

# WINDOWS

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES • VOLUME 30, NUMBER 1 • SPRING SUMMER 2023







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SPRING SUMMMER 2023

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Roland L. Freeman, "Hettie Barnes and her granddaughter," Wilkinson County, Mississippi, August 1976.

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Windows is published by the Friends of the Library under the auspices of the University Libraries, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We welcome questions and comments at P.O. Box 8890, CB #3900, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-8890 or (919) 962-1301.

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## LIBRARIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA



 **unclibrary** Thank you so much to everyone who came by our table today during GiveUNC!



 **unclibrary** Thank you to everyone who stopped by the KSL's Spring Seed Celebration on Wednesday! If you missed this party, you can still get seeds to plant in your home garden from [@UNC\\_SciLib](#) any time they are open.



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Connect with the University Libraries on social media for creative inspiration, news, resources and more.

# From the University Librarian



Photo by Jon Gardiner/UNC-Chapel Hill

Dear Friends,

Photographs have always held special meaning for me. It was learning about photography and receiving a book about historical photographs when I was young that first ignited my interest in history. That curiosity and excitement eventually led me to a career path through archives and to Carolina.

Photographs have a unique power to bring out the humanity of history in ways that words alone can't always do. They enrich our understanding of the past and challenge us to think about how we got to where we are today. They create space for larger conversations about our stories and ourselves.

That's why I feel so fortunate that the Kohler Foundation has chosen the University Libraries as the home for two powerful photographic collections, and why I'm thrilled that we are sharing them with you in this issue of Windows.

The Burk Uzzle collection arrived at the Wilson Special Collections Library first. Burk's six-decade career, including at Life magazine and Black Star and Magnum Photos agencies, led him to photograph some of the most memorable and iconic moments of modern American life.

Roland L. Freeman devoted an equally long career to capturing the heart and nuance of Black communities in the United States, especially in the South, and to documenting Black folklife, culture and artisans in a way that no one else ever has.

Interestingly, these two celebrated photographers have a warm relationship with one another. Roland considers Burk a mentor; he says that one of the first calls he received upon the placement of his collection here was from Burk himself.

Fundamentally, this is what libraries are all about. They are places to explore our history and question our assumptions, to build new understanding of the past, and to discover and create connections with one another.

It's our pleasure and privilege to be able to steward these important collections and, even more importantly, to be able to share them with generations of researchers, artists and photography lovers to come.

I hope you will stop by to see these collections, enjoy selections of photographs as we place them online or simply appreciate the images as they appear in these pages. I would love to know what you discover in them and where they take you.

With deep thanks to you for your support of the University Libraries,

María R. Estorino

Vice Provost for University Libraries and University Librarian





Photo by Owen Osborne, University Libraries

## Get in the game with Friends of the Library!

*It's a slam dunk.*

As a Friend of the Library, you make it possible for every Tar Heel to be a standout.

Your gift in any amount provides the assist, setting the University Libraries up to help every student and researcher bring their A-game, every time.

*Join the team by making your gift today:*

[go.unc.edu/GiveLibraries](https://go.unc.edu/GiveLibraries)



◀ The Friends of the Library Board of Directors provides time, talent and financial support to the University Libraries. Members meet twice a year for business (and a little fun, too).

Learn about all the ways to get involved by contacting the Library Development team at [librarydevelopment@unc.edu](mailto:librarydevelopment@unc.edu), or [919-962-4307](tel:919-962-4307).





## Omar ibn Said documents inspire an opera

The University Libraries' manuscripts by Omar ibn Said took center stage in February. That's when Carolina Performing Arts presented the opera "Omar" by musician and MacArthur "Genius Grant" recipient Rhiannon Giddens.

Said was a 19th-century Islamic scholar. Kidnapped from West Africa and enslaved in 1807 in North Carolina, he was renowned for his Arabic writings. Giddens took inspiration from the growing collection of Said manuscripts at the Wilson Special Collections Library. "It's really miraculous that we have his materials in North Carolina, not that far from where he spent most of his life," Giddens said. "Without his words, we have nothing."

To mark the opera's presentation at Carolina, archivists offered students and the community a rare opportunity to view the Said materials in person. Because the materials are extremely fragile, researchers generally consult them online.

[View digitized versions of the documents:](#)



[go.unc.edu/OmarIbnSaid](https://go.unc.edu/OmarIbnSaid)



Photo by Aleah Howell/University Libraries

## Library expands open access opportunities

A pilot agreement between the University Libraries and Frontiers publishing group covered open access fees for approximately 30 articles by Carolina researchers in 2022 as part of the University Libraries' Sustainable Scholarship initiative. The initiative's goals are to make scholarship more affordable, sustainable, transparent and open.

"Open access to the research produced at Carolina benefits everyone," said Nerea Llamas, associate University librarian for collection services and strategies. "Frontiers' 100 percent open access model aligns perfectly with our commitment to change and innovation in scholarly publishing."

In recent years, the Library has entered similar agreements with the publishers SAGE and PLOS. It also operates the Carolina Digital Repository ([cdr.lib.unc.edu](https://cdr.lib.unc.edu)) as a way for Chapel Hill affiliates to openly publish their research.

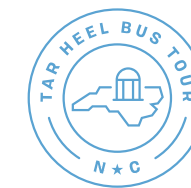
## Librarian on the Bus

In October, the Tar Heel Bus Tour returned for the first time since 2019. For four days, UNC-Chapel Hill employees traveled across the state to learn how Carolina is having an impact and can continue to make a difference in the lives of North Carolinians.

Among the riders was Winifred Fordham Metz, media librarian and head of the Media & Design Center at the University Libraries. Metz was on the tour's "West route" that made stops between Chapel Hill and the mountains.

"I can't say enough how valuable it was to hear about [these] projects. I found myself thinking, 'Wow, Carolina does so much for the state,'" said Metz. She appreciated the time and space to reconnect with her passions, deepen her commitment to service and build relationships with colleagues from across the University.

**READ AN INTERVIEW WITH METZ:**  
[go.unc.edu/BusTour22](https://go.unc.edu/BusTour22)



*'I found myself thinking, 'Wow, Carolina does so much for the state.'*



Photos by Aleah Howell/University Libraries

**Top:** Ambrotype of Omar ibn Said, ca. 1855. University Libraries.

**Bottom:** Rhiannon Giddens (center) joined visitors to view materials by and about Omar ibn Said at Wilson Library in February.



## Congratulations, 2022 staff award recipients!



Six University Libraries employees were recognized for exemplary work and contributions to advancing the University Libraries' mission in 2022.

**Monica Figueroa**, interim director of human resources and librarian for inclusive excellence, received the University Librarian's Award for Meritorious Service. The award is the Library's highest honor. Nominators noted Figueroa's dedicated efforts to make the Library a more inclusive and equitable organization. "While Monica's work clearly advances the priority of inclusive excellence," wrote her nominators, "it also has knit the University Libraries together in new ways, both through individual connections and through cross-departmental collaboration."

**Kristan Shawgo**, social sciences librarian, received the Annual Excellence Award for Inclusive Excellence. She "works tirelessly to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racism and social justice in the University Libraries," wrote a team of nominators. They cited her role as inaugural chair of the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) Action Committee and her contributions toward implementing the Library's Reckoning Initiative.

**Stephanie Williams**, digital projects programmer with the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center

(NCDHC), received the Annual Excellence Award in two categories: Innovation & Problem-Solving and Customer Service. Williams found a way to take 2.4 million pages of previously digitized newspapers and make them available through NCDHC's website at digitalnc.org. This work also increased NCDHC's capacity to digitize and share newspaper content from partners across North Carolina.

Finally, a cross-departmental team of three also received an Annual Excellence Award in the two categories of Innovation & Problem Solving and Inclusive Excellence. **Nancy Kaiser**, technical services archivist, **Becca Stubbs**, processing assistant, and **Eileen Lewis**, business services coordinator, were recognized for their efforts to interview community genealogists. The interviewees, all women of color, provided important insight that will guide the Wilson Special Collections Library in more accurately and inclusively describing archival records.

MEET THE 2022 AWARD WINNERS: [go.unc.edu/EmployeeAwards22](https://go.unc.edu/EmployeeAwards22)



TOP: Left to right: Monica Figueroa, Kristan Shawgo, Stephanie Williams.

RIGHT: Left to right: Nancy Kaiser, Becca Stubbs, Eileen Lewis.

## NC Digital Heritage Center receives public service award

The Carolina Center for Public Service has recognized the work of the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center (NCDHC) with the Office of the Provost Engaged Scholarship Award in the category of "engaged partnership." The award honors extraordinary public service and engaged scholarship at UNC-Chapel Hill in service of the state of North Carolina. Program Coordinator Lisa Gregory accepted the award on behalf of the NCDHC staff at an April 11 ceremony.

NCDHC ([digitalnc.org](https://digitalnc.org)) is a joint venture between the University Libraries and the State Library of North Carolina. It offers free digitization services for libraries, archives, historical centers and cultural organizations in the state. In 2020, NCDHC celebrated its 10th anniversary of online publishing. In 2021, it reached the milestone of working with partners in each of North Carolina's 100 counties. Its website draws nearly half a million visitors every year.

The award lauded the ethos of generosity, openness and inclusion that animates the work of the center and the people who make it run.

"No partner is too small; no document too minor; no user unimportant," the nominators wrote. "NCDHC's values include the belief that 'community history and culture have the power to enrich the lives of all North Carolinians.' Every aspect of the program enables and promotes these encounters."

## Campaign for Carolina opens doors at the University Libraries

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the University's donors, the Campaign for Carolina made history when it ended on December 31.

Donors to the University Libraries made history, too. Gifts totaling \$48.9 million will open doors to a bright library future for Tar Heels today and long into the future. Here is a look at campaign totals by the numbers.



Gifts ranged from **\$1 to \$6M**  
 MORE THAN HALF WERE UNDER \$100

20 new endowment funds  
 \$1M+ unrestricted giving



WATCH to see how Friends of the Library have made a difference during the Campaign for Carolina.

[go.unc.edu/OpeningDoors](https://go.unc.edu/OpeningDoors)





# Reckoning Initiative updates

A selection of stories highlighting the University Libraries' Reckoning Initiative in action

## "Finding Your People" panel explores Black families in archives

In February, the University Libraries hosted "Finding Your People: Exploring the Past, Present and Future of Documenting Black Families in the Special Collections." The panel discussion brought together leading historians and archivists of African American life. They explored the challenges and rewards of working with archives that have not always centered Black stories.

Panelists discussed the role of women in preserving family history and how public historians work with archives. They also answered questions about building archival collections ethically and documenting Black stories for future generations.

"Collecting stories around African American life and expanding the African American Families Documentation Initiative are priorities for the Southern Historical Collection," said Meaghan Alston, assistant curator for African American collections. "'Finding your People' served as a space to explore the importance and impact of this work."

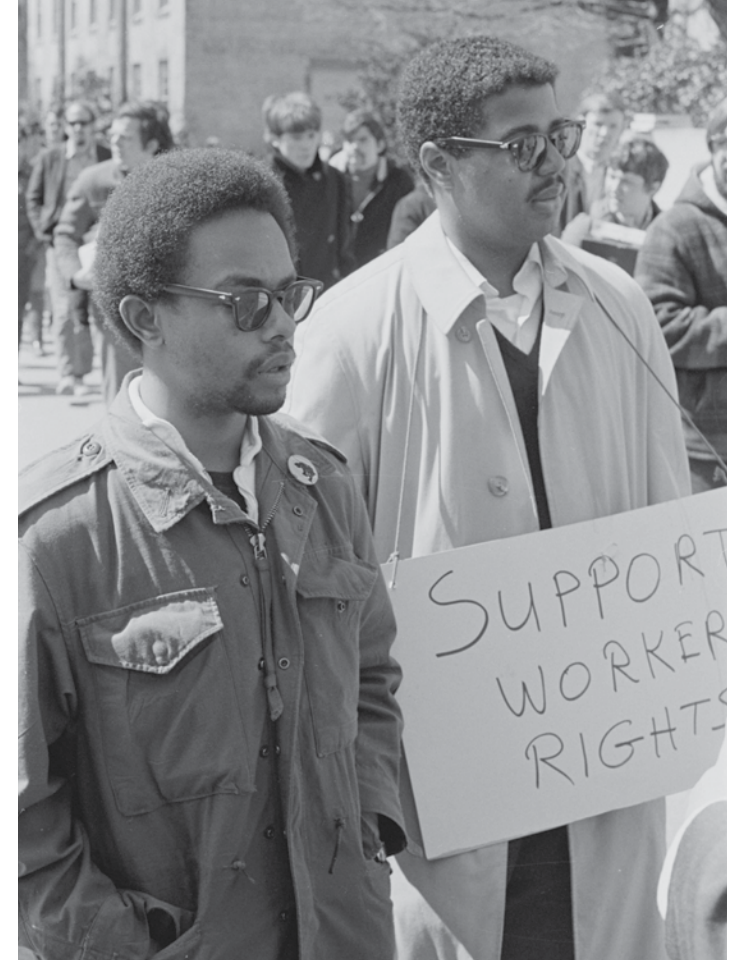
Watch a recording of the panel: [go.unc.edu/FindYourPeople](https://go.unc.edu/FindYourPeople)

Top: Demonstrators outside Lenoir, March 1969, Photographic Laboratory Collection, North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives

Bottom: Beech and Lee in Chancellor House's office, J. Kenneth Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection

Top: Parents wedding, circa 29 February 1972, Gragg Family of Black Mountain, N.C., Photographs and Papers, Southern Historical Collection

Bottom: Jessie Early and Thomas A. Wylie family, Wylie Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection



Visit the online tour: [go.unc.edu/BlackCarolinaBlueTour](https://go.unc.edu/BlackCarolinaBlueTour)

## A new website for the Black and Carolina Blue tour

For more than 20 years, the Black and Blue Tour has introduced students and visitors to local histories of slavery, racism, memorialization and activism at UNC-Chapel Hill. Now, the University Libraries has released a revised Black and Carolina Blue Tour website, with updated and expanded entries.

"The Black and Carolina Blue Tour website is an essential supplement to other campus history sources," said University Archivist Nicholas Graham. "It's impossible to truly understand the history of UNC-Chapel Hill without learning about slavery, white supremacy and Black resistance."

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO TRULY UNDERSTAND THE HISTORY OF UNC-CHAPEL HILL WITHOUT LEARNING ABOUT SLAVERY, WHITE SUPREMACY AND BLACK RESISTANCE.

The original tour was created as a walking tour of key sites connected with Black history at Carolina and Chapel Hill. The Library began work to revise the tour website in 2020. A University Libraries IDEA Action grant provided funding to work with community stakeholders who reviewed drafts and provided feedback and suggestions.

"We provided vetted citations for further research so that the online tour can be a source of quality information," explained NC Research and Instructional Librarian Sarah Carrier. "Our goal is to not only inform and answer questions about Carolina's history, but also to inspire new work and new thinking about what engaging with our institution's history can look like."





Photo by Jon Gardiner, UNC-Chapel Hill

**Windows spoke with Estorino about being University Librarian and about the future of the University Libraries.**

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*



**Congratulations, María! To begin, I wonder if you could tell us a bit about your background. How did you come to librarianship, and how do you think that influences your outlook today?**

Well, let me say first how fortunate I feel to be entrusted with this responsibility and to work with the incredible team at the University Libraries. If I've made it to this point, it's thanks to the work that so many others do to make this library great.

My own career starts with a passion for history and how we understand our past. That love for history sparked when I was about 9 and my cousin's future wife was showing me how to use a camera and develop film. She also gave me a book that was a history of American photography geared toward middle-grade readers. And I remember that being a world-opening experience. I had always liked social studies; seeing photographs of historical people and events opened up that interest in a much more meaningful way.

As an undergraduate, I wanted to understand how we know history. What are the traces that help us know what we know? I had the opportunity to do an internship at the archives of the Smithsonian Institution. It gave me a whole new idea of what a career in history could be and set me on my career path in public history, museums, libraries and especially archives.

I think so much of what we do in all these settings is about meeting people in different moments of curiosity, or need or aspiration, and building a mutual understanding of how we can work together for the benefit of each other and the greater whole. Our expertise as librarians and archivists can help people see the bigger picture of all the things that are possible.



***Our expertise as librarians and archivists can help people see the bigger picture of all the things that are possible.***

**How would you describe the job of being University Librarian?**

When you're in an administrative role, it's possible to see connections that people who are immersed in the work don't always see. In my previous position, as director of Wilson Library, I felt like it was about bringing people together and making connections. That's a very energizing part of this work.

The University Librarian position has a similar function, only now it's my job to look across the entire organization and start to see patterns and connections. I'm in a position to be able to convene people around certain ideas or challenges or opportunities.

I also think that one of the key aspects of the job is to be advocate-in-chief. It's telling the stories of the Library. In good times, it's to generate opportunity and relationships and foster conversation. Sometimes, you're doing it when things are more challenging, and you have to really demonstrate how what we're trying to accomplish aligns with greater goals and merits support.

Perhaps the third piece of that is that librarianship has always been a collaborative professional space. We participate in so many different organizations and collectives, both on campus and with other libraries. I think that's going to become even more important as we move forward, and it's part of my job to look for those opportunities. You have to understand the larger conversations and make sure that you're in them. Because it doesn't matter if you make good decisions for your library if you can't put them in conversation with your campus and with higher education as a whole.



# Putting people at the center

On January 30, María R. Estorino became vice provost for University libraries and University librarian following nine months as the University Libraries' interim director (see [go.unc.edu/Estorino](https://go.unc.edu/Estorino)). She is the 11th person to lead Carolina's libraries and she steps into the permanent position at a moment that she believes is full of opportunities.

BY JUDY PANITCH



“ ***I’m interested in an approach that puts people at the center of our cosmology—users, students, researchers, donors who give us collections that we care about, the people who produce knowledge here on our own campus.*** ”

**What are some of the opportunities that you feel especially excited about?**

One of the things I’ve loved over the past year is learning about the entirety of the organization and the areas of excellence that have the potential to be meaningful for the Library and also for the entire community.

Research impact is an area that I’m excited about and where really advanced work is going on, especially at the Health Sciences Library. There’s tremendous value for the University as a whole in better understanding where we excel, where investments are yielding results and where there are collaborative opportunities. While a lot of academic libraries are starting to grow in this space, we have a team that has already been incubating this expertise for years. I’m really excited to unleash that, make it more visible and build the service models that will help people do their best work.

I’m also really excited about the possibilities of collaboration around applying data science methods and technology to the humanities. With the rich special collections that we have, we already support significant teaching, research and learning in the humanities. This is a center of possibility where we could really lean into that strength to collaborate with the College of Arts and Sciences, with the new School of Data Science and Society and with other partners across campus to create a stronger research infrastructure for these emerging research directions in the humanities. Today, we’re seeing data science entering fields that have not traditionally used data-driven methods and tools for their work. And I think we’re in a really good position to facilitate more of that kind of work.

Finally, I’m excited about our spaces. Even with some very real challenges, we are at a moment where we can really try to define a new future. Our spaces give us an opportunity to articulate where we see ourselves going and help define a new future for our students, and for our research and local communities, as well. Students have told us for years that a café in Davis Library would give them a better study environment. I’m excited that we’re

partnering with Carolina Dining to make that a reality this year. I’m interested in thinking about other ways we can activate our spaces to be welcoming and adaptable to the way students and researchers work now.

**Much of this vision sounds very technology focused. At the same time, you are now the leader of a library with a really storied history. How do those elements relate to each other?**

I think that our storied history is, at its core, the history of the amazing collections we have built over the last century. Those collections are at the heart of our success, and I think that doesn’t change. We are facing challenges with how we sustain the excellence of collections in an increasingly expensive environment where more is being published than ever before. Even so, we will always invest in collections because they are the central nervous system of who we are. We will always be building collections that are meaningful to our campus and our state.

At the same time, I’ve always been interested in what I call the cosmology of academic research libraries. We’ve historically placed our collections at the center of our universe, and then built services, programs and staffing to revolve around them. I’m interested in an approach that puts people at the center of our cosmology—users, students, researchers, donors who give us collections that we care about, the people who produce knowledge here on our own campus.

Then it’s a different conversation, a different point of view, where the collections are in service to the user communities we work with. It’s not that the focus shifts away from collections and to technology. It’s that technology and data are one more way to activate and unlock collections for learning, knowledge creation and clinical care.

**What do you think a research library like Carolina’s means to students today, in 2023?**

I tend to think that it means different things to different students. They are such a diverse community, and their needs are also very diverse. For a lot of students

the library is a place—a safe place, a known place, a place they feel they can find other students and be able to do what they need to do. Sometimes that’s studying. Sometimes it’s watching a film or attending a Zoom class. Sometimes it’s not any of those things.

I think the library as a resource is also very important for learners at every level. Some students are coming to campus who have not necessarily engaged with libraries in ways that leave them prepared for the academic research wealth they have here on this campus. We invest in programs that welcome students into our spaces apart from assignments or classes, so that there’s a greater sense of ease with approaching us when they do need help. That’s something we’ll definitely continue.

I should add that the University Libraries is also an employer, with almost 150 student workers right now. They help us get our work done, and we’re also giving students important work experience that they can carry forward as they build their careers.

**To wrap up, is there something you wish everybody knew about the University Libraries?**

I’d say: You belong in these libraries and these libraries belong to you. We hold the resources here in public trust for our campus, and for the entire state of North Carolina.

More than anything, we are here to be your intellectual and creative partner in achieving your goals. That’s going to look different for different people but, really, that’s the key. Your goal may be that assignment from your professor, or a federally funded research project. Your goal may be to preserve a set of interviews that you conducted in your local community and you want to make sure they will be part of the historical record in a meaningful way.

And at the end of the day, our greatest asset is the staff who work here, the human beings who can help you navigate this very complex collection and information environment. I want people to know that just because you cannot find something on your own doesn’t mean that the conversation is over. We’re here for you, and that’s what I want people to know. ▲

**Connect with María**

Estorino tweets at [@mariaestorino](#).

To make an appointment with her, please contact the University Libraries administrative office at (919) 962-1301.

◆ ◆ ◆ **Create your legacy at the University Libraries** ◆ ◆ ◆



“ **Carolina’s libraries are the hub of our University, touching all divisions, all specialties and all studies. We want to make sure that our internationally known collections stay in the highlight and that the excellence our libraries have offered over the years will continue long into the future.** ”

—Linda Butler ‘68 and Clifford Butler ‘68

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 Or contact Jess Aylor, interim executive director of Library development, at [jessica.aylor@unc.edu](mailto:jessica.aylor@unc.edu) or 919-962-4207.



# WHEN THE HEART GUIDES THE EYE



Photographer Burk Uzzle reflects on images from the Burk Uzzle Collection at the Wilson Special Collections Library.

BY CLAIRE CUSICK

For more than six decades, North Carolina photojournalist Burk Uzzle has captured defining images of American life. In 2021, the Kohler Foundation donated Uzzle's photographic archive to the Wilson Special Collections Library.

The collection contains more than 100,000 items, spanning Uzzle's prolific career and including some of his work for Life magazine and with Magnum Photos.

"Burk is in his 80s now, still photographing, and still re-inventing himself. He has always re-invented himself," says Stephen Fletcher, photographic archivist at Wilson Library. "Researchers into the future will appreciate Burk's different avenues for capturing the world around him."

As an introduction to the vast archive, Fletcher selected a handful of images to represent Uzzle's work. Then, in a series of interviews, Uzzle reflected on each. He explains his approach as letting his heart guide his eye. "The heart must have integrity, good values," he says, "and of course, the photographs must show strong visual craft in composition, lighting and erudition."

Uzzle's mentor at Magnum, Henri Cartier-Bresson, encouraged him to study the Italian quattrocento painters of the 15th century. These painters were known to compose their works from left to right in the frame, and also forward and backward. Uzzle used this technique in his most famous photo—the 1969 image of a young couple embracing at Woodstock—and in the works Fletcher selected here.

## "CONGREGATION LADIES" (2021)

"Part of the reason I moved to Wilson was because of my interest in photographing Black Americans. Wilson is a beautiful town, very rich for photography. I attend Black churches regularly, and I noticed these ladies and their sense of style. I invited them to my studio to be photographed. They started bringing their clothes and hats a week or two in advance. Some of them had 12 to 15 hats each, and they told me, if you mess up one of these hats, you will die. I scrubbed the floor of my studio and started to arrange the hats on the floor. I decided on a left-to-right, red, white and blue arrangement, and then placed their outfits in parallel.

The ladies were quite taken with an assistant of mine at the time, Wylie Edwards, and flirted with him as he helped me adjust the hats. That caused the laughter you see in this photo."



**"DANBURY STATE FAIR"  
(1977)**

"I love to roam. I love to walk. I love to go slow and just wander around. On a road trip through New England, I wandered into Danbury (Connecticut) and its state fairgrounds. I spotted that odd building with its whimsical figures on top. When I realized it was the restrooms, I knew it had potential for a photo of people coming and going. I sat down on a grassy bank and watched, but the combination I wanted wasn't happening. I finally got tired. I went to sleep on the bank. And when I woke up, the people were there. It was an incredibly magic moment where they were just right. I took a picture, just that one picture, and they were in the right position graphically and striding like human beings. It was just a perfect, perfect moment."

“ I love to roam. I love to walk.  
I love to go slow and just wander around.”







**"MOTIVATION PLATOON"  
(1967)**

"U.S. Marines are the meanest of the mean, the strongest of the strong, they think. When Marines are recruited, their drill sergeants run them through all sorts of drills on Parris Island, South Carolina. Really tough stuff. And if they don't seem to be performing, the drill sergeants send them to the 'motivation platoon,' and that is when serious hard things happen. They put them in the mud, they make them crawl. So we decided to do a story on motivation platoon — what it's like to be subjected to all of that. If they survive the motivation platoon with honor, they are good Marines."



“ *I have an engaging personality, and I encourage people to engage their personality.* ”

**“IMPERIAL CHARITY BALL” (1962)**

"This photograph is from a 1962 photo essay I did for Life magazine on the subject of charity. The nice thing about working for Life was the entrée. You tell someone you want to do a photograph for Life magazine in their house, and they'll practically lay down and die for you.

I have an engaging personality, and I encourage people to engage their personality. This is a moment when there is an exultation of self that this woman is exhibiting, which is a beautiful thing to see. She's clearly an elegant, well-to-do lady, but not without the capacity for the very powerful feelings and examination of who she is."







### "MIME ARTISTS" (2005)

"I can't remember where I met these men, but it would have had to have been in one of the churches here in Wilson. I love photographing in my studio, and the interesting, organic feeling of that wall. I've photographed many people against that wall. Here, there is the contrast of the black shirts and white ties. There is one guy, second from the right, who does not have a tie. He's the guy who I identify with."







“

*Who would have thought  
that a house mover could  
make poetry like that?*

*But he did.*

**“ACID PARK” (2019)**

"When I moved to Wilson, several people kept saying, you have to go meet Vollis Simpson and see the whirligigs. They were insistent about it. When I did go out to see him, Vollis and I hit it off. We were like twins. We had such a good feeling between us. The independent nature of his artistry and innovations ... who would have thought that a house mover could make poetry like that? But he did. Many afternoons I would sit by his side while he worked, and we would talk. We had wonderful fun, and really got to know each other.

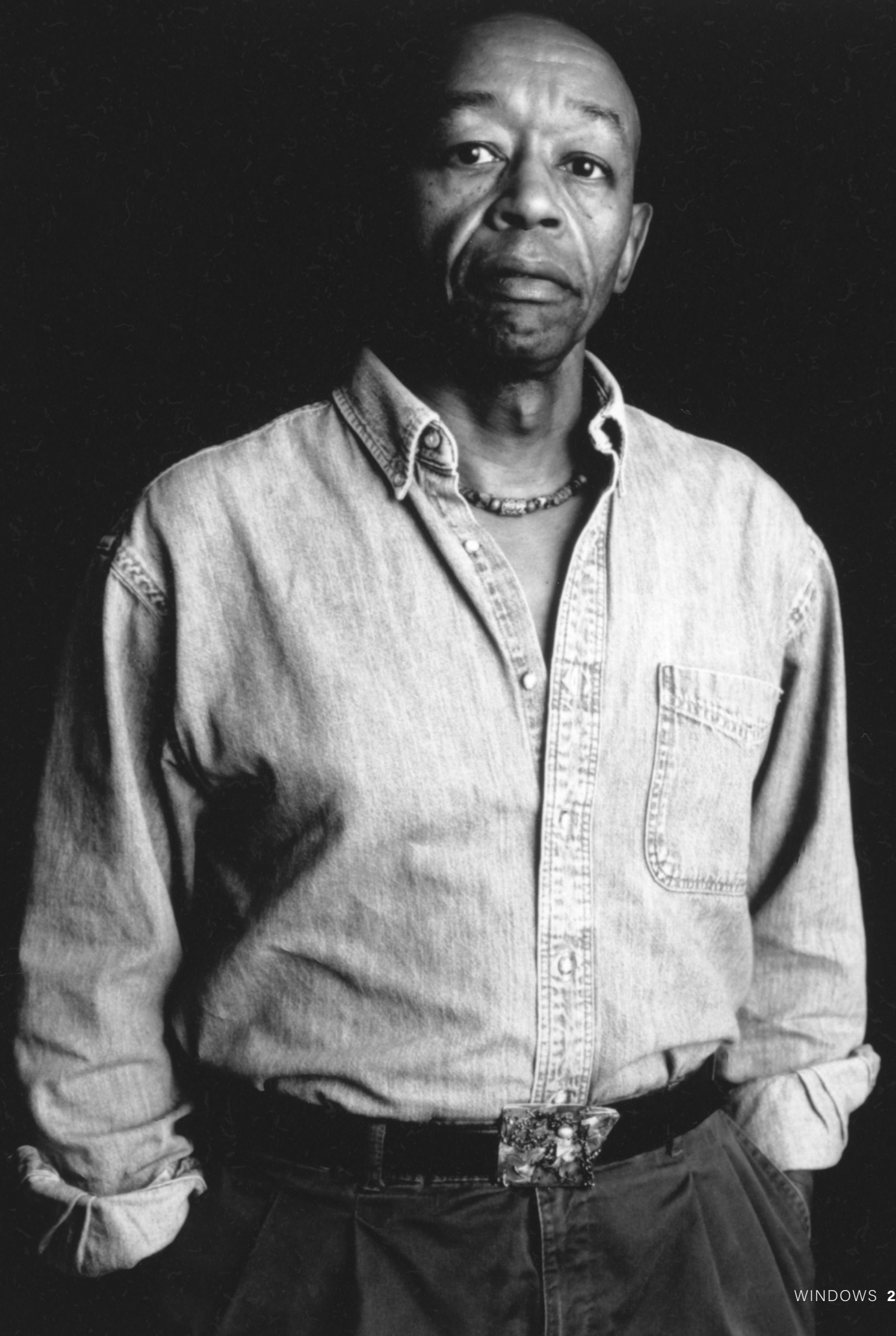
One morning, I woke up to incredibly dense fog. It was still dark. I packed up all my stuff. In those days, I was still using an 8" by 10" camera — very big. But I knew exactly which lens I wanted to use: the wide angle. I drove my van to the whirligig park, hauled that big camera up on its roof, and set up the composition in a really big hurry. Then there was just enough light to take a photo and capture the fog. This was just sheer determination. That's how photographers get great pictures." ▲



*“Saying something  
about the times in  
which I was living”*

The massive archive of photographer Roland L. Freeman comes to Wilson Library. It will offer unique perspectives of Black life in the Southern U.S.

BY JUDY PANITCH





Since beginning his career with a borrowed camera in 1963, Roland L. Freeman has been one of the nation's most prolific photographers of Black life in the 20th century.

Freeman's massive archive now has a new home at the Wilson Special Collections Library, as part of the Southern Folklife Collection.

"The Freeman collection adds depth, dimension and a vivid visual element to our collections, giving us new ways to explore and celebrate the history, culture and folklife of Black communities in the United States," says María R. Estorino, vice provost for University libraries and University librarian.

Researchers will be able to delve into a massive compilation of assignment and project work by Freeman. The visual treasure trove consists of nearly 24,000 slides, 10,000 photographic prints, 400,000 negatives and 9,000 contact sheets, as well as an archive of Freeman's papers.

"Roland's deep archive of work as a photojournalist and documentarian of Black life and culture provides unique opportunities for anyone studying history, politics, social change and cultural expression," says Steve Weiss, curator of the Southern

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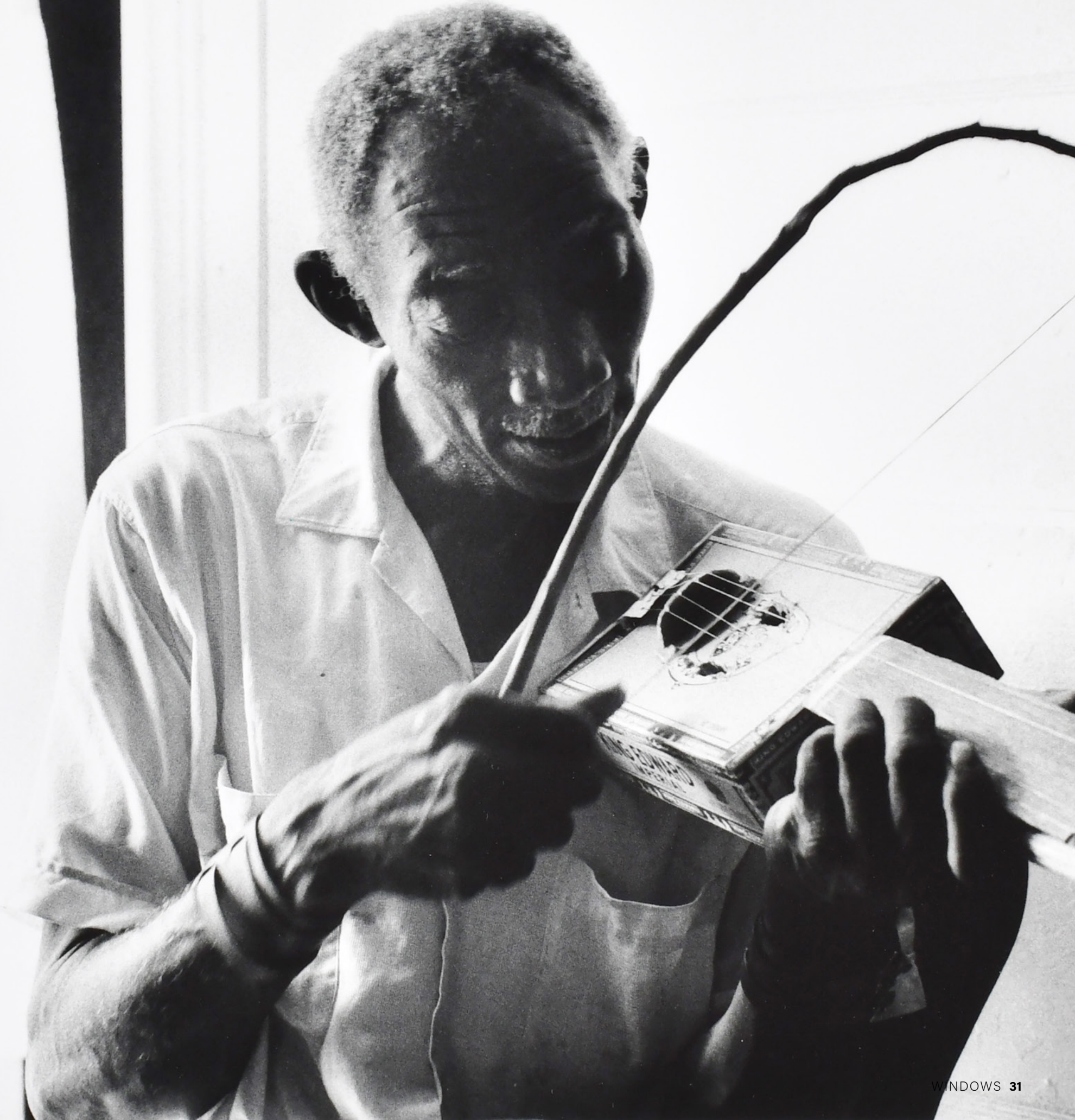
Folklife Collection. "It beautifully complements the SFC's expansive holdings in Southern music, art and culture, and it opens a new era of discovery for students of African American folklife."

The archive is a gift of the Kohler Foundation, which previously placed the collection of photographer Burk Uzzle, one of Freeman's mentors, at Carolina (see p.16). The Foundation also provided a \$20,000 grant that Weiss will use for preservation and digitization work on the collection.

"We knew the Southern Folklife Collection would be an outstanding long-term steward of Roland Freeman's photography collection," says Liesl Testwuide of the Kohler Foundation. "Roland Freeman is a visual anthropologist, and now generations will have the chance to better understand the times and communities he documented."

**Page 29:** "Roland L. Freeman self-portrait," 2007.  
(Courtesy Roland L. Freeman)

**Page 30-31:** "Cigar Box Fiddler Scott Dunbar,"  
Mississippi, 1975.











## Unparalleled in the history of American photography

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1936, Freeman has said he was inspired to become a photographer after participating in the 1963 March on Washington. His career led him to photograph landmark events, including the unrest following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Poor People's Campaign "Mule Train" March on Washington, and Nelson Mandela's first visit to the United States.

"I was inspired by the March on Washington, and that's why I started taking pictures. I wanted to say something about the times in which I was living, and that's what I've been doing ever since," Freeman told the National Endowment for the Arts in 2007.

Freeman devoted much of his career to documenting Black communities across the South, with a particular emphasis on art, cultural events and folk culture in all its manifestations. He also co-directed the Mississippi Folklife Project for the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in 1970 and was later a research associate there.

Page 32-33: "Florence Barnes," Wilkinson County, Mississippi, October 1992.

Left: "Sunday Baseball Game," near Buffalo, Mississippi, 1976.





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***The brilliance of Roland is that, as a photographer, he is absolutely committed to working collaboratively with those whose photographs he's taking.***

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“Roland provides a portrait of Black style and Black aesthetics that is unparalleled in the history of American photography. He understood the possibility of capturing deep narratives of tradition, especially in the Black South and the journey of those traditions in the Great Migration, that no one else has done,” observes Glenn Hinson, associate professor in UNC-Chapel Hill’s department of anthropology and a longtime collaborator with Freeman.

The Roland L. Freeman Collection displays the full range of his work and craft. It includes images of well-known figures, including jazz musician Miles Davis, author Alice Walker, comedian Richard Pryor and historian John Hope Franklin, among others—as well as scenes of everyday life in cities and towns and the work of craftspeople, artisans and performers.

It also contains photographs from Freeman’s many books and exhibitions, including “A Communion of the Spirits: African-American Quilters, Preservers, and Their Stories”; “Arabbers of Baltimore,” celebrating the city’s traditional Black

street vendors; “Southern Roads/City Pavements: Photographs of Black Americans”; and projects documenting folklife in Mississippi, North Carolina and Philadelphia.

Freeman himself was an avid collector of African American quilts and Weiss considers his photographs a landmark in the study of African American quilters.

“Freeman’s work method is part of what distinguishes him from other documentary photographers,” says Hinson. “The brilliance of Roland is that, as a photographer, he is absolutely committed to working collaboratively with those whose photographs he’s taking. He would get to know the person and then work to capture representations that are both deep and deeply honest. That truly set Roland apart as a documentary photographer.”

Weiss says that he and his colleagues in the Southern Folklife Collection find it “humbling and a deep honor” to preserve the stories that Freeman documented through his work. “We are proud and excited to help share his journey.” ▲

**Left:** “Reynoldstown Quilters in Atlanta,” Fulton County, Georgia, November 1992. **Left to right:** Pearl Walker, Annie S. Heard, Annie L. Parks, Mamie L. Hughley, Stephanie S. Hughley.



# Finding a home in libraries

Mary Boone Bernsen ('66, MSLS '73) traveled the world as a librarian. Now she is giving back to the library that launched her career.

BY MICHELE LYNN

There is no place like home. And for Mary Boone Bernsen ('66, MSLS '73), there is no home like libraries. Her work as a librarian—which has taken Bernsen around the world—began in her hometown of Chapel Hill.

As a teenager, Bernsen lived across the street from the director of the Chapel Hill Public Library and around the corner from a librarian at Wilson Library, which was then Carolina's main library.

Those connections led to her first jobs the summer after her Chapel Hill High School graduation. She spent her mornings as an assistant in the public library and her afternoons in Wilson Library as a student worker in the reference division. "I have a very clear memory of being a 17-year-old girl, working in the public library, looking down the hallway into the librarian's office, thinking I'd like to have a job like that someday," says Bernsen. "Sixteen years later, I had that job."

While a Carolina undergraduate, Bernsen spent much of her time at Wilson Library, which she describes as her "home base" on campus. "That's where I loved to work, study and meet my friends," she says. "It just seemed natural for me to go to the library." As a student library worker, she learned how to use the library and to do complex research. Bernsen gained so much knowledge that by the time she began graduate studies at UNC's School of Information and Library Science, she says laughingly that she could have taught some of the reference classes.

That knowledge was useful in a career in which she traveled the globe. After receiving her MSLS, Bernsen spent four years working for the U.S. Army Library program in Germany, including a year as deputy director of the European-wide program. She returned home to direct the Chapel Hill Public Library for seven years, then spent 20 years in the Foreign Service as a library and information resource officer with the U.S. Information Agency and the Department of State.

Bernsen's work included overseeing the 175 libraries and information centers in embassies and consulates around the world, as well as the State Department Library, which is the oldest federal government library. Thomas Jefferson, as the nation's first Secretary of State, established it in 1789.



Photo by Ken Huh, Huh Photo

Bernsen says that one of her career highlights was briefing then-Secretary of State Colin Powell on the library program. When Bernsen was promoted into the Senior Foreign Service, she became one of the highest-ranking librarians in the executive branch of the federal government.

Serving as the state librarian of North Carolina was the final feather in her career cap. During her tenure, she partnered with the University Libraries to establish the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center. (Read more about the center on p. 9).

Proud of this legacy, Bernsen has created a library endowment to support UNC-Chapel Hill graduate assistants who work at the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center. She says her motivation stems from her desire to give back and look forward. "I fully know and understand how valuable my work at the library was to me," she says. "I'm naturally a librarian." She continues to give back to the University Libraries by serving on the board of directors of the Friends of the Library at Carolina because, she says, "It's my home on campus."

Bernsen cherishes her student worker days as well as the University Libraries itself. "Not everyone is going to make a career out of librarianship by being a student assistant, but everyone can benefit from working in the library," she says. "I recognize the value that the University Libraries has in the lives of not just students, but also faculty and everyone in the academic community." ▲

## END NOTE

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**"I didn't set out to work in IT, but I really like the combination of analytical thinking and people-centered collaboration that IT affords. I love that I get to strategize about complex projects with smart people who bring a variety of skills and experience to the table. I also can't think of a better place to work than a library."**

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**Emily Brassell** is associate head of software development

Read an interview with Brassell:  
[go.unc.edu/Brassell](https://go.unc.edu/Brassell)



Photo by Aleah Howell, University Libraries



## CLUE RETURNS

After a pandemic hiatus, the beloved tradition of live-action Clue returned to Wilson Library in March. Student teams competed to solve a supernatural mystery, all while building research skills and learning about Carolina's special collections. *Photo by Aleah Howell/University Libraries.*

 Watch a video about Clue at Wilson Library: [go.unc.edu/Clue23](https://go.unc.edu/Clue23)

