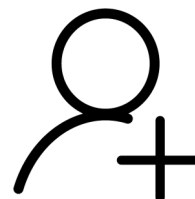




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**ARCHIVISTS  
AND ARCHIVES  
OF COLOR**

# NEWS



Dr. Ellen Irene Diggs in Luxor, Egypt, 1954. (See page 4 for details.)



*Barrye Brown*

## Letter from the Senior Chair

Dear AAC community,

I hope you all are continuing to stay safe, sane, and healthy! This will be my final letter to you as AAC chair (effective August 31, 2020). Thank you to all who were able to attend our first-ever virtual AAC business meeting. Technical difficulties and terrible weather in the midwest tried to derail us, but we persevered and made it through!

I'd like to welcome our new AAC leadership team: Tarien Mitchell (Chair), Tracy Drake (Co-Chair/Chair Elect), Bernadette Birzer (Newsletter Editor), Zakiya Collier (Web Liaison), Haian Abdirahman (Steering Committee Member), Tamara Rayan (Steering Committee Member), and Brittany Newberry (Steering Committee Member/Social Media Manager). I look forward to seeing what activities the section has to offer in the year ahead!

What a year 2020 has been and continues to be. It has certainly brought widespread clarity to a number of social issues that have been neglected for far too long. It is my hope that we will continue to use the AAC section to highlight and uplift the work that we are doing as archivists of color to document and preserve this tumultuous, historic moment. Let's continue to stay connected, be encouraged, and inspire one another. Sending warm and caring thoughts to you all!

Sincerely,

Barrye Brown

## About AAC



The Changing Face of California State University, circa 1970s. Public Affairs Photo Collection. Courtesy of the California State University Archive.

**The Archivists and Archives of Color Section (AAC) is an interest group within the Society of American Archivists. SAA is the oldest and largest archival association in North America, serving the educational and informational needs of more than 5,500 individuals and institutional members. The AAC Section helps to identify concerns and promote the needs of archivists and archives of color.**

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# Staff Updates

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## New Staff Positions at Emory University

*Tierra Marie Thomas, Southern Jewish Collections Project Archivist*

[tthom70@emory.edu](mailto:tthom70@emory.edu)



Photo of Tierra, who is very excited to be joining the Rose Library as Visiting Archivist for Southern Jewish Collections.

Beginning August 2020, Tierra Thomas now serves as the Archivist for Southern Jewish Collections at the Emory University Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library. In this project position, she will process four collections that focus on Jewish people and Jewish history in Atlanta, Georgia, and the south more generally. Tierra is originally from a small town outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, called Canonsburg and moved to Georgia as a high school senior. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in History with a minor in African American Studies from Georgia State University. As an undergraduate, Tierra developed an interest in public history through which she was introduced to archives and ended up working as a student assistant at the Georgia State University Library. Assisting in processing collections appealed to her nosy sensibilities, and she decided she wanted to continue this work in graduate school. She later earned her Master of Science in Library from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science and worked as a graduate research assistant to the University Archives at the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library.

*Anicka Austin, Geoffrey Holder and Carmen de Lavallade Papers Project Archivist*

[anicka.austin@emory.edu](mailto:anicka.austin@emory.edu)

In August 2020, Anicka Austin began working at Emory University's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library as Visiting Archivist for the Geoffrey Holder and Carmen de Lavallade papers. The papers of these two prolific and influential artists are an addition to Rose Library's focus on Black arts, aesthetics and cultural practices. *(continued on next page)*



Anicka Austin self-portrait.



(continued from page 3) Anicka's interest in archives began in 2009 when she impulsively applied for an Archives and Preservation internship at the American Dance Festival (ADF) in Durham, North Carolina.

There, she spent a summer digitizing Eiko & Koma's vividly imagined ADF performances for the artists' own archive. Anicka received a BA in dance from Kennesaw State University. While working as a choreographer in Atlanta, a friend and collaborator encouraged her to pursue librarianship. She luckily applied to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill just in time to work alongside Tierra Thomas as graduate research assistant in Wilson Special Collections Library. As a Carolina Academic Library Associate in University Archives, she worked primarily with Carolina Performing Arts' records, exhibitions and engagement programs. She received her MS in Library Science in May 2020.

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# Announcements

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## Beulah M. Davis Special Collections at Morgan State University Awarded an IMLS Grant

By Ida E. Jones, Ph.D., University Archivist

The Beulah M. Davis Special Collections at Morgan State University was awarded an IMLS one-year, \$248,551 grant to implement a comprehensive interpretive project titled, "Ellen Irene Diggs: Creating Path-



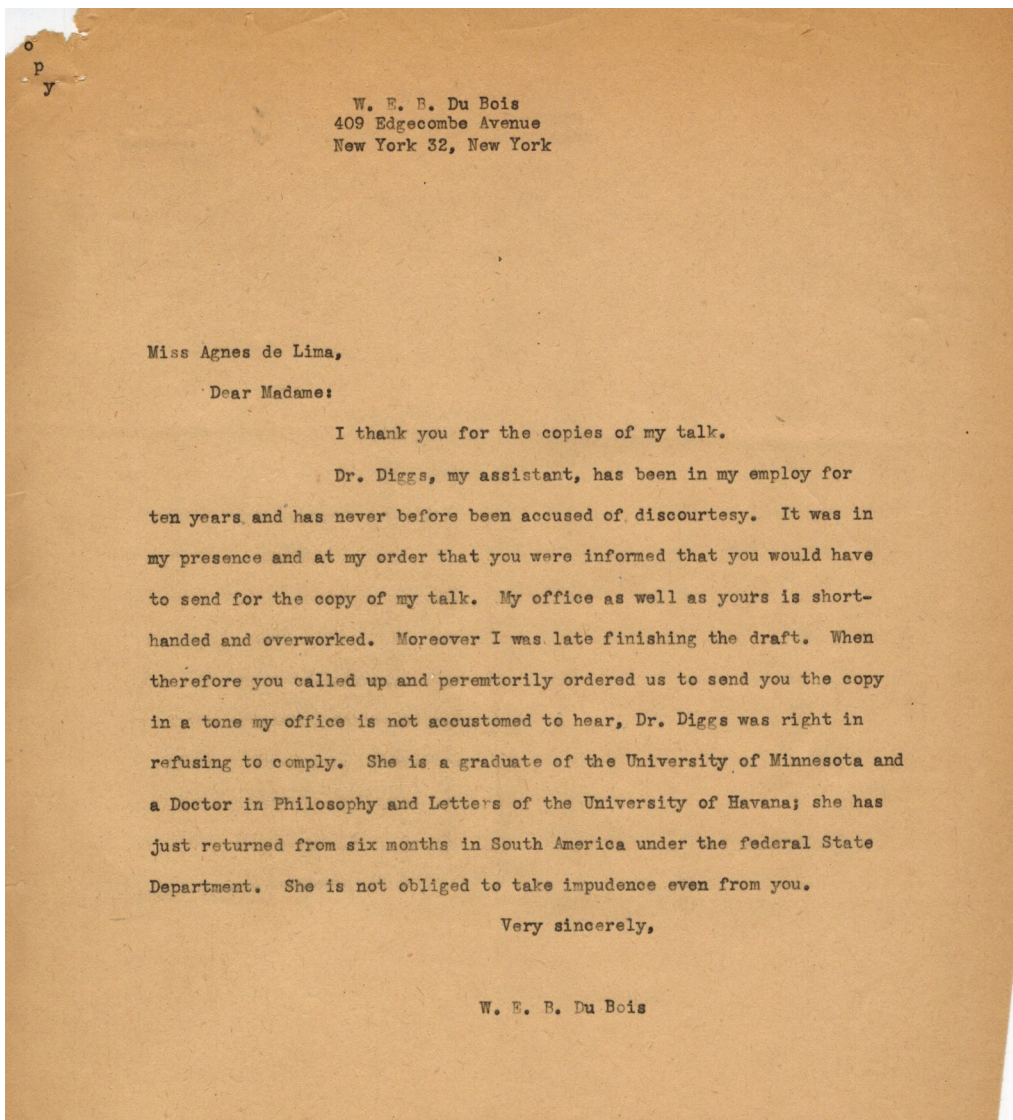
Dr. Ellen Irene Diggs and her husband, Mr. R.A. Hamilton of the British American Bible Society, while in Khartoum, Sudan, 1954. She socialized and enjoyed her time connecting to the rich Black African tradition.

ways for Young Pioneers." Based on the personal papers of Ellen Irene Diggs a pioneering African American Anthropologist, professor, scholar, researcher, and former Morgan faculty member 1947-1976. The project will process and digitize the collection, provide metadata instruction for 40 students, create a toolkit for Maryland educators in concert with the Reginald Lewis museum, as well as provide primary source materials for a forthcoming documentary on Dr. Diggs. Utilizing the Diggs collection, the grant will expose humanities undergraduate and graduate students to archives, anthropology, and technology, hopefully expanding their idea about potential career options while promoting archival literacy.

The life and contributions of Dr. Diggs spans 4 decades of research throughout Central and South America, Africa, and America. Fluent in three languages, Dr. Diggs sought to excavate the contributions and influences of the African diaspora throughout the western hemisphere. Her scholarship is known to Anthropologists, Sociologists, and scholars on feminism, yet her interior life missing and she is absent from the roll call of pioneering scholars in the select fields.

(continued on next page) PAGE 4

(continued from page 4) How did this happen? The Diggs collection arrived at Morgan through the personal crusade of Maggie Wanza, librarian, and former Associate Director of Public Services in the Soper Library at Morgan State. Wanza befriended Diggs and inquired about the destination of her papers, Diggs was mildly indifferent with no plans, and allowed Wanza to deposit them at Morgan in the 1980s. There the papers remained shelved and unprocessed until 2020. Morgan State did not have a full-time archivist until 2016. The voluntary archivist Dr. Roland McConnell was a full-time faculty member in the Department of History from 1948 to 1981. Dr. McConnell had archival training and worked with Dr. Harold T. Pinkett at NA-RA. During his career he assisted in acquiring collections and processed several. After his retirement in 1981 manuscript collections remained unprocessed until my arrival in 2016. Initially, my focus in the Davis Room allowed for collections to be reprocessed and processed. Dr. Diggs is among many luminaries of Morgan faculty such as Dr. G. James Fleming, Dr. Therman O'Daniels, and Dr. Benjamin A. Quarles. All at Morgan during its golden age 1947-1970 under the presidential administration of Dr. Martin D. Jenkins. Currently, Diggs is one of two women faculty collections. The papers of the late Dr. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn are slated for arrival and will greatly add to the intellectual landscape of Morgan women faculty voices. (continued on next page)



Letter from DuBois – this response allows for Dr. Diggs to gain perceptibility as a lettered professional regardless of station.

(continued from page 5)

Regretfully, Dr. Diggs largely remains a phantom to many however, her collaboration with Dr. W.E.B. DuBois resuscitates an element of her scholarly contributions, while her academic career at Morgan is fondly remembered by alumni who had her as an instructor. Dr. Ellen Irene Diggs was born on April 13, 1906 in Monmouth, Illinois to Henry Charles Diggs and Alice Scott Diggs. She obtained a B.S. in sociology from the University of Minnesota in 1928; a M.A. in sociology from the Atlanta University in 1933 and her doctorate in anthropology from the University of Havana, Cuba in 1945. In November 1945, the *Afro American* newspaper wrote “she is first American colored woman to achieve this distinction and very few American whites have obtained it.” Her dissertation was on Fernando Ortiz a notable Cuban anthropologist. Through the work of Ortiz and traveling throughout Cuba and South America Diggs became intrigued with issues of African cultural retentions and colorism. This led her to dig deeper into how culture, color and humanity were entwined always situating the African lower than indigenous or European. These questions would remain a continuous thread throughout her research.

Dr. Diggs met Dr. DuBois while pursuing her M.A. degree. She was the first person granted a degree in anthropology from Atlanta University. Upon completing her M.A., she began full time work for Dr. DuBois. The urgency of Dr. DuBois’s work was greatly augmented by the able research of Dr. Diggs. She contributed to the publication of the *Encyclopedia of the Negro* and served a cofounder of the journal *Phylon: A Review of Race and Culture*. The professional relationship between DuBois and Diggs remained until his death in 1963. In the wake of his death she offered research assistance to scholars writing on DuBois.

As I process the collection during the pandemic to meet the IMLS grant parameters, I am learning more about how race, gender and intelligence were imperceptible as being able to co-exist. Dr. Diggs spoke three languages, offered scholarly commentary on television and radio, served on state and federal commissions, maintained an exacting teaching load, and wrote articles and book reviews. In 1978 the Association of Black Anthropologists awarded her the Distinguished Scholar Award for her outstanding contributions to the field through her research. In 2021 the American Anthropological Association will meet in Baltimore, Maryland and they will be reintroduced to Dr. Ellen Irene Diggs in her own words and on her academic home ground – no longer a footnote in other works, but a fully processed collection open and accessible for all.



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# Announcements

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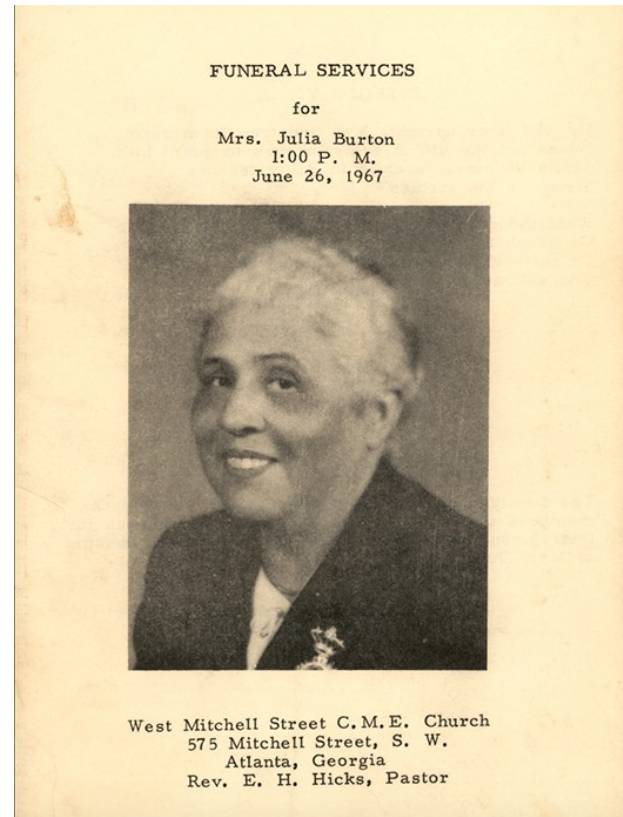
## Over 130 Years of Atlanta Area African American Funeral Programs Now Freely Available Online

Over 11,500 pages of digitized African American funeral programs from Atlanta and the Southeast are now freely available in the [Digital Library of Georgia](#). The digital collection of 3,348 individual programs dates between 1886-2019 and contains contributions from the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, a special library of the Fulton County Library System; the Wesley Chapel Genealogy Group; and the Atlanta Chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society. Digitization was funded by Georgia HomePLACE, a program of the Georgia Public Library Service.

“Funerals are such an important space for African Americans, said Auburn Avenue Research Library archivist and lead project contributor Derek Mosley. “The tradition of funerals is not reserved for the wealthy or privileged, but the community. It is that lasting document of someone’s life. In the program is the history and throughout this collection you see the evolution of the stories people left for future generations. I was amazed at the one pagers from the 1940’s, and by the 2000’s there was full color, multiple pages, and a ton of photographs highlighting the life and love shared by the families. This collection is public space for legacy.”

Funeral programs provide valuable social and genealogical information, typically including a photograph of the deceased, an obituary, a list of surviving relatives, and the order of service. Some programs provide more extensive genealogical information about the deceased, such as birth and death dates, maiden names, past residences, and place of burial. This data that can otherwise be hard to find, particularly for marginalized populations. The records of these communities were often either destroyed, kept in private hands, or never created in the first place.

“The challenge for African American genealogy and family research continues to be the lack of free access to historical information that can enable us to tell the stories of those who have come before us,” said Tammy Ozier, president of the



(continued on next page)

*(continued from page 3)* Atlanta Chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society. “This monumental collection helps to close this gap, allowing family researchers to get closer to their clans, especially those in the metro Atlanta area, the state of Georgia, and even those outside of the state.”

The Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History began collecting funeral programs in 1994 with an initial donation by library staff. Since then, staff and the public have continued to add to the collection with a focus on the city of Atlanta. Although the materials have been physically open for research for decades, they can now be accessed beyond the library’s walls. In 2012, the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society Atlanta Chapter began its funeral program collection project in partnership with the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History and the Wesley Chapel Genealogy Group.

Fulton County Library System Director Gayle Holloman said, “Funerals are filled, of course, with moments that allow expressions of great sorrow. However, for so many, especially in black communities, the funeral program is the written and preserved benediction to a life lived. It is my hope that the understanding of that fact will be treasured for generations to come.”

Funeral programs are still being accepted by both organizations; to contribute to either collection, contact the [Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History](#) or the [Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society Atlanta Chapter](#).

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## ***Your Outgoing 2019-2020 AAC Steering Committee***

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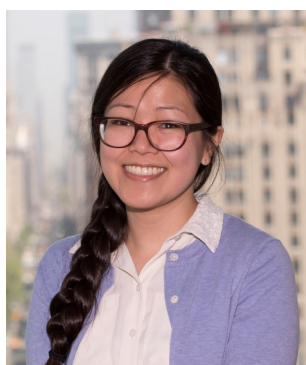
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