

ARCHIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC AND CULTURE

liner notes

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**A Sound
Disciple:**
The Life
and Radio
Career of
Jacquie
Gales Webb



From the Desk of the Director

aaamc mission

The AAAMC is devoted to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of materials for the purpose of research and study of African American music and culture.

www.indiana.edu/~aaamc

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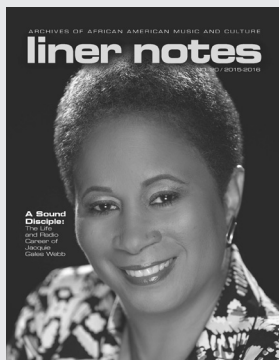
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Jacquie Gales Webb, host of *Sunday Afternoon Gospel* on Washington, D.C.'s WHUR.

As I come to the close of my second year as Director of the Archives of African American Music and Culture, I pause to reflect on the list of accomplishments we have achieved over the past twelve months. Each day my appreciation and understanding of the very vital roles that the Archives can play in our individual and collective lives increases. With a mission of collection, preservation, dissemination and analysis, archives can help in making the difference in whose story gets told and how.

In December 2015, a panel comprised of Drs. Alisha Jones and Tyron Cooper and I, chaired by Dr. Clara Henderson, presented the session *Hot Buttered Soul: The Role of Foodways in Building and Sustaining African American Communities* at the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology meeting in Austin, Texas. Both Jones and Cooper are valued AAAMC research associates, who had presented earlier versions of their papers to an enthusiastic audience at an AAAMC event sponsored in conjunction with the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University in 2014. The SEM panel was well attended, especially for the early 8:00 a.m. start time. Musical examples in the presentations featured items from the AAAMC broadly representative of African American musical practices, rural and urban, sacred and secular, past and present. The subsequent spirited exchange which the panelists generated was sufficiently stimulating to prompt the audience to continue the discussion for a full 30-minutes after the session officially ended. Our long term objective for this AAAMC-inspired project is to expand and translate this important content into print.

The AAAMC was also strongly in evidence at the 50th annual ARSC (Association for Recorded Sound Collections) conference held at Indiana University during May 2016. Through the vision of the AAAMC's Head of Collections Brenda Nelson-Strauss, who served as conference organizer, the group of nearly 300 attendees was welcomed to a two-day pre-conference workshop featuring IU's new Media Digitization and Preservation

Initiative, followed by three days of stimulating sessions and IU hospitality. Nelson-Strauss' organizational efforts were supported by AAAMC staff, including Digital Archivist/Project Manager William Vanden Dries, and graduate assistants Matthew Alley and Douglas Peach, both Ph.D. students in ethnomusicology at IU. Peach's talents were showcased as a presenter in a panel which highlighted the contents of his co-authored book, *Ola Belle Reed and Southern Mountain Music on the Mason-Dixon Line* (2015).

Brenda Nelson-Strauss represented the AAAMC in Los Angeles in October 2015 when Logan Westbrooks, a past member of our advisory board, received the Vanguard Award from the Living Legends Foundation in recognition of his distinguished career in the music industry. We were thrilled that Westbrooks chose to remark on his ongoing relationship with IU and the AAAMC during his acceptance speech at the awards banquet, encouraging other Black music industry executives to consider the importance of preserving history. The Logan Westbrooks Collection holds a position of prominence in the AAAMC, and his visit and public presentations at IU in 2013 made an indelible impression on the broad range of students who heard his riveting stories as a pioneering executive at CBS Records, who advanced the careers of the likes of Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes, Billy Paul, and the O'Jays.

Memorabilia from the Logan Westbrooks Collection was displayed as part of the fall 2015 exhibit, *The Wunderkammer: The Curiosities in Indiana University Collections*, at the Grunwald Gallery of Art on the IU campus. Douglas Peach curated the AAAMC portion of the exhibit which included a lunchbox given to Westbrooks to "create a buzz" for Diana Ross' 1989 album, *Workin' Overtime*; a key to the City of Memphis, Tennessee, presented to Westbrooks in 1991; and a Soul Train jacket Westbrooks received during his tenure as Vice President for Marketing at Soul Train Records.

Another AAAMC 2015-16 highlight was the invitation from Google to curate

an online juried exhibit for publication during Black History Month. As one of the 54 cultural organizations selected to participate, our four-part virtual exhibit, *The Golden Age of Black Radio*, was added to the Google Cultural Institute site in February 2016. The exhibit garnered the attention of National Public Radio, which prompted an on-air interview regarding its conception and content with Brenda Nelson-Strauss.

This account provides a glimpse of the breadth of the AAAMC's educational mission and the richness of its impact on our ever expanding information culture. The staff of the AAAMC cultivates and values opportunities to document and foreground accounts of African American presence, innovation and excellence in the field of music. We welcome your feedback as a measure of our success in this effort.



— Mellonee Burnim, Ph.D.

In the Vault: Recent Donations

Special Collections:

Deborah Smith Pollard: Gospel music magazines, interviews with gospel musicians, and radio airchecks.

Carl Tancredi: Limited circulation magazines from the 1970s with a focus on vocal harmony groups.

Angela Brown: Additional programs and press clippings from 2013-2015.

Michael Nixon: Hip hop magazines and images related to the marketing and promotion of hip hop artists and music in Los Angeles, CA.

Logan Westbrooks: Additional personal papers from 2013-2015.

Teresa Hairston: Gospel music magazines, CDs, DVDs, videos, media press kits, artist publicity, and event photographs.

Opal Louis Nations: Pewburner CD series and recent articles.

Prince Rogers Nelson Commemorative Publications: Collection of posthumously published magazines compiled by AAAMC staff.

CD/DVD/Book Donors:

4Entertainment
Akousa Gyebi
Alison M Loggins-Hill
Alligator Records
Armadillo Music
Audio Preservation Fund
Avie Records
Basin Street Records
Bellamy Group
Black Diet
Blind Pig Records
Blind Raccoon
Blue Engine Records
Blue Note
Blues Images
Braithwaite & Katz
Communications
Bryant Scott
Capitol Entertainment
Chart Room Media
Cherry Red Records
Cleopatra Records
Computer Ugly
Concord Music Group
Conqueroo
Culture Shock Music
Cumbancha

Daptone Records
Delmark Records
DL Media
Dorado
Effective Immediately PR
Entertainment One
Ethan Alapatt
Fat Possum Records
Fernando Orejuela
Flipswitch PR
Forced Exposure
Fully Altered Media
Gathier Music
Get On Down
Girlie Action
Good Road PR
Hard Head
Harmonia Mundi
HighNote Records
illPhonics
Indra Rios-Moore
Jatta
Jazz Promo Services
Jazz Village
Jensen Communications
Joe Douglass Ministries
K7 Records

Killer B3
Legacy Recordings
Luaka Bop
Lydia Liebman Promotions
M.C. Records
Mack Avenue Records
Mariea Antoinette
Mark Pucci Media
Michael Woods
Living Legends Foundation
MCG Records
Miles High Productions
Montema
MVD
Naxos of America
New Community
Nonesuch
Numero Group
Okeh
PELO Music
Portia Maultsby
Press Junkie
Propeller Media Group
Rahim Muhammad
Real Gone Music
Red Beet Records
RED Distribution

Resonance Records
Resonate Media
Rock Paper Scissors
Sacks and Co
Secretly Canadian
Shanachie Entertainment
Shout! Factory
Slingshot
Sony Legacy
SSR PR
Sugar Qube Records
Sugar Shack
Tá Records
Terri Hinte
Thirsty Ear
Thompkins Media Group
Tomás Doncker
Tyscot Records
Ubiquity Records
Universal Music
University of Chicago Press
Wacken Records
Warner Music Group
Wolf Records

The AAAMC welcomes donations of photographs, film, video, sound recordings, music, and research materials on all aspects of African American music.

A Sound Disciple: The Life and Radio Career of Jacquie Gales Webb

Jacquie Gales Webb is an impactful presence in the broadcasting industry. As the host of *Sunday Afternoon Gospel*, she has become a mainstay on Washington, D.C.'s WHUR-FM and, today, is being broadcast throughout the world via the web. Gales Webb's passion for music has been expressed through Black radio for over 40 years and she has garnered numerous awards for her efforts—most notably the “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses. The mission of her work—bringing listeners closer to God through music—continues to this day.

In order to understand the breadth of her contributions to Black radio, I interviewed Gales Webb in September 2015 at her office in Washington, D.C. Excerpts from this interview are included throughout the profile below.

Let's begin where her love for music was born.

Early Life and Musical Foundations

Jacqueline Diana Gales was born in 1955 in Harlem, New York—the year and city where Marian Anderson first sang at the Metropolitan Opera. Her parents, Indiana Johnson Gales and Wesley David Gales, were natives of Athens, Georgia, but moved from the Jim Crow-era South to Harlem during the Great Migration.

In 1958, the young Gales and her family

moved to Westbury, Long Island, settling in the neighborhood of New Cassel. At that time, New Cassel was an important working-class suburban area for African Americans. Gales Webb reflects: “. . . I had a pretty good childhood [among] African American families growing up in one neighborhood—you know, doctors and lawyers; and carpenters and blue collar workers; neighborhood associations, Boys and Girls Clubs, and cotillions. [W]e didn't know we were lower-middle class, we thought we were doing pretty good at the time . . .”

Despite her distance from the musical hotbed of Harlem, Westbury was the place where the young Gales began her life-long fascination with African American music. Her father, an avid music fan, owned a LP collection that included Harry “Sweets” Edison, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Harry Belafonte. As a child, Gales would spend hours with these records in the family basement: “I am an only child, so music was my world. In the evening I would go down and get into my father's record collection . . . and I was all three of the Supremes; I was all five of the Temptations; I was the entire cast of *West Side Story*. You know? So I got into music that way.”

In addition to records, her love for secular music grew by listening to the Black radio stations broadcasting from New York City. Lying in her bed at night, the young Gales tuned into WBLS and WWRL to hear the broadcasts of Alma John, Vy Higginsen,

Frankie Crocker, and La Mar Renee—all Black radio personalities. The female deejays were especially influential to Gales: “[I was] a little girl hearing these beautiful voices, female voices, [and it] allowed me to imagine doing the same thing.” And she did.

Channeling their inspiration, Gales hosted her own afternoon “radio” show at Westbury High School. Broadcasting over the intercom, her playlists included the hit records she heard on WBLS and WWRL. Her passion had become practice.

While records and radio were Gales' connection to Black secular music, she was exposed to gospel music during visits to family in South Carolina and Georgia. Each year, the Gales traveled south by car or by train on the “Chicken Bone Express,” as it was often referenced by Blacks, who had to bring their own food on board because Jim Crow laws did not allow them to receive service in the dining car. Gales' first experience with gospel music was during one of these Southern adventures, and several songs of this period still hold a special place in her memory. For example, she remembers her introduction to James Cleveland's “Peace Be Still”—which she calls “a perfect example of an anointed song”—while visiting her grandmother's home in Athens.

These elements—North and South, sacred and secular, records and radio—became the musical foundation for her ongoing career in Black radio.



A young Jacqueline Gales with her parents.



Jacquie Gales Webb at the microphone.



Jacquie Gales on WYCB in Washington, D.C.



Jacquie Gales Webb and AAAMC graduate assistant Douglas Peach, who curated the Gales Webb exhibit at Indiana University.



Staff at WYCB: (l to r) Donn Miller, Jacquie Gales, Raynetta Ray, and Mitch Clark.



Gales Webb and Stevie Wonder at WYCB.



Lou Rawls, Jacquie Gales Webb, and John Tyler recording for *Black Radio: Telling it Like it Was*.



Gales Webb and Chuck Brown at *Food 2 Feed*.



Gales Webb's induction into the WERS Hall of Fame in 2014.



A young Gales with Richard Smallwood.



Gales Webb with trumpeter Clark Terry.

On the Air

When Gales left Westbury to attend Emerson College in 1973, she took an unpaid student position at the College's radio station WECB-AM. Fresh out of high school, Gales' work was strictly administrative, although her ambitions lay behind the microphone. Her first opportunity to broadcast came by surprise—she was thrust onto the air to announce the resignation of Vice President of the U.S., Spiro Agnew.

Promoted quickly to Emerson's more-prestigious WERS-FM, Gales Webb settled into a broadcast position. Her first show, *The Black Experience*, ran from 10:00 p.m. to midnight and featured Black artists such as Chaka Khan, George Benson, War, and Earth, Wind & Fire. Gales' popularity spread beyond Emerson when she hosted *Jazz in the Afternoon* on WERS from 1975 to 1977. The program's "drive-time" slot, from 3:00–7:00 p.m., made Gales a rising star on Boston's airwaves.

Sonny Joe White, the owner of Boston's WILD-FM and a listener to *Jazz in the Afternoon*, recognized her potential. White offered her an audition and she was hired for her first professional position: broadcasting gospel music from 6:00–8:00 a.m. on WILD-AM, a white-owned station. This assignment launched Gales' forty-year professional career in broadcasting.

WYCB

With experience in hand, Gales spent 1978 to 1983 working for WYCB-AM, a Black-owned radio station in Washington, D.C. In its early days, WYCB was led by Black radio entrepreneurs, Dewey Hughes and Cathy Liggins Hughes. Under their direction, the format of WYCB-FM was "positive message music"—the station featured Black artists whose recordings conveyed a theme of positivity. This format countered genres of Black music that WYCB questioned, such as gangsta rap. Some of WYCB's most-played songs during this period included the O'Jays "Message in Our Music" and "Wake Up Everybody" by Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes.

The Hughes left the station in 1978 and were replaced by Howard Sanders. After taking the helm, Sanders' primary goal for WYCB was clear: he needed to make the station profitable. Recognizing the popularity of gospel music programming, Sanders shifted WYCB from its format of

"positive message music" into Washington, DC's first 24-hour gospel music station.

For Gales, the shift in ownership presented new professional opportunities. While she continued her gospel radio show, her administrative responsibilities at WYCB expanded to the position of music manager, then to program director. She created new ways to connect with her listening audiences and increase advertising revenue for the station, such as broadcasting live from Black businesses in Washington, D.C. She was essential in promoting the careers of artists like Richard Smallwood and the Winans, whose recordings she played frequently, and who she sometimes interviewed on WYCB. These relationships and experiences would serve her future career, but, most importantly for this moment, they helped WYCB become financially stable.

In 1983, Gales decided to shift her career from radio to television. Having studied broadcasting at Emerson, she was eager to take on this medium. Working for W*USA TV, Washington D.C.'s ABC affiliate, she produced numerous programs, worked closely with television journalist Maureen Bunyan, and won several Emmy awards for her productions. Her time at W*USA TV coincided with several changes in her personal life. She married TV broadcast journalist Cliff Webb, changed her name to Jacquie Gales Webb, and their first daughter was born in 1991.

Sunday Afternoon Gospel on WHUR-FM

It was this same year that Gales Webb returned to her first love: radio. Howard University's WHUR-FM wanted to capitalize on the success of its "Sunday Morning Gospel" with Patrick Ellis and sought familiar on-air personalities who could create and host new gospel programs. The station's management—Jim Watkins (general manager), Bobby Bennett (program director), and Ellis Terry (operations manager)—remembered Gales Webb's work from WYCB and knew that she would be recognizable to their listening audience. She was soon hired to host an afternoon gospel program, which quickly became known as *Sunday Afternoon Gospel*.

In the twenty-five years since its inception, *Sunday Afternoon Gospel* has become a part of the cultural fabric of

Washington, D.C. Dedicated listeners tune in each week from 12:15–3:00 p.m. to hear the best of contemporary and traditional gospel music. For her work, Gales Webb has been recognized by the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts (CAAPA) and inducted into the Hall of Fame for Emerson College’s WERS. Her success is built on the pillars of engagement with her community, her relationships and promotional work with gospel artists, and what she calls “curation”—or the selection of music for her show.

Curation

Counter to the many radio programs that use algorithms to select music, the curation of *Sunday Afternoon Gospel* is no simple process. A typical 2016 program might include music from contemporary artists Brian Courtney Wilson and Anthony Brown, mixed with established greats like Shirley Caesar, Walter Hawkins, and Andraé Crouch. While gospel represents the foundation of her show, popular music artists such as George Benson and Whitney Houston, to name a few, are sometimes included in her playlists as well.

If Gales Webb were to define her curatorial style, it would be “eclectic.” The foundation for her approach lies with her childhood hero—radio personality and entrepreneur Frankie Crocker. She shares: “What I did pick up from [Frankie] was how you can curate music . . . he not only played the O’Jays and the disco hits, but he’d throw in some Miles Davis. He’d throw in some Rolling Stones. He mixed it up, and it all fit. And that’s something that I must admit that I do [now] with gospel music.”

On *Sunday Afternoon Gospel*, eclecticism means thinking of musical selections not simply in terms of genre, but also in terms of meaning—what she wants to communicate through her show. As she explains: “When I’m going to different churches . . . they play gospel but they might even sing ‘Reach Out and Touch Somebody’s Hand,’ the Diana Ross song. Or if it’s a special anniversary for the pastor and his wife, they might play a beautiful love song. You know, the gospel experience isn’t as one-dimensional as most people think. I’ve thrown in ‘Happy’ by Pharrell [Williams] on *Sunday Afternoon Gospel*—it just seemed to fit.”

Her brand of eclecticism is not based solely on how a song fits into a playlist, but also how it will impact her listeners. Gales

Webb pays close attention to what and how a song communicates before selecting it for her show. She elaborates: “[Potential songs have] to grab you, not only sound-wise, but emotionally, because it’s a gospel song. There’s a song now by Travis Greene called ‘Intentional.’ And all it says is ‘all things are working for my good, it’s intentional.’ I mean it’s over, and over, and over. It’s very repetitive. But because of what he’s saying, and the way he’s presenting it, it doesn’t seem repetitive enough to annoy people. And it’s becoming a big hit.”

In other words, Gales Webb’s ears are peaked for the “anointing”—what she defines as, “the ability for a sound, a phrase, a feeling, to bring people closer to God.” Songs like “Intentional” are measured against classics like Richard Smallwood’s “Total Praise,” which she contends, “has the Spirit.”

Tonality is another important factor in Gales Webb’s curatorial process. As a former gospel choir member, she brings a musician’s sensitivity to her curation. If singers are off-pitch or instruments out-of-tune, the recording will not likely get air time on her show.

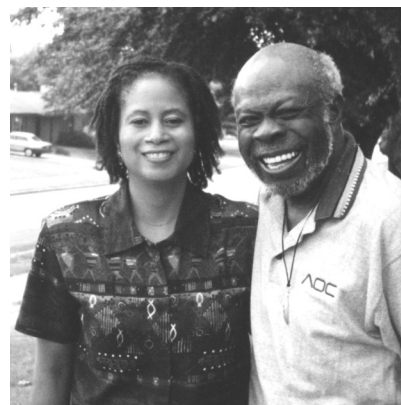
Through the principles guiding her curation—eclecticism, transcendence, and musical quality—she forges a “spiritual connection” with her listeners. Yet, music is not the only vehicle with which Gales Webb connects with her audience.

In-tune with the community

Engagement with the African American community has been a core tenet of Black radio since its beginnings in the 1920s. Although *Sunday Afternoon Gospel* has a global listening audience, Gales Webb follows this tradition by consciously connecting with her local listening community in Washington, D.C.

When she is not on the air, Gales Webb works as an emcee for church programs, fundraisers, music festivals, and other events in the African American community. In these contexts, she is deeply-respected for her professionalism, ability to engage an audience, and her musical knowledge. For the on-air personality, these engagements are opportunities to hear the songs that are most popular with her audiences. If a gospel song resonates in the community, there is a good chance it will appear on her *Sunday Afternoon Gospel* playlist.

Gales Webb’s audience engagement is also maintained through the aesthetics she



Jacquie Gales Webb with Rufus Thomas.



Gales Webb and Jim Watkins at *Food 2 Feed*.



Gales Webb and Richard Smallwood at WHUR.



Gales Webb with Emerson College President, Lee Pelton.



Gales Webb with Dottie Peoples, Juanita Jackson, and Bill Cole at WHUR.



Gales Webb and Stacy Lattisaw at WHUR.



WHUR staff at Food 2 Feed.



Gales Webb interviews Kirk Franklin on *Sunday Afternoon Gospel*, Dec. 2015.

uses while broadcasting *Sunday Afternoon Gospel*. Speaking about Black deejays, aesthetics, and their connection to their communities, AAAMC founding director and IU Professor Emeritus Dr. Portia K. Maultsby says: “In spite of the microphones, deejays were committed to having a personal conversation with their audiences . . . the oral tradition of storytelling, speaking in rhythm and rhyme, speaking in an improvised style, as well as an animated delivery, was a cultural expression that was familiar to the [Black] masses.”

Every Sunday, Gales Webb stays in-tune with her community through her on air delivery style. Her commentary is seasoned with rhythmic cadences as she glides through her notes with an improvised confidence. Inspired by the spirit of the songs she plays, her animated interludes are celebrations of life that keep her listeners engaged and energized for the coming week. Through reading announcements from local churches and community groups, she provides a highly valued public service and simultaneously forges a personal relationship with her listening audience.

Gales Webb also works with WHUR-FM to host *Food 2 Feed*—a “radiothon” that collects non-perishable food items and monetary contributions on behalf of the Capitol Area Food Bank for Thanksgiving. Begun in 2008, the event collected 170,000 meals during its 2014 program. She is just one of the many WHUR personalities who volunteer to participate in live *Food 2 Feed* broadcasts.

Artists

Gales Webb’s success is also based on the relationships she has developed with gospel music professionals during her tenures at WYCB and WHUR. Deep respect for her work is widespread in the gospel music industry, and many recording artists are indebted to her for the promotion and support she has provided throughout her career.

One such performer is gospel superstar Kirk Franklin. At the start of his career, the now multi-platinum selling artist was considered highly controversial among many segments of the gospel community. While his music was often labelled “too secular,” Gales Webb embraced Franklin’s music as well as his ministry, commenting: “I love Kirk Franklin. I was one of the first [to do so] because when he first came

people said, ‘Oh, that’s not gospel music.’ But I went to a Kirk Franklin performance, and at the end, where he brought young people up . . . they were crying and . . . giving their life to Christ, and he was leading them to church . . . I said this—you know—this is right!”

Since her earliest encounter with Franklin’s music, his recordings have been a constant presence on *Sunday Afternoon Gospel*. Furthermore, Franklin makes frequent visits to the WHUR studio for interviews with Gales Webb. In 2015, they reflected on their mutual admiration and respect during a studio broadcast:

Jacquie Gales Webb: Kirk Franklin, thank you for joining me here at WHUR.

Kirk Franklin: Are you kidding me? I will walk from Texas up here to see you. You are the quintessential legend in radio and broadcast journalism . . . I really admire and appreciate you. You’ve done so much for my career throughout the years. You’ve always supported me and you’ve always been honest—when you did not like a song, you would let me know! I think artists need more people letting them know when [the music is] not ready . . . I appreciate you for that type of coaching, pushing, and challenging that you’ve given me for over twenty years.

JGW: Well, that’s just because I love you.

KF: I love you, too, Momma [term of endearment and respect].

JGW: And I appreciate your ministry.

Distinguished gospel music icon Richard Smallwood is another artist whom Gales Webb has promoted throughout her career. Smallwood’s music is a mainstay on *Sunday Afternoon Gospel* just like it is in churches across Washington, D.C. Gales Webb championed Smallwood’s music, even when she did not personally share her audience’s fervor for a particular song. She explains: “. . . there’s a song of Richard Smallwood’s that I have played for 25 years—‘I’ll See You Again.’ People love it .

.. [and] it didn't hit me until last month. I mean, I play the song because it's a nice song. But it hit me because my cousin had just died. And I was listening to it and it really got to me. So . . . even though I didn't relate to it that much in the beginning, [once] I related to it, I really understood why people requested it all the time . . .”

Jacquie Gales Webb Collections at the AAAMC

Gales Webb's ongoing relationship with the AAAMC is built on years of personal interaction with the Archives' staff; this connection grows stronger through the acquisition of her two archival collections.

In the early 1990s, Gales Webb took a position with Smithsonian Productions—an organization designed to disseminate the curatorial work of the Smithsonian's museums and programs through multimedia projects. One of her most important productions was *Black Radio: Telling It Like It Was*—a thirteen-part public radio documentary that details the history of Black radio in the United States. Produced in conjunction with Lex Gillespie and Sonya Williams, “*Black Radio*” received the prestigious Alfred I. DuPont Award from Columbia University and the Peabody Award from the University of Georgia.

During the production, Gales Webb reached out to Dr. Portia K. Maultsby, founding Director of the AAAMC, for consultation on important historical, theoretical and musical perspectives which were incorporated into the production of “*Black Radio*.” This strategic professional partnership, supported by the expertise of Brenda Nelson-Strauss, Head of Collections, created the “perfect storm” for the on-air personality's legacy to be preserved at Indiana University.

The first of Gales Webb's two collections, *Black Radio: Telling It Like It Was* (SC 39, donated in 1996), includes research and production materials documenting the thirteen-part radio series. The collection features interviews from over 160 disc jockeys, artists, radio industry professionals, and scholars who provided the “raw material” for the production. Promotional materials, production notes, and awards received by the program represent some of the additional items in the collection. Importantly, the AAAMC also holds all thirteen episodes of “Black Radio,” which

have been digitized and are accessible to researchers. Audio from this collection was used in the AAAMC's 2016 online exhibit “The Golden Age of Black Radio” (see related story).

The second Jacquie Gales Webb Collection (SC 81) is her personal archive, comprised of professional photos, family portraits, and numerous awards for her work in radio and television. Also included are production materials for other programs she produced, including two radio series—*Remembering Slavery and Jazz Singers*—and the award-winning public television documentary, *Melodies from Heaven*, which explored African American gospel radio in Washington, D.C. Much of this collection is featured in the AAAMC's newest online exhibit, “Jacquie Gales Webb: Radio DJ and Producer” (see “Sound Bytes” article).

These two collections paint a vivid portrait of Gales Webb's contributions to Black music and radio, while also documenting her very important personal history.

Signing Off

From humble beginnings in Westbury to the heights of gospel radio stardom, the life and career of Jacquie Gales Webb is characterized by deep commitments to African American music, her community, and her faith. As *Sunday Afternoon Gospel* enters its 26th year, she remains an arbiter of sacred music, showcasing the songs that create a spiritual bond between the gospel announcer, her listeners, and the recording artists who translate their Christian belief through music. Steadfast in her commitment and recognized for her contributions to Black radio over the past forty years, Gales Webb has continued a powerful legacy of Black gospel radio announcers, while also leaving her own distinguished footprints that many music enthusiasts—perhaps themselves listening to Black radio in their beds at night—will follow.

Each week, Gales Webb signs off *Sunday Afternoon Gospel* with her trademark phrase: “May the grace of God save you; May the will of God guide you and May the love of God shine through you until we meet again. You be blessed!” It seems appropriate to end her story in just the same way.

— Douglas Dowling Peach



Gales Webb with Smokie Norful at WHUR.



Gales Webb and Marvin Sapp at WHUR.



Gales Webb and Tye Tribbett at WHUR.



Gales Webb and Jonathan Nelson at WHUR.



Jacquie Gales Webb with past and present AAAMC staff. Front row (L-R): Thomas D. Jordan (Gales Webb's cousin), Raynetta Wiggins. Back row (L-R): Matthew Alley, William Vanden Dries, Jacquie Gales Webb, Brenda Nelson-Strauss, Dorothy Berry, and Mellonee Burnim.

Jacquie Gales Webb Visits Indiana University

On March 9, 2016, Jacquie Gales Webb visited Indiana University's Bloomington campus as part of the celebration surrounding the establishment of the Jacquie Gales Webb Collection (SC 81) in the Archives of African American Music and Culture. This deposit supplements her previous donation of *Black Radio: Telling It Like It Was* (SC 39)—the most frequently accessed and utilized collection at the AAAMC.

During her visit, Gales Webb toured the AAAMC and IU's new Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative facilities, both of which are playing a key role in preserving her valuable materials. She also had an opportunity to see audio items from her collections being transferred at the MDPI facility.

After working with AAAMC staff to document the components of her collection in greater detail, Gales Webb spoke with graduate students in Dr. Mellonee Burnim's African American Religious Music course. The class discussed various topics including

the role that Black radio stations have historically played in their communities, Gales Webb's approach to programming music on her radio shows, and the state of the gospel music industry today. This conversation provided students with historical perspective on the dissemination and representation of gospel music via radio broadcasting and offered a rare look into the day-to-day operations of broadcasting units.

Following this informal in-class discussion, Gales Webb presented a public lecture in the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center, after an official university welcome from Professor Martin McCrory, Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Multicultural Affairs. Gales Webb's lecture highlighted her career in radio and television broadcasting, her deeply personal relationship with gospel music, and the importance of transmitting high quality media over the radio and television airwaves. She spoke candidly and passionately about the role of her family life in preparing her for a career as an

announcer and producer, highlighting the radio and television stations that she worked for, and showcasing several key projects that she spearheaded. Gales Webb emphasized how her career has been informed by her faith as well as by her business acumen, noting the responsibility of broadcasters to engage in public service, making a strong case for the production of high quality educational programs in public media as essential to cultivating well-informed citizens.

The afternoon concluded with a reception honoring Gales Webb's distinguished career and the establishment of the Jacquie Gales Webb Collection, where she also had an opportunity to see the AAAMC's exhibit on her life and work in the Bridgwaters Lounge. Students, faculty and staff in attendance responded to Gales Webb's account of her distinguished career in radio and television broadcasting with tremendous enthusiasm and great appreciation.

— Matthew Alley



Gales Webb stands in front of the AAAMC's exhibit celebrating her career in Black radio (Bridgwaters Lounge, Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center).



Gales Webb meeting with Dr. Mellonee Burnim's class.



Gales Webb lecturing at Indiana University, March 9, 2016.



Gales Webb lecturing at Indiana University as part of the public launch and celebration of the Jacquie Gales Webb Collection at the AAAMC.

one-on-one



An Interview with Ericka Blount Danois

Ericka Blount Danois, an award-winning author and journalist based in Baltimore, Maryland, was trained at Columbia's graduate school of journalism. Her articles about music, race, culture, and politics have been featured in publications ranging from The Source, Wax Poetics, to the Wall Street Journal, and have included stories on numerous musicians, actors, athletes, and politicians. For her recent book, Love, Peace, and Soul—Behind the Scenes of America's Favorite Dance Show (Backbeat Books, 2013), she journeyed back to "the land of bell-bottoms, afros, and soul power" to chronicle Soul Train—the hit television show dubbed "the hippest trip in America."

AAAMC graduate assistant Matthew Alley interviewed Danois about her career in December 2015. In these excerpts, she discusses researching her Soul Train book, her musical interests, and relates stories of notable interviews she has conducted during the course of her career.

MA: The first thing I'd like to ask you is a little bit about your personal background. Where are you from?

EBD: So I was born in Washington, DC. I lived there until I went to college . . . in Philadelphia, PA at University of Pennsylvania. I stayed there for four years and moved to New York right after school. I lived in New York maybe nine or ten years, got married there, and then we moved to Baltimore. So now I've been in Baltimore 13 years.

MA: I know that you got your graduate degree in journalism from Columbia. Was your undergrad in journalism as well?

EBD: No. In fact, I was an English major. As a kid, I loved to read—primarily, I loved to read fiction. But, when I got to Penn, [though] I loved English, I just didn't really know what I was going to do with an English major. I was fortunate enough to have someone ask me to write for the student

newspaper and I just was really excited about the feedback I got from writing that article. And I just continued, and did stories for the local paper, *The Philadelphia Tribune*, and decided that journalism is kind of the best of both worlds—reading and writing and doing investigative stuff. I also, as a kid, loved Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys mysteries and all of those—Sherlock Holmes and Encyclopedia Brown. It kind of worked itself out.

MA: I know you mentioned to me last night when we talked that you're covering the Freddie Gray trial right now. What other stories have you covered recently?

EBD: Recently, I just did a piece for *Pitchfork* magazine on go-go music. I grew up in D.C. so go-go was a big part of my upbringing. Also, my dad was a deejay so we listened to all kinds of music, but that was sort of the youth music of my time period. So, I just did a piece for them which will come out in the next issue. I'm trying to think of what else—mostly culture pieces. I did a bunch of stuff on *Mad Men*, the show, because in addition to music, I really, really love TV. Obviously, I guess, *Soul Train* and music—it all, again, worked itself out. *Mad Men* was one of my favorite shows and I had sort of dissected it and did a bunch of stories. It's funny, one of the stories I did was on a record exec who created the Coke jingle that was the ending of the entire series. He was a Chess Records alum. That was another piece I've done recently.

MA: Wow, that's interesting. You mentioned a moment ago about how you've written some about TV. One thing that immediately grabbed me when I was reading through your resume was your articles about the David Simon shows, *The Wire* and *Treme*.

EBD: Yes! Both of them!

MA: What drew you to those shows?

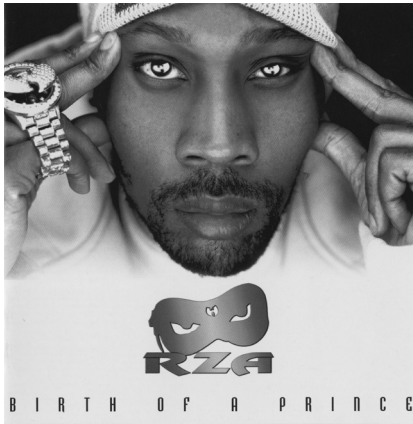
EBD: Well, you know it's funny—*The Wire* just happened accidentally. I was at Sundance [Film Festival] and there were maybe like 20 of us in a cabin and I met—his real name is Andre Royo—you know, his character on *The Wire* is Bubbles. During that weekend he got a call to be on the show. So, I said, "You know (at the time I was working for the Baltimore newspaper), when you come to Baltimore let me know and I'll see what the show is all about." And I had no idea that it was going to be this big phenomenon. So I had started covering it before it even happened, really, because [Andre Royo] was taking me to their lunches and all the stuff that they did prior to actually recording. I ended up covering it for the entire five series—various stories, from profiles on some of the characters to a profile on the character that inspired it. Little Melvin Williams was a drug kingpin in Baltimore and he had reformed and had been in prison—I don't know how long, maybe 30 years or so. And they finally actually hired him to be on the show after he was released from prison because apparently he had this incredible photographic memory and he was the one that created that wire code that the show was inspired by. So, I ended up interviewing him and . . . just [writing] a bunch of different stories every season on the show.

And then *Treme*. Oh my God, New Orleans music and culture is just fascinating to me. I was just—it was beyond exciting that he decided to do a series on it. Just being able to see all those musicians on the show and being able to learn even more about New Orleans than I thought I knew. You know, that show was just incredible. I wish that it had gotten a lot more play than it did. But I enjoyed it.

MA: You mentioned a couple of people that you've interviewed who have really stood out to you. Are there any other people that you've profiled or that you've talked to that you are particularly interested in or that your conversations maybe went differently than you expected?



Clockwise from top: Don Cornelius, Johnny Nash and Logan Westbrooks on an episode of *Soul Train*; Kurtis Blow; Earth, Wind & Fire; Shalamar (Logan H. Westbrooks and Karen Shearer Collections).



EBD: Let's see. Well, I interviewed the RZA—you know, from Wu Tang Clan.

MA: Oh yeah, I'm a fan.

EBD: Okay, just checking. But, wow . . . the brilliance, but also, [he's] really just down to earth and really grounded. He has this sort of otherworldly thing about him that, you know, he sees a thing before it happens. I read both of his books and he's also had a very difficult childhood but he is most definitely the brains of Wu Tang, and the things that they were able to do both musically and in terms of business in the music industry was just unprecedented. And he's the reason behind it. I could have talked to him forever. And he's a funny dude, too. He's hilarious. But he's got all kinds of talent—I'm sure some of it untapped. So, talking to him was fascinating.

I talked to Larry Dunn from Earth, Wind & Fire. He's a sweet dude. Him and his wife, they're great friends of mine 'cause he's just so easy to talk to and he loves, loves, loves music and he's another one that was sort of the heart and soul—I think—of Earth, Wind & Fire. Obviously Maurice White was as well, but I think Larry should be in a category with him . . . they are the two that stand out.

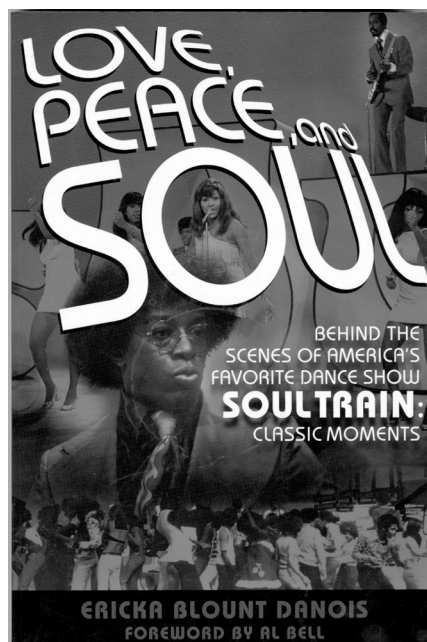
MA: A lot of your interviews have been with musicians. Can you talk a bit more about your background and experiences with music? I know your dad was a deejay and apparently you guys had some great records in the house.

EBD: Yes, yes, absolutely. That was our

lives. That was our daily lives. I would go to sleep with the radio on, I would wake up to the radio. My dad was always, always playing music. We didn't really know a life without music. You know, *Soul Train* was obviously a part of that. On Saturdays—it was just like we were going to a concert. You know, my dad also worked as a stagehand, so we would go to shows and I was helping him with the spotlight for Parliament-Funkadelic concerts and as kids me and my sister were going to see Prince. All the other kids thought we were all crazy, but it was normal to us. We saw all kinds of [musicians]. My parents, also, would go to shows regularly. And we would meet people at—they used to have in-store signings. My dad worked at a record store at one point, too, which is also how he got such a great collection. So we would meet people, artists that would come to do their signings, and we didn't really think of it as much of anything but our daily lives. Music was very much just an everyday kind of thing.

MA: Wow. Getting to go to some of those shows at such a young age must have been fascinating.

EBD: Well, you know, when he was younger [Prince's] shows were just crazy. He did all kinds of stuff and had bathtubs and all kinds of things that kids should not see . . . (laughs). But we did!



MA: I've read your book on *Soul Train*. You mentioned that you watched it growing up, so how did that initial interest lead to writing a book about it?

EBD: Well, it's sort of the same way I've gotten into these [other] stories. I initially wanted to just find some of the dancers that we followed as kids and sometimes made fun of, sometimes wanted to dance like them. So, I looked for Cheryl Song. You know, she was better known back then as "the Asian woman with the long hair." And so I found her working in the airport in Los Angeles, and I didn't know she had a background beyond *Soul Train*. She had danced with Michael Jackson on [his] video and with Rick James. So, I just kept finding out more stories as I interviewed people, [including] some of the other dancers—obviously Shalamar, Jody Watley, Jeffrey Daniels. All of those things just started connecting.

So I started to find out more about the show, and The Lockers, and about Don Cornelius and his various ventures beyond *Soul Train*—including the *Soul Train Awards* but also the *Soul Train* nightclub—and he even attempted to do a talk show. It just kept growing and growing. I was like, "This is more than the story that I started out with about the dancers." A much bigger cultural legacy that had not been documented. And it just so happened that—and I didn't know this—that the show was the longest-running first-run syndicated show in history. I was like, "Wow! How did that happen, and nobody really knows that? And why did it become so popular?" And that question just stayed with me, so I kept trying to find out [more] from various people that I interviewed.

I was also just committed to telling the story in a way that would read—for people who were not there to witness it during its peak—[in a way] they could experience it . . . so that the reader would feel like they were there. I wanted other people to get a sense of what *Soul Train* meant and its impact, but also just the story itself. Being there every Saturday morning—what that meant to me. What kind of fun that was. Why we had to watch it. I thought just telling the story would do that for people who couldn't [watch], and [for] people who could,

to let them relive [it]. We don't have anything like that nowadays.

MA: What were some of the challenges you faced when you were trying to put the book together?

EBD: Ooh, lots. First, I had gotten a contract and I met Don Cornelius in Chicago and we had talked about doing interviews for the book. I met his son—and I think it was maybe two months, three months later [Don] committed suicide. That in and of itself was just a shock because you would never think that someone as successful and someone who would start something as fun as *Soul Train* would do that. Then what was also a problem, in terms of telling the story, was that [Don] was really private about the business end of *Soul Train*. So a lot of those secrets went with him. That was a challenge. I had to figure out how to work around that by interviewing various people that could tell some of those stories that he had kept [to himself].

Then after he passed, interest in *Soul Train* grew, which was good, and was also bad. Because then so many other people started getting interested in writing about the show. Initially I had thought about that being competition, but it ended up working itself out. You know Questlove ended up doing a picture book, which was actually sort of a companion book with great pictures. You can't have *Soul Train* without having the visuals. In my book, we had a bunch of visuals because of that, but [Questlove] really had a full range. So, that was a challenge.

The other challenge was—and I was surprised by this—I thought that artists, particularly older artists, would be a lot easier to get ahold of. But I found I had to really massage egos and really sort of court a bunch of people. At one point, I sublet my house and stayed in L.A. a month or two, because a lot of people wanted to be interviewed in person. A lot of people I had to court over several dinners. Damita Jo Freeman, for instance. We spent a lot of time at Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles in L.A., because that's what she likes.

A lot of the dancers, and rightfully so, felt like they should be paid for their stories and/or that they had been sort of exploited on the show and they wanted to have some agency in terms of telling their story, which is fine. I agreed. That included me being able to talk to them in person and making sure that I was somebody that was trustworthy in telling the story and that kind of thing. In the end, that worked out well because they told me things that they have not told anyone [else].

MA: Was it hard to locate any of those people? I'm thinking especially of the dancers or some of the other staff you talked to.

EBD: Not too hard. There were some people that were not in the country, like Jeffrey Daniels. He lives in Nigeria now. But for the most part, the main people that were popular from the show were pretty easy to find. At that time they—particularly the dancers—would have reunions regularly, so I could catch people there, and at the funeral of Don Cornelius. I was able to talk to a lot of people at Don's funeral that knew him well. So, it was not that difficult to find people; it was more difficult to pin them down.

MA: Is there anyone, or are there any interviews from that project that stand out as being especially memorable to you?

EBD: Sure. Bobby Womack was one. I talked to him before he passed and he was really good friends with Don. He had a bunch of stories—some of them I could not include (laughs). It was interesting how he talked about the impact of *Soul Train* and Don as a person. [Womack] really knew him well, so he talked about how he was



Producer and recording artist, Bobby Womack
(Karen Shearer Collection).

just a class act, and what his motivation was in terms of getting the show and who he wanted to be and that kind of thing. And this is before he actually made it big. He was great!

MA: What do you consider to be some of the most interesting stories you've worked on?

EBD: My memory is bad, but the one that stands out to me right now is the one that I've just done recently on go-go music for MTV.com. And that's because what is fascinating to me is . . . the genre itself. It's addictive. It's like watching *The Wire*. You hear about it but you really have to actually go there to understand. Since I grew up with it, it was just a part of my life. But when I went to school and I would play tapes to my roommates, they were like, "What is this? It all sounds the same." It's just like, "Aaah, you really have to experience it."

When I took creative writing, my teacher always talked about showing rather than telling. I wanted to show what that experience was like for me and what go-go meant for people in D.C. In the process of doing that story, I learned so much about things I didn't know at the time. The mayor, Marion Barry, was supportive of the go-go scene but he was also very supportive of the punk scene. He was employing kids through this summer job program that were punk rock kids . . . [they] would be able to play and get paid to do it. And the same for go-go bands. They had this thing called a "Showmobile" where they would be able to play around the city and get paid minimum wage as their summer job. So, to me, it was a genre that didn't really get out of D.C. But for the kids who lived it, it was a source of pride. It's almost like New Orleans music—people enjoy it from all around the world. Go-go was really sort of essential to a scene that, for whatever reason, only folks from D.C. understood. It did get to the U.K., but for the most part it's sort of a D.C. thing that people from that era take pride in. So, it was great to be able to interview folks—[including] people in the jazz scene that preceded it—and just dissect it. I enjoyed it as a kid, but now I'm able to look at it differently.

— Matthew Alley



Top: Run D.M.C. Bottom left: André Cymone. Bottom middle: Karyn White. Right: Big Daddy Kane (Karen Shearer Collection).

Featured Collection

Behind the Scenes of *Soul Train*: The Ericka Blount Danois Collection

Established in 2015, the Ericka Blount Danois Collection (SC 83) contains materials documenting Danois’ professional life as a writer, author, and journalist—including magazine and journal articles as well as items published online from the 1990s to the present. The collection also includes research materials, as well as notes and drafts that she compiled while preparing her publications.

The bulk of Danois’ collection relates to *Soul Train* and documents the show’s history and its cultural impact. Included are audiocassettes featuring interviews she conducted with over 100 singers, dancers and music executives affiliated with the show. For over thirty years, *Soul Train* exposed all of America to Black artists, Black music, and the latest dance moves straight from New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Danois tracked down many of the show’s most famous dancers—Damito Jo Freeman, Adolfo “Shabba Doo” Quinones, Don “Campbellock” Campbell, Tyrone

“The Bone” Proctor—who provide insights on how their choreography influenced American culture, as well as musicians such as Big Daddy Kane and Dennis Coffey who discuss the show’s impact on their careers. Regrettably, the tragic death of *Soul Train* creator, Don Cornelius, occurred just as Danois was beginning her research, so his personal insights are not included. However, she was able to interview many of his former colleagues, whose recollections trace Cornelius’ path to stardom, beginning with his early days at Chicago radio station WVON through his later years in Los Angeles. As a whole, these interviews provide a penetrating look inside the empire of Don Cornelius, “one of the coolest cats on television” in the 1970s and the man responsible for creating a cultural phenomenon that is revered to this day.

As a journalist, Danois has written stories about a broad range of musicians, and her collection includes many

fascinating interviews with artists such as the Roots, Earth, Wind & Fire, Tricky, Nas, Olu Dara, Quincy Jones, Lenny Kravitz, Bootsy Collins, Al Bell, and Run DMC, to name just a few. Other interviews and articles in this collection reflect the knowledge and passion Danois has for television, including the David Simon shows *The Wire* and *Treme*, as well as for her home regions of New York, Baltimore, Brooklyn, and Queens—areas about which she has written extensively.

A finding aid to the complete collection will soon be available via the AAAMC’s website. We’re very grateful to Danois for her generous donation of this material. Her insightful pieces on a wide variety of subjects, and especially her many interviews with key artists, are invaluable primary resources for the study and preservation of African American music and culture.

—Brenda Nelson-Strauss and Matthew Alley



one-on-one

An Interview with Opal Louis Nations

In 2011, Opal Louis Nations contacted the AAAMC about placing his gospel music collection at Indiana University. Since that time, a digital archive has been established, including over 300 articles and liner notes authored by Nations which shed light on gospel and rhythm and blues artists active during the 1940s–1960s. More recently, he donated a complete set of his Pewburner series, consisting of 500 CDs compiled primarily from his personal collection of out-of-print and rare recordings of early gospel music.

On June 13, 2016, Brenda Nelson-Strauss conducted a telephone interview with Opal Nations, a British expat who resides in Oakland, CA. The following abridged excerpts document his multi-faceted career as a musician, writer, artist, deejay, record collector, and producer of many notable CD reissues and compilations.

After discussing Nations' early years in Brighton, England, and his first exposure to rhythm and blues music as a teenager

listening to Radio Luxembourg, they segue to his early affinity for gospel music.

BNS: So at some point a young teenage Opal Nations goes from listening to R&B and is struck by gospel music and becomes fascinated by that genre. How exactly does that happen? Was there a seminal moment?

OLN: I am 74 and three-quarters [years old] right now and I grew up listening to the Staple Singers, the Swan Silvertones—you know, all of the golden age gospel groups. All the great, great, great quartets. And when you listen to the quartets, when you sit down and listen to that music, there is no other music! There is no other Black music that really sort of sends shivers down your spine, and gives life to your soul, and makes you feel good.

BNS: So you loved the harmonies?

OLN: Oh boy, did I love them! Claude Jeter and all those guys, and especially my idol, Reverend Julius Cheeks in the

Sensational Nightingales. That's why I wrote a book about the group. But he was my idol, Julius Cheeks, and if you listen to Cheeks back in the 1950s, you know, he just gets inside you. I mean, you feel like you're drifting somewhere off the ground and he lifts you up. His voice was such a powerful, moving voice. He spoke when he sang, and he sermonized when he sang. It was a mixture of all those things that is something special in gospel music. But later on in the 1960s, when soul music came up, soul singers adopted the gospel way of singing. They got it from gospel soloists like Julius Cheeks. Wilson Pickett was the embodiment of Cheeks.

BNS: So at some point you became a singer?

OLN: Well, I was always a singer. I was always singing in school and when I moved to London I put an ad in the paper and I got with this group who were recording for Decca—they were called the Frays. They were inspired by all the blues artists



Top left: Opal Nations with Paramount Gospel Singers, San Francisco Blues Festival, 1989; Bottom left: Five Blind Boys of Mississippi (courtesy of Opal Nations).

that came to England, like Sonny Boy Williamson, and the Chess gang, as I call them. The Frays had dropped their lead singer. This gave me the chance to steer them into becoming one of the first English soul groups. We went around singing soul music—singing the songs of Solomon Burke, Wilson Pickett, and all the soul-statesmen on Atlantic Records.

BNS: So you were a lead singer?

OLN: Yes, correct. I performed all the knee-drops and rendered all the screams one associates with James Brown.

BNS: So this was an all-white group?

OLN: Yes, this was an all-white group, all Brits, all from South London, and we recorded. The lead guitarist, Johnny Patto, was with the first significant rock 'n' roll group in England—Johnny Kidd & the Pirates. We would do the whole Otis Redding catalog, when few had even heard of Otis Redding. This was in the early '60s So I got with Alexis Korner after that. If

you're into English blues then you'll know that Alexis Korner was one of the founders of the British blues movement. But he also had a passion for gospel music. As a quartet, we cut a couple of Staples Singers covers at the BBC in London. The band was composed of Alexis (guitar & vocals), his bass player, and his daughter who sang harmonies with me.

BNS: I understand that later on in your career you sang with a gospel group called the Paramount Gospel Singers?

OLN: Oh yes, our local Bay Area gospel group. They recorded for Coral Records during the '50s. I sang with them and did some performances with them in the 1980s while they were still performing. Sadly, they have all passed now. I had written their biography, I had taken an interest in their music, I'd given them some music to perform, and I had done everything except sing with them. And I said to myself, "Well, I should sing with them if I can." I really wanted to find out what it was like to sing with a Black gospel group. [The Paramount

Gospel Singers] came up in the 1940s; so they were getting on in years at the time. From 1947 through to the mid-1950s, they had the great Vance Tiny Powell lead them. In between, in 1950, Powell sang briefly with the Five Blind Boys of Mississippi and later in his career switched over to soul music.

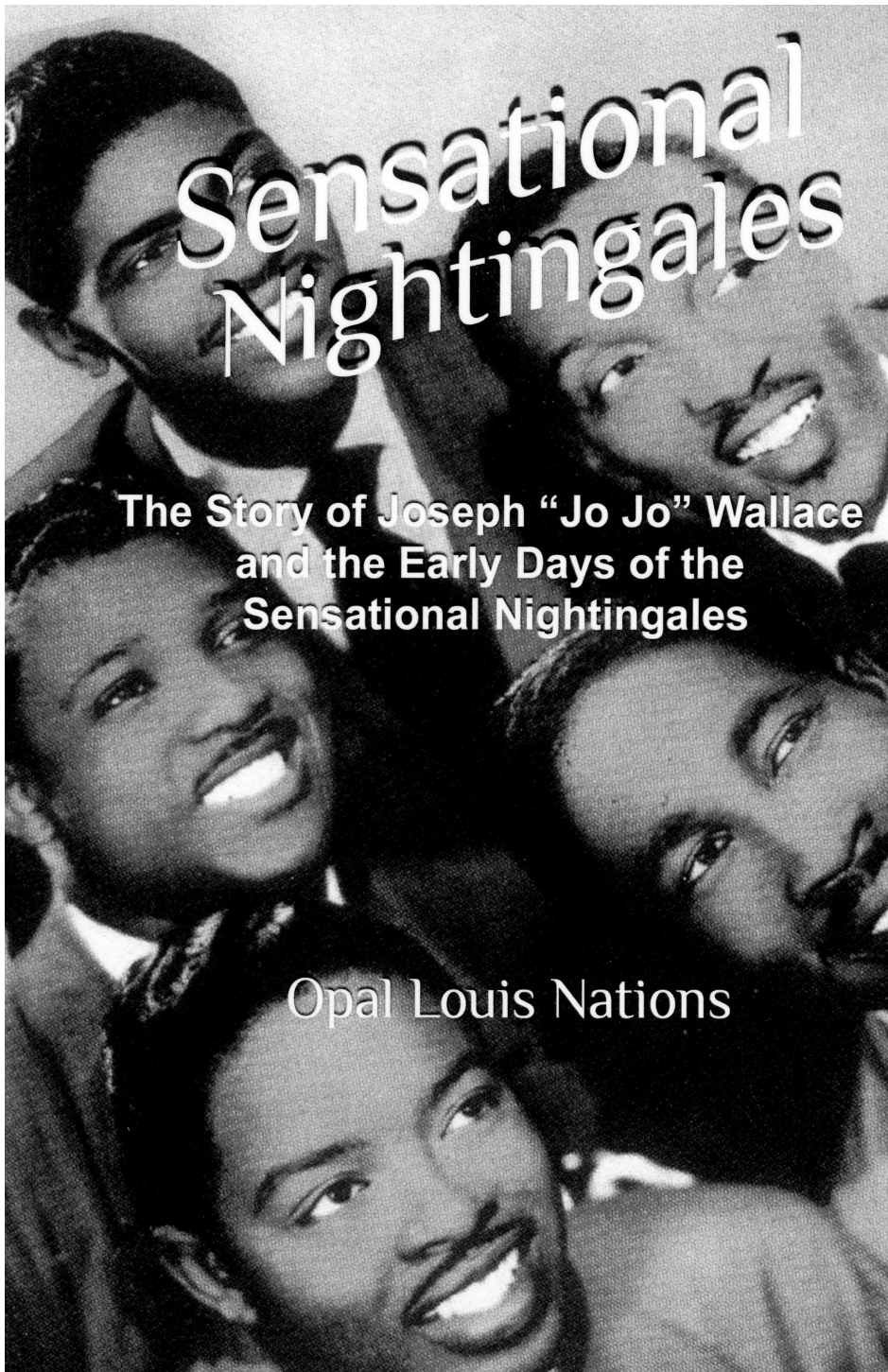
BNS: Who else was still singing in the group at that time?

OLN: Well, Archie Reynolds, who was the founder of the group, was my buddy and he got me into the group. The only other original member was lead tenor Joe Dean.

BNS: And how did you connect with Archie?

OLN: Research—by researching groups. Back in the 1980s, there were some group members still alive that you could interview. And it was Lee Hildebrand who inspired me to do that, when we were both working at Fantasy Records. There we reissued most of the early Specialty gospel catalog. So Lee got

“... the Specialty reissue series on Fantasy—I co-produced twenty-two of them with Lee Hildebrand. We shared most of the liner notes. The releases are really a landmark because if you have all of those you have many of the most significant quartet singers and soloists from the period.”



me into it. He said, “Why don’t you go out to the survivors and get their stories now?” And I thought, “I’d better do it right away and find as many as I can.” And that’s what I did during the ‘80s. Unfortunately, almost all the great gospel quartet soloists from the golden age are gone now.

BNS: So how many of them did you personally interview?

OLN: Well, because I don’t drive, I only interviewed those people I could get to on the subway or on the bus—mainly those who lived in the Bay Area or who came to the Bay Area from elsewhere to give concerts. These included the Dixie Hummingbirds and the Mighty Clouds of Joy. I also conducted extensive phone interviews with gospel singers that I managed to track down all around the country.

BNS: Did you record those interviews?

OLN: No, I never did that. I had my own shorthand, a rapid scribble. I just wanted to mention before I forget that during the mid-1960s, English Black music enthusiasts became familiar with gospel music because promoters from Germany, Lippman and Rau, and Willy Leiser from Switzerland, brought gospel singers to Great Britain. These included the Blind Boys of Mississippi, the Gospelaires, the Harmonizing Four, the Stars of Faith and Inez Andrews. English singers like Dusty Springfield and Eric Burden were knocked off their feet by the power and majesty of the music. It was just fantastic! It was mind-blowing, very memorable, for musicians who were around in Britain at that time.

BNS: Were you able to go to many of those concerts?

OLN: On the first Lippmann and Rau tour I traveled on the tour bus! When the Blind Boys of Mississippi visited in 1965, I think it was then. I sat with Big Henry Johnson, the lead singer of the Blind Boys of Mississippi on the bus. We traveled all over England.

BNS: How did that come about?

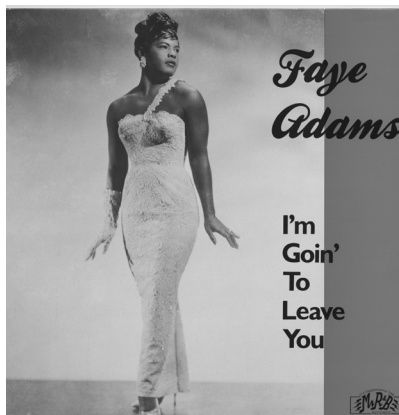
OLN: Well, I signed up as the roadie. I would move all their equipment and all their uniforms and stuff in and out of their hotel rooms. I would run errands and help

set up for them everywhere we went. I was really dedicated. Some nights I slept on the bus because I couldn’t afford to pay for accommodations. I had the time of my life and I’d do anything to make it last. Big Henry Johnson, now he was something else. He could scream at a fantastic decibel rate when the passion caught him. He would rehearse on the bus and I would be sitting next to him. His screaming practice really made me quite deaf at times.

After discussing Nations’ radio career—including 14 years as a gospel music deejay at KPFA in Berkeley (ending in 1995), followed by one year hosting a Sunday morning gospel show at KUSP Radio station at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and occasional work as a guest deejay at KPOO in San Francisco—the interview turns to Nations’ work as a writer and producer.

BNS: I guess it’s about this time when you turn your attention towards gospel and R&B reissues and writing liner notes?

OLN: Well, no, I was doing reissues and liner notes in the early ‘80s. The first assignment was the liner notes for Faye Adams’ album for Mr. R&B, a Swedish label. Folks in the U.S. lost interest in Faye Adams when she returned to gospel music. Fans still consider “Shake a Hand” an R&B record, which it is not.



BNS: Yes, we have the entire Route 66 LP collection, including Mr. R&B and the different label subsidiaries.

OLN: They were so important, because they turned the American music enthusiasts on to their own music, like some of the ‘60s singers. I mean everyone had forgotten artists like Roy Brown and Floyd Dixon and many others of the same school before

Route 66. Nobody. They were dead and gone. You can see how dead the music was in this country because nobody played it on the radio or reissued this stuff. It was horrible. But Jonas Bernholm and Route 66 re-enlivened it. People here started buying the major founders of R&B again—Jonas did a marvelous job. So I did that one album for them. I became friends with one of the guys affiliated with the label, Per Notini, who was the pianist on a lot of their Swedish blues releases. I helped him put out a handful of gospel CDs in Sweden on the Gospel Friend label . . . I supplied information and photographs.

One of my Swedish Gospel Treasures releases (issued by Jonas Bernholm) was the Stars of Bethlehem, who were the genesis of the Mighty Clouds of Joy. I produced a second compilation by a local Bay Area spiritualist who was an extremely interesting guy—Bishop Louis Narcisse. He was amazing! He was another minister who sang in a way that really gotcha! He started a spiritual temple here in Oakland . . . I interviewed him, and his minister, and wrote an extensive article. He was born in New Orleans, then he came to Oakland and founded his grassroots spiritualist church. He organized bread giveaways on the weekends, and helped some of the local people improve their lives, some of the poor folks who lived in badly managed tenements. He helped a lot and became an important figure in the community. He made some wonderful recordings and I gathered them all altogether on a CD. I spoke to his extremely fine pianist who was alive at the time. The Narcisse collection is such an important CD to me. It should be noted that soul singer Theola Kilgore first recorded with Narcisse.

BNS: So you also worked on many reissues for Specialty Records?

OLN: Yes, the Specialty reissue series on Fantasy—I co-produced twenty-two of them with Lee Hildebrand. We shared most of the liner notes. The releases are really a landmark because if you have all of those you have many of the most significant quartet singers and soloists from the period.

BNS: And what were some of these reissues?

OLN: We reissued work by the Blind

Boys of Alabama, the Gospel Harmonettes, Detroiters, Chosen Gospel Singers, Bessie Griffin (that's the legendary Bessie Griffin), Pilgrim Travelers from Los Angeles—all of these wonderful artists that few remember now. And of course the better-known Soul Stirrers and Swan Silvertones. Alex Bradford—we put a great deal of his previously unreleased stuff out. He was a character. While reading his correspondence with Art Rupe (the head man at Specialty), I realized what a multi-faceted character he was! Sister Wynona Carr, she was like the Lucille Ball of gospel music! She was the spiritual equivalent of Lucille Ball, a real Calamity Jane. She wrote lengthy letters to Art Rupe at Specialty. She used to get into all sorts of scrapes and Rupe was always bailing her out. A truly incredible lady. I wrote a detailed article on her. I said more than I should've said, I expect, about her foibles, but she had so much talent. Not only was she a great singer, but directed Reverend C.L. Franklin's choir in Detroit. You know, Aretha's dad. And she could write songs! She was really great—she transformed the major issues of the day into gospel poetry.

BNS: So what years were you working for Fantasy on the Specialty reissues?

OLN: From the late 1980s into the mid-90s.

BNS: So that must've been great fun.

OLN: Oh boy, was it great fun going through the library, especially all of Art Rupe's filing cabinets! Going through the correspondence with his artists, and being able to write articles on all of these people ... Art Rupe's first love was gospel music ... I know a personal friend of his, and I know all of the old stories that Art told him about going around to Black churches and peeking in the doors just like Johnny Otis did, and Elvis Presley. You know, peeking in the door and seeing what was going on and getting into the spirit of the music. He was with Sterling Records before he set up Specialty and helped issue a lot of great gospel quartet music from the a cappella quartet period. He dearly wished he could have done more to popularize gospel music.

BNS: So when did you start your record collection?

OLN: (Laughs) When I had little or no money! Back in England, living at home

with what was left of my family, I tried saving every penny I could. I would buy those few recordings that were issued on the English Vogue label and on Columbia. They would now and again put something out that sounded like gospel music. Mahalia Jackson and Sister Rosetta Tharpe were the two cornerstones of gospel music in Europe during the '50s and '60s. Because they always sold a decent amount of tickets, jazz and blues fans invariably came to see them. Then I started earning more money, and was able to fly over to France to buy the albums I couldn't find in England on French Disques Vogue. Much of the Vee-Jay and Peacock gospel material was issued in France, so I picked up what was to become the foundation of my collection.

BNS: And then you had to move it all over here?

OLN: No, I had to sell most of it because when we came to the States we packed only a couple of trunks. That was all we could afford to ship. What I couldn't bring I sold to fellow gospel researcher Bob Laughton. I only shipped a choice number of albums and singles. So I started re-building my collection when I got to Boston in 1979, while working for Skippy White at his record store in the Roxbury neighborhood. He opened a new world for me. I ravenously started collecting singles and albums, and now I have just about everything by any traditional-sounding quartet from the post-war golden age period (between 1945 and 1965).

BNS: So I guess this segues into your Pewburner CD series.

OLN: Well, this was set up to trade with like-minded friends. There are a lot of elderly African Americans out there who want to hear gospel music from this period. Somehow they hear about Pewburner Records and they want to buy this music, so I make a copy from my collection and I send it to them. So this was all about sharing it with a few others now and again. I never made it a business. It warms my heart to be able to bring back those golden gospel memories to those few out there to whom it means so much.

BNS: We never really talked about your career as a writer. I looked at the material in your collection at the AAAMC and you've published over 150 articles on R&B and

gospel music, and you've written over 160 liner notes, not to mention your unpublished articles. So you've been very, very busy!

OLN: Yes, I kept at it for about a decade, and the decade before that I was into experimental writing. So I went from fiction to fact and you just covered the non-fiction, music-related part. For my fiction work I was awarded a couple of prizes, but nothing that paid the bills. I was quite successful at getting published as a fiction writer, but I came to a point where I felt like I wasn't growing, because the people that read my work were the same small coterie of aspiring writers. And then I was let down by the major publishers who promised contracts, but when it came to actually reading my work, they evaluated it in terms of book sales and not by its literary merit.

BNS: Well you have done an incredible job here in documenting gospel music over the years.

OLN: Thank you for your interest. I only wish I had started earlier when more of the great singers were still with us. But fortunately there is a new gospel music documentary *How They Got Over*, coming out in the next month or so, directed by Robert Clem, that includes vintage film clips of such groups as The Dixie Hummingbirds, Fairfield Four, Blind Boys of Alabama, Sensational Nightingales, Soul Stirrers, Mighty Clouds of Joy, and the Highways QCs. Jerry Zolten [author of the Dixie Hummingbirds' biography *Great God Almighty*] and I are co-producers [more information can be found at www.howtheygotover.com].

BNS: And you know we feel incredibly fortunate to have your collection here. So my final question for you—how do you hope the Opal Nations Collection will be used in the future?

OLN: I want access for the general public as well as for students and professors and teachers.

BNS: And we're thrilled that you want to make your collection widely available.

Many of the articles in the Opal Louis Nations Collection are currently accessible via his website at <http://opalnations.com>.



"Groovy George" Nelson in the KYOK studio, Houston, Texas (George Nelson Collection).

The AAAMC brings The Golden Age of Black Radio online with the Google Cultural Institute

In recognition of Black History Month, the Google Cultural Institute (GCI) recently partnered with 54 cultural heritage institutions on a Black History and Culture project that allows virtual access to unique collections containing thousands of artworks, artifacts and stories related to the African American experience. Each of these institutions also curated an exhibit utilizing the images and media files in their CGI collections.

The AAAMC's contribution is a four-part exhibit celebrating the *The Golden Age of Black Radio*. Drawing upon over 100 historic photographs from the AAAMC's collections, as well as audio and video clips of interviews with Black radio pioneers, the exhibit offers an interactive multi-media experience, using many materials accessible to the public for the first time.

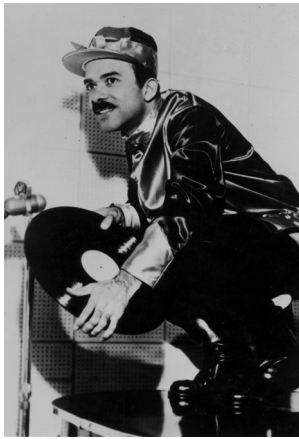
Exhibit details

The four-part exhibit traces the birth of Black-oriented radio programs in Chicago through its transition to all-Black programming by stations around the country. Along the way, viewers explore: 1) the role of radio during the Civil Rights Movement; 2) pioneering African American women in radio; 3) personality deejays who rapped and rhymed; and 4) the role of deejays in breaking hits and promoting Black music.

The first segment, "The Early Years, 1920s-1940s," begins in Chicago with America's first prominent Black radio announcer, Jack L. Cooper, and Richard Durham's early radio dramas *Here Comes Tomorrow* and *Destination Freedom*. Al Benson, a legendary disc jockey with extensive influence in Chicago's African American communities, is remembered

by deejays Jack Gibson, Lucky Cordell, and Herb Kent. From Chicago, the exhibit travels to Memphis as Jack Gibson and Martha Steinberg describe how WDIA became the nation's first station with programming that specifically catered to the Black community. This section concludes with video footage of Jack Gibson in an interview with Dr. Portia Maultsby discussing the programming impact of the country's first Black-owned station, WERD in Atlanta.

Segment two, "Deejays," explores the complicated, yet indispensable role personality deejays played in popularizing Black radio. Beginning in the 1940s, Black deejays began adopting on-air aliases such as "Dizzy Lizzy" and "Hotsy Totsy." These monikers often represented a deejay's individual delivery style; some, for example, utilized rapping and rhyming to



Clockwise from top left: Richard Durham; "Jockey Jack" Gibson; George Nelson presenting young girl with record player; WERD celebration of 23rd National Book Week at Clark College (Jack Gibson at microphone); Peggy Mitchell in the WEDR studio; Al Benson holding copies of the Constitution; Vivian Benton in the WERD studio; "Hotsy Totsy" and "Dizzy Lizzy" with KYOK contest winner (AAAMC's Black Radio Collections).



KYOK van in front of civil rights marchers in Houston, Texas, 1967 (Rick Roberts Collection).

grab listeners' attention to both the songs they played and commercial products they promoted. Many Black radio deejays became celebrities to their listening audiences, with star-power that sometimes eclipsed the artists they promoted on the air. Audio and video clips in the exhibit recount how Black radio was the only place recordings by Black artists could be heard outside of the record store and home, and how deejays were often responsible for promoting songs and "breaking the hits."

The third segment, "Community Engagement," takes a closer look at the ways in which Black radio connected with and shaped African American communities. Entertainment through music and variety shows was one way in which radio engaged communities. Black radio deejays and announcers also served their listeners by promoting African American owned businesses, publicly supporting blue collar workers, holding community events such as WDIA's Goodwill Revues, and broadcasting breaking news and opinions about current events that could not be heard on other radio stations. In this segment, you will hear voices such as Martha Jean the "Queen" Steinberg of Detroit and Novella Smith of Houston recounting this close connection between the stations and their listeners.

The fourth and final segment, "Gender Equality and Civil Rights," begins with a look at how Black women in radio

broke through gender barriers to shape everything from advertisements to programming. Through the voices of pioneering deejays Vy Higginsen, Cathy Hughes, Martha Steinberg, and Hattie Leeper, viewers can learn about the unique perspective women brought to Black radio. The second half of this segment demonstrates the crucial supporting role played by Black radio in the Civil Rights Movement. Personal stories about Al Benson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the March on Washington highlight how Black radio served as a networking and mobilization tool for Black leaders during this era.

The AAAMC staff combed the archives' special collections for photographic, audio, and video materials to create the rich, multi-media experience made possible by Google's digital exhibit platform. The bulk of the audio clips are from the collection *Black Radio: Telling It Like It Was*, donated by Jacquie Gales Webb (see related articles), and feature interviews recorded in the early 1990s with nearly two dozen personality deejays and producers.

Historic photographs documenting Black radio stations and deejays in Houston, Atlanta, Louisville, Cincinnati, Detroit, Philadelphia and New York were drawn from the following collections: Travis Gardner (SC 96), Skipper Lee Frazier (SC 95), George Nelson (SC 89), Rick

Roberts (SC 88), Ed Castleberry (SC 87), Katherine Lewis (SC 86), Jack Gibson (SC 14).

Thanks in large part to Indiana University's Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative, a video interview from the Portia K. Maultsby Collection (SC 18) was digitized just in time for inclusion in this exhibit. This interview with legendary deejay Jack "The Rapper" Gibson, conducted in 1981 by Maultsby and Alfred Wiggins, weaves together the themes running through the four segments.

Impact

In the first four months (February to May 2016), *The Golden Age of Black Radio* accrued over 60,000 page views. A significant increase in visitors occurred in late February, following a feature about the exhibit on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition*, which included interviews with Jacquie Gales Webb and AAAMC's Brenda Nelson-Strauss. The program can be heard online at: <http://tinyurl.com/jl2qth3>.

A feature on the making of *The Golden Age of Black Radio* exhibition will also be included in an upcoming issue of *Choice* magazine, a publication of the American Library Association.

To view the exhibit online, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/jqp2g8j>

— William Vanden Dries

sound bytes: digital initiatives

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Archives of African American Music and Culture (AAAMC) at Indiana University. The header includes the IU logo and the site title. Below the header, there are several featured sections: a 'Welcome to the AAAMC' section with a brief overview; a 'Thank you to our distinguished speaker' section for Jacquie Gales Webb; a 'Featured collection: Logan H. Westbrook's Collection' section; a 'Preserving Images' section; and a 'Preserving Media' section. At the bottom, there are navigation links for 'Visit the AAAMC', 'What's Going On?', and 'Give to the AAAMC', along with contact information and social media icons.

Activity surrounding the AAAMC's digital collections grew significantly during the past year, thanks to many new collections and initiatives. The number of born-digital materials arriving at the AAAMC continues to increase, and the digitization of our analog content is expanding as well. Preserving and providing access to these digital materials, both within our reading room and online through websites and social media, continues to be a priority. Following is a summary of the AAAMC's recent digital projects, as well as Indiana University's ongoing media digitization and preservation efforts.

New Website and Blog

The start of 2016 saw the launch of the AAAMC's new website! An ever-increasing number of collections coming to the AAAMC, more collection materials accessible online, and the growing use of mobile devices to access web content were several reasons we decided on a site make-over. The IU web team released a new mobile-friendly set of content guidelines and templates in late 2015 which helped our staff redesign the AAAMC site from top to bottom so you can access it at home or on the go.

The new site includes much of the content of our old site, but it is now organized in a way we hope will be more intuitive and user-friendly. We also made an effort to increase our site accessibility, and hope you will let us know if you encounter navigational challenges of any kind. New content includes forms that will allow you to easily contact us with requests or set up an appointment to visit the AAAMC. We also provide more information on parking and transportation; an updated public services section; an expanded special collections area with links out to finding aids, online image collection content, and online media collection content;

an updated public programming section; updated listings of AAAMC publications; and embedded feeds from our Facebook page and new Tumblr blog (<https://aaamc.tumblr.com>), which includes announcements about new image collections online, newly published finding aids, upcoming events, and more.

We hope the new site improves your online experience and your ability to access the AAAMC and our collections. We invite you to visit our website (please note the new URL) at <https://aaamc.indiana.edu>.

Online Exhibit: Jacquie Gales Webb—Radio DJ and Producer

In honor of Jacquie Gales Webb, the AAAMC has produced a new online exhibit exploring Webb's formative years, her initial exposure to radio, and her long and distinguished career in broadcasting using photographs, videos, and audio clips from her collections. Special recognition goes to AAAMC graduate assistant Douglas Peach for curating the exhibit, and the IU Libraries IT staff for assistance with the Omeka exhibit software. View the exhibit at <https://aaamc.indiana.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/jacquie-gales-webb>.

New Video: The Portia K. Maultsby Collection

In January 2016, the AAAMC publicly introduced the Portia K. Maultsby Collection (SC 18) with the release of our latest collection video. As many readers know, Dr. Maultsby was the founding director of the AAAMC, which was established in 1991. Her collection includes interviews with many musicians and music and radio industry executives, which offer critical documentation of the voices of seminal individuals instrumental in shaping

Black music and culture.

Her collection also illuminates her activities as an Indiana University professor, where she developed some of the first courses on post-WWII African American popular music and hip hop in the United States, and served as the founding director of the IU Soul Revue. Many of the songs in the video soundtrack were composed by Maulsby and recorded with the IU Soul Revue in 1977. Special recognition goes to graduate student Juan Sebastian Rojas E. for producing the video. Watch online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tieyu_zmcl.



The Portia K. Maulsby Collection: Portrait of a Creative Artist, Teacher, and Scholar
IU Archives of African American Music and Culture
299 views

Finding Aids

The AAAMC staff published EAD finding aids for seven collections since our last issue. Special recognition goes to graduate student Allison Bohm for her work encoding many of these in preparation for publication to IU's Archives Online site (<http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/findingaids/welcome.do>):

- The Black Composer Speaks Collection, 1958-1987, bulk 1970-1977
- Charles Coleman Papers, 1929-1991 (composer)
- Tom Draper Collection, 1970-1998 (music industry executive)
- Jack Gibson Collection, 1942-2000 (Black radio)
- Jocko Henderson Collection, 1980-2003 (Black radio)
- Blondell Hill Gospel Music Collection, 1916-1964, bulk 1940-1964
- *What Must Be Done* radio series, 1968 (Civil Rights Movement)

Image Collections Online

Interested in photographs? Since the last issue, two additional photograph collections are now available for viewing online.

The Tom Draper Collection (SC 160) consists of 80 publicity photographs taken during music industry events, documenting Draper's career as a music executive at RCA Records and Warner Bros. Records. Draper was hired as a salesman by RCA in 1970, worked his way up through the company's newly established Black music division, and eventually became vice president of A&R. In 1975, Warner Bros. hired Draper for marketing and promotion, ushering in a period of growth and success for the label's Black artist roster.

The Nelson George Collection (SC 133) contains 138 photographs consisting primarily of materials collected during research for his book, *Where Did Our Love Go? The Rise and Fall of the Motown Sound* (St. Martin's Press, 1985). Press photos of artists from the Motown, Stax, Arista, and Curtom labels are included, along with many candid shots taken at live performances and music industry events.

View these collections and more at: <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/images/splash.htm?scope=aaamc>.



Stephanie Mills eating cookie replica of her gold record, 1981 (Nelson George Collection).

MDPI update

IU's Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative (MDPI) is now in full swing and many analog media items from the AAAMC have already made the round trip from our vault, to the MDPI facility, and back again. Nearly



Jacquie Gales Webb visits the MDPI facility, March 2016.

2,000 LPs and over 700 45s were selected from our collections for digitization.

MDPI's SMARTeam, staffed by dedicated IU graduate students, boxed up the selected discs and transported them to the Innovation Center, where they were cleaned, digitized using the MDPI team's high-throughput workflow, and returned to the AAAMC in better condition than when they left.

The SMARTeam also collected the Betacam SP videos and DATs from our collections, which are currently making their way through the digitization workflow. Next up, audiocassettes!

While the digitization team focuses on quality transfers of high-throughput items such as LPs, as well as real-time transfers of more challenging items such as multi-speed open reel tapes, the software development team is hard at work on creating workflows for content access. Earlier this year, IU units were invited to use an access portal to view files from digitized items. These files have completed the quality control process and are now accessible to each unit from which the item originated.

Soon, we will be able to import those files directly into IU's streaming media site: Media Collections Online. Once that step is reached, we will be able to provide access to authenticated users via password protected streaming to the digitized content preserved through the MDPI project.

— William Vanden Dries

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Black Grooves

Black Grooves (www.blackgrooves.org), the music review site hosted by the AAAMC, promotes black music by providing readers and subscribers with monthly updates on interesting new releases and quality reissues in all genres—including gospel, blues, jazz, funk, rock, soul, and hip hop, as well as classical music composed or performed by black artists. To submit material, subscribe, or join our group of volunteer reviewers contact aaamc@indiana.edu.




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