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Archives of African American
Music and Culture

Indiana University
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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.

AAAMC LINER notes



Thomas "Beans" Bowles

In the last weekend of January, 2000, the AAAMC lost two valuable members of its National Advisory Board, Jack "The Rapper" Gibson and Thomas "Beans" Bowles. These two individuals touched the Archives and its staff in their own special ways.

Saying Goodbye...

JACK "THE RAPPER" GIBSON (1922-2000)

The legendary Jack "The Rapper" Gibson, pioneer African-American radio personality, passed away on January 30, 2000. He was a major donor to the AAAMC as well as a member of the National Advisory Board. His influence and impact on me personally and the Archives in general are immeasurable.

When I first met Jack in 1979, we discussed my research in Black popular music and my efforts to document the creators and those legendary figures who promoted and disseminated this tradition.

He agreed to my request for an interview and offered his assistance to my endeavor. Jack provided me with an essential entrée into the infrastructure of the music industry by introducing me to key players at his Family Affair Conventions. (Jack founded this important annual gathering of musicians and industry personnel associated with Black music in 1975, which he hosted annually for the next two decades.) Using his well-earned influence, Jack encouraged the understandably wary industry players to open up and make themselves accessible.

As my research began to take root and thrive, my earliest visions for the AAAMC began to evolve. Again, Jack was supportive of this concept, allowing me to spend days over several years in his office in Orlando, Florida going through files and organizing photographs and other materials. During this process, I discovered two badly deteriorated 7-inch reel-to-reel air-check tapes of Jack from the 1950s and 1960s that were broken in several places. I convinced Jack to let me take them to Indiana University for restoration. After this, he agreed to leave the originals at the university for safekeeping. I later realized that his then-fledgling *Mello Yello* newsletter (1976-96) should also be preserved. These materials, along with those contributed by other special people such as Johnny Otis and Karen Shearer, were pivotal in helping establish the AAAMC. In subsequent years, Jack added documentary video and radio programs about his life and Black radio in general, selected photographs and "Family Affair" programs, and related memorabilia to his collection.

Jack also contributed to Indiana University in many other ways and served as a role model for students—African-American students in particular. In 1981, he contributed to a scholarship fund for Indiana University students training for careers in telecommunications and the music industry. Jack also contributed to IU's and the AAAMC's educational mission, giving captivating and widely acclaimed public lectures and classroom presentations beginning in 1981. He gave his final public lecture on the IU campus on February 24, 1999.

The Archives will miss Jack's advice, encouragement, and guidance. I, along with the Archives' staff, IU students, and others who came into contact with "The Rapper," will miss his effervescent personality, unyielding candor, and contagious humor. Goodbye, Jack. Know that the AAAMC remains committed to the preservation of your memory and legacy.

—Portia K. Maultsby
Director

THOMAS "BEANS" BOWLES (1926-2000)

For many of us the word "Motown" evokes images of Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson and other well-known stars who etched the "Motown Sound" upon the eardrums of the world. Likewise, Motown's founder, Berry Gordy, and his staff of songwriters and producers, Holland-Dozier-Holland and others, are well-known heroes of the Motown legacy. Only in recent years has the public begun to take note of Motown's unsung heroes; those who stood in the shadows of the stars while helping the company *make* stars and achieve overwhelming success during the mid to late '60s. On January 28, 2000, the world lost one of those unsung heroes: Thomas Bowles, affectionately known as "Dr. Beans," or just "Beans."

I met Beans in July 1994, when I began researching the history of Motown in its home city, Detroit, Michigan. A musician and former road manager for Motown, Beans had gained brief mention in various books that I had read. As I began to chart a path of interviews that I would pursue with Motown alumni, Dr. Licks, who is now a member of the AAAMC Advisory Board, suggested that I start with Beans.

I recall the day that I met him at his two-story apartment, a modest dwelling that Beans describes as a "six-room ghetto apartment." The place was filled with the range of the remnants that defined his diverse life: instruments, audio equipment, sheet music, old photos, new computers, etc. He was a tall, thin man (hence the name Beans), with a lovely smile and warm personality. From the very beginning of our meeting, Beans was no stranger to me. In his down-to-earth, sincere, gentle, yet direct manner, he talked about his life and Motown experiences as if we were long-time acquaintances. Beans didn't just give information; he told stories, he explained, reflected, reminisced, and gave advice using his own life as a model. In the manner of a good social scientist, he drew relationships across musical, economic, social, cultural and geographic lines. What I thought was going to be an interview about his experiences with Motown turned out to be an engagement with his personality and a lesson for life. What was gained from my conversation with Beans helped shape the approach that I would take from that point on in my research and in my development of a course on Motown at Indiana University.

In the spring semester of 1995, the Motown course was offered at IU, and Beans Bowles appeared one day as guest lecturer. Much like our interview that prior summer in Detroit, Beans covered in his lecture a broad range of subjects, sharing with us his life's experiences as examples. What I remember most are the words of wisdom that Beans left with us: "The world changes; when it changes, you've got to be able to change with it," he said, referring to adjustments that he made during his lifetime, including taking computer classes at age 68. "You've got to do 'what it takes to get to a point when you can be of value,'" he said. A young Detroit musician credits Beans as being the person who kept him out of jail. "Everybody needs a hero," Beans says. To me, Beans is a hero. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to spend time with Beans. I will always remember him and his teachings.

—Charles E. Sykes
AAAMC Acting Director/Research Associate



Jack Gibson with the recipients of the "Jack 'The Rapper' Gibson African-American Arts Institute Minority Scholarship," 1981

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CIRCLE OF FRIENDS FORM

The William Barlow Collection: Black Radio

To fully tell the history of music in African-American culture in the post-World War II era, we must consider the role of radio, a primary medium that has escorted music from performance halls and recording studios into African-American community life. The William Barlow Collection housed at the AAAMC provides a new resource for students of Black radio to examine African-American music within this context, to explore the role of this institution in African-American communities, and to learn about the history of African Americans in professional broadcasting. Donated to the AAAMC in May 1998, this collection represents materials amassed during nearly 20 years of research by William Barlow. Barlow is professor of communications at Howard University in Washington, D.C. and author of two books, "Looking Up At Down": *The Emergence of Blues Culture* (1989) and *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio* (1999). The William Barlow collection consists of thousands of pages of published and unpublished manuscripts, along with interviews with radio show writers (transcripts included), disc jockeys, station owners, general managers, audiences, and leaders of Black-owned radio organizations. Unique to this collection are materials that document the formation of radio stations affiliated with historically Black colleges and universities.

The scope of Barlow's research project examines the earliest days of Black radio (1920s), but oral history interviews also focus on the post-World War II era. Through these interviews, Barlow has discovered that:

"Black radio played a much more prominent role in the development of Black communities, Black politics, and Black culture than I had thought going into the research. [Radio] was much more central to the day-to-day lives of African Americans in those various communities where it existed. It was very much a local phenomenon and a local tradition . . . because of the nature of the medium. Therefore, there was not a lot of national exposure or recognition of Black radio. [But] at the local level, people remembered various deejays that they had grown up with and the various stations that they had listened to, as well as those who had participated. Certainly a lot of the people [who] had worked in Black radio over the years were a repository of that history. Being able to talk with them about it illuminated that history in ways that you couldn't find in anything that had been printed about it up until that time."

Over the years, musicians and radio broadcasters have helped to flavor the musical, political, and social life in African-American communities. Materials in the Barlow Collection illuminate experiences of people such as self-taught radio personality Hattie "Charrie Hattie" Leeper (who became a professor of communications at Gaston College in Dallas, North Carolina), former radio announcer and long-time blues performer B. B. King, Dorothy Brunson (who, in 1979, was the first African-American woman to own a radio station), Ron Davenport (who at one time headed the only Black radio network in the United States), Obataiyi Akinwale (co-founder of the first African-American public radio station in the United States), and today's widely heard syndicated host Tom Joyner. Of particular note among the printed resources are some scripts of Richard Durham's radio programs, aired in the late 1940s on *Destination Freedom*. Interviews with African-American seniors describe the role of Black-formatted radio shows in their daily lives at the time when television was a mere novelty, and both blues and rhythm & blues music reigned in popularity among the majority of African Americans. These interviews contextualize the broadcasts of Black-formatted radio in the lives of its listeners, who vary in age, profession, musical preference, and regional location.

We are proud to house this resource at the Archives of African American Music and Culture, and we look forward to serving patrons interested in the collection.

New Initiatives for Studies on Black Radio

Professor Barlow remains involved in the historical study of Black radio, a topic of which he says he and other researchers have only "scratched the surface [in] getting the full flavor of local traditions and local histories." To further document this tradition, Barlow has initiated efforts to fund a project joining Howard University and the Smithsonian Institution in hosting a series of "regional Black radio conferences around the country, which would culminate in a national conference and exhibit on Black radio

here in Washington, D.C." He envisions that "the regional conferences would draw out the regional traditions in Black radio—educate the public about Black radio, but also . . . collect artifacts on Black radio for the national exhibit." According to Barlow, the AAAMC has been selected as a site for a regional conference.

—Susan Oebler

Susan Oebler is completing a Ph.D. in folklore and ethnomusicology with a minor in Afro-American Studies. She is finishing work on a dissertation about blues in intercultural contexts.

Collection Highlights

Each issue of *Liner Notes* includes brief descriptions of selected existing and new collections.

JOHNNY GRIFFITH COLLECTION. More than 600 record albums from the late 1950s through the early 1980s by various artists. Styles range from blues, gospel, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, funk, and disco. The collection features personal recordings, a musical score by Griffith, and a videotaped performance of Griffith and jazz guitarist Kenny Burrell. Also included is a taped interview with Griffith and its accompanying interview transcript.

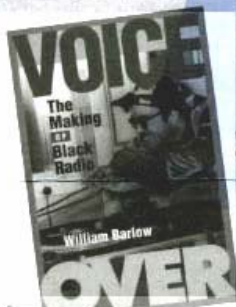
THE MILES WHITE COLLECTION. A collection of compact discs, audio cassettes, videotapes, LPs, and books on rap music and hip-hop culture. The collection contains a copy of White's master's thesis, which consists of printed material and video footage of deejays demonstrating turntable techniques. The collection also includes photographs of jazz trumpeter Miles Davis, among others.

Donations to the AAAMC 1998-99

The AAAMC would like to thank individuals and corporations for the following donations that were made over the year:

- **Blaze/Vibe**—Free subscription to *Blaze* magazine.
- **Joi Byrd**—Compact discs
- **James Shelton (Daran Records)**—compact disc
- **Miles White**—Hip-hop material

The AAAMC welcomes Mark W. Garrett and Dr. Bobby L. Jones to its Circle of Friends. Thank you for your support.



Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio (1999)



B. B. King (second in the back row) with other disc jockeys and artists, 1956

People

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE HIGHLIGHT— MELLOREE BURNIM— CONNOISSEUR OF GOSPEL MUSIC

As part of its organizational structure, the Archives of African American Music and Culture maintains a group of Resident Research Associates who act as resource consultants to the staff and the patrons of the Archives.

Melloree Burnim, associate professor of folklore and ethnomusicology at Indiana University, is a research associate for the AAAMC, working primarily with the sacred music material held at the Archives. Burnim is also a donor to the AAAMC. The Melloree Burnim Collection forms a major part of the sacred music collection. (A detailed description of the Melloree Burnim Collection will appear in a future issue of *Liner Notes*.) As one of the prominent scholars in the area of African-American religious music, her involvement with the AAAMC is invaluable.

Burnim was raised in rural Texas, in a small town called Teague. She started school at the age of four and her piano lessons started soon thereafter. The Burnim family did not own a piano, so her father, a schoolteacher, would sometimes take her to school after hours to allow her to practice there. However, a great deal of her practicing in this beginning stage was at the windowsill at home, requiring imagination and considerable determination to ensure mastery of the instrument.

By the age of 12, Burnim was directing adult choirs at several Teague churches, as well as serving as a piano instructor to members of the community. Her vocation as a minister of music, which continues today, provides her with great personal satisfaction and facilitates the scholarly dimension of her life as well. Her position within churches as a minister of music gives her a unique first-hand perspective from which to critique the music that she studies and writes about. Thus, Burnim does not fit into the typical mold of the "participant observer" who participates in the culture's activity for a while and then retreats to analyze and write about it. Rather, throughout her life, Burnim has been completely and consistently submerged in the culture, participating as an integral part of the performance context.

Burnim's interest in performance translated into a music major with a teaching emphasis. Her teaching experience raised her awareness of the need for a broader spectrum of musical knowledge. Western European music alone was not adequate to meet the needs of the middle schoolers Burnim first taught in Lewisville, Texas. Her decision to pursue graduate study in ethnomusicology was prompted by this realization. She earned an M.A. (music and ethnomusicology) at the University of Wisconsin in 1975 and a Ph.D. (ethnomusicology) from Indiana



Melloree Burnim

University in 1980. Her dissertation, *The Black Gospel Music Tradition: Symbol of Ethnicity*, examines gospel music in its historical and socio-cultural context and determines that the musical principles, aesthetic values, and performance practices that can be observed in gospel music are also evident in other forms of African-American musical and verbal expression. Her research argues that, "African Americans have a perspective, a sense of identity, a sense of ethnicity that was firmly rooted and grounded in the African historical past."

Prior to Burnim's dissertation in 1980, scholarship on gospel music had been sparse. The first dissertation treating gospel music exclusively was by George Robinson Ricks in 1960. Fewer than a dozen dissertations joined the scholarship until Burnim's seminal work in 1980. Since then, attempts to write about gospel music include serious historical works; yet, on the whole, scholarship in gospel music is still in its infancy. According to Burnim, cultural context and interpretation is still often lacking in the emerging literature, and hence, there are often "rather skewed notions of meaning embedded in the writing."

In her capacity as a research associate for the AAAMC, Burnim envisions that the AAAMC will in the future organize summer camps for teachers and students. This is consistent with Burnim's initial commitment to promote a supportive environment for schoolteachers to teach music. She also hopes that the AAAMC will be able to facilitate conferences dealing with African-American gospel music, bringing in people from the music industry. She insists that there is much to be learned by both sides in an interaction between academia and music industry personnel.

Burnim's visions for the AAAMC are consistent with two of the central missions of this repository—to expose materials to the general public through outreach projects, and to engage in collaborative research and creative projects with various institutions and associations. As the new millennium begins, it becomes imperative for the AAAMC to seek support and funding for such important endeavors.

—Stephanie Shonekan

Stephanie Shonekan is a doctoral candidate in folklore and ethnomusicology, specializing in the biographical study of African and African-American musicians.

BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHT— MICHAEL McALPIN

In the spring of 1997, the AAAMC established its National Advisory Board, a volunteer group of prominent professionals who share our commitment to our mission and lend their support and expertise to the AAAMC. They are distinguished individuals who are actively involved in the production, promotion, and study of African-American music and culture. They have contributed to our growth and influence over the past three years by aiding in the acquisition of materials and program development, bringing national visibility to AAAMC, and providing valuable input to discussions on future projects.

Michael McAlpin, a producer and director at WGBN/Boston, brings to the National Advisory Board a useful blend of talents and skills that are applied to our programming and the development of our vision. McAlpin's work, particularly on the national PBS documentary *Record Row: Cradle of Rhythm & Blues* (1997), has received various national awards. For the 1998-99 academic year, McAlpin was a Nieman Fellow in Journalism at Harvard University. Following are excerpts from interviews that Stephanie Shonekan had with McAlpin in June 1999 and January 2000. McAlpin talks

about various issues including *Record Row*, his research interests, and the AAAMC.

On Record Row

"*Record Row* is a documentary on Chicago's rhythm and blues history. My take on Chicago's rhythm & blues history was slightly different. Actually, I wanted to look at the African American entrepreneurial aspect of the rhythm & blues community. And I thought it was more interesting than doing the same old story of the white Jewish record owners falling in love with Black music and creating a record company. I mean that's an interesting story—it's a fish out of water story—but not really a new story.

"I was lucky enough to have signed on to the project Robert Pruter, author of the book *Chicago Soul*. *Chicago Soul* had a small segment on the community known as Record Row in Chicago.

(continued on back page)



Michael McAlpin

Work in Progress

AAAMC INSTRUCTIONAL WEB SITES

The AAAMC is involved in the production of educational materials for use in various instructional settings. Our construction of Web sites represents our first venture in the area.

Over the last 18 months, the AAAMC has worked with Indiana University's Teaching and Learning Technologies Lab (TLL) to construct two instructional Web sites on African-American music. These sites will be available for use in future workshops that will be sponsored by the Archives to educate teachers, high school students, scholars, and international visitors. On IU's well-wired campus, these Web sites on rap and post-World War II popular music provide students and workshop participants with a virtual visit to the AAAMC, while still protecting the valuable and often rare research materials. The multimedia format of the Web sites offers interactive audio-visual displays that often place varied media in close proximity.

The Web site design incorporates recorded sounds, digitized photos and drawings, interactive question-and-answer sections, and animated graphics as they relate to course content and instructional objectives. The audio examples illustrate various musical genres and styles, as well as concepts related to the music's evolution. At the click of a mouse, students can hear music and see photos that illustrate an African-American musical style and bring its history to life. For instance, recordings and images from the albums

and CDs of Parliament-Funkadelic and Public Enemy not only illustrate specific styles of funk and rap, but also examine the ways artists relate their music to the experiences and ideologies of African Americans and society in general. The air-check tapes and historical photographs of pioneering disc jockeys hosting sock hops and participating in local civil rights events demonstrate the social, cultural, and political function of Black radio in Black community life. The various images also establish a social, cultural, and political context for the significance of these styles of music.

The Web sites on rap and post-World War II popular music are being tested in classes taught by Portia K. Maultsby, who conceptualized and developed the project. Fernando Orejuela, associate instructor for the course titled "Rap Music," explains that he finds the Web sites valuable for both instructors and students:

"As a teaching tool it's useful in that you don't have to fumble through multimedia presentations. You can have the lyrical text [displayed] on the screen at the same time the musical example is being played. Or you can pull up historical figures, innovators, or popularizers in the field so that students can put a face to a name of a person that they've read about or [that] has been brought up in a lecture."

The AAAMC is currently working on a new Web site that surveys the development of African-American music from its African origins throughout the 20th century.

—Susan Oebler, project coordinator

MICHAEL McALPIN, CONTINUED

Record Row was the nickname the folks in the rhythm and blues community gave to South Michigan Avenue, from I think 12th Street to 22nd Street; about a 10-block stretch of independent record companies, distributors, and a bunch of other little shops that were loosely affiliated with the music business. . . . I started getting grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Black Programming Consortium, the Central Educational Network, and others.

"Portia Maultsby's endorsement and belief in the project helped put wind behind the proposal because of her reputation and standing academically as well as within the historical documentary community. She is recognized within the field as having a good sense of history of the music and the history of the nation and how the two intersect.

"This was my first national documentary and it chronicles the rise and fall of the Chicago rhythm & blues industry through the prism of this one strip, this musical community. It focuses on three different stories: the story of Chess Records, Vee-Jay Records, and

Curtis Mayfield. I think those were probably the primary creative forces within Chicago's rhythm & blues community. Of course I don't want to diminish the importance of forces like Willie Dixon, Muddy Waters, and others. But Mayfield moved from becoming just a singer, to becoming a songwriter, to becoming a record-label owner. He was one of the first African-American artists to control his own art, publishing his own music."

On His Research Interests

"I have recently completed a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard, which is a journalism fellowship. I actually never really considered myself a journalist. I am just more a storyteller.

"I have some projects that I am trying to develop, doing some research on post-World War II African-American society, which is what I focused on at Harvard. I will continue to try [to] create programming that addresses that era. In addition, I think that in the latter half of the century, the struggle of African Americans in post-World War II America fundamentally changed the world. The many social, political movements that spun out of the civil rights movement affected the policies and practices of

America, and subsequently, I think, even had an effect globally. So, it was more than just the music that came out of the African-American experience. But the struggle and the sense of idealism are a cornerstone of contemporary American politics and of contemporary American grassroots organizing. It just crosses all nationalities, gender, even national borders in terms of the approach to protest, and approach to enfranchise[ment]. I think that it was a template for the world and that's why I have this interest in it. I think it's easy and accessible, as a maker of documentaries and television programming. We can use music or popular culture as a prism in which to make this accessible to a mass audience."

On the AAAMC

"Other than being a consultant to the AAAMC on an as-needed basis, one of the things that I want the Archives to do is become an institution that has archival holdings from which it can benefit commercially. I'd like for the AAAMC to amass holdings of home movies and photographs from musicians. I'd like for the Archives to be much more proactive in terms of going after musicians and saying, let us be the keepers of your historical artifacts. Let us be the one that disseminates this to the public. We will protect the materials, copyright the materials in concert with the owners,

and have that material available for broadcast on a variety of different mediums. And then the Archives can also profit from that. I'd also like for the Archives to create programming for educational purposes.

"I think that the Archives has possibilities with its connection with the university, media professionals, music professionals, and television professionals. It has the potential to create displays and educational products that would educate individuals, or tourist groups, like high school and elementary school kids.

"I am very proud to be a part of it. I'd like to see it become more of a force. I am on the board and I am willing to do whatever the AAAMC requests from me. I am committed to this subject matter."

—*Edited by Stephanie Shonekan*

AAAMC STAFF

P. Macia Richardson, archivist and head of public/technical services
Portia K. Maultsby, director
Stephanie Shonekan, *Liner Notes* editor

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For the 1999-2000 academic year, AAAMC Director Portia K. Maultsby is a Fellow at the Center for the Advanced Study for the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California.

Circle of Friends *(Please type or print clearly)*

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In Memoriam:

Thomas "Beans" Bowles (1926-2000); Jack "The Rapper" Gibson (1922-2000)