

African-American and Third World Archivists Roundtable

NEWSLETTER

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AUGUST 1994

ADIEU FROM THE PAST CO-CHAIR Beverly A. Cook

As the outgoing Co-Chair of AATWAR, I wish to express my gratitude to all the members for allowing me to serve for the last two years. It has been a rewarding experience which I hope will allow me to become a more effective member. In moving toward the 21st century, AATWAR must continue to encourage the emergence of more minorities into the ever-growing field of archival administration. We must be ever diligent in submitting program proposals to SAA and interacting with other roundtables and sections within the organization. We must also begin to build bridges and initiate contacts with our third world colleagues. The future is a blank sheet before us; let us fill the pages!

See you in Indianapolis.

THE SILENT MINORITY

Response to the call to consider a name change for AATWAR has been almost nil. Only one written response was sent to the newsletter. If you have an opinion or suggestion, let us hear from you - **SOON!**

Efforts to compile a new directory of archivists of color have been delayed because of the low number of questionnaires returned. Over 80 survey forms were mailed, and thus far, only 28 returned. We are waiting to hear from you!

PEOPLE, PLACES, & THINGS

Ervin L. Jordan, Jr. was recognized as outstanding alumnus by the Old Dominion University Chapter of the National Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi at its April 1994 Honors and Awards program. Jordan is the Associate Curator, Special Collections Department of the University of Virginia Library. He also teaches a two-semester night school course on African-American history at Piedmont Virginia Community College and his third book, Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia, will be published by the University Press of Virginia in February 1995.

Barbara Lewis Burger of the Still Picture Branch, National Archives, is the editor of the newly published, Pictures of African Americans During World War II, a slide

set consisting of 260 images of African Americans. The images document African American participation in the war on both the home front and the battlefield. Burger researched, selected and arranged the items in the accompanying listing and wrote the introductory information. The set is available for \$120.00 and may be ordered from National Archives, National Archives Trust Fund, Fulfillment Center (NEDC), 8700 Edgeworth Drive, Capitol Heights, MD 20743-3701.

The University of Maryland's College of Library and Information Services offered a summer course, "Sources of Diversity: Materials in Archives and Libraries for the Study of African-American Life and Culture." The course was coordinated by Marilyn Pettit of the CLIS faculty. It offered students an introduction to the archival and library resources available for research in the Maryland/D.C. area, and featured class sessions conducted by archivists and librarians from area repositories. Participants included Joellen ElBashir, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; Deborra Richardson, Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian Institution; Debra Newman-Ham, Library of Congress; Lynda DeLoach, George Meany Memorial Archives; Danna Bell-Russel, Washingtonian Division, MLK Public Library of D.C.; and Gail Lowe, Anacostia Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

The Organization of

American Historians is seeking information for its new directory of minority historians. If you wish to be listed in this directory, contact OAH, Directory of Minority Scholars, 112 North Bryan Street, Bloomington, In 47408-4199.

The African American Museums Association (AAMA) held its 1994 annual conference, August 25-27 in Chicago, IL. It was hosted by the DuSable Museum of African American History of Chicago. With the theme "The Future of the Past: Planning to Educate America in the 21st Century," the conference dealt with philosophical issues relating to the purpose - past, present and future - of African American museums, as well as explored basic museology topics. Since 1978, the AAMA has been the voice of the black

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The African-American and Third World Archivists Roundtable Newsletter is published twice a year. Questions? Contributions? Contact co-editors: Karen L. Jefferson and Joellen ElBashir, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. 20059, (202)-806-7840/ FAX (202) 806-6405.

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museum movement in the U.S. Headquartered in Wilberforce, Ohio, home of the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, AAMA is actively engaged in advocacy before Congress and other bodies on behalf of member institutions' concerns. AAMA produces a quarterly newsletter, a directory of black museums and museum professionals, plans workshops to address the needs and concerns of the profession, and convenes an annual conference for the purposes of training and networking. For membership information, contact Jocelyn Robinson-Hubbuch, executive director, AAMA, P.O. Box 548, Wilberforce, OH 45384, 513/376-4944.

NUCMC OFFERS FREE RLIN/OCLC CATALOGING

The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), a free-of-charge cooperative cataloging program operated by the Library of Congress, is actively seeking to identify archives and manuscript repositories located in the United States and its territories which are open to the public and which lack the capability to catalog their collections in a national-level database such as RLIN or OCLC. On the basis of data supplied by such institutions to the NUCMC program, NUCMC catalogers create RLIN bibliographic records describing collections held by participants and establish pertinent name and subject authority headings. The NUCMC tapes are subsequently purchased and

loaded by OCLC. Descriptions and locations of the material are then available to researchers on RLIN and OCLC throughout the United States and around the world.

For more information on this and other NUCMC programs, contact NUCMC Team, Special Materials Cataloging Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540-4375, 202/707-7954.

Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Award \$220,000 to Document Impact of Voting Rights Act

The National Endowment for the Humanities has recently announced that it has awarded Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center a \$220,000 grant to support the first phase of a "Voting Rights Act Documentation Project."

The project, which is directed by Moorland-Spingarn staff member **Avril J. Madison**, will document and record the impact of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by creating an oral history documentation collection which will be deposited at the Moorland-Spingarn and 10 other academic and research institutions.

During the next two years of the first phase of the project, Madison and her colleagues will focus on the first 20 years after passage, and they will conduct interviews with 50 to 60 public officials who were elected during the period and whose elections may be directly attributable to the landmark legislation. Most of the

officials to be interviewed will be black men and women from eight Southern states: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

The resulting oral histories will document the political changes that occurred during the period. The project will also solicit for deposit at Moorland-Spingarn the personal papers of those interviewed who have not already made such arrangements with other institutions.

The documents produced by this project will complement the Moorland-Spingarn's Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection which documented the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

The project was one of 227 projects nationwide which received funds recently from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Division of Preservation and Access.

A second phase of the project is expected to begin in two years, and will cover the period 1985 to the present.

PRESERVING OUR RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

Victor N. Smythe
Project Archivist

In 1872 the black community in Baltimore City finally had a place to bury their dead. It was in that year that Rev. James Pack and the Memorial United Methodist Church (Sharp Street Church) founded the Mt. Auburn Cemetery

where former slaves and noted black leaders and heroes could rest in peace. The ledgers which record lot ownership and those who have been buried there for over 120 years were microfilmed as part of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project.

The Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project funded by the Lilly Endowment four years ago has been surveying churches and other religious institutions and conducting preservation workshops in 14 cities across the country. Undertaken in 1988 to enhance the special collections of the Schomburg Center in the area of religion, the project broke new ground in many fields.

It was the first time that a nationwide attempt was made to physically inspect and log existing records of black religious institutions and to undertake preservation of these materials. Wedded to this endeavor was a concerted effort to instill in the minds of the black community at large the importance and critical necessity to preserve their heritage.

The introductory preservation workshops conducted in the targeted cities of the Project afforded an opportunity to talk frankly of the urgency to save our religious heritage from benign neglect or worse. It was always emphasized that history committees should be formed, where they did not already exist, to begin to focus attention on maintaining church

records as an ongoing primary activity of the church's administration. Various methods for engaging the interest and attention of the entire church body were discussed. Although the focus was to impart professional wisdom, ideas, suggestions and the experiences of others were shared with the workshop participants. Demonstrations using standard archival materials were used to introduce proper archival techniques and practices to the groups. Local experts in conservation and well-known scholars or researchers were invited to address those attending the workshops.

One of the handiest tools used during the workshops was the Project's publication, Preserving African-American Religious Documents: A Guideline For Churches and Other Religious Institutions. This seven-page booklet covers the essential points for preserving records in various formats, disaster preparedness and gives regional centers to contact for guidance. The booklet has been in great demand; and other research institutions, universities, and individual religious and non-religious institutions around the country have requested copies.

In efforts to reach future African-American religious leaders and a wider public, the Schomburg Center held two symposia to discuss research priorities and forms of religious expressions and practice in the African-American community. Noted scholars, educators, researchers and practitioners

presented papers in their particular areas of expertise in panel discussions at the Schomburg Center.

The first symposium in May 1990 considered 'Research Problems and Resources for the 1990s.' The focus was the status of research and scholarship on mainstream black Protestant denominations. In May 1992 a two-day symposium entitled 'The Diversity of the African-American Religious Experience: A Continuing Dialogue' whose focus was comparative religion.

As part of the Project, The Schomburg Center has acquired significant collections. These include the papers of Bishop Emeritus Henry C. Bunton, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; Rev. Milton Galamison, Presbyterian Church; Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr., Baptist Church and Dr. Olivia P. Stokes; the Dupree African-American Holiness-Pentecostal Collection, and a Moorish Science Temple Collection. Signature religious paintings by Charles H. Alston and Allen Rohan Crite were acquired. Contemporary images of diverse religious expressions captured by photographers Sulaiman Ellison, Chester Higgins Jr., Marilyn Nance, and Coreen Simpson among others have enhanced the photograph collections. Numerous taped sermons, spirituals, gospel and other religious music as well as films and videotapes collections have augmented the Center's holdings.

A vital activity of the Center's far-reaching project has been microfilming church records on site. The project

archivists arranged and filmed ledgers, record books, correspondence, bulletins, souvenir programs, and other materials of churches in Savannah, Richmond, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. Microfilm copies will be given to the churches. Additional copies will be available at the Schomburg Center. With the permission of the church, positive microfilm copies will be sold to other research institutions at cost.

There is yet much work to be done. Some collections need to be processed, finding aids prepared, final surveys corrected. In total, nearly 100 collections of original sources and microfilm compilations have been acquired. These collections include personal and religious papers, art work, sheet music, and photographs. Although the project is nearly completed, the Schomburg Center remains committed to its mandate to help preserve the rich heritage of the Black religious experience. Other institutions and individuals have also undertaken projects to survey and safeguard church and religious institutions' records. As a result of the project, churches have become aware that their records have historical value and that their contributions to the African-American experience are an integral piece of American culture. For more information call Victor Smythe at (212) 491-2226.

SAA IN INDIANAPOLIS

The theme for the 58th Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists is "The

Archival Core: Defining the Profession In the Information Age." The Program Committee developed four core sessions which will focus on the issues of information technology, advocacy, education and shared concerns. Other sessions will expand on those broad themes, e.g. preservation, document imaging, legal issues, documentation efforts, management and international contacts. Sessions and activities which may be of particular interest to AATWAR members are listed below:

#26 "Forty Years After Brown vs The Board of Education: Desegregation and the Documentary Heritage"

#27 "Stop the Grievances: Identify and Eliminate Potential Strife via Conflict Resolution Techniques," chaired by Wilda Logan Willis

#71SF "International Exchange: United States and West Africa," chaired by Deborra A. Richardson

#77 "Archivists and the Documentary Process," featuring Tony Buba, independent film producer and Dante James of Blackside Films

Thursday, September 8, 5:45-6:45 p.m. Awards Ceremony at which the first Minority Student Award will be presented

Friday, September 9, 12:45-2:30 - Walking Tour of the African-American Community and the Central Canal

FROM THE CO-CHAIR

AGENDA FOR INDIANAPOLIS

Beverly A. Cook

Plans are set for the African American and Third World Archivists Roundtable's annual meeting, Friday, September 9, 1994, from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m., during the annual conference of the Society of American Archivists. Below is a short agenda of matters that must be discussed during this year's business session. Please try to attend.

- Opening remarks ---- Co-Chairs
- Minority Award Recipient
- Reports from subcommittees
 - newsletter
 - directory update
 - AATWAR name issue
- Minority Award Critique - discussion
- AATWAR Program Proposals (1995)
- Old Business
 - election of new Co-Chair
- New Business
 - promoting AATWAR
 - 3-year agenda
- Closing remarks

This list is not exhaustive. If you have any issues that you need to bring before the Roundtable, please contact Deborah Dandridge at the Kansas Collection, Spencer Library, University of Kansas, 913/864-4274; FAX: 913/864-3855. Ms. Dandridge will continue as Co-Chair of AATWAR for the coming year.