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# ARCHIVISTS AND ARCHIVES OF COLOR NEWS



*Students performing in Spelman College's dance theater. Courtesy of the Spelman College Archives.  
(See Page 6 for details)*



## Letter from the Senior Chair

Hello all!

I am pleased to announce the latest featured archivist on our web project, [Archiving in Color](#). Teresa Mora is the University Archivist at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Mora has been involved with the section since the start of her career as an archivist, as a Pinkett Award winner and then as co-chair from 2004-2006.

I hope you will enjoy this feature and the ones that will follow in the coming months.

I am also happy to announce a West Coast meetup for AAC section members on Thursday, February 15, 2018 at 2:30 pm. The Autry Museum has provided 12 complimentary tickets to the [LA RAZA exhibition](#) currently on view. Published in Los Angeles from 1967-1977, the influential bilingual newspaper *La Raza* provided a voice to the Chicano Rights Movement. *La Raza* engaged photographers not only as journalists but also as artists and activists to capture the definitive movements, key players, and signs and symbols of Chicano activism. The archive of nearly 25,000 images created by these photographers is now housed at the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA (CSRC). CSRC Archivist, Xaviera Flores will be joining the group as we visit the exhibition. The museum visit will be followed by beers at Golden Road Brewery. To RSVP, please visit this form: <https://goo.gl/forms/ssne9nW1O1Ydbn7G2>

If you are interested in meeting archivists in your area, building local and regional collaborations, or networking through other means, please contact your AAC Regional Contact listed below. If you do not have a regional contact close by, please consider becoming one!

Lastly, SAA awards season is upon us! Consider nominating yourself, or an individual or organization that has made an outstanding contribution to the archives profession. I encourage you to consider each and every one of the awards. There were multiple awards that were not awarded last year because no one applied! Deadline for applications is February 28.

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## 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.**

## Spotlight on 2017 Pinkett Student Award Winner: NaVosha Copeland



Pinkett Student Award Recipient: NaVosha Copeland

NaVosha Copeland is an archivist whose mission it to #EnrichTheCollectiveMemory. She was raised in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, and obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Society & Culture from Emory University in 2016. She is currently a graduate student at the iSchool of Illinois at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She will graduate and obtain a Master of Science in Information Science in May 2018. Follow her on Twitter @navoshacopeland.

*What attracted you to a career in archives?*

During my senior year of my undergraduate career at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, I investigated the history of Black student protest at the institution. I decided to look in my University's archives and use primary sources. I appreciated seeing the photographs, correspondence,

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and videos that were created by the students, faculty, and staff who advanced social justice at Emory University. While completing this research, time was ticking, and I was also deciding which career to pursue after graduating from college. An archivist at Emory University encouraged me to become an archivist, as he saw how interested I was in archival material. After speaking on a panel at Emory University about the research that I did, and realizing how important archival material is to understanding history *as well as* the present, I decided to become an archivist.

*You are earning your graduate degree in archival studies through a distance learning program. What attracted you to this type of program? Have there been any challenges?*

After I decided to become an archivist I needed to apply to a Library and Information Science graduate program. I researched different institutions, and I also decided to stay in Atlanta, Georgia due to several commitments. Thus, I knew that I was going to enroll in an online learning program. Yikes! I was concerned about this. One of my friends had an unpleasant experience in a traditional online learning program a year before I began my graduate school application process. Therefore, I was not interested in completing my graduate studies without having synchronous class sessions. I wanted the real time classroom experience. Thus, I decided to apply to the iSchool of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

This online program, called the LEEP online learning program, consists of synchronous class sessions- and I love this experience! I'm grateful that I can speak with my professors and classmates via our live, real time, online classroom spaces. I am on the Archives and Special Collections professional pathway and In May 2018, I will graduate with a Master of Science in Information Science from 'UIUC.

*Tell us about your current position and the work you do at Emory University.*

For the first year of my graduate program, I completed several internships in archives around the city of Atlanta (the Atlanta History Center and Georgia State University's archives). Currently, I'm working as a Project Archivist at Emory University's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library. Yes, I'm back at Emory, but this time it's different! I'm processing the Lawrence Wood Robert papers, a 70 linear feet collection that consists of his personal and professional material. He was born in the 1890s. He was an engineer, Georgia Tech alumnus, a Democrat, and a world traveler. His collection is vast and robust, as it spans from the 1890s to the 1970s, and it includes remnants that portray Confederate history, the ins and outs of the Public Works Administration, and the history of Georgia Tech's expansion.

*How does being an archivist of color influence your practice?*

Of course, it has been interesting processing Lawrence Wood Robert's (known as "Chip") papers. I'm a Black woman, he was a White man, and he was a proud admirer of the Confederacy, as evidenced by his memberships in different organizations that celebrated the history of the Confederacy. I have appreciated learning about a different culture from my own. As a Black woman who grew up in a lower-income community, I have realized how the class and socioeconomic status of donors have affected the archival profession and the collective memory. By critically looking at the neatly-filed correspondence that is within this collection, which was more than likely filed by Chip's assistants or secretaries, I see how the wealthy's papers have been able to be archived more speedily than those who come from marginalized backgrounds. Frankly, neatly-filed correspondence can be processed quicker than that which is more dispersed throughout the collection. But what about the poor, the incarcerated, the chronically ill, the historically transient? I realize that our papers take more time (hence, more funding) to process- but it is our job as archivists to develop workflows and solutions that address these concerns. My goal as an archivist is to #EnrichTheCollectiveMemory, and doing so requires the processing and archiving of the papers and records of diverse groups and organizations. All of the correspondence that we receive will not be neatly-filed, yet, it still needs to be processed and made accessible within a short period of time. I'm still thinking about this, and I want to continue this conversation.

*Can you offer any advice to someone considering a graduate program in library, information, or archival science?*

As I near the completion of my graduate program, and work in the beginnings of my professional career, I encourage anyone who is interested in completing a graduate program in library, Information, or archival science to visualize where one wants to "land", meaning, what type of work one wants to do after they graduate from the program. A wise woman once told me that the key to figuring out where to study (which school/program to choose) is to ask what type of work one wants to do after the program is complete. Knowing this information helps prospective students choose the right program. Choose a program that won't conflict with your commitments and will complement (and help you reach) your goals.

This feature is Part 2 of a spotlight on 2017 Pinkett Minority Student Award winners: Chido Muchemwa (University of Texas at Austin) and NaVosha Copeland (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). To view Muchemwa's spotlight, check out [AAC's Fall 2017 Newsletter](#).

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## Upcoming Dates

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The **Harold T. Pinkett Minority Student Award** was established in 1993 to encourage minority graduate students, such as those of African, Asian, Latinx, or Native American descent, to consider careers in the archival profession and promote minority participation in SAA. The award provides financial support for a minority graduate student enrolled in a post-secondary institution to attend the SAA annual meeting.

**Application Instructions:**

**Nominations are due to the Pinkett Award Committee by February 28 of each year.** For more information about applying, please see SAA's [Harold T. Pinkett Minority Student Award](#) page.

# Institutional Profile

## Our Story: Digitizing Publications and Photographs of the Historically Black Atlanta University Center Institutions

By Holly Smith and Matthew Ownby

In 2016 the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library was honored to receive a grant awarded by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) for digitizing rare and unique content. The project, titled “Our Story: Digitizing Publications and Photographs of the Historically Black Atlanta University Center Institutions,” is a three year collaborative project between the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, Spelman College Archives, Morehouse College, and the Digital Library of Georgia. The



goal of the project is to broaden access to “hidden” collections consisting of unique publications and select photographs that document the history of the Atlanta University Center – the largest consortium of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The project gathers materials from past and present AUC schools including Atlanta University, Clark College, Clark Atlanta University, Gammon Theological Seminary, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College, Morris Brown College, and Spelman College. Over two years the project more than 700,000 pages of material will be digitized and made available online in order to broaden access to the collections. Working in partnership with the Digital Library of Georgia and the Spelman College Archives, the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library has prepared over 80,000 pages of historic publications and photographs for digitization. Phase one of the project has been primarily focused on shining a spotlight on Spelman College, with

many of its collections being digitized for the first time. Among the exciting materials that will soon be made available are an extensive run of Spelman College yearbooks, college catalogs, newspapers and bulletins that tell the story of Spelman dating back to its founding in 1881. In addition to the publications are hundreds of rare photographs from the Spelman College Archives that focus on student life, commencement, Spelman College presidents, historic buildings and grounds, and theatrical productions. Beginning in early February 2018 users will be able to visit <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/spelman/> to access Spelman College materials digitized to date.

## Golden State Mutual Digitization and Access Project

By Shani Miller, Project Coordinator

The UCLA Library is delighted to announce the completion of its Golden State Mutual digitization project supported by the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation, with additional funding from the National Film Preservation Foundation. The grant was used to digitize moving images, sound recordings, photographs, negatives, film strips, and slides from one of our cornerstone collections, the Golden State Mutual (GSM) Life Insurance Company records (1909-2009). The Project Supervisor for this project was Yasmin Dessem, Head of the Library's Audiovisual Preservation division. This initiative builds on an earlier Haynes grant to reprocess the GSM records that was helmed by Kelly Besser, UCLA Library Special Collections Processing Archivist.

GSM was the first Black insurance company in Los Angeles, established in 1925 in response to discriminatory practices that restricted the ability of African American residents to purchase life insurance. Throughout its nearly eighty-five year run, GSM displayed a commitment to self-documentation on a variety of media formats, building a treasure trove of images and sound that illustrates the shifting demographics of Los Angeles, and the empowerment of a community.



Golden State Mutual executives on the rooftop of the Home Office. Left to right: A.J. Williams, Norman O. Houston (co-founder), Helen Hodge Batiste, George A. Beavers, Jr. (co-founder), Edgar J. Johnson, and Robert W. Smith. (ca. 1949)



### Digital Collection:

So far over 2400 items are online, with more slated to come early this year. Here's a link to the collection page on Calisphere: <https://calisphere.org/collections/26883/>

Left to right: Edgar J. Johnson, Paul R. Williams (architect of Golden State Mutual Home Office), Norman O. Houston (co-founder), and George A. Beavers, Jr. (co-founder). (ca. 1948)

*Continued from page 7*

**Crowdsourcing:**

We recently launched a crowdsourcing project to help us enhance descriptions by identifying people and places in the digitized content. Through the process, we've had the pleasure of meeting the collection donor, Ivan J. Houston, son of GSM co-founder Norman O. Houston. Like his father, Houston is a Buffalo Soldier and former GSM president and CEO. He's 92 years young and has helped us identify many of the faces in the collection. We've also met several members of the Golden State Mutual Life Alumni Association, a group of former GSM staffers who have maintained their community since the company's close. It's been incredibly moving to hear how GSM made a difference in everyone's lives and how much this project means to them. The crowdsourcing will be conducted through in-person meetings with former staffers and this designated Flickr page: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/preservegsm/>

**Coming Soon:**

We hope to screen a selection of GSM home movies at their celebrated former Home Office in the West Adams Historic District, designed by renowned architect Paul Revere Williams. The Late Moderne building still stands today and was designated a City of Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument in 2011. It's been over 50 years since some of these films were first viewed by staff in the Home Office auditorium.

For additional information about the project, please contact [preservegsm@ucla.edu](mailto:preservegsm@ucla.edu)



Norman O. Houston and George A. Beavers, Jr. prepare for the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly installed IBM RAMAC at the Golden State Mutual Home Office. (1959)

## Black, White and Bronze: What role do archivists play in ridding American racism of its historical amnesia?

By Sarah Riccitelli, Corporate Archivist/Records Manager

### Chapter I: Charleston, South Carolina

When Dylann Roof murdered nine African-American worshippers in their historic church in June of 2015, another chapter was written in the long, sorry and sordid book of American race relations, after a period of the writer's block known as historical amnesia. When photos surfaced of the vehemently racist Roof posing with the Confederate battle flag, everyone from ordinary citizens to professional historians threw themselves into arguments about the flag's true meaning: racism or heritage. Many historians argued that the Confederate flag was indeed racist, but as a part of our shared history, state capitals should keep their flags.<sup>1</sup>



Fig. 1. Stephen Foster looms over an African-American slave playing a banjo in this statue by Giuseppe Moretti. Note the bare and shod feet. Photo courtesy of Bill O'Driscoll, *The Pittsburgh City-Paper*.

### Chapter II: Charlottesville, Virginia

On August 12, 2017, white supremacists rallied in front of the memorial statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, VA, after debate shifted in favor of removing the statue. During the ensuing rally and counter-protest, a white nationalist drove his car into a crowd and killed Heather Heyer. Immediately, President Donald J. Trump blamed "many sides" for the violence and stated that many of the neo-Nazi and Alt-Right marchers were "very fine people."<sup>2</sup>

### III: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Stephen Foster and His Discontents)

A 1900 bronze statue by an Italian artist Giuseppe Moretti depicts Pittsburgher Stephen Collins Foster as a well-dressed white man, who wears good shoes, standing over a barefoot, gap-toothed, ragged and vacant-eyed African-American slave strumming a banjo, who sits at Foster's feet. Stephen Foster's figure apparently transcribes the opening notes and lyrics to his earliest hit, "Old Ned," about the death of a musical and (supposedly) happy slave.

Current scholarship agrees that Stephen Foster had abolitionist sympathies, despite the fact that many, if not most, of his songs lent themselves to Blackface Minstrelsy, which helped usher in the Jim Crow era of segregation in the American South.

<sup>1</sup> Ben Jones, "The Confederate flag is a matter of pride and heritage, not hate," *New York Times*, 19 June 2015, accessed 12 Oct. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/19/does-the-confederate-flag-breed-racism/the-confederate-flag-is-a-matter-of-pride-and-heritage-not-hatred>.

<sup>2</sup> Maggie Castor, Christina Caron, Daniel Victor, "A guide to the Charlottesville aftermath," *New York Times*, 13 Aug. 2017, accessed 12 Oct. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/13/us/charlottesville-virginia-overview.html>.

#### IV. The Pittsburgh Public Arts Commission Hearing on the Stephen Foster Statue.

On Wednesday October 4, 2017, I attended the Pittsburgh Public Arts Commission public hearing on the eventual fate of the Stephen Foster statue: removal, relocation or a plaque to explain its racial context. Both black and white Americans were, with a few exceptions, united in their desire to see the statue removed. A smaller contingent wanted the statue modified with a plaque. Pittsburgh's black and white communities reached an understanding: People of color need to stand beside their white counterparts, not sit beneath them.

I, too, testified to the Pittsburgh Public Arts Commission about the Stephen Foster Memorial statue. I said that the statue masks a long and bloody history of racism and violence. Destroying the statue would erase our history and how far we stand from our democratic ideal. The statue should be removed and relocated to a museum, where it can be properly contextualized and its story fully told. Or an explanatory plaque should be added to fully contextualize the statue and address the racial concerns that it raises. But, whatever is done, it must be historically accurate and acknowledge the racial strife that the statue embodies.



Fig. 2 John Reyes - the Arts & Culture Coordinator for the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh at North Braddock - testifies to the Pittsburgh Public Arts Commission regarding the Stephen Foster statue's meaning to Pittsburgh and the statue's impact on children. Photo courtesy of Bill O'Driscoll, *The Pittsburgh City-Paper*.

#### Chapter V: Concluding thoughts

During recent debates over the fates of Confederate flags and monuments, archivists have been shamefully silent. This silence may be due to most American archivists being white, a reality that pushed SAA to recruit more archivists of color.<sup>3</sup> As an archivist, I feel that, for too long, my colleagues in the field have contented themselves with passively collecting historical documents, instead of choosing what documents to collect and to what ends they collect them. It is well past time that we, as archivists, put justice and truth before institutional loyalty or even donors and speak up when racism, or any form of historical amnesia, rears its ugly head.

Some community archives have already started. The Interference Archive "explores the relationship between cultural production and social movements" by bringing to

light previously unknown facets of American civil protests and revolutionary movements. A recent exhibit, which displayed art by African-American women - who participated in civil rights struggles from the 1960s through today - showed that African-Americans and people of color continue to fight fiercely for their rights as Americans, independently of the white majority's support.<sup>4,5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Alex H. Poole, "Pinkett's charges: Recruiting, retaining and mentoring archivists of color in the twenty-first century." *The American Archivist*, 80, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2017), accessed 12 Oct. 2017 <http://americanarchivist.org/doi/pdf/10.17723/0360-9081.80.1.103>.

<sup>4</sup> "Home page," *The Interference Archive*, Accessed 12 Oct. 2017. <http://interferencearchive.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> "Black women/Black lives," *The Interference Archive*, Jan./Feb. 2017, accessed 12 Oct. 2017. <http://interferencearchive.org/black-womenblack-lives/>.

While the Interference Archives' efforts are laudable, it is high time that mainstream archival organizations opened their eyes to the racial conflicts in our country and advocated for true justice and equality. Because only the truth and nothing but the truth can set this country free from the burdens of its racist past. When archivists call the past to account, history can write a new book.

*UPDATE: On October 25, 2017, The Pittsburgh Public Arts Commission voted to remove the Stephen Foster statue from its prominent position on Forbes Avenue next to the Carnegie Museums. The statue will be placed in storage, with the hopes that it will eventually move into a private collection. Change is coming.<sup>6</sup>*

*Sarah Riccitelli is a Corporate Archivist/Records Manager, living and working in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She has an MLIS degree, with a concentration in Archives and Information Science, from the School of Computing and Information (formerly the School of Information Science) at the University of Pittsburgh. She feels passionately that archivists need to advocate for racial equality by ensuring that their collections are used in a historically accurate manner and to speak out when myth is passed on as history.*

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<sup>6</sup> Bill O'Driscoll, "Art Commission votes to remove Stephen Foster statue," *The Pittsburgh City-Paper*, 26 Oct. 2017, accessed 11 Jan. 2018. <https://www.pghcitypaper.com/Blogh/archives/2017/10/26/art-commission-votes-to-remove-stephen-foster-statue>.