

# AVERY

## MESSENGER

WINTER 2018



*In the spirit of Sankofa*  
*Marlene O'Bryen Sealent*





A Publication of the

## AVERY RESEARCH CENTER

FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

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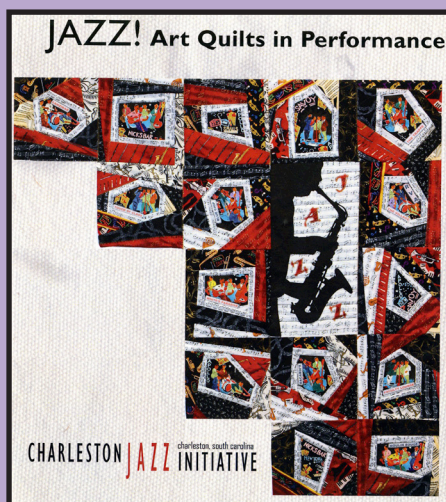


## ON THE COVER

### In the Spirit of Sankofa



The cover features the adinkra Sankofa heart symbol. Underneath is, an image of the autographed sentiment, "In the Spirit of Sankofa," by Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook. The autograph is from Georgette Mayo's personal copy of *A Communion of the Spirits: African-American Quilters, Preservers, and Their Stories* by Roland Freeman (Rutledge Hill Press 1996). Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook is a featured quilt artist in the book. In the background is Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook's quilt, *Gone Clubbing: Crazy About Jazz* (2008).



Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook's quilt *Gone Clubbing: Crazy About Jazz* (2008) shown on the cover of the Charleston Jazz Initiative's *Jazz! Art Quilts in Performance* catalog. This exhibition was featured at the Avery Research Center in 2009.

Adinkra are visual symbols that represent proverbs relating to history and customs of the Asante people of West Africa. Sankofa means "go back to the past in order to build for the future." We should learn from the past and move forward into the future with that knowledge. A stylized heart, as featured on the cover, or a bird with its head turned back while walking forward, are the two symbols used to represent Sankofa. The upper left image is a depiction of the Sankofa bird. Conceptually, Sankofa is a realization of self and spirit, representing self-identity, redefinition, and vision. In the Ghanaian army, this symbol represents the rear guard. Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook was one of the Avery Research Center's rear guard!

*To go back to your roots is to take the first step forward.  
For it is in the past we find the path that leads to the present.  
And from the present, we move on to the future.*

This issue is dedicated to Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook and her good and mighty works, and to all who believed in the dream, labored with resilience and love, worked above and beyond, and promoted and nurtured the Avery Research Center to help it grow—"In the Spirit of Sankofa!"



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**AVERY RESEARCH CENTER**  
**DR. PATRICIA WILLIAMS LESSANE**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Avery Supporter,

I can hardly believe 2018 is already here, and with it comes many changes! In many ways, last year was a rollercoaster ride of change: volatile and unpredictable weather closed the research center and flooded parts of the city and coastline due to Hurricane Irma; the long-awaited justice in the Michael Slager trial; the release of the Race and Social Justice Initiative's (RSJI) *The State of Racial Disparities in Charleston, South Carolina 2000-2015*; the announced retirements of stalwart and long-time Avery Research Center employees Curtis J. Franks and Deborah Wright; and the sudden passing of our beloved friend and Averyite, Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook.

Along with many of you, the Avery Research Center staff and I mourn the death of Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook. As a proud alum of Avery, she was a dedicated supporter of the work we do here at the Avery Research Center. I met Dr. O'Bryant Seabrook during my interview for the executive director position in 2009. Realizing that we were both proud members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, she took me to the side and welcomed me to Charleston with sisterly love. It was in that very same conversation, however, that she schooled me on the difference between "Cumyahs" and "Beenyahs," saying, "I'm a Beenyah and when you get the job, you will be a Cumyah!" As fate would have it, I did get the job, and she was always present at major and minor events, greeting me and the staff with a smile and kind words of encouragement.

The consummate educator, artist, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and soror, Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook epitomized the adage of "lifting as we climb." It is on her shoulders that I stand. It is in honor of her legacy that we continue the upward trajectory of the work we do here at the Avery Research Center.

At the same time, we sadly said goodbye to Mr. Franks and Ms. Wright. While we all wish them well as they enjoy a much-deserved retirement, I can't help but feel like an important chapter in Avery history has been closed. When I think of the Avery Research Center—what it has offered students and the wider community—I think of them. When I think of resistance, and Black power, and liberation struggle, and the symbiotic relationship with academe, I think of them. And when I think of the countless successes we have amassed during my tenure at the Avery Research Center, I think of them.

Avery Research Center will never be the same without them, but we will carry on the legacies of Black pride, social uplift, and scholastic excellence that Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook, Curtis J. Franks, and Deborah Wright have put forth for us.

Thank you,

PWL

## AVERY INSTITUTE

**JOHN BUNCUM**  
**PRESIDENT**



Dear Friends,

On behalf of all us on the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture's Board of Directors, I would like to wish each of you a Happy New Year and a very prosperous 2018. I hope you and yours had a joyous holiday season. Our annual meeting was held on June 24, 2018, and I would like to thank Michael Boulware Moore, director of the International African American Museum, for sharing his vision for the museum and the progress made towards the funding of the project. Thank you to our members for attending the annual meeting.

The 2016-2017 Board of Directors was also installed at this meeting. Joining the Board this year are Ms. Kimberly Greene, Ms. Gia McKenzie, and Ms. Yvette Metz. Judge Daniel E. Martin Jr., who volunteered to serve the remainder of Ms. Pearl Gibbs's term, was also installed to serve a full term on the Board. We are grateful to each of them for offering their time, talent, and resources to the Avery Institute Board. We would also like to thank current and former Board members for their service.

I hope you were able to attend the presentation on *The State of Racial Disparities in Charleston County, South Carolina 2000-2015*. Special thanks to Dr. Stacey Patton for her unyielding research, analytical expertise, and talents in making this report, along with its recommendations, another source of national validation. Also, thanks to all our members and contributors for their financial support, allowing the Avery Institute to help sponsor such an informative report to promote public awareness.

Finally, I am pleased to announce the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture has been awarded a grant from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to make *The South Carolina Black History Bugle* more dynamic and accessible to South Carolina public school students. We are honored the SCDE has partnered with us again to produce this educational tool for students throughout the state.

Continued thanks,

John Buncum



# AVERY ARCHIVES NEWS

## UPDATE: Digitizing Twentieth-Century Civil Rights Collections

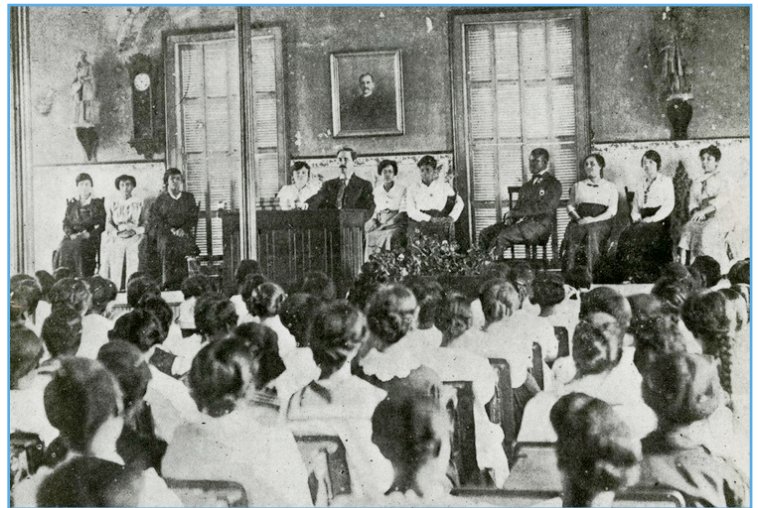
by Aisha N. Haykal, Manager of Archival Services

From 2015 to 2017, the College of Charleston's Lowcountry Digital Library (LCDL) and the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture partnered on a National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) grant to digitize a select number of documents from thirteen of Avery Research Center's collections. These holdings document Charleston, South Carolina, and the surrounding Lowcountry region in the twentieth-century civil rights movement. The collections are fully accessible online through the LCDL website. Links to the completed collection's pages, which have a description of the individual or organization, are below:

- Anna D. Kelly Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/anna-d-kelly-papers-1930s-1999>
- Bernice V. Robinson Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/bernice-robinson-papers-1920-1989>
- Book Lover's Club Records <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/book-lovers-club-1927-1969>
- Cleveland L. Sellers Jr. Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/cleveland-l-sellers-jr-papers-1934-2003>
- J. Arthur Brown Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/j-arthur-brown-papers-1937-1988>
- Charleston Branch of the NAACP Records <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/charleston-branch-national-association-advancement-colored-people-papers-1920-1995>
- Esau Jenkins Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/esau-jenkins-papers-1963-2003>
- Eugene C. Hunt Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/eugene-c-hunt-papers-1834-1994>
- Isaiah Bennett Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/isaiah-bennett-papers-ca-1932-2002>
- Millicent E. Brown Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/millicent-e-brown-papers-1949-2003>
- Septima Poinsette Clark Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/septima-p-clark-papers-ca-1910-ca-1990>
- William "Bill" Saunders Papers <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/william-bill-saunders-papers-circa-1950-2004>
- YWCA of Greater Charleston, Inc. Records <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/ywca-greater-charleston-inc-records-1906-2007>

In total, we were able to add approximately 41,000 pages to LCDL, or a little over 36 linear feet. These collections have been used in archival instruction sessions and to assist patrons with finding research materials. Additionally, several of the collections, such as Millicent Brown and Septima Clark, have been featured in *The South Carolina Black History Bugle*, which can be found on Avery Research Center's website. As a part of the grant, two online exhibitions were created and published on the Lowcountry Digital History Initiative site.

The first exhibition, published in May 2016, was *Avery: The Spirit That Would Not Die, 1865-2015* by the Avery Research Center (<http://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/avery>). This exhibition was curated in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Avery Normal Institute and the 30th anniversary of the Avery Research Center, both of which were in 2015.



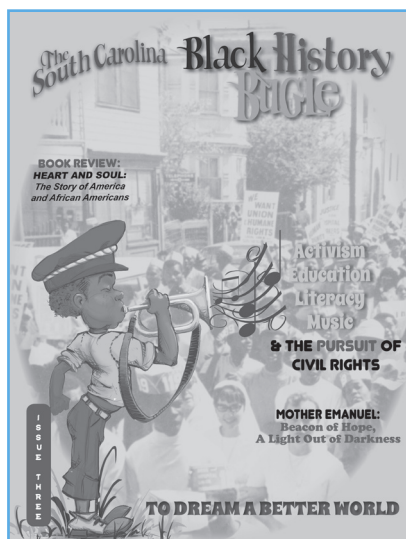
Principal Benjamin Cox addressing the student body during a meeting in Avery's auditorium with faculty seated behind him, Charleston, South Carolina, ca. 1916, courtesy of the Avery Research Center.



Local and national leader Septima P. Clark, 1973, Septima P. Clark Papers, courtesy of the Avery Research Center.

The second exhibition was *Remembering Individuals, Remembering Communities: Septima P. Clark in Charleston's Public History Landscape* by Katherine Mellen Charron in February 2017 ([http://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/septima\\_clark](http://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/septima_clark)).





Cover: The South Carolina Black History Bugle, Issue 3 ©2016.

For the future, we are continuing to seek ways to integrate the collections into both K-12 and higher education curriculum. Beyond the classroom, we hope these collections will be helpful guides for further educating people who are fighting for civil rights in this country. Moreover, the Avery Research Center continues to collect records that document the current civil rights struggles in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Lowcountry region.

As you view the collections, you may see photographs with no attribution or identifying names. We tried identifying people and places to the best of our abilities and we welcome assistance in naming some of the unknown people, places, and events in the photographs. Thus, if you know a specific person, place, or event in an image, please email [AveryResearchCenter@cofc.edu](mailto:AveryResearchCenter@cofc.edu) with your information.

The faculty and staff of the Avery Research Center and LCDL worked diligently and cooperatively to compile this resource for the community. We appreciate this vision, work, and effort.

## Dr. Conseula Francis Book Circle by Georgette Mayo



Dr. Conseula Francis (1973–2016)

The newly named **Dr. Conseula Francis Book Circle** gives tribute to the scholar who “designed and coordinated a book club focused on African-American writers.” Dr. Conseula Francis, a beloved college professor and administrator, passed away in 2016. The book circle she started in 2011, then called “Dart after Dark Book Circle,” continued after her untimely death. Former John L. Dart Library branch manager Kim Odom states, “[Dr. Francis’s] extraordinary combination of intellect, wit, kindness, and fierce moral integrity will never be forgotten by those who attended the Dart after Dark Book Circle.”

Renaming and continuing this book circle supports the importance of book clubs. The newly named Dart Library branch manager, K’Lani Green notes, “Book clubs are a way to bring people together around a shared interest—reading—and a way to foster literacy in the community. Book clubs spark intriguing conversations not only about a book, but also about social or cultural topics affecting us all.”

The Dr. Conseula Francis Book Circle continues to encourage and stimulate our minds’ growth with the literature we read while bringing together our diverse Charleston community. We look forward to you joining us for insightful discussions. In the spirit of Dr. Francis’s commitment and love of the written word, this book circle lives on!

The Dr. Conseula Francis Book Circle meets on the third Thursday of the month from September to May, 6:15 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Participation is free and the books for the discussions are available at your local Charleston County library branch.

Upcoming selections are found on the library’s website:  
<https://www.ccpl.org/john-l-dart-monthly-calendar>



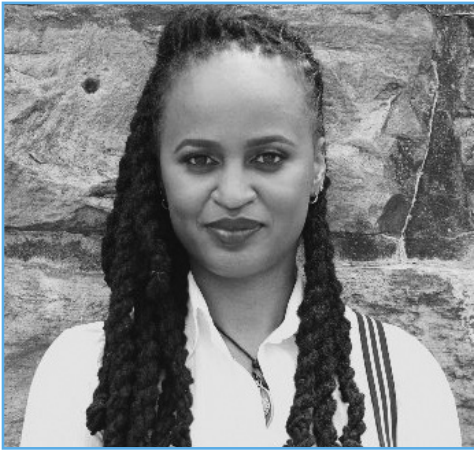


## EXPLORING THE STATE OF RACIAL DISPARITIES IN CHARLESTON COUNTY

### WHAT ARE RACIAL DISPARITIES?

**Racial disparities are differences in areas of life (such as education, wealth, home and business ownership, education, health, school arrests, and policing) that result in one group having a disproportionate burden of negative life outcomes.**

On November 13, 2017, the College of Charleston's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) and the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture hosted a community luncheon for stakeholders to launch a detailed report on the racial disparities in the lives of Charleston County residents.



Dr. Stacey Patton, author, *The State of Racial Disparities Report*

*The State of Racial Disparities in Charleston County, South Carolina 2000-2015*, funded by Google, Inc., is a report that highlights systemic barriers marginalizing African Americans in education, employment, business enterprises, housing and gentrification, policing, and public health. It serves as a component of RSJI to help foster awareness and dialogue regarding the history and continued struggles of racial injustice in Charleston, South Carolina, and throughout the United States.

Commissioned by Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, coprincipal of RSJI, the report is the culmination of a multiyear research initiative undertaken by a team led by Dr. Stacey Patton, assistant professor of Multimedia Journalism at Morgan State University. The data come from a number of local governmental agencies and original research among activists, leaders, residents, and organizations with a vested interest in Charleston County being equitable.

"Findings in this report consistently demonstrate the disparities that exist in Charleston County based on race and poverty," said Patricia Williams Lessane, executive director of the Avery Research Center, but Lessane also hopes "the report's facts can provide the first step in framing an open and relevant conversation on exactly where inequalities in our community exist, and how best to address them."

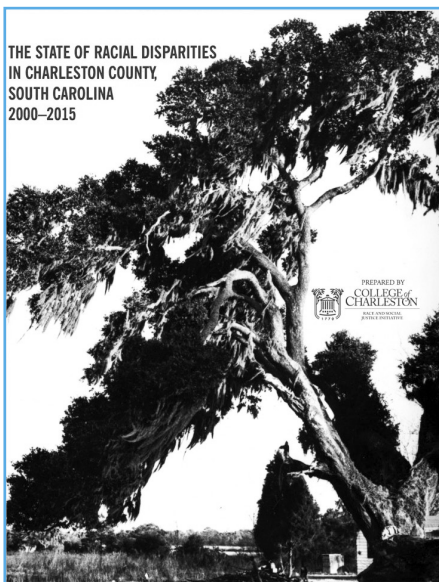


Image: Cover of *The State of Racial Disparities in Charleston County, South Carolina 2000-2015*.  
©2017 The College of Charleston  
Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture

RSJI's coordinator Daron L. Calhoun II shares, "The production of *The State of Racial Disparities in Charleston County 2000-2015* [was] a labor of love for the Race and Social Justice Initiative team. Throughout the report, we have used a racial equity lens for examining racial disparities and a racial equity framework for addressing and removing the systemic barriers we found."

**The sources of many racial disparities are deeply embedded in our history of slavery and segregation, the hierarchical structure of our society, and the social ideologies that inform our thinking and social policies. Some disparities are due to economics and poverty; others are a result of the personal biases of law enforcement officials, education professionals, politicians, and human resources managers. This individual racism consists of prejudicial beliefs and discriminatory behavior against people of color.**



In addition to feedback from Charleston-area activists, clergy, educators, and other community stakeholders, the RSJI team generated recommendations specific to Charleston County and incorporated a number of policies, programs, and best practices from “toolboxes” created by various antipoverty networks, school districts, and civil rights organizations across the county and country, including Charleston Area Justice Ministry, Quality Education Project, and the Charleston Illumination Project. These policy recommendations can be used to address racial disparities in Charleston County.

**Disparities can also be attributed to institutional racism. This type of racism occurs whenever there are laws, policies, and practices that have a “disparate (unequal) impact” on racial groups. Demographic trends show people of color will become the majority of the United States population by 2050. Thus, addressing these disparities is a local and national priority.**

#### **Some suggestions include:**

- Undertake an immediate effort to preserve existing subsidized and affordable housing;
- Address barriers to work, including expensive and unreliable transportation systems; high-quality, yet unaffordable childcare; and business management practices that make hourly work schedules insupportable;
- Expand the full-day, high-quality preschool program to all low-income, pre-K children in the county; and,
- Increase de-escalation training for all levels of law enforcement officers with a special focus on agencies that work with youth and young adults.

By providing policy suggestions, *The State of Racial Disparities* seeks to serve as a model reproducible in other communities—Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia—plagued by racialized state violence.

Calhoun further posits, “It is our intention to provide the community with a resource that will aid in the continued dialogue of facing inequities in Charleston County. It will also serve as a living document scholars, graduate students, and community members can use to actively track the progress being made in the county.”

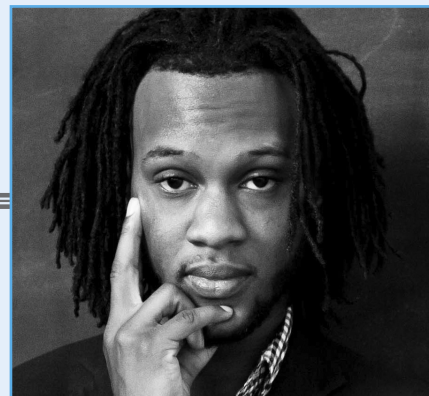
The community stakeholders’ luncheon, organized by Calhoun and the RSJI team, included presentations by Dr. Stacey Patton and Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane. Charleston City Mayor John Tecklenburg; Google, Inc., representative Lily Hester; College of Charleston Board of Trustees and administration; Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture Board members; media, and members of various organizations and institutions in Charleston County attended. JB’s Catering catered the luncheon.

#### **The State of Racial Disparities report is distributed in three ways:**

- Hard copy by request thanks to the gracious support of civic leader/charitable donor Linda Ketner;
- A preloaded 8GB USB flash drive, available at all sixteen Charleston County Public Library (CCPL) locations, free of charge, courtesy of the CCPL and Starbucks;
- On the RSJI website: <http://rsji.cofc.edu/resources/disparities-report/>.

**“May the work we do here serve as a model for the rest of the country.”**

#### **College of Charleston Race and Social Justice Initiative**



Shown (l–r) Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, Coprincipal Investigator (Executive Director, Avery Research Center); Dr. John White, Coprincipal Investigator (Dean of Libraries, College of Charleston); Daron Lee Calhoun II, RSJI Coordinator (Avery Research Center).  
Not shown: Dr. Lisa Brock, RSJI Scholar-in-Residence (2017); David C. Rothmund, RSJI Graduate Assistant; Ebony T. Venson, RSJI Undergraduate Assistant; La’Nasa A. Clarkson, RSJI Undergraduate Intern.

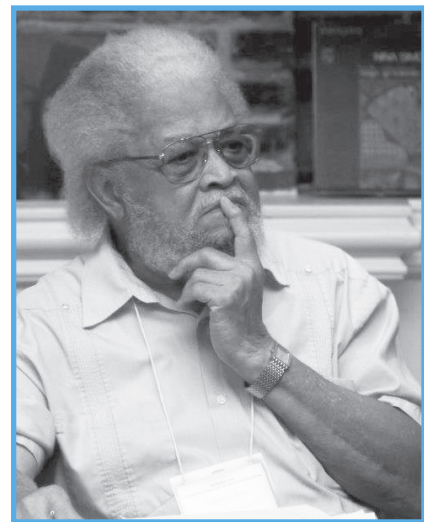


## James E. Campbell—Avery Supporter and Treasured Elder by Curtis J. Franks

**J**ames E. Campbell is an educator, elder, and power broker. In addition to being a regular Reading Room patron, Mr. Campbell has been a staunch supporter of the College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture for over twenty years, consistently supporting and promoting the Avery Research Center's ongoing work.

**Mr.** Campbell's relationship to Avery is multigenerational. His mother, Eva Jones Campbell, graduated from the Avery Normal Institute in 1916. His grandaunt, Sadie Jones Clement, graduated in 1896. Two of his sisters and several of his cousins also graduated from Avery Normal Institute.

**Mr.** Campbell donated his collection to the Avery Research Center. The James E. Campbell Papers (AMN 1113), an integral part of the Avery Research Center's archives, measures approximately ten linear feet (20 archival boxes) and focuses on education at large, independent educational initiatives particularly, globalism, and activism.



**In** January 1994, shortly after Mr. Campbell's retirement and return to Charleston, he was instrumental in convincing Franklin Thomas, executive director of the Ford Foundation; and Kate Whitney and George Patterson, executives with the Greentree Foundation (New York), to visit the Avery Research Center. While Dr. Myrtle G. Glascoe, the Avery Research Center's executive director at the time, was on sabbatical, then-Avery Research Center archivist Donald West and Harriet Cochran served as its codirectors. They facilitated the meeting and managed the exchange of follow-up correspondence between the two foundations. During their visit to the Avery Research Center, the Ford Foundation and Greentree Foundation representatives were impressed with the Avery Research Center's development during its first five years of existence, recognizing its potential.

**As** a result, the Ford Foundation agreed to provide approximately \$197,000 to the College of Charleston in support of renovations to the Avery Research Center. The Greentree Foundation also gave a grant to the Avery Research Center, which was used to purchase African American history and culture source materials to supplement Avery Research Center's local outreach programming. In addition to

source materials, the Avery Research Center used grant funds to purchase a van, thereby bolstering the Avery Research Center's ability to increase its outreach mobility, and to support the Avery Research Center's Avery Scholars Program. The support received as a result of these early foundational relationships undoubtedly help expand the Avery Research Center's educational outreach, public programming, and institutional profile.

**Mr.** Campbell's involvement and support of the Avery Research Center's current work is an important, perpetual endeavor that has the capacity to further enlighten those who are willing to pay "the price for the ticket." May the ancestors continue to find the work of our nonagenarian, Mzee James E. Campbell, pleasing!

## Dorothy Elizabeth Fludd—A Proud Librarian by Deborah Wright

**A** trained librarian with an old-school approach, Dorothy E. Fludd is proud of her research and librarian skills. In order to provide education, and the institutions and repositories that hold and disseminate such information. When asked about the importance of the Avery Research Center, she said, "It is especially important to me because it houses a significant amount of information about the descendants of African Americans."



**A** 1955 graduate of Laing High School in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, Ms. Fludd proudly holds a master's degree from the City University of New York.

**Ms.** Fludd was employed by the New York Public Library System as senior librarian and supervising Black Culture, where she met and worked with world-renowned educators and historians. Ms. Fludd retired in 1993.

**Coming** out of retirement for a brief period, Ms. Fludd joined the Avery Research Center as a part-time assistant. She addressed really tough and challenging research questions, often running out to her reputation for the breadth and depth of resources contained in her "mobile repository," as well as

**Ms.** Fludd, who periodically brings gifts to the staff, regularly uses the Avery Research Center's Reading Room and the Avery Research Center's Vertical File Collection. In fact, Ms. Fludd donated the majority of the

**As** to the future, Ms. Fludd hopes Avery and Laing will collaborate to build an African American history



## Cynthia McCottry-Smith–Avery’s Angel by Georgette Mayo

To know Mrs. Cynthia McCottry-Smith (or “Cinny” as she prefers to be called) is to know a true friend, which is exactly the type of friend she has been to Avery. The connection she and her family has had with Avery has been enduring. Her mother and sister were former students, and Cinny graduated from the Avery Normal Institute in 1940. She was also a teacher for thirty-six years at Avery Institute, Archer, Sanders-Clyde and Julian Mitchell Elementary Schools. She was voted Teacher of the Year in 1978 during her tenure at the last.

A devoted and honored member of the Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club, a women’s organization with indelible Avery ties that is over a hundred years old, Cinny’s membership spans sixty-nine years. She has held the offices of president, vice president, and recording secretary, as well as chairing all the club’s committees over the course of her membership with the organization. Additionally, she served on the board of the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture, and was one of the initial donors to the Avery Research Center’s archival collection when she began donating (circa 1983) the McCottry Turner Smith Family Papers. She is also a frequent contributor to the *Avery Messenger*.

Cinny would frequently drop by the Avery Research Center, brightening our days with her cheery disposition, and she never visited empty-handed. Cinny always had a small treat for each staff member. Every holiday season, Cinny also gifted us beautiful seasonal poinsettias. She loves to laugh and loves sharing a good joke, not bashful about showing her playful side at all! She always gives so much but asks for little in return.

Cinny’s experience and keen memory are invaluable. I would frequently refer students who wanted to know more about Charleston to her because of her extensive knowledge of people, places, and events. Among her numerous civic and community activities, Cinny revels in her creativity. For example, she used her skills as a calligraphy artist to inscribe dedications on thirty framed posters created and donated by Jonathan Green for Avery Research Center’s “A Gift of Art...Collaboration...A Challenge” fundraiser.

No one who knows Cinny has an ill word to say about her. She is one of those special people who has never met a stranger, willing to share her constant love and positive spirit with all. Cinny is our treasure and holds a dear place in our hearts! The Avery Research Center is delighted to have her as one of our many advocates. Our thoughts and prayers continue in earnest for Cinny’s complete recovery.

In Cinny’s words, “I’ll never be stressed.”



to understand Ms. Fludd, one must understand her love and respect for African American history and culture, Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, she responds, “The Avery Research Center is ancestry of the Lowcountry.”

s a BA in English from Allen University (SC), and an MLS in Library Science and an MA in Education, both from The City

g librarian. During her tenure there, she spent a significant period of time at the Schomburg Center for Research in dd returned to Charleston in the mid-1980s and gained employment as a librarian at the College of Charleston until her

t-time library assistant in the late 1990s. She served as a knowledgeable, thorough, and professional Reading Room er car for additional information and resources to assist researchers. During those years, Ms. Fludd developed a s her ability to quickly put hands on the right information.

ading Room and resources. She continues to donate materials, such as programs, flyers, obituaries, and journals, etc., to materials in the Avery Research Center’s Laing School Collection. history and education collection.

# Avery Research Center Staffers Retire

## MESSAGE FROM DEAN JOHN WHITE

Please join me in wishing a happy retirement to Curtis Franks and Deborah Wright at the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. Today is their last day before graduating to a well-earned retirement. Collectively, Mr. Franks and Ms. Wright have served Avery for over a half century. Through multiple directors, archivists, boards, etc. Deborah and Curtis have provided consistent and dedicated service to Avery. I wish them well.

I have heard many people describe Deborah Wright as the “heart” of Avery. I cannot think of a better way to describe her tenure at the College. As the driving force behind the *Avery Messenger*, Ms. Wright was ahead of her time in promoting the wonderful work at Avery beyond our campus community. I have lost count of the number of times Deborah has come in on her day off or stayed late into the evening to ensure the success of a public program. Her work ethic and willingness to go the extra mile for patrons is beyond impressive.

Curtis Franks not only curated many of the most important exhibits on African American history in the city, he introduced thousands of students from grade school to graduate school to African American history, black culture, and the African Diaspora. Mr. Franks has also been an important community leader on issues related to memory and commemoration, playing an important role in placing the monument to Denmark Vesey in Charleston. Over the years, he has braved storms and floods to look in on the collections at Avery Research Center and to secure the building while many of us were evacuating. His commitment to Avery has been remarkable.

I thank them for their contributions to Avery, the Libraries, the College, and our community and I hope they will continue to be involved into their retirements.

John W. White, PhD  
Dean of Libraries  
College of Charleston  
January 12, 2018



**Curtis J. Franks** served as curator and director of museum education (and in later years, facilities manager), at the Avery Research Center from 1992 through January 2018, a total of twenty-six years. Of his curatorial work at the Avery Research Center, Franks says, “each exhibition that I have curated has been an extension of the preceding one...They all have been developed and executed in support of the Avery [Research] Center’s mission...some have been received better than others, but the idea has always been to accord the material culture, artifacts, and works on paper the respect due and the accompanying sacred trust bestowed upon us, individually and institutionally.” Franks was a principal member of the Spirit of Freedom Committee which was ultimately responsible for the installation of the Denmark Vesey monument in Hampton Park.

*Image top left:* Franks in 2014 during an interview at the Denmark Vesey monument.



**Deborah A. Wright** began work at the Avery Research Center in 1998 as the Reference Archivist. Over the years, she also served as photo archivist, director of special projects, and associate director. She also served as the liaison for the community component of the *Grassroots: African Origin of an America Art* exhibition/project. She expressed that over all of the years and the various positions, she most enjoyed serving the public as reference archivist/librarian in the Avery Research Center’s Reading Room. Wright retired January in 2018.

*Image bottom left:* This 1999 image shows Wright at the reference desk during the time when the Reading Room was located within the second floor archival holdings area.



## REFLECTIONS: Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane

### CURTIS J. FRANKS

**Mr.** Curtis Franks has not only been an important fixture at the Avery Research Center in a physical capacity, he has also been integral to the intellectual and spiritual infrastructure of Avery Research Center's mission. He has brought so much to our community, our colleagues, and to me—professionally and personally—demonstrating how knowledge of self and one's people must be central to the work we do as publican historians, cultural critics, and race warriors.

**Mr.** Franks has been invaluable to every undertaking, shoring up every Avery Research Center endeavor, even while mostly in the background. The quintessential Black bibliophile, he readily recalls names, dates, movements, and ideas that have shaped the African American experience. He stands on the traditions set forth by Arturo Schomburg, Alain Locke, and others. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to have worked with him and learn from him.



Shown (l-r): Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, Curtis J. Franks, and Deborah A. Wright during Avery Research Center's exhibition opening "Varied Voices: Cultural Expressions of a Revolutionary Era" curated by Franks, featuring source materials from the collection local community leader Imam Hakim Abdul-Ali. This exhibition was part of the 2012 Black Power Conference, "The Fire Every Time: Reframing Black Power Across the 20th Century and Beyond."

### DEBORAH A. WRIGHT

**O**ften times when we think of revolutionaries, charismatic leaders who command the stage and galvanize throngs of people to rise up and fight for change come to mind. Yet, most often, the stalwart dedication and relentless desire for change of unsung heroes are what win revolutions. Without these countless, unnamed fighters and their dogged commitment to social and racial uplift, many of us would not enjoy the many victories of the Black Liberation struggles. Deborah Wright is one of those unsung leaders. From her roots in student activism during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s at SUNY-Albany where she was part of the Black Studies movement, to her work at the African Burial Ground in New York City, to spearheading the annual, multisite Remembrance program, and finally to her work at the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, she has been a steady fixture on the frontlines of Black movements for equality, agency, liberation, and self-determination.

**Deborah** is an important cornerstone of the Avery Research Center. She is a quiet master-teacher who is willing to share her wisdom and perspectives with those who have ears to listen. And for the last twenty years, she has served students, researchers, professors, and community members in a multitude of capacities, imparting her intimate knowledge of the Avery Research Center collections and African American history and culture at a moment's notice.

**But** for me, she has been a reliable sounding board; an eager, dedicated, and enthusiastic team player when it comes to Avery; and a confidant, cheerleader, and friend. While she has been a central figure in the reading room and the brains and the creative force behind *The Avery Messenger*, she has done so much more.

# We Remember Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook

**Dr. Marlene Linton O'Bryant-Seabrook, of Charleston, South Carolina, transitioned on Monday, December 4, 2017. She was eighty-four years old.**

Dr. Marlene Linton O'Bryant-Seabrook, a third generation educator, held a bachelor's degree from South Carolina State College, a master's degree from The Citadel, and PhD from the University of South Carolina. She was a classroom teacher, central staff administrator, and, became the first African American and one of only two women on The Citadel's permanent faculty in 1975.



Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook took an eight-week quilting class in the 1980s and became a nationally exhibited quilter in 1992. Certified by the South Carolina State Department, she approached quilting from the dual focus of an educator and an artist. She substituted fabric and thread for canvas and oils to create original art quilts. The educator in her, either subtly or overtly, slipped "lessons" into her quilts: love of God, family, children; pride in heritage; respect for accomplishments, etc.

She lectured nationally, including at the American Folk Art Museum (NY) and Cleveland Museum of Art (OH). Her work, shown in several magazines and thirteen books, has been exhibited across the United States, including twice at The Smithsonian Institution; internationally in South Africa, Namibia, France, and Japan. She was one of 44 nationally recognized fiber artists invited to create a quilt honoring President Obama for an

Inaugural exhibition at the Washington Historic Society.

In 2009 Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook exhibited "JAZZ! Art Quilts in Performance," as part of the Charleston Jazz Initiative's fourth annual Return to the Source events. The exhibition displayed at the Avery Research Center, featured sixteen original quilts and twenty-two mini quilt fabric postcards.

**Quilt image shown:** *Dizzy: Bopped Out of South Carolina* (2006).

Commercial fabrics (wool blend suiting and 100% cotton); machine appliqued, pieced, and quilted; embellished with braid. 48" x 36".

*This quilt is made in the shape of South Carolina to honor John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie. I designed the quilt so that the horn extends beyond the South Carolina state shape, acknowledging the fact that, although he is South Carolina's son, his "horn" went outside of the boundaries of the state. Attached are replicas of the dust jacket of the Jazz genius' memoirs and personal inscriptions to me "Dizzy" and his co-author, W. Alfred Fraser, my schoolmate and friend. The handkerchief belonged to my dad, Fletcher Linton, who was a school and bandmate of "Dizzy" in Cheraw, South Carolina, and a long-time friend and colleague of Al Fraser's dad in Charleston (SC) County schools.*

—Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook, PhD

*From the Charleston Jazz Initiative's exhibition catalogue, Jazz! Art Quilts in Performance (2009)*





# RESOLUTION

**Whereas**, Dr. Marlene Linton O'Bryant-Seabrook, born in Newberry, South Carolina, on August 21, 1933, was a third-generation educator, held a bachelor's degree from South Carolina State College, a master's degree from The Citadel, and PhD from the University of South Carolina; and

**Whereas**, O'Bryant-Seabrook was a classroom teacher, central staff administrator, and became the first African American, as well as one of only two women, on The Citadel's permanent faculty in 1975; and

**Whereas**, Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook was pivotal in the formation of the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture (AIAAHC), serving with Mrs. Lucille Whipper as the facilitator of the AIAAHC's 1989 Planning-Strategizing Program. This program set short- and long-term goals for the AIAAHC; and

**Whereas**, Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook served as president of the AIAAHC from 1991-1993; and

**Whereas**, Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook had two powerful exhibitions at the Avery Research Center:

- 2003: *Stories in Fiber: The Quilts of Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook (A Retrospective)*
- 2009: *Jazz! Art Quilts in Performance*; and

**Whereas**, Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook has been featured in many publications for her work as a fiber artist, including:

- A Communion of the Spirits: African-American Quilters, Preservers, and Their Stories* by Roland L. Freeman (Rutledge Hill Press, Nashville, TN, 1996)
- Spirits of the Cloth: Contemporary African American Quilts* by Carolyn Mazloomi (Clarkson Potter Publisher, New York, 1998)
- Charleston Magazine*, "Fabric of Life featuring Catherine Lamkin, Peggie Hartwell, Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook, Torrea 'Cookie' Washington & Winifred Sanders" (November 2008); and

**Whereas**, Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook often gave seminars, workshops, and presentations at the Avery Research Center for audiences of all ages; and

**Whereas**, Dr. O'Bryant-Seabrook served on the Avery Research Center Advisory Board (2011-2017); therefore, be it

Resolved that the Avery Institute Board of Directors extends its heartfelt sympathy and gratitude as we reflect on the life and work of Dr. Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook and is comforted to know she is now resting for eternity in the arms of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7)

Presented by Mr. John Buncum, Chairman, Avery Institute Board of Directors  
Ms. Kimberly E. Greene, Secretary, Avery Institute Board of Directors

## AVERY INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**TONY BELL,**  
Membership  
Chairman



### Greetings!

We would like to thank you for your continued support. Your support of the Avery Institute Board ensures that we can continue to supplement the Avery Research Center.

The membership committee is busy updating member information on our respective lists. We want to ensure that members receive all pertinent information.

And please do not forget to renew your membership today! Remember, it is tax deductible!

Thanks again for helping us to make sure the Avery Research Center remains the community jewel and national treasure it is.

Also, visit us online at:  
[www.averyinstitute.us](http://www.averyinstitute.us)



# AVERY INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP 2018

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# AVERY RESEARCH CENTER RENOVATION ANNOUNCEMENT

The College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture remains closed to the public through August 31, 2018, to implement a major improvement project to replace the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems throughout the building.

During the renovation, the Avery building will be closed with LIMITED ACCESS to select Avery Research Center's archival collections. Also during this time, there will be no new archival acquisitions and no public or private on-site tours or events. Faculty and staff will be temporarily relocated to the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library and can still be reached via their individual College of Charleston emails.

For general Avery Research Center inquiries, email [averyadmin@cofc.edu](mailto:averyadmin@cofc.edu) or call 843-953-7609. For general archival inquiries contact Ms. Aisha Haykal, Manager of Archival Services at [haykalan@cofc.edu](mailto:haykalan@cofc.edu). For reference inquiries contact Ms. Barrye Brown, Reference and Outreach Archivist at [brownb@cofc.edu](mailto:brownb@cofc.edu).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### •WHAT ARE THE DATES OF THE RENOVATION?

The renovation will be from April 2018 to August 2018. From January 2018 to March 2018, the Avery Research Center's faculty and staff will be packing and moving collections out of the building.

### •WHEN WILL THE AVERY RESEARCH CENTER REOPEN?

We are aiming to reopen in Fall 2018. Please watch the Avery Research Center's website and Facebook page for any information on delays.

### •WHAT IS BEING COMPLETED AS A PART OF THE RENOVATION?

The Avery Research Center will be getting a new HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) system so we can maintain better environmental conditions for the collections and personnel.

### •WILL THE AVERY RESEARCH CENTER BE OPEN FOR TOURS, PUBLIC MEETINGS, AND PUBLIC PROGRAMMING?

No, there will be no tours, public meetings, or public programming in the building during the renovation.

### •WILL THERE BE ACCESS TO THE AVERY RESEARCH CENTER'S COLLECTIONS FOR RESEARCH, EXHIBITION, LOANS, OR STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS?

There will be LIMITED access to select collections from Avery Research Center's collections for the duration of the renovation. A list of the available collections will be on the website in March 2018.

### •WHERE WILL THE COLLECTIONS BE STORED?

The collections will be stored off-site and on-campus.

### •ARE THERE ANY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS I CAN ACCESS?

Yes, we encourage you to review our collections on the Lowcountry Digital Library (LCDL) and explore the exhibitions on the Lowcountry Digital History Initiative.

### •CAN I SCHEDULE AN INSTRUCTION SESSION OR WORKSHOP FOR MY STUDENTS OR GROUP?

Yes, please contact Avery Research Center's Reference and Outreach Archivist, Ms. Barrye Brown, at [brownbo@cofc.edu](mailto:brownbo@cofc.edu) or 843-953-7613 for assistance and direction.

### •I HAVE AN ITEM/COLLECTION TO DONATE. MAY I STILL BRING IT TO THE AVERY RESEARCH CENTER?

No, Avery Research Center will not be acquiring any materials during the renovation.

Updates on progress of the renovation will be posted to the Avery Research Center's website at <http://avery.cofc.edu/> and on the Avery Research Center's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/averyresearchcenter/>.





COLLEGE of  
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AVERY RESEARCH CENTER FOR  
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