



Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-251591-OMS-22

Amistad Research Center

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| Amount awarded by IMLS: | \$50,000 |
| Amount of cost share: | \$5,000 |

Amistad Research Center (ARC) will gain intellectual control and access to the records of Junebug Productions, an organization engaged in the progressive arts movement since 1980. The project team will complete a collection survey, preliminary container listing, preservation assessment, and action plan for future implementation of full archival processing of the collection. They will then work closely with a consultant to digitize 68 hours of moving image and sound recordings from the Junebug Productions records. The project activities will enable ARC to provide improved access to the records of Junebug Productions for research inquiries, as well as address at-risk audiovisual items through digital preservation reformatting prior to processing the collection.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

Project Justification

The Amistad Research Center (ARC) seeks funding to gain intellectual control and access to the records of Junebug Productions, a leading organization in the progressive arts movement since 1980. The project will entail the completion of a collection survey, preliminary container listing, preservation assessment, and action plan for future implementation of full archival processing (arrangement, description and preservation) for the collection. The goals of this project are to provide a degree of improved access to the records of Junebug Productions for research inquiries, as well as address at-risk audiovisual items through digital preservation reformatting prior to an application for funding to fully process the collection.

Junebug Productions is widely considered the successor to the Free Southern Theater (FST). In 1963, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) field secretaries John O’Neal and Doris Derby, along with student leader Gilbert Moses, co-founded FST to be a cultural wing of SNCC. FST went on to become a major influence in the Black Arts Movement. The theater’s first professional tour was of Freedom School Project sites during the 1964 Freedom Summer in Mississippi. In 1965, FST moved its base from Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, to New Orleans. It continued to use arts to support the civil rights movement through a community engagement program and training opportunities for local people interested in writing, performing and producing theater, as well as touring. In 1980, FST produced *Don’t Start Me to Talking or I’ll Tell Everything I Know*, the first solo piece written and performed by John O’Neal featuring Junebug “Jabbo” Jones, a character created by SNCC members to represent and symbolize the wit and wisdom of everyday people.¹ This was the last production of the FST and the first production of Junebug Productions.

As a leader in the progressive arts movement since its emergence, Junebug’s community engagement has been central to the creation of the story circle method. The method of the story circle is a process that originally emerged as a cross-racial collaboration while John O’Neal was touring with the Roadside Theater in the mid-1980s.² The method of story-sharing through collaborative performance is a vehicle Junebug Productions continues to allow audiences to comfortably testify their experiences with difficult social issues, such as racism and oppression, in a nurturing and safe space.

John O’Neal, Junebug’s founder, saw the theater as a viable instrument of social justice throughout his fifty-plus year career.³ This ideal is documented extensively within the records of Junebug Productions. O’Neal saw artists as an important force within the civil rights movement,

¹ “Our Founding: Black Theater Matters,” Junebug Productions, accessed July 1, 2020, <https://www.junebugproductions.org/our-founding>

² John O’Neal, Carol Bebel, Nicholas Slie, Catherine Michna, John Grimsley and Raymond “Moose” Johnson, “Performance and Cross-Racial Storytelling in Post-Katrina New Orleans: Interviews with John O’Neal, Carol Bebel, and Nicholas Slie,” *TDR* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2013), pp. 51.

³ John O’Neal, “‘Do You Smell Something Stinky?’ in Notes from Conversations about Making Art while Working for Justice in Racist, Imperial America in the Twenty-First Century,” in *Acting Together II: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict*, ed. Cynthia E. Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea and Polly O. Walker (New Village Press, 2011), pp. 125-157.

and the arts as a way to connect to communities and empower the people within those communities through telling stories that are important to them.⁴ The shared narratives of the story circle created by O'Neal within Junebug Productions was and is a way to expand, explore and address real and current issues within communities; and to break the barriers of exclusion of the Black community to history and concerns of inequality, racism and discrimination.

The initial donation of the records of Junebug Productions was received in 1992 and covered the years 1983 to 1989. Additional deposits occurred in 2000 and 2002, covering the last two decades of the 20th century. The Junebug Productions records encompass 167 linear feet in total of touring and performances; board of directors and administrative records; financial records; grant records; photographs, slides and negatives; and an extensive collection of 54 moving images and sound recordings in the form of VHS and U-Matic tapes comprise of 68 hours of footage. At the time that the initial records and the additions were deposited at ARC the records were never archivally appraised, inventoried or rehoused for long-term preservation. The records of Junebug Productions have largely been inaccessible to staff and researchers due to the lack of intellectual control and access points within this large collection. Additionally, the contents of the audiovisual materials within the collection are inaccessible due to the nature of their obsolete formats. ARC has been unable to provide access for almost thirty years to neither the paper-based portion of the collection nor the moving images and sound recordings, though interest in the collection and its content documenting the arts and social justice has increased significantly.

The importance of appraisal and the need to gain intellectual control over collections were a priority for ARC's staff in 2009 following the Center's recovery of staffing resources devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. With a new and enthusiastic archival staff, as well as four pre-Katrina administrative and archival members, the focus was fully on the archival program and how to move forward to address an extensive backlog of inaccessible collections, particularly large organizational records collections that researchers were waiting to access. Plans were made and funding was sought to address a number of collection management issues, including acquisitions, archival processing (arrangement, description and preservation), digital asset management, and audiovisual reformatting and preservation. Implementation of plans to improve collections management and access included new policies and procedures that addressed all areas of the archival program, including collection management software for online access to collections information.

ARC has a platform for effective and efficient workflows in its collections processing and preservation program. This, in turn, led ARC to address issues related to processing large collections of organizational records, such as the Junebug Productions records. This project would address the challenges of access and preservation of the collection, allowing ARC to prepare for implementation of an in-depth processing project that would provide full access to the Junebug Productions records.

The records of Junebug Productions are of scholarly interest in many humanities areas, and beneficial in preserving the history of artist-driven grassroots organizing and advocacy. These

⁴ O'Neal, "Do You Smell Something Stinky?" pp. 140

records serve as documentary evidence of the role of artists in social justice movements and community building in the late 20th into the 21st century. The topical strengths for research contained in the collection include the organization and cooperation of artists addressing pressing sociocultural issues; the Black Arts Movement; grassroots arts-activism in the South; and creative approaches to environmental justice, immigration, human rights and related issues. Further, the collection provides insight into cultural organizing, creative placemaking, regional community theater and performance art, oral history practice, art and theater production in rural communities, and the development and exhibition of social justice arts.

While the organizational nature of the records places a transactional tone on the interpretations and understanding of arts advocacy and social justice, it becomes apparent that the availability of the records of Junebug Productions carries large and unique opportunities and implications, of which many scholars of the humanities and the arts may not be aware. This finding is based upon the presence of records at ARC that complement the collection and demonstrate Junebug Productions as paramount within the South as forerunners of the use of arts and social justice. The background of fundraising and educational endeavors documented within the collection would offer a researcher who is embarking upon the study of nonprofit community arts the knowledge and ability to apply strategic skills, and a new awareness of the variety of tools at their disposal, for the creation and maintenance of such a successful organization.

Margo Natalie Crawford utilized several Black Arts Movement (BAM) related collections at the ARC for her scholarly work, *Black Post-Blackness: The Black Arts Movement and the Twenty-First Century Aesthetics* (2017). *Black Post-Blackness* connects BAM principles and theories to recent literary and visual artists and artworks. Crawford's view of artist activism in the post-BAM era highlights how the accessibility of the records of Junebug Productions can benefit public and scholarly research for the later period of the 20th century and into the early 21st century. Daniel Matlin noted in his review of Crawford's book, "*Black Post- Blackness* is a landmark study that makes a series of powerful interventions by offering new and revealing ways of comprehending the BAM, the putatively 'post-Black' art of the twenty-first century, and the relationship between the art of these two eras."⁵ Crawford's research no doubt would have been further enhanced for this topic if the records of Junebug Productions had been available at the time she was conducting her work at ARC.

Free Southern Theater (FST) member, and close friend of John O'Neal, Kalamu ya Salaam's editorial work to create *New Orleans Griot: The Tom Dent Reader* extensively utilized the papers of Tom Dent and related artist-activists' collections held at ARC. Tom Dent, New Orleans-born poet, essayist, playwright, teacher and oral historian, was an active participant and member of the FST, and Kalamu ya Salaam's volume showcases the life and writing of an important, yet under-appreciated African American writer and cultural activist.

Research statistical data available highlights extensive use of BAM and artist-activist collections

⁵ Daniel Matlin, "The Black Arts Movement and Twenty-First-Century Aesthetics," *Black Perspectives*, accessed July 1, 2020, <https://www.aaihs.org/the-black-arts-movement-and-twenty-first-century-aesthetics/>

at ARC over the last five years, encompassing access requests for the Tom Dent papers (179 times), John O'Neal papers (63 times), Free Southern Theater records (68 times), Nkombo Publications records (41 times). Recently opened collections such as the Dashiki Project Theatre records, Chakula cha Jua papers and the Harold Sylvester papers are also popular with researchers since they became available.

Project Work Plan

This project will begin July 1, 2022 and will end on June 30, 2023. Laura Thomson, ARC's director of the Archives Division, will implement and manage the project. Key staff's time will be devoted to this project on a percentage basis. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any conflict between ongoing responsibilities and those of this project.

Identified risks include unanticipated preservation needs of specific documents encountered during survey; the need for more intensive archival processing for some parts of the collection than initially calculated; and unanticipated preservation needs of audiovisual materials, or delays in outside vendor digitization for audiovisual materials. However, ARC will adjust its schedule of completion based on regular activity review and reporting as necessary in order to reflect needed changes to the work plan. Based on the success of previously completed large organizational records projects, ARC staff is confident in their preliminary assessment of the collection in relation to the planning of this project.

This project entails two phases. Phases I and II will run concurrently throughout the year.

Phase I: Records Collection Survey, Content Analysis, Container Listing, Preservation Assessment and Processing Action Plan

The project team will conduct a review of all acquisition documentation for the various deposits of the Junebug Productions records, as well as develop a draft of an organizational history to assist in identifying the various officers, functions and programs conducted. This historical assessment will allow the project team to initially identify the main series and sub-series of files during a collection survey that will be incorporated into the eventual processing action plan. Following the historical assessment, the project team will conduct the collection survey and preliminary container listing for all boxes, assessing their contents and identifying preservation and conservation issues throughout the collection.

The survey and container listing will be completed at a rate of 1 linear foot per four-hour period, or 664 hours throughout the year. Content analysis done during the survey will be used to adjust and enhance the overall arrangement of the series and sub-series identified based on provenance and original order, as well as be used to draft preliminary series and sub-series descriptions. The final container listing will assist ARC's archivists in providing access to the Junebug Productions records until future full archival processing can be completed. The final container listing with series and sub-series, as well as preliminary content description, will be entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet will be sorted by series and provide information on the condition, arrangement and size of each series and sub-series within the records for future archival

processing. [Please see the appendices for examples of the collection survey work completed on The Africa Fund records and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund records used to implement archival processing in 2012 and 2020, respectively.]

The collection survey, content analysis and preliminary container listing will enable the project team to create a detailed processing action plan. The processing action plan will provide identification of the final file groupings of series and sub-series, their arrangement, assessment of the physical condition of the records and any conservation issues to be addressed in the future, and the various formats of the records. The processing action plan will provide information about the various functions and programs Junebug Productions was conducting; a listing of officers and staff who were creating the files; identification of the final order of the files within each series and sub-series, preferably based on provenance and original order if it is identified; and lastly, provide information about the size of each series and sub-series, so a final work plan and timeline for full processing can be completed. The results of this beta-level project work on the Junebug Productions records will also assist ARC's archival and curatorial team in determining the format and amount of archival supplies to be ordered for final processing and preservation. Lastly, printed items and publications will be separated and assessed by the Head of Research Services for possible cataloging within ARC's OPAC, WorldCat and cataloging databases.

Phase II: Audiovisual Digital Preservation Reformatting, Content Analysis and Metadata Creation

ARC's audiovisual preservation and digital reformatting program is closely related to its overall collections management and preservation policies. This program includes the digitization of material for both preservation and access. In conjunction with the collection survey and preliminary container listing, a related goal of this project is to digitize 68 hours of moving image and sound recordings from the Junebug Productions records. The collection includes 54 videocassette tapes in VHS, S-VHS, Umatic and Umatic-S formats. The audiovisual items from the collection encompass Junebug Productions' performances, and artist interviews dating from 1980 to 1991.

Audiovisual items within the collection have been identified and assessed by the Curator for Moving Image and Recorded Sound for digital preservation reformatting. Though ARC has capabilities in-house for the digital transfer of audiocassettes, 1/4" reel-to-reel audiotape, phonographic discs and VHS, the condition and unique nature of the video formats within the collection necessitates outsourcing to an appropriate vendor for digitization. All material in these formats within the collection, once digitized, will have content analysis and metadata description created. These descriptions will become part of ARC's content management system for digital assets, TMS Collections by Gallery Systems, and will also become part of the online finding aid to the collections within ARC's ArchivesSpace collection management system when full processing of the Junebug Productions records can be scheduled. The costs of digitization of the audiovisual items within the collection are estimated by vendor Preserve South, Inc. at \$2,995.24.

The following standards will be followed for outsourced digitization of moving image material: for master files, the video will be encoded using 10-bit YUV 4:2:2 uncompressed. No image or

sound processing, such as dropout compensation, noise reduction, audio equalization or limiting, shall be used in the creation of the archival masters. All archival masters shall maintain their source formatting, including interlacing, frame rate, aspect ratio and recording standard. Access files will receive an MPEG4 wrapper (.mp4 extension) with video encoded using H.264/MPEG-4 Part 10 AVC. Files will maintain the original recording standard, frame rate, number of audio channels and auxiliary information such as original timecode and closed captioning. The access copies will be de-interlaced. Levels may be adjusted. All non-program material at the head and tail of the tape, such as bars, tone or excessive black/silence, should be removed unless doing so incurs extra expense.

The digital surrogates of the audiovisual materials created under this project will be saved to ARC's hosted (Amazon) cloud-based storage Amazon S3 Glacier and Amazon S3 Glacier Deep Archive for long-term preservation and access. ARC utilizes the metadata standards of Dublin Core when describing digitized assets.

Project Results

At the close of the project, ARC staff will convene to discuss, evaluate and document processes resulting from project implementation. The outcome of this convening is to create and revise effective practices to sustain ARC's current and future processing and access projects. The project's outcome will focus on gaining intellectual control and providing access to the records of Junebug Productions, as well as planning for the implementation of a project to fully process (arrange, describe and preserve) the records, including creation of an online finding aid to the collection. This project also allows ARC to outsource to a specialist vendor the digitization of 68 hours of magnetic moving image and sound recordings for researcher access, as well as complete content description and metadata creation for the materials.

Project deliverables outlined below seek to increase access to the records of Junebug Productions, resulting in increased scholarship by providing access to documentary evidence of the role of artists in social justice movements and community building. Additionally, accessibility of the records and the audiovisual materials in the collection will provide ARC's wide audience of scholars, students, teachers, genealogists, documentary filmmakers, members of the press and major production studios with a means to study the impact of artist-led civil and human rights activism within the United States, but more specifically throughout the southern region. ARC will support the current administration of Junebug Productions by assisting to develop a records management plan with its members and board of directors to acquire records of the organization still in the hands of individual artists and previous staff.

Content analysis, preliminary finding aid and planning documentation for the Junebug Productions records will assist providing for greater access for researchers until such a time as full archival processing and preservation can be completed. As seen with similar archival surveying projects, ARC anticipates increased researcher interest and use due to more robust online description and information about this collection. In addition, the digitization of analog moving image and recorded sound formats will assist in the preservation of the content of those materials and make them available for the first time. ARC's existing policies and procedures for archival care and digital preservation will ensure the sustainability of the outcomes of this project.

Performance Objectives:

1. Submit complete reports by deadlines outlined by grant award.
2. Acknowledge the Institute of Museum and Library Services in all print and electronic products that result from grant support.
3. Completion of a collection survey, including preliminary container listings for the collection, as well as urgent preservation rehousing or support as required.
4. Data entry of the container listing into a MS Excel spreadsheet, including identification of series, sub-series and file groupings for use in future implementation of archival processing.
5. Completion of an organizational history of Junebug Productions, including detailed historical note; organizational structure; and officer and staff listing, including their functions within the organization.
6. Completion of descriptive content for use with the preliminary finding aid including scope and content note, and preliminary series and sub-series descriptions.
7. Completion of a processing action plan and preservation assessment report for the collection, including detailed timeline for processing completion and project budget.
8. Digitize approximately 68 hours of audiovisual materials in the collection, complete metadata description for each recording, and input into the content management system, TMS Collections.
9. Recommendation of a records management plan for Junebug Productions.

ARC holds the physical property rights to the Junebug Productions records as per the deed of gift for the collection. The collection was donated unconditionally regarding access being made available for research and public view. Junebug Productions retains all literary, artistic and intellectual property rights to the records with the provision to ARC for use for reproductions and all standard and archive purposes without limitation. These purposes encompass exhibition, publicity and educational endeavors in all media, including online. There are no ethical considerations that are known for sacredness, religious or culturally sensitive content of the recordings or materials within the collections.

ARC understands the significance of records and documentation created by performing arts, cultural, and activist community-based organizations. As part of this project, ARC will create a dedicated blog series that will track the progress of the project, highlight interesting materials discovered, discuss preservation issues encountered, and generally highlight the history of the organization. Junebug Productions staff and members will be invited to share their personal stories as part of this blog series. Also, the digital initiatives and promotion of this project to scholarly, governmental and general audiences will drive research inquiries to the project team, and thus facilitate greater access to the records. Additionally, the availability of the Junebug Productions records at the close of this project will be promoted on H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online and other web-based forums for academic researchers.

Schedule of Completion:

| Activity | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
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| Four | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Ten | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Eleven | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Twelve | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Project Activities for the Period, July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2021:

1. Historical Assessment: acquisitions documentation review and drafting of organizational history
2. Collection Survey: preliminary container listing, file group arrangement and mapping, and preliminary series and sub-series description
3. Survey Data: compilation of data from the collection survey into MS Excel spreadsheet
4. Preservation Assessment: report
5. Processing Action Plan: detailed plan for arrangement and preservation, archival processing timeline, and project budget
6. Cataloging: publications selected for ARC’s library cataloged into OCLC, local OPAC, and WorldCat
7. A/V Digitization: outsource to vendor, Preserve South, Inc.
8. A/V Digitization: quality control checks of digital files
9. A/V Digitization: content analysis and metadata creation
10. A/V Digitization: input digital assets into TMS Collections
11. AWS Cloud Storage: upload digital surrogates into Amazon S3 Glacier (hi-resolution access copies) and Amazon Glacier Deep Archive (uncompressed preservation masters)
12. Reporting: final project report and final financial report