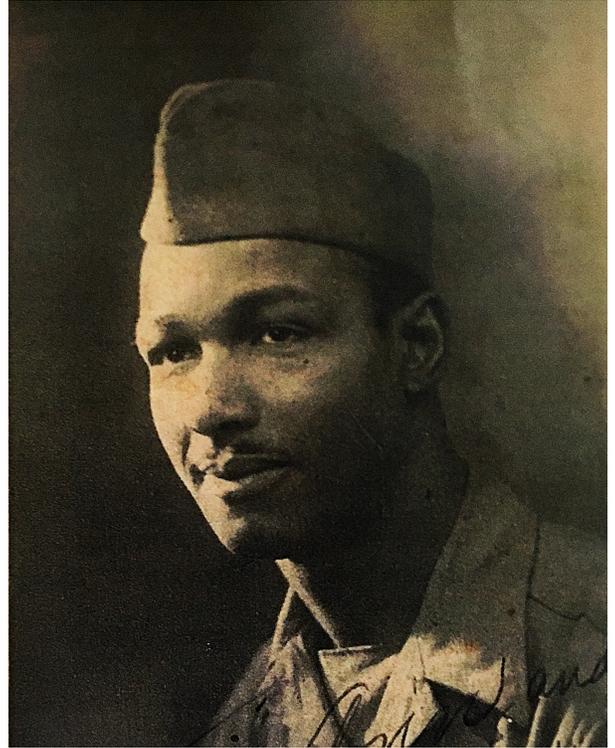
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From a Daughter’s Story about Her Army Veteran Father

“Daddy was a great storyteller. One of the reasons that his stories were so exciting was that he was an original Gilpen Player at Cleveland’s famous Karamu House Theatre.”

“He also loved to go fishing and hunting, which was part of his Southern roots. His beagle hounds were his hunting dogs, and his favorite dogs were ‘Mr. Moon’ and ‘Miss Peaches.’ He fished every day during the fishing season, and, when the recession of the late 1950s came, my mother learned to cook fish about 50 different ways—fried, baked, smoked, grilled, etc. Eating the fish was good, but supplying daddy with the worms wasn’t all that much fun . . .”

By Theresa Ann Bumpers



On the cover: Mr. Jack E. Stewart, Sr. U.S. Army, c. 1943. Stewart, a former resident of Cleveland’s Fairfax Community is one of the many veterans whose life stories RASHAD will document and share in 2021-2022. (Photograph courtesy of Theresa Ann Bumpers.)

Traditions & Beliefs

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Service, Leadership, and Servant-Leadership: The Life and Work of Air Force Veteran Walter Napier

We are pleased to announce that the first episode of the RASHAD Center's veterans' oral history project which had its premier screening on May 15, 2021, Armed Forces Day. This video is based on the military and community service of Mr. Walter Napier. Mr. Napier, his family members, and friends from St. Adalbert / Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church were the guests of honor at a special screening at the UnBar Cafe on Tuesday, August 10, 2021, and the program is still available on YouTube. This project, the first in our 2021 Internet TV series, C-L-E / Arts and Culture TV, will help us promote a related veterans history publication and public program series through Veterans Day, November 11, 2022.

Church and community members and representatives from veterans groups have agreed to support the project, which will raise awareness about the contributions of Black veterans to American history and the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress (LOC). We have already invited members of the Antioch Baptist Church, the Fairfax Business Association, and the Veterans Outreach Office of the City of Berea to partner with us to promote the project, and we have been awarded a Cuyahoga Arts and Culture grant to produce and share other segments in our Internet TV educational program series. In order to reach an even larger audience, we will donate interview footage to the LOC, and make the final videos and newsletters available online as Open Educational Resources (OERs).

Members of RASHAD's governing board, additional paid professionals, and project volunteers will be responsible for the planning, marketing, public relations, implementation, and evaluation for this program. Our goal is to produce high-quality educational programs that will become part of an accessible digital archive that can be shared online or in traditional instructional settings.

We look forward to sharing this exciting series with you!

Sincerely,

Theresa

Theresa A. Bumpers, MEd

Regennia

Regennia N. Williams, PhD



Air Force veteran Walter Napier (center) is shown here with his wife Louise and son James after the August 10, 2021, screening of his oral history video at the UnBar. (Photograph courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)



SISTER JUANITA SHEALEY, CSJ



Sister Juanita Shealey is shown here with students from Cleveland's St. Joseph's Academy. (Photograph courtesy of St. Joseph's Center.)

In this excerpt from her recent oral history interview with the RASHAD Center, Inc., Sister Juanita Shealey, CSJ shares some of her memories of Black family life in Cleveland, coming of age as a proud member of the Catholic Church, and her work as an educator, a media personality, a lover of the performing arts, and her 70 years of service in religious life.

--RNW

. . . Now, people dance in church. People sing gospels in church; we never did that. I knew all the gospels, because we went to all the churches when we were growing up, because they were our neighbors. I knew all of the Protestant songs, just about, because I sang them when I finished going to Mass.

Our Mass was early, and we had several Masses—starting at 6:00 a.m. Mass was only an hour. There was an 8:00 Mass, and there was a 9:00 Mass, which most of the people went to. But if you were going to go with your Protestant friends, you had to go to Mass, so you went to an early Mass. I got a head start

They [our Protestant neighbors] would come to church with me, and our prayers were in Latin, so it was a little strange for some of them. Next to the Latin was the English, so people got used to saying those Latin words as they answered the prayer at the Catholic Church. But when the words were translated, we didn't have to use the Latin any more.

Also, we didn't have to worry about pronouncing those Latin words . . . The priests prayed in Latin, and the only thing that they did in English was the sermon.

I think I am very lucky, actually, very blessed. In our neighborhood, my family was the only Catholic household. Further down, by 89th Street and 93rd Street, near Antioch Baptist Church going toward Central, there were a lot of Catholics on 89th Street. The Longhorns lived on 89th, the Scotts lived on 89th, Slaughter's Drug Store . . . It was elegant. We lived on 73rd. We weren't elegant; we were the ordinary, but they were all our friends. The people who had businesses had a little more money than we did. They went to Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, because they were Black Catholics. That's how it worked. We weren't supposed to go to Protestant churches, but my mother would never hear, my daddy, too, of not accepting an invitation to go to church. Our Protestant friends came to church with us, so they were Catholic and Protestant; and we went to church with them. I didn't miss anything.



Statue and chapel on the grounds of St. Joseph's Center. (Photo courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)

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So, lots of my friends say, “People thought I was a Catholic, because I knew so much.” However, many people knew that I was Catholic, because [as far as] Mr. and Mrs. Shealey’s children were concerned, you knew that you could come at their invitation.

Things aren’t like that now. Now, it’s sad to say that a lot of young people don’t go to church anywhere, and we need church now. I think once they know the history of how the churches worked together, at least the pastors, things will change. When I was young, I met some pastors, and when I got older, I made friends with a lot of them, but some of them were kind of like, “Oh.” But when they got to know me, they would invite me to all their things, and I would go.



Sister Juanita Shealey (right) is pictured here on June 17, 2021, with one of her colleagues at the St. Joseph’s Center. (Photograph courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)

I can’t think of too many Protestant churches where I haven’t been their speaker, or I haven’t been their guest, because they always invited me, and I came to that one down on Central, I was a little scared. The ladies invited me, and just before I got ready to speak at the church, in came three deacons, and they sat in the front row like this [with arms folded], and I thought, “Oh my goodness.” It was Women’s Day, and the women all wore white. I did my little thing, while [the deacons] were sitting there. I had what I was going to do, and I did it. Afterwards, we went down to eat. They always feed you good in the Protestant churches. So they came down, and two of them [the deacons] came toward me and a third one was behind. I thought, “Uh oh, here it comes.” They said, “Sister Shealey, that was great!” I was worried, because there I was, with my veil on my head, and it was a good Women’s Day at that church on Central, one of the old churches. . . not far from Tri-C . . . It’s still there, and it’s one of the stalwart churches in Cleveland. Anyway, they came to me and thanked me . . .

I’ve had a lot of invitations from my Protestant brothers and sisters, and I used to work with Bishop [Arthur] Williams [Episcopal Diocese of Ohio]. We were Campus Ministers together. I was Campus Minister when I worked at Tri-C, and we would ride to Columbus, whenever they had meetings in Columbus. I would ride with him, because we were Campus Ministers for the various colleges in Ohio. I fussed at him, because I said, “You didn’t invite me when you became a bishop, and we worked together all the time. I think he gave the invitation to some other people to invite me, and maybe they didn’t do that, but I forgave him . . .

And then the Rev. Dalton Downs’ Episcopal Church was right where Cleveland Clinic is, but they tore the church down, and I cried. He was a wonderful, wonderful, magnificent pastor. We used to do things together, too, not in campus ministry, but just things around here, and I would invite him . . .

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But we did a lot, so I don't know many Black churches in Cleveland that I have not been in, and also out of Cleveland. Black and White, not so much in Cleveland but in Berea and in Columbus, because the churches have their little network, and they say, "Invite her!" So, I have been, and I'm telling you I have never seen such wonderful church people. That's why we need to get more people in church, our young people.

I think Coronavirus is getting more of them in there, but the churches are essential. When you have churches in your book [*Cleveland, Ohio* (Arcadia, 2002)], that says something to people. I will tell you the churches had parades, the churches had picnics, the churches had reunions, and all the people in the communities were welcomed.

We didn't have just Catholic friends; we had friends of all denominations. When I grew up, we didn't have just Black friends, we had White friends, too, who invited us. When you are Catholic, you do get to be with more people than just your own color, because you have the same feast days, you have the same this, you had the same that . . .

We always knew there was Midnight Mass, and when we were really, really little, the Mass started at Midnight. Now, the Mass can start whenever you want it to, but they wanted it to be closer to the very moment we attribute to Jesus being born, at midnight. So, most of the masses are when everything is still and quiet, and we are awaiting the birth of Jesus. It is so magnificent that we are paused, and there are candles and the flowers, and the soft hymns that are being played. If the choir is a big choir, they usually wear their robes, their ceremonial robes, and in some cases they carry candles down the aisle. "Light of Christ, Deo Gratias," which means "Thanks be to God." These songs were in Latin. All the Catholic prayers were in Latin, so it seemed mysteriously beautiful.

You were walking down the aisle, if you were in the procession, the altar boys in the procession, the little girls carrying flowers. They didn't let us carry too many candles when we were really little, but we walked. I remember I used to be so sleepy, because it started at midnight, and usually it wasn't over until way after 2 a.m.

. . . In some of the churches you had to get there, and get your seat quickly, because the church was dark. Little by little, the candles would be lit. Usually, the choir would be in the balcony, some of the choir members would be in the balcony, but the rest would walk down the aisles, in the candlelight, go all around the church, and then they would go back up into the choir. Then the candles would be lit in the main area of the church, and the priest would start Mass . . .

I miss that. It was really so beautiful, because everybody was a part of it. We had an adult choir and a children's choir. The children's choir usually didn't sing during Midnight Mass, but that's one of the things that made us Catholic: We did the same thing. There was no difference. The hymns were the same, the rubrics were the same, and you didn't deviate from it. The choir had practiced for I don't know how long, and they were excellent, too. We repeated the prayer, so we got a special blessing. Everybody got it.

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What it was depicting was Jesus' journey in his mother's womb, and [Mary and Joseph] were trying to find a place to stay. It was cold and dark. They were uncertain, but they had the hope, and the people were waiting for this newborn king, this one who is going to save us from all that is horrible and wicked and evil. We anticipate the waiting with song, with prayer, with silence, as we listen to what God is saying to us, and we listen to what we are saying to God. I am saying this, "God, with your help, I am going to fulfill it—in this new year that is upon us." It was a very sacred time, a very quiet time, and in some places the ushers would pass candles to the people. The people would hold their candles, then one person's candle would be lit. The next person would light his from the last person's . . . and then we'd stand and say, "I pledge as a Christian and as a Catholic to be fulfilled, and I pledge to fulfill my life as God would have it fulfilled." So, you recited that. It was a renewal of your baptism, a renewal of your commitment.

As I think about the Catholic Church, if it happens at one Catholic Church, it happens at another Catholic Church. You don't make up your own. Now, sometimes in the modern world, people do, but they don't do too much, because you have to get permission for that. Every country you go to, wherever you go, the Catholic Mass will be the same. That's the difference. It doesn't mean that it is better, because I have been in every church, and I know the way "home" is a lot of different ways. But I do know my faith, because that is what I was brought up on. I never thought we would be able to sing gospel in the Catholic Church. I never even thought of it. When I was in the Black Sisters Conference, we did. We were from all over the United States and Africa, too. We came with our drums, with our singing, with our dashikis, with our prayers. We were singing the songs that our ancestors sang, and they weren't Catholic, but the priests were authentically Black priests . . .

I don't think I would want to be anything in life without being affiliated with the people of God in some way. No matter what happens, it's the people of God, who know God, who remind you—as one of my students who is a minister now reminds me. She calls me every day from Decatur, Alabama and prays with me. She always says, "Sister, remember God and God alone has the last say so. Her name is Rev. Joy Duncan.

So, my life as a religious woman has been great, but my life before I was a religious woman was great. My mother and father were the only people that I could truly say loved God and lived it, because I lived with them. I didn't live with everybody else. When I would say, Dr. Regennia Williams, "Mother, I don't know why so and so did so and so. I don't understand that, and that shouldn't have been," she always listened. Nell Mary Shealey always listened. This was her answer, and it was always the same answer. She'd say, "My darling," in her soft lovely strong voice, "Everyone wasn't raised the way that your father and I tried to raise you and your brothers and sisters. You must teach them, you must pray for them, you must forgive them, and you must love them." And I would say, "Okay." It was good advice . . . I've always tried that, and it has always worked. Sometimes it was a little hard, but it always worked.

Juneteenth
FREEDOM DAY

WITH HOPE & GRATITUDE

Thursday, June 17, 2021
4:00pm

Dining Room

Welcome
Sr. Rita Shinhearl

History of Juneteenth Video

Prayer

Reflection
Sr. Juanita Shealey

Happy Hour

Juneteenth program cover for the St. Joseph's Center.

For more information on Sister Juanita Shealey, CSJ, please visit <https://www.csjoseph.org/cleveland/>.

Black Music Appreciation Month and Juneteenth Events



Even though masking and social distancing policies evolved over the course of the month of June, many people took the time to celebrate both Black Music Month and Juneteenth—the first to be observed after Juneteenth was declared a national holiday. The RASHAD Center, Inc. partnered with the Music Settlement to present the Cleveland School of the Arts’ Passione Quartet in a mini concert in the Settlement’s recital hall. The members of the Cavani String Quartet joined the students in presenting a wonderful performance on a rainy Juneteenth afternoon. Pictured here (clockwise from the top left) are the cellists from the combined Passione-Cavani ensemble, the RASHAD Center’s Theresa Bumpers, and the eight musicians with members of their audience. (Photographs courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)



Juneteenth at the Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum



The Western Reserve Historical Society joined the RASHAD Center Inc. in hosting two live Juneteenth music events on Saturday, June 19, 2021. The day started with piano and vocal jazz by Daniel Spearman (top) and gospel music by pianist Helen Turner-Thompson and her ensemble of instrumentalists and vocalists. (Photographs Courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)





(Left to right) Pianist Dianna White-Gould, violist Christopher Jenkins, and tenor Matthew Jones were performers and oral history narrators for RASHAD's "Linking Legacies" virtual Black Music Month program that had its online premiere on Sunday, June 27, 2021. (Video still courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)



Frank Ross (above) is the creator of the Grand March Cultural Dance and author of *Soul Dancing: The Essential African American Cultural Dance Book*. On Sunday, June 27, 2021, Ross served as the guest speaker and Master of Ceremonies for a special Black Music Month dance program at the Western Reserve Historical Society's Cleveland History Center. (Photographs courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)



(Above, left) Author, educator, Central State University alumnus, and choreographer Frank Ross leads guests in a performance of the Grand March. All images on this page were taken at RASHAD's June 27, 2021, Black Music Month "Soul Dancing" event at the Western Reserve Historical Society's Cleveland History Center. (Photographs courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)

(Right) These garments were part of a 2021 Juneteenth / Black Music Month display at the Cleveland History Center. Sherrie Tolliver, daughter of the late Attorney Stanley E. Tolliver, allowed WRHS to borrow her father's jacket, shirt and tie for the display, and pianist-vocalist Helen Turner-Thompson contributed one of her choir robes for the display. Turner-Thompson's narratives are part of RASHAD's Praying Grounds Oral History Collection and the A. Grace Lee Mims Arts and Culture Oral History Collection at WRHS. (Photograph courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)



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In March 2021, Trustee Theresa Bumpers interviewed Air Force Veteran Walter Napier for RASHAD's CLE/ Arts and Culture TV. (Video still courtesy of Regennia N. Williams.)

