



AFAM News

A Publication of the Institute for African American Studies

Fall 2014



“A Night at the Morton: Celebrating Black Traditions in Athens Musical Culture”

The Institute for African American Studies, the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts, and the Hugh Hodgson School of Music sponsored “A Night at the Morton: Celebrating Black Traditions in Athens Musical Culture,” March 26, 2014, at the Morton Theatre, 195 West Washington Street, Athens, GA. The event was part of the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts Athens Music Project, an interdisciplinary research initiative directed by professors Jean Ngoya Kidula and Susan Thomas of the Hugh Hodgson School of Music.

(Details of “A Night at the Morton” and additional photographs appear on page 3.)

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Greetings from the director . . .

The Institute is excited to announce the launch of its new website. Please be sure to visit us at afam.uga.edu. We have a wonderful season of events beginning with our new Fall Lecture Series. On September 12th, our first guest will be Hilton Als, writer and theater critic for The New Yorker magazine. Later on September 28th, UGA's own Dr. John Morrow, Franklin Professor of History and his co-author Jeffrey Sammons, professor of History, New York University, will speak on their new book Harlem's Rattlers and the Great War: The Undaunted 369th Regiment and the African American Quest for Equality. A booksigning and reception will follow. Details will be posted to our website.

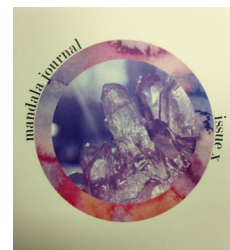


In this issue you will be treated to Jason Thrasher's photographs of an uplifting event at the Morton Theatre, "A Night at the Morton: Celebrating Black Traditions in Athens Musical Culture." This program was part of the Willson Center Athens Music Project, an interdisciplinary research initiative co-directed by Dr. Jean Ngoya Kidula and Dr. Susan Thomas of the Hugh Hodgson School of Music. The program was dedicated to the celebratory music that has chronicled the small joys of everyday living, religious worship, and social activism of black life. Music, theater, poetry, verbal and visual arts were all employed to create a remarkable record of African American life in Athens.

We are saddened by the retirement of our associate director, Dr. Freda Scott Giles. Though she is no longer a full-time faculty member, she continues to be an integral part of the life of the Institute. Please join us in wishing this very deserving colleague all the best in her new ventures.

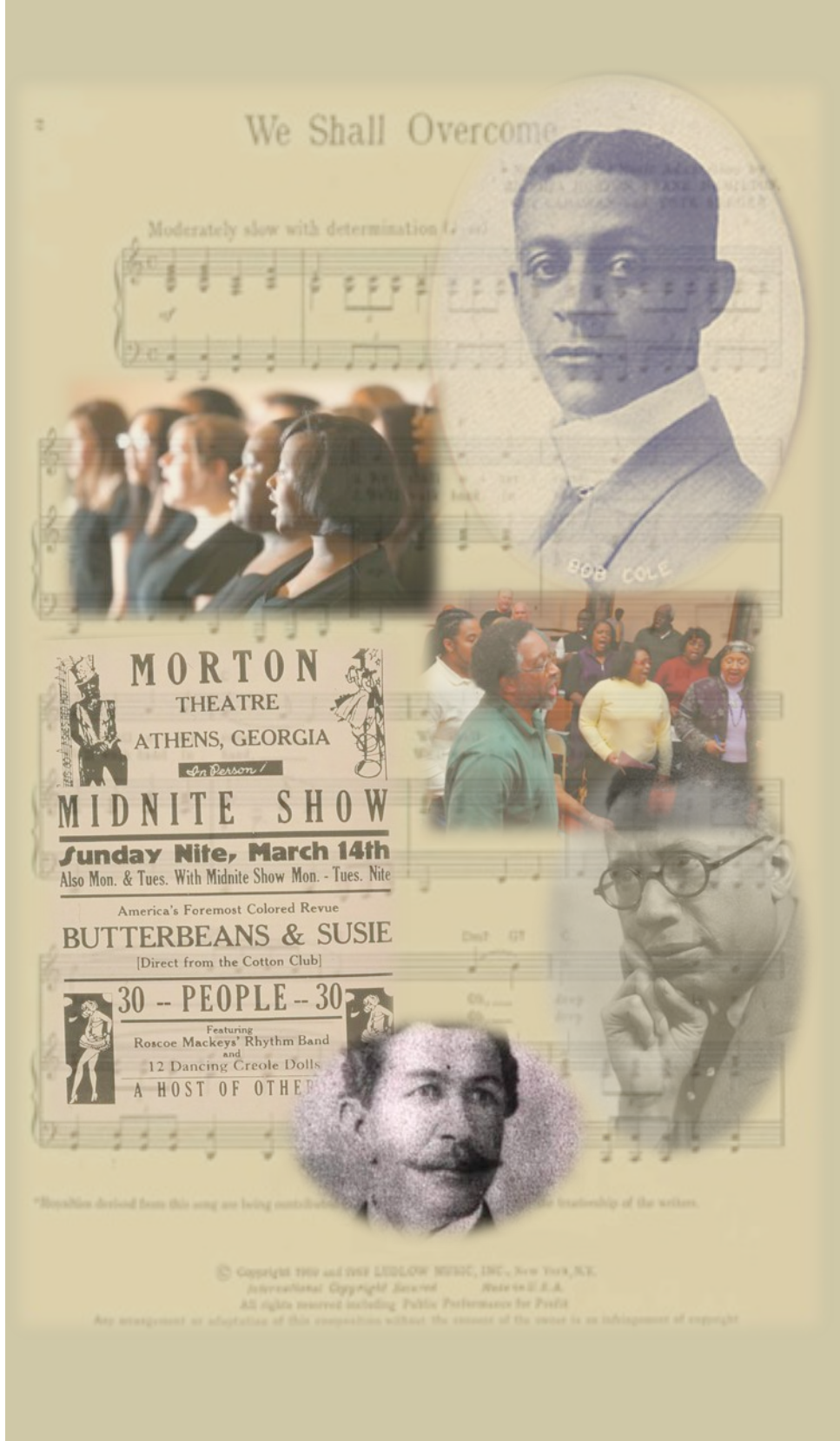
As always we welcome your support in whatever fashion is possible for you, and we look forward to meeting you at one of our events!

Be sure to access the link to our student journal *Mandala*, Issue X at <http://mandala.uga.edu>



“A Night at the Morton: Celebrating Black Traditions in Athens Musical Culture,” March 26, 2014, at the Morton Theatre

Long known as an epicenter for rock and alternative music, Athens, GA is also home to a vibrant tradition of black music. “A Night at the Morton” highlighted the diverse African American music soundscape in Athens through a program designed for music lovers of all ages and backgrounds. Performers included the Athens Voices of Truth Community Choir, directed by James R. Smith; the African American Choral Ensemble, directed by Gregory Broughton; and a dramatic enactment by theatre and film professor Freda Scott Giles and MFA performance student J. L. Reed. The evening presented music both sacred and secular, along with readings by renowned poet and professor Ed Pavlic, commentary by noted civil rights scholar and professor Barbara McCaskill, and interviews of key personalities such as Dr. Walter Allen, Sr.



“A Night at the Morton” (cont’d)



Above, Mayor Nancy Denson with organizers of “A Night at the Morton”

African Americans have been in Athens since its birth as a city, and have been part of every major movement for black freedom. After emancipation, former slave Tom Singleton recalled standing on the corner of Jackson Street in a crowd of thousands watching Union soldiers ride into the street as freedom had finally come; in 1900, W. E. B. Du Bois spoke of his theory of black progress before school teachers of Athens, GA; Shirley Taylor, Ken Dious, Elizabeth Taylor, Patricia Thomas, among many, many others, would march down Clayton Street, West Broad St., and Milledge Avenue to desegregate businesses such as S. H. Kress, Woolworth’s, and The Varsity. Music has long been a primary means of giving voice to the hopes and dreams of these freedom movements.



Above, Dr. Freda Scott Giles interviews Dr. Walter S. Allen, educator, community activist, and musician, on the central role he played in integrating Athens area schools.



Right, Sister Lillie Willis Dowdy, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, wife to Deacon Al Dowdy, and member of the East Friendship Baptist Church, lines a hymn.





Left, Ms. Dierdra Stroud, Associate Musician at Ebenezer Baptist Church, West, sings "Precious Lord."



Above, The Howard Sisters sing a gospel medley.



Above, The Athens Voices of Truth Community Choir.



Below, audience members sing along.



"A Night at the Morton" focused on two seminal spaces where African American artistry was nurtured or showcased—the Morton Theater and its vaudeville acts, concerts, musicals, films—and the Church—the place where many musicians got their beginnings, the place where community was forged, talent explored and nurtured.

(All the photos of the Morton event were taken by Jason Thrasher. To see more of his work visit, <http://www.thrasherphoto.com/>)

Student Word



This spring **Renee' Donnell** completed her thesis requirement for a Masters in historic preservation. Her thesis on the Interpretation of the African American experience on Charleston County plantations included fieldwork in Charleston, South Carolina where she took this photograph of slave quarters and work buildings. She says of her research, "My goal is to come up with an interpretation plan for plantations to use that intertwine black and white existence on plantations. . . . The biggest thing that stood out to me was that before the 1990s, it was unpopular, unimportant, and 'uncomfortable' to discuss slavery on a plantation. But within the last

10 years, plantations have been trying to redirect the focus and purpose of their sites. I appreciate this. I hope by doing so, more African Americans will begin to visit these sites and learn about their own history."

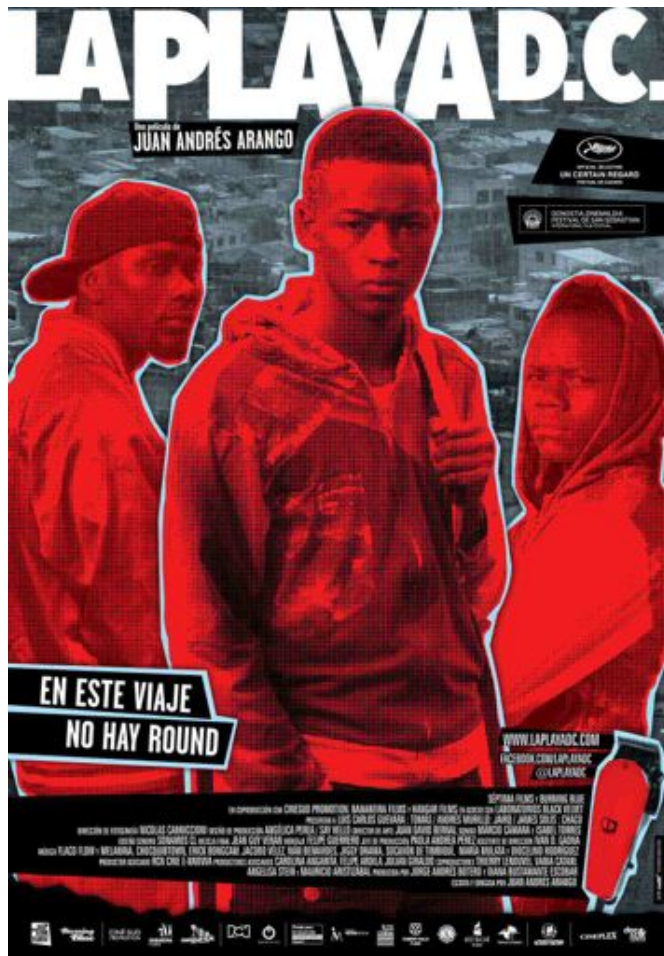
Lee Roy Giles Encouragement Award



The Institute for African American Studies Annual Lee Roy B. Giles Encouragement Award was presented April 16, 2014. From left, graduate awardee Sierra Carter; Freda Scott Giles, associate director of the Institute and the award's sponsor; undergraduate awardee Briana Farlow; and Valerie Babb, director of the Institute.

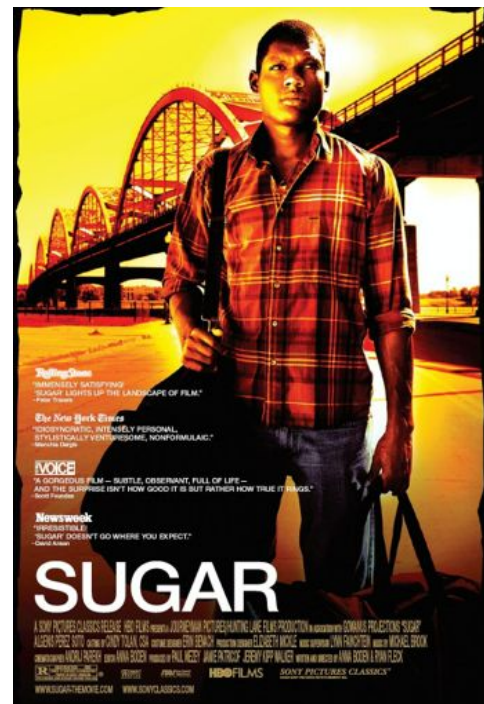
Please consider donating to the Lee Roy B. Giles endowment by sending a check to the University of Georgia Foundation (include fund number A729030/Giles Award on the check), Milledge Centre, Suite 100, 394 South Milledge Avenue, Athens, GA 30602-5582; or email <http://www.externalaffairs.uga.edu/development/sections/giving/ways.php> for more information.

Diaspora Film Festival Focuses on Black Latin America



Dr. Lesley Feracho again coordinated this year's African Diaspora Film Festival with a focus on Latin America. The festival opened with *La Playa D.C.* which tells the story of Tomás, an Afro-Colombian teenager who has fled the Pacific Coast traveling to Bogotá in search of his brother. Navigating the isolating urban landscape of Bogotá he begins another journey to self-discovery that links him to the legacy of enslaved Africans. The film was nominated for the *Un Certain Regard* Prize at the Cannes Film Festival (2012).

Also screened was *Sugar*, a drama directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck. It follows Miguel Santos, "Sugar," a Dominican pitcher who fights to make it to the major leagues to rescue himself and his family from poverty. The film was a Spotlight film in the 2008 Hamptons Film Festival.



Faculty and Staff Notes

- ❖ Dr. Lesley Feracho was named Associate Director of the Institute for African American Studies.
- ❖ Dr. Chana Kai Lee was named one of 20 Incredible Black Female Historians by *The Root*, an online magazine started by the *Washington Post* and edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. She is in the company of such renowned historians as Nell Painter, Deborah Gray White, Paula Giddings, and Darlene Clark Hine.



Dr. Freda Scott Giles played the character of Miss Leah in the University Theatre's production of Pearl Cleage's *Flyin' West*, a play based on the history of the 1879 "Exodusters," a group of 24,000 African Americans who journeyed West to create their own destinies apart from the legacies of enslavement and discrimination.

Dr. Giles was also awarded Emeritus status in recognition of her distinguished record of work for the Institute of African American Studies.

- ❖ Dr. R. Baxter Miller was the recipient of the Lifetime Scholarly Achievement Award from the College Language Association, an indication of the impact of his scholarship and the esteem of his peers. He was also named Interim Director for UGA's new Center for Social Justice, Human and Civil Rights.
- ❖ Dr. Diane Batts Morrow received a Willson Center Research Fellowship to support her continued research on the Oblate Sisters of Providence.
- ❖ Dr. Valerie Babb was named Franklin Professor of English.
- ❖ Dr. Donna E. Alvermann was appointed Omer Clyde and Elizabeth Parr Aderhold Professor in Education, an endowed faculty position in the College of Education.

Do You Know Your History?

¶ What was the first newspaper owned, operated, edited, and published by black Americans?

¶ What has the nickname “Hitsville USA”?

¶ In 1910, what was the tallest building built by an African American man?

¶ Which American president expanded Negro History week to Black History Month? *

Support AFAM

Gifts help us to fulfill our mission. We have diverse ways of giving and welcome your ideas for ways to contribute. The Foundation Fund provides AFAM the flexibility it needs to offer cutting edge programs on campus and in the community. The Lee Roy B. Giles Encouragement Endowment will help us offer scholarships to support student research and study abroad. With your energy, enthusiasm, and financial assistance, we will continue to grow the Institute into a premier entity in the field of African American Studies. If you are considering including IAAS in your legacy you may do so through Planned Giving (including Bequests & Trusts). We encourage you to consider a recurring payment schedule for your gifts so that you establish ongoing participation in the life of the Institute.

If you would like to discuss your gifts and the programs they support, please do not hesitate to contact the IAAS office to schedule an appointment with the director. Please see the following link for details on giving: <http://afam.uga.edu/support/>. We thank you for your sponsorship!

**Answers: 1) Freedom's Journal. 2) Motown's first headquarters, a former photographers' studio located at 2648 West Grand Boulevard in Detroit, Michigan. 3) The Morton Building. 4) Gerald Ford.*

Institute for African American Studies Fall Lecture Series

September 12, 2014

Lecture

Hilton Als, drama critic for *The New Yorker*.

6PM, Griffin Auditorium, Georgia Museum of Art.

September 18, 2014

Lecture and book signing, for the release of *Harlem's Rattlers and the Great War: The Undaunted 369th Regiment and the African American Quest for Equality* by John Morrow, Franklin Professor of History, University of Georgia and Jeffrey Sammons, Professor of History, New York University.

4-6:30PM, at the University of Georgia Special Collections Library, Richard B. Russell Building, Special Collections Libraries Auditorium (room 271). Address: 300 S. Hull Street.

More events to follow . . .