

The

# RASHAD

Center, Inc.

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**Founder and Director**

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**Washington, DC, Jazz Issue**





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Dear Friends,

**Greetings from Greater Cleveland, Ohio**--my hometown and the former home of saxophonist Eddie C. Baccus, Jr., Willard Jenkins, and other great jazz artists and programmers! I hope you are doing well and that your new year is off to a wonderful start.

Now that the *Washington, DC, Jazz* book has been published, I would be remiss if I didn't extend my sincerest thanks to everyone who offered their support and encouragement during the research phase of the project. That said, I want to introduce this issue of our newsletter by sharing a story about the "**Three Rs of DC Jazz Research**" -- **Rusty Hassan, Rachel Elwell, and Rainy Williams**. My message to every reader is that every writer gets a lot of help from other people, and these three individuals were among the most helpful during the preliminary stages of my research.

When I moved to the DMV on March 1, 2016—with plans to spend more time on Duke Ellington-related research and hanging out on the National Mall, among other things, **I had no idea**:

- That I would be able to file the **Articles of Incorporation for the RASHAD Center** in April of 2016;
- That **Willard Jenkins** (a former Jazz History instructor at Cleveland State University and former Artistic Director for Cleveland's Tri-C JazzFest) was already living in the DMV and serving as the Artistic Director for the DC Jazz Festival;
- That I would meet **Rusty Hassan** at a July 6, 2016, Duke Ellington "Chautauqua" event at Montgomery College; (Who knew that Rusty would be filling in that night for Willard?!!)
- That **Rusty's wife Sandy** was a quilter whose work would be included in the collections of the National Museum of African American History and Culture when it opened in September 2016--and that **Rusty** would encourage me to visit Sandy's website and email him for more info;
- That the **Montgomery College** History Department Chair who hosted that July 6, 2016, Ellington event would invite me to apply for a teaching position at the college;
- That I would be invited to serve as an adjunct faculty member at **Montgomery College** and **UDC** (Community College) by fall 2016;
- That, in August 2016, I would meet **Rachel Elwell** in UDC's Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives and that she would make sure that I had access to the following items (among others) by September 2016:
  1. The 2014 Ellington issue of the *Washington History Journal*;
  2. A **Calvin Jones Big Band** CD Set;
  3. The newly-released **Shirley Horn "Live at the 4 Queens" CD**; and
  4. A **Duke Ellington quarter**;

(Continued on next page)

- That **Rusty and Sandy lived in the same neighborhood as Shirley Horn's family** for a significant period of time. (I found that out while listening to a Rusty Hassan interview in a Resonance Records promotional video for that "Live at the 4 Queens" CD that Rachel told me about.
- That I would **sign a contract** to write a history of jazz in Washington, DC for Arcadia Publishing's "Images of America" series **on November 29, 2016** --the 101st anniversary of the birth of Ohio native Billy Strayhorn-- and that Willard Jenkins would agree to write the preface;
- That **Rachel**, Judith Korey, Michael Fitzgerald, and other UDC colleagues would provide invaluable information and research assistance with the book project and my teaching-related activities;
- That **Rusty** would trust me with **Rainy Williams'** email address, and **Rainy** (Shirley Horn's daughter) would put me in touch with Zev Feldman and others who could provide more information about Horn's photo and manuscript collections at the Library of Congress.
- That **Rainy** would agree to have lunch with me at the airport during one of her DC / Maryland visits; and
- **That so many people who didn't know my name before March 1, 2016, could be so incredibly kind and generous.**



*Reuben Jackson is pictured here in the UDC Student Center in January 2019.  
(Photo by Regennia N. Williams)*

By December 12, 2018, when the editor at Arcadia wrote to say that I could consider myself “officially done” with the manuscript, the above account already had all the makings of a great American jazz story, but it got even better. When I was preparing for a January 26, 2019, presentation at the Montgomery History Conference in Germantown, Maryland, I had the opportunity to meet Reuben Jackson, who is described in a UDC promotional document as an “archivist, poet, radio broadcaster/producer and currently Jazz Archives Specialist at the Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives.”

It was Reuben, another “R” in this chapter of jazz history, who shared invaluable information about the manuscript collections of Ronnie Wells Elliston and Ron Elliston, two former University of Maryland (College Park) faculty members and the founders of Maryland’s East Coast Jazz Festival. In the wake of Ronnie’s passing in 2007, the event was reborn as the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival, with saxophonist and Howard University alumnus Paul Carr – the narrator for my latest jazz oral history, serving as the director. Now in its tenth year, the 2019 Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival will take place in Rockville, Maryland on President’s Day Weekend.

Someday, I hope to give every jazz lover in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area a more personalized **THANK YOU**. For now, I will begin by extending my special thanks to Rusty, Rachel, Rainy AND Reuben, Ronnie, and Ron –six R’s at this point— for their role in making and documenting jazz history in the Mid-Atlantic. I also want to **acknowledge the musical genius of the 250+ individuals listed on subsequent pages of this publication**. Their names are also included on the pages of my new co-authored book, *Washington, DC, Jazz* (Arcadia Publishing, 2019). I look forward to sharing more information about these musicians and their music.

*Regennia*

*\*Cover photo by Nathaniel Rhodes.*

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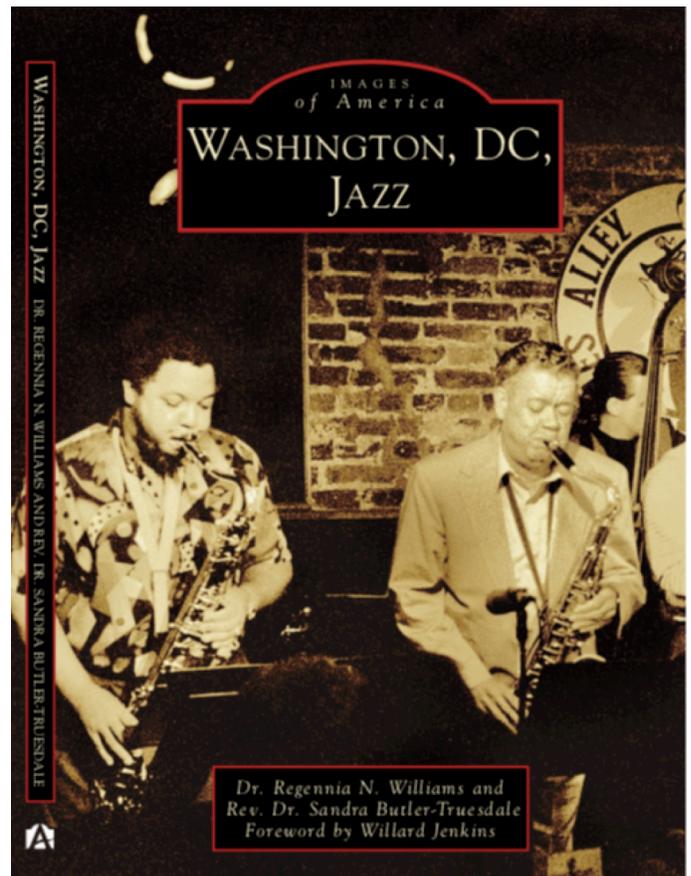
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