

# TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE INITIATIVE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE HISTORY OF AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA (RASHAD)

Introducing

## *Spiritual Gifts*

A Professional Black Sacred Music Repertory Ensemble



David Manning Thomas, Music Director

## CHORAL GROUP ENHANCES RASHAD'S EDUCATIONAL AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS

By Regennia N. Williams, PhD

Spiritual Gifts, a professional Black sacred music repertory ensemble, had its debut performance on Monday, October 27, 2008, in Trinity Cathedral's Cathedral Hall. An appreciative audience braved the rain, snow, thunder, and lightning to hear the group sing during RASHAD's Fall Open House. This ensemble is the most recent addition to RASHAD's growing list of educational programs.

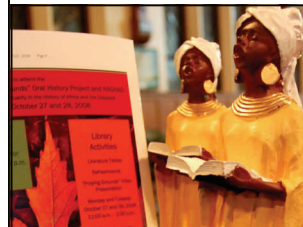
Among the works performed were director David M. Thomas's arrangements of "The Star Spangled Banner" and "This Train is Bound for Glory," a concert spiritual. The group closed with

"You are the Living Word," a contemporary Christian composition by Fred Hammond.

Soon after the October performance, a representative from Severance Hall asked the ensemble to sing during the Cleveland Orchestra's annual commemoration of the life and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. **Spiritual Gifts will perform on the main stage at Severance Hall on Monday, January 19, 2009, from 2:45 until 3:15 p.m.** For more information about the Martin Luther King Community Open House at Severance, visit the Cleveland Orchestra's website at [www.Clevelandorch.com](http://www.Clevelandorch.com).

### Contents

History through the Arts	2
Praying Grounds Update	5
Open House Photos	6-7
Children of Abraham	8
Women and Spirituality	8
A Letter to Our Friends	11



Open House announcement and table decorations

### Non-Discrimination Statement

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## HISTORY THROUGH THE ARTS



Horace Pippin, *Harmonizing*, (1944), Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio; Gift of Joseph and Enid Bissett, 1964. Reproduced by permission.

### ‘HARMONIZING’ CLOSE TO HOME

HORACE PIPPIN’S ART CONTINUES TO ENLIGHTEN AND INSPIRE

By Regennia N. Williams, PhD

Genre paintings, including those works depicting the everyday lives of African American folk, are frequently reproduced in art history texts, on calendars, date books, and other printed materials. In the case of Henry Ossawa Tanner’s *Banjo Lesson* (1893) one finds a clear example of the on-going popularity of this style of painting more than seventy years after Tanner’s death. A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Tanner (1859-1937), is credited with being

the first African American to achieve international acclaim for both his genre paintings and the religious themes that dominate the work of his later years in Europe.

Another Pennsylvanian, Horace Pippin (1888-1946), also achieved a measure of notoriety for his genre works, at about the time of Tanner’s death in 1937. While he was neither as prolific nor as well known as Tanner, Pippin’s success as a self-taught, “primitive” artist earned for him a place in art history. Today, his works are in

private collections and public museums, including the Allen Memorial Art Museum (AMAM) in Oberlin, Ohio.

Born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, Pippin spent most of his childhood in New York state. As a young man, he enlisted in the army during World War I. Like many African American soldiers, he and the members of his racially segregated regiment fought with the French, and he earned the Croix de Guerre, one of France’s highest military honors. Pippin was also wounded during the

**Continued on page 3**

**HARMONIZING, Continued from page 2** conflict, and he was awarded the Purple Heart.

After his military service, Pippin married and eventually returned to West Chester, where he pursued painting as therapy for his wounded arm and began to exhibit his work in the 1930s.

Oberlin's AMAM acquired Pippin's *Harmonizing* (1944) in 1964. *Harmonizing* is both autobiographical and historical. Pippin was more than a painter; he was a chronicler of the African American experience.

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## Not all was right with Pippin's racial world in 1944, but neither was he without hope and music.

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*Harmonizing* is an oil painting on canvas. It is 24 inches high and 50 inches wide. The artist's signature, "H. Pippin," appears in the lower right hand corner along with the year, 1944. The scene is one of four African American men standing in front of a wooden fence and "harmonizing" while singing quartet-style.

The brighter colors of the artist's palette are used sparingly in the red of the chimneys and the deep yellow of some of the men's shirts. Blues, greens, and grays are dominant, and a cloudless blue sky tops everything off. The paint for the men's clothing and that for the greenery is applied in very thick layers, and brush strokes are clearly evident here. This technique has the effect of making the living beings and plants stand out from the wooden buildings and paved walks, animating the images of the people more than one might expect in a painting that relies so much on the use of flat areas of color

and the total absence of shadowing.

The vertical lines in the fence, the men's shirts and trousers, the pillars on the front porch, and the rows of plants in the farm / garden contrast with the horizontal lines of the houses' walls and rooftops and the lamppost, yet all suggest the well-ordered regularity of a carefully planned environment.

The electric street light, the dense, almost crowded arrangement of housing and other buildings in the background, and the neatly manicured tree lawn all suggest that the setting for this scene is urban. Some other elements, however, are reminiscent of rural America.

The carefully arranged rows of green vegetation in front of the pillared frame house, where one might expect to see a front lawn, indicate that, perhaps, the occupants of this house were among the millions of African Americans who came to the North as part of the Great Migration during World War II, bringing many of their southern traditions and "country ways" with them.

Clearly the "harmonizing" figures are the central focus in this work. The individuals have several things in common: they are all African American, they are all male, and they are all singing. These four men stand in close proximity to each other, and the absence of any other man, woman, child, or animal outside their circle evokes a sense of community and brotherhood. The 1944 date lets viewers know that the work was created during the era of Jim Crow segregation, but there are no "Colored" and "Whites Only" signs indicating the presence of a color line.

In addition to their similarities, we also find great diversity in this quartet. All of the men are different heights, and all wear different styles of clothing. They all sing in harmony, but the leftmost figure appears to be directing the singing of the entire group. The figure that stands furthest right is the shortest in stature and the only one dressed in overalls. His attire may be an indication that his work ties him more closely to the land. The artist literally places him closest to the farm-like area, while keeping him in the company of his singing brothers. One of the other men embraces the overall-clad individual, a gesture indicating, perhaps, that he is welcoming the "little farmer" to the big northern city and facilitating the

process of his acclimation to his new home. Even the conductor-like figure appears to "point out" that this individual is deserving of a certain amount of attention.

In actual fact, this type of nurturing relationship would not have been unusual, since many middle-class members of the Urban League and similar organizations frequently helped recent migrants adjust to urban living.

The aforementioned elements in *Harmonizing* point to both the possibility of some class differences and common



**Sam Cooke (front row, left), a native of Mississippi, migrated with his family to Chicago when he was about two years old. In Chicago, Cooke sang quartet-style gospel with the Soul Stirrers in the 1950s.**

racial characteristics among the men, but the work seems to stress the unifying power of African American quartet singing above everything else.

The Jubilee tradition of quartet singing among African Americans began in the nineteenth century, when enslaved and free men and women performed Spirituals and other songs. In the 1870s, the Fisk Jubilee Singers began to sing these songs before non-African American audiences. Through their travels, the Fisk Jubilee singers introduced the world to formal arrangements of African American music. Other college-based choirs followed the lead of the Fisk Jubilee singers. Outside the campus communities, African Americans kept the quartet tradition alive in community groups

**Continued on page 5**

# The Journal of Traditions and Beliefs

## EDITORIAL AND SUBSCRIPTION OFFICE

RASHAD

c/o The Department of History

Cleveland State University

2121 Euclid Avenue, RT1915

Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Phone: (216) 523-7182 | Fax: (216) 687-5592

**Subscriptions** | Two-year subscriptions are available for \$30, and individual issues can be purchased for \$20. We will publish our charter issue in the fall of 2009. Make checks and money orders payable to Cleveland State University, and include RASHAD on the memo line.

**Submissions** | We will announce the annual theme for the upcoming issue by February 15<sup>th</sup> of each year. Manuscripts should be submitted by November 15<sup>th</sup> via email to [African.Diaspora@csuohio.edu](mailto:African.Diaspora@csuohio.edu). Double-spaced manuscripts, no more than 30 pages in length (including endnotes), should be prepared using *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (University of Chicago Press, 2007). Manuscripts submitted for publication will be peer-reviewed. Books for review and other correspondence should be addressed to:

Dr. Regennia N. Williams, Editor-in-Chief

*The Journal of Traditions and Beliefs*

Department of History

Cleveland State University

2121 Euclid Avenue, RT1915

Cleveland, Ohio 44115

[r.williams@csuohio.edu](mailto:r.williams@csuohio.edu), Email

(216) 523-7182, Telephone

*The Journal of Traditions and Beliefs* is published annually by the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD), a research and education program. Other RASHAD projects include "Praying Grounds": African American Faith Communities, A Documentary and Oral History, Spiritual Gifts: A Professional Black Sacred Music Repertory Ensemble, and *Traditions and Beliefs*, a quarterly newsletter.

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**Continued from page 3**

(both sacred and secular) and church-based groups.

In *Harmonizing*, Pippin is careful to include the white steeple of a church on the left side of the painting, a sign, perhaps, of the church's prominent role in the life of this African American community. In fact, the only element in *Harmonizing* that is higher than the church is the sky / heavens.

By the 1940s, then, it was possible for Pippin, Jacob Lawrence, and other African American artists to imagine, witness, and paint scenes from everyday African American life, where the folk were migrating, worshipping, working, and harmonizing, with and without non-African Americans. Not all was right with Pippin's racial world in 1944, but neither was he without hope and music.

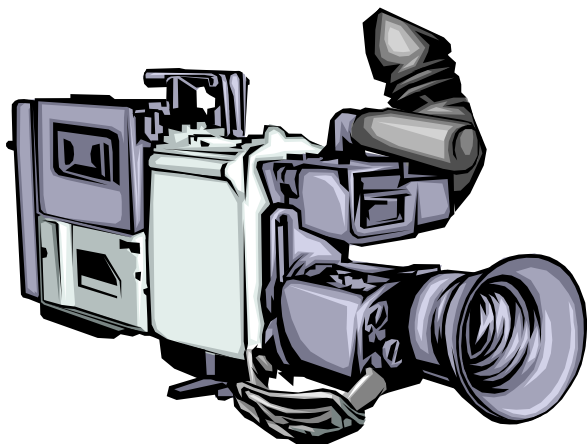
**Read more about it . . .**

Stein, Judith (editor). *I Tell My Heart: The Art of Horace Pippin*. New York: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1993.



Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, guest speaker for the December 9, 2008 Town Hall of Cleveland program, is pictured here with Regennia N. Williams, a member of the Town Hall board. Burns is currently working on several projects, including a series on Prohibition.

## PRAYING GROUNDS UPDATE



### Educational Video Series and Additions to Archives Coming in 2009

Praying Ground will launch an educational video series in 2009. The first program, which will feature David M. Thomas and Spiritual Gifts, will be available in February, African American History Month.

Produced in collaboration with CSU's Instructional Media Services, the digitally-recorded programs will be broadcast over the Internet and local cable networks. For more information, visit [www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/](http://www.ClevelandMemory.org/pray/) after February 1, 2009, or call (216) 523-7182.

**Rev. Fred Robinson**, a Praying Grounds interviewee, was an Associate Minister at the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church and founder of "I Believe in God Ministries." His popular radio and television programs featured some of the best gospel artists of his day.

Before his passing in June 2008, Rev. Robinson agreed to make his program archives available to Praying Grounds. Dr. Regennia N. Williams is currently working with Mrs. Corene Robinson to finalize the terms of the purchase agreement for this extensive collection.

### Spiritual Gifts:

A Professional Black Sacred Music Repertory Ensemble

#### Membership Requirements:

1. An open mind
2. Bachelor's degree or experience (at least 10 years) performing solo and choral arrangements of the music of the historic African American church
3. Brief performance resume and two references
4. Audition, two vocal works in contrasting styles
5. Participation in rehearsals at Trinity Cathedral, in Cathedral Hall, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m., on the second, third, and fourth Mondays in the month (except for holidays)

#### Stipend paid for each performance.

For more information, call (216) 523-7182.



SPECIAL FEATURE — SPECIAL MEMORIES



# 'SPIRITUAL GIFTS' & FRIENDS



Fall 2008 Open House for  
Praying Grounds and RASHAD  
Monday, October 27, 2008  
Trinity Cathedral, Cathedral Hall  
Jeffery Ivey, Photographer



## 'CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM' EXHIBIT AND PROGRAMS

"The Children of Abraham," an Ohio Humanities Council exhibit, will be in Cleveland for four weeks in January and February 2009. Thanks to a special community partnership, the exhibit will be on view at Severance Hall, home of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, and CSU's University Library.

On Monday, January 19, 2009, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the 14-panel exhibit will be at Severance Hall, as part of the orchestra's annual observance of the King holiday. "Spiritual Gifts," a professional Black sacred music repertory ensemble, will also provide music for this program. The exhibit will have its official CSU opening on Friday, January 23, 2009.

All activities are free and open to the public. The detailed program descriptions and exhibit brochures will be available on January 23rd.

**\*Program subject to change.**

Complementary CSU programs include the following:

**OhioLink Film Discussions**  
**Fridays, 9:45 a.m., University Library**  
**Film Screening Room, RT 325**  
**\*Reservations requested.**  
**Call (216) 523-7182**

"The Qur'an, the Bible, and the Torah,"  
 January 23  
 "Judaism," January 30  
 "Christianity," February 6  
 "The Role of the Prophet Muhammad,"  
 February 13

Another film will be the subject of an afternoon discussion:

**"Memphis Dreams: Searching for the Promised Land"**

Friday, February 6, 1:30 p.m., RT325

The above film discussions are scheduled in conjunction with Dr. Regennia N. Williams' "African American History Through Sacred Music" and "African American History Since 1877" classes.

Films can also be viewed online via the OhioLink Digital Media Center. Visit: <http://dmc.ohiolink.edu> for more information. (Authentication required.)

**Lectures:**

**Dr. Cynthia A. Crane**  
 "Divided Lives: The Untold Story of Jewish-Christian Women in Nazi Germany"  
 Monday, February 2  
 Reception and Book-signing, 5:30 p.m.  
 Lecture, 6:00 p.m.

University Library, First Floor Exhibit Area

**Dr. Regennia N. Williams**  
 "Exodus: 'Slavery,' 'Freedom,' and the 'Promised Land' in the Language of African American Spirituals"  
 Wednesday, February 4, 9:45 a.m.  
 University Library, First Floor Exhibit Area

**Dr. Stephen Cory**  
 "Muslim Relations with Christians and Jews"  
 Wednesday, February 11, 1:30 p.m.  
 University Library, First Floor Exhibit Area

## WOMEN AND SPIRITUALITY: ENLARGING THE CIRCLE

By Patricia O'Lunaigh

Vision becomes reality when the insight, talents, and hard work of creative and dedicated individuals are united in pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. The Women and Spirituality Symposium to be held at Cleveland State University in March of 2009 is an example of just such an effort.

Approximately 62 proposals were submitted from individuals all over the country and as far away as England and Thailand. The proposals for academic papers are intriguing and diverse - exploring Yoruba and Latin American women in Christianity, the transformation of deities and female subversion in 5<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe, Croning Ceremonies, a Thai woman's practice of astrology, Hex workers in the Civil War and post-Civil War period, and spiritual resistance among Jewish women in concentration camps during World War II.

Possible lecture presentations include Wicca, women in the orthodox Christian Church, a personal story of indigenous African initiation, and Gods and Goddesses of the Indo-European world.

Artistic installations and performances encompassing tattoos and body modification, visual art presentations, the Spirit of Life Dancers, the 21 Praises of Tara - a

Buddhist sacred dance, a documentary on Buddhist fabric Thangkas, poetry performance pieces written expressly for this event by CSU students, and readings concerning feminist poetry in the oracular tradition by a famous author are some of the other proposed offerings.

Many of the submissions are participatory in nature - Buddhist and Zen meditation, theatrical performance with group dialogue, Reiki, a dance in honor of the Black Madonna, and a panel on faulty female empowerment in film from a Taoist perspective - all invite active engagement.

Musical presentations are also among the offerings - a gospel performance accompanying an academic paper on African American women in gospel, a Celtic/Pagan folk duet, a Singing in Sacred Circle workshop, and the use of the tambourine in the worship of the Black Madonna.

Selena Fox, a psychotherapist, teacher, writer, photographer, ritual performance artist, and priestess will be one of the keynote speakers for this event.

All proposals will be peer-reviewed, and the planning committee will extend formal invitations to selected presenters by the end of December.

Because time and space limitations for the three-day symposium will likely not allow for the inclusion of many worthy presentations, the RASHAD team has decided to publish a comprehensive bibliography on Women and Spirituality. All participants, including those whose proposed presentations could not be included in the final program, will have the opportunity to submit titles for the bibliography. RASHAD also plans to publish an anthology of the best scholarly papers from the symposium.

**Registration materials for the March 12-14, 2009 symposium will be available after January 15, 2009. For more information, call (216) 523-7182.**



(left to right) Dana Artonovich, Ramon Smith, and Patricia O'Lunaigh, star players on the RASHAD team, at an October 28th planning meeting for the March 2009 Women and Spirituality Symposium



The

# “First Mondays”

Group

## A Sanctuary for Writers and Readers

Every first Monday of the Month, 6:30 - 8 p.m. (December – May, except for holidays)  
Cafe Ah Roma at Trinity Commons, 2230 Euclid Avenue



This group is open to anyone working on research related to the history of African American religion, sacred music (especially gospel), and other cultural expressions that have come out of the Black church. We are extending a special invitation to educators (and teachers-in-training) who are interested in developing curriculum materials for use at all levels, Pre-K through Ph.D.

“First Mondays” seeks to establish a safe space, where group members can present their work and receive useful feedback and constructive criticism.



**Free membership. Refreshments available for purchase.**

*For more information, contact:*

Dr. Regennia N. Williams

(216) 523-7182 | [r.williams@csuohio.edu](mailto:r.williams@csuohio.edu)

# THE REV. DR. CHERYL KIRK-DUGGAN IS GUEST SCHOLAR FOR APRIL 2009 INSTITUTE



## “We’ve Come This Far by Faith!”

### A Celebration of African American Religious History and Music

Commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
Founding of Cleveland State University’s Messengers of Joy Choral Ensemble

*The Rev. Dr. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan (left) is Professor of Theology and Women’s Studies and  
Director of Women’s Studies at Shaw University Divinity School in Raleigh, North Carolina.*

#### **Wings Over Jordan Spiritual Workshop**

Saturday, April 4, 2009, 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Free  
Cleveland State University, Music and Communication Building, Drinko Recital Hall  
2001 Euclid Avenue

#### **Workshop on Contemporary Christian Music with Drene Ivy**

Saturday, April 18, 2009, 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
\$20, Advance – \$25, At the Door (Includes music packet)  
Trinity Cathedral, Cathedral Hall  
2230 Euclid Avenue (Across from CSU’s Main Classroom Building)

#### **“Praying Grounds and Contested Terrain:**

#### **African Americans, Religion, and the Academy”**

**The Rev. Dr. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, Shaw University, Guest Scholar**

**Music by The Greater Cleveland Choral Chapter of the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses**

Monday, April 20, 2009, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Free  
Cleveland State University, Main Classroom Auditorium  
1899 East 22nd Street

#### **New Music Seminar**

**Dr. James Abbingtion, Emory University, Guest Presenter**

Saturday, April 25, 2009, 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
\$20, Advance – \$25, At the Door (Includes music packet)  
Trinity Cathedral  
2230 Euclid Avenue (Across from CSU’s Main Classroom Building)

#### **Spiritual Gifts Concert**

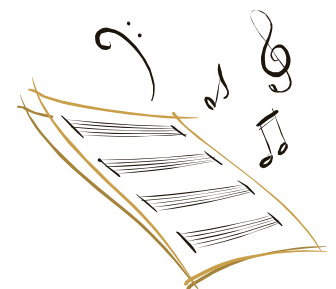
**David Manning Thomas, Music Director**

Sunday, April 26, 2009, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.  
\$20, Advance – \$25, At the Door (Includes music packet)  
Cleveland State University, Music and Communication Building, Waetjen Auditorium  
2001 Euclid Avenue

**Great Professional Development Opportunity! For registration information, call (216) 523-7182.**

Made possible, in part, with support from the CLASS Dean’s Office.

*\*Program subject to change*





# Praying Grounds



December 15, 2008

Dear Friend:

I am writing first and foremost to thank you for supporting the Praying Grounds Oral History Project, the Spiritual Gifts Chorus, the *Traditions and Beliefs Newsletter*, and the other components of the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD). This marks the fifth program year for Praying Grounds, and I know that we would not have made it to this point without you.

My second reason for writing has to do with the future of our initiative. As a former student and a current faculty member at Cleveland State University, I invite you to join me in supporting the on-going work of RASHAD. **As always, we welcome your donations of time, talent, and treasure, including books, sheet music collections, and manuscript materials for our Praying Grounds archives.** Your support helps create employment opportunities for students, performing artists, and other residents of Northeast Ohio, even as our archives enhance educational opportunities for all members of our community.

We believe in working creatively and collaboratively with other campus and community entities. **Since 2003, our collaborative efforts have made it possible for 16 undergraduate and graduate students to work on Praying Grounds or other RASHAD-related activities.** Our work, then, contributes to the creation of healthy economic and learning environments.

As we prepare to print the charter issue of *The Journal of Traditions and Beliefs*, our new peer-reviewed publication, I cannot help noticing the marvelous diversity that characterizes the growing group of RASHAD supporters. On the journal's editorial and advisory board alone, we have men and women, junior and senior scholars, academicians and religious leaders—several who work here in the Midwest and folks from as far west as California and as far south as Texas—individuals born in America and some who hail from African nations, historians, program directors, an anthropologist, a composer, a choral director, a recording artist, and a librarian. It is wonderful to know that so many good people are willing to support our interdisciplinary work.

**Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to RASHAD or Praying Grounds through Cleveland State University's Development Office.** Your gift will help to enrich and enhance the educational programs on our campus, in the surrounding community, and, thanks to the Internet, throughout the world.

For your convenience, you may give online at the university's secure website at [www.csuohio.edu/giving](http://www.csuohio.edu/giving). You can also make checks payable to Cleveland State University Foundation, and reference Praying Grounds or RASHAD on the memo line. Please mail checks to: Cleveland State University, Development Office, 2121 Euclid Avenue, MM209, Cleveland, Ohio 44115. If you have questions or concerns, please call me at (216) 523-7182.

Sincerely,

*Regennia*

Regennia N. Williams, PhD  
Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs '86 and '90  
Founder of Praying Grounds and RASHAD and Associate Professor of History, Cleveland State University

**TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE: GIFTS THAT ARE ALWAYS WORTH GIVING!**  
Cleveland State University - Department of History - 2121 Euclid Avenue, RT 1915 - Cleveland, Ohio 44115

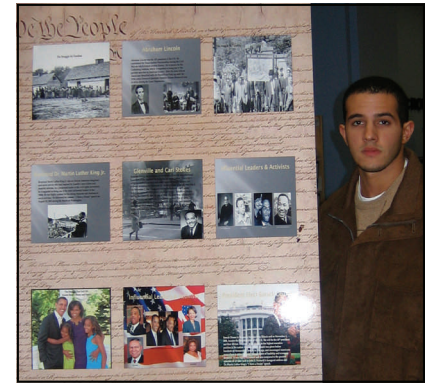
## RASHAD AND PRAYING GROUNDS: ON CAMPUS, IN THE COMMUNITY, AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY!



Prof. Mareyjoyce Green (left) and student Hannah Patterson in the CSU Women's Comprehensive Program office. After many years of dedicated service, Prof. Green will retire in December 2008.



**CONGRATULATIONS!** Music Education major, Praying Grounds narrator, and Spiritual Gifts member Beverly Brown (center) at her senior recital on December 3rd. Pictured with Beverly are (front row, left to right) Rya and Raya Fitch (granddaughters), (second row, left to right) Zella Smith (mother), and Zellateena Brown (daughter).



Steve Lambrou (right) worked with some of his HIS 216 classmates to produce this poster for the December 2nd Learning Communities Poster Day. Their "African American History since 1877" course was part of the "Cities, Sanctuaries, and Social Change" Learning Community.

# RASHAD

Initiative for the Study of  
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Dr. Regennia N. Williams, *Founder and Editor*  
Patricia A. O'Lunaigh, *Associate Editor*  
Dana Aritonovich, *Research Assistant*