

Curriculum Vitae

JAMES M. AULT, JR.

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER - AUTHOR - ETHNOGRAPHER

James Ault Productions
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EDUCATION

Harvard College, B.A. with Honors, 1970

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Field work in East Africa and Zambia, 1969 and 1974-5

Brandeis University, Dept. of Sociology, Ph.D. 1981. Advisor: Egon Bittner; Additional principal teacher: Barrington Moore, Jr. (For recommendations, see below.)

DOCUMENTARY FILM AND VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

ESPERANZA: HOPE FOR OUR CITIES (88:00) An intimate documentary about the inspiring, multi-faceted work of Esperanza serving the largely poor communities of North Philadelphia, especially its exemplary educational work with inner-city youth and children. Producer/director/camera/editor. 2022 For the film and shorter Educational Extras from the project, visit the film's [webpage here](#).

MACHANIC: MANYERUKE: THE LIFE OF ZIMBABWE'S GOSPEL MUSIC LEGEND (85:00) An intimate portrait of Zimbabwe's gospel music legend—a cross-generational story of family, culture and religion carrying profound lessons about basic overlaps in religion and culture involved in Christianity's spread across cultures. Producer/director/camera/editor. 2020

<https://vimeopro.com/jamesault/machanic-manyeruke-the-life-of-zimbabwes-gospel-music-legend-2>

KWAME BEDIAKO: HIS LIFE AND LEGACY (58:00). A biography of the late Rev. Dr. Kwame Bediako, a great thinker of the church in Africa, set in the context of the ongoing work of his Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture in Akropong, Akuapem, Ghana. Producer/director/camera/editor. 2018 <https://vimeopro.com/jamesault/kwame-bediako-his-life-and-legacy-1>

THE ASHEVILLE POVERTY INITIATIVE (29:21) A documentary about some exemplary faith-based work with homeless and poor folks in Asheville, North Carolina. Producer/director/camera/editor. <http://vimeo.com/260511978>

AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY RISING—Stories from Ghana (77:00) and *Stories from Zimbabwe* (73:30, Digibeta & DVCAM). A two-part series on Christianity's explosive growth in Africa and the distinct forms it is taking as it becomes increasingly *African*, and its meaning for the world. Extensive shooting in the range of churches found in Ghana and Zimbabwe and following characters on "mission" to North America. Funded by Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation and sponsored by Hartford Seminary. Released 2013 Producer/director, and additional camera. For reviews and samples: <http://jamesault.com/documentaries/africa-project/>

MARTHINUS DANEEL: His Life and Work (Part One) (16:03) A biographical sketch of the foremost scholar of independent churches in Zimbabwe for Boston University's School of Theology website Old and New in Shona Religion. Producer/director/camera/editor. <http://sites.bu.edu/shonareligion/>

NOCHE DE ALTARES--Night of Altars (38:55) The story of Santa Ana, CA's, popular Dia de Los Muertos annual festival. Producer/director/camera. <https://vimeo.com/141662642>

BUILDING THE NEW COMMUNITY: Stories of Multicultural & Latino Ministry in the Episcopal Church (55:44, DVCAM). An exploration of the promise and challenges of Latino and multicultural ministries in building the "new community" of the Episcopal Church, a movement recently launched by the ethnic ministry leaders of that denomination. Shot in southern California, Las Vegas and New York City. Completed, in part, with funding from the Louisville Institute. 2012. Producer/director/camera. (Cf. www.vimeo.com/44067510.)

BORN AGAIN: Life in a Fundamentalist Baptist Church (87:00,16mm). A feature-length film broadcast as a prime-time special on PBS, 1987. Premiers: Anthropolos '87: The Barbara Myerhoff Film Festival, Los Angeles (1987) and the Margaret Mead Film Festival, New York City (1987). Broadcasts in Great Britain, Australia, The Netherlands, and Sweden. *Blue Ribbon* American Film Festival; *Cine Golden Eagle*. Co-Producer/Director with Michael Camerini, original research and conception. Funded by the N.E.H. and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. (Cf. www.vimeo.com/channels/206130.)

LATINO/HISPANIC MINISTRY: Transforming the Church in Nevada (27:25). A documentary report on building Latino congregations in Anglo churches for the office of Latino/Hispanic ministries of the Episcopal Church, USA. 2012 (Cf. www.vimeo.com/33761027.)

AFRICA HALL VIDEO EXHIBITS. An interactive video exhibit created for the Springfield Museum's Africa Hall, consisting of five vignettes from Ghana and Zimbabwe and an Introduction. Completed in 2008 and currently on exhibit. (Cf. www.vimeo.com/album/1840032.)

KIM HOWES: SON OF FLORENCE. Part One of *NORTHAMPTON'S LIVING HISTORY COMMUNITY HERITAGE PROJECT*, 2002- A documentary project designed to build community life by crossing divisions and differences in one local community and creating films to portray the diversity at its heart. Funded by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities. Producer/director/camera and sound. (See www.vimeo.com/13959185.)

PARISH PORTRAITS, 1999. Portraits of four local Episcopal churches for the Zacchaeus Project and Trinity Institute's national teleconference "Roots and Wings," September 27-9, 1999. (Video, 40:00). Footage from an Anglo/Latino congregation later used, with follow-up filming, for a film on multicultural and Latino ministries. Funded by the Episcopal Church Foundation. Producer/director and DV camera. (See www.vimeo.com/channels/177621.)

LEADING OUT: A Profile of University Leadership, 1995. An ethnographic portrait (video, 44:30) of the president of Emory University and his relation to trustees and other constituents. For the Lilly Endowment's programs in Leadership Education. Producer/director. (See www.vimeo.com/15779361.)

IRWIN MILLER: Portrait of a Trustee, 1990. A video profile (28:50) of an exemplary public servant and treatment of issues surrounding trusteeship. Funded by the Lilly Endowment. *Honorable Mention*, American Film and Video Festival. Producer/director.

EARTHEN VESSELS: Challenges for the Good Theological School, 1994. A documentary (video, 33:30) for the Association of Theological Schools (led by Jim Waits at the time) to provoke reflections on the future of theological education in the context of change. A conversation among denominationally and ethnically diverse leaders. Producer/director.

EXPLORING WORSHIP STYLES, 1994. Video portraits of worship in contrasting congregations (small town, suburban, African-American) for research exploring different styles of worship and their relation to spiritual formation. For Boston University's School of Theology. Producer/director and (with Linda Clark) research and conception. Producer/director. Published by the Alban Institute, 2001.

STREETLIFE: Homeless in Louisville, Kentucky (9:51) Portraits of several homeless men and those working with them at a day shelter run by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky. Produced as a spin off from a documentary project on the future of life in the Catholic Church. <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/20691252>

RELIGIOUS LIFE SAMPLER, 1993. A sketch (video, 17:31) of The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (Kentucky) for a documentary on the future of religious life in the Catholic Church. For the Center for Applied Social Research, DePaul University. Producer/director. (See www.vimeo.com/20691912.)

KEEP GOIN' JUICE, 1992. An ethnographic portrait (video, 56:40) of youthwork and a program to renew youth-serving organizations. An experiment in one-man Hi-8 ethnographic documentary production. For the Lilly Endowment's evaluation work. Producer/director, camera, sound.

PUBLICATIONS

"*African Christianity Rising: Lessons from a Documentary Film Project*," in Andrew Eugene Barnes and Toyin Falola, eds, *The Palgrave Handbook of the History of Christianity in Africa from Apostolic Times to the Present* (Palgrave, Macmillan, 2024)

"Sociology for People of Faith . . . and Anyone," for a volume on the liberal arts for Christians edited by Dr. Edward Meadors, *Where Wisdom May Be Found* (Wipf and Stock, 2019)

SPIRIT AND FLESH: Life in a Fundamentalist Baptist Church. (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) Recounting the author's ethnographic research and filmmaking in a fundamentalist Baptist church, and drawing lessons from that experience to better understand conflicts over family-value issues in American life. "The best single-volume explanation of why American fundamentalist Christianity thrives among certain people, what needs it fulfills and why it will not die out." *The Washington Post Book World*. "One of the 5 best nonfiction books of 2005." *The Christian Science Monitor*. Honor Book, Massachusetts Center for the Book, 2005.

"What Liberal Delusions About Conservatism Teach," *Society*, Jan/Feb 2012, on understanding social conservatism.

"Tracking Christianity's Transformation: An Interview with James Ault," in *The Public Eye*, by Theo Anderson, Spring 2013. (See www.politicalresearch.org/tracking-christianitys-transformation-an-interview-with-james-ault/)

Lift Thine Eyes: The Landscape, the Buildings, the Heritage of Northfield Mount Hermon School (NMH: Mt. Hermon, MA) 2010 Authored three chapters covering this school's history from World War I to the present, in the context of social change spanning this entire period.

"Secular Humanism," in R. Wuthnow, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc.) 1998.

"Family and Fundamentalism: The Shawmut Valley Baptist Church." *In Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, ed. By Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, Raphael Samuel (NY: Routledge) 1987

"Making 'Modern' Marriage 'Traditional': State Power and the Regulation of Marriage in Colonial Zambia." *Theory and Society*, 12 (1983). "Review Essay: Robert Bates, *Rural Responses to Industrialization* (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1976" *African Social Research* 32, 1981.

ACADEMIC TEACHING

Teaching Fellow, Harvard University, 1971-72.

Instructor/Assistant Professor, Dept. of Sociology & Anthropology, Smith College, 1976-81.

Visiting Lecturer, Sociology & Ethnographic Film, University of California, San Diego, 1987.

Spoelhof Chair for Visiting Scholar (taught documentary filmmaking), Calvin College, 2003

"Digital video and world Christianity," a week-long seminar taught several times at the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, CT, with residents from around the world.

RESEARCH POSITIONS

Primary journalist & artist filmmaker in a team research project based at the University of California-Irvine on *Global Religious Festivals in Secular Cityscapes: Immigration, Politics, and Religious Performance in California*. Principal investigator: Prof. Jennifer Hughes. 2013-14

Research affiliate, Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia, 1974-75.

Research fellow, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1975-76.

Fellow, American Council of Learned Societies, 1982.

Post-doctoral fellow, Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women, 1982-83.

Visiting scholar, Trinity Institute, New York, 1987.

Evaluation research, The Lilly Endowment, 1988-92.

SCREENINGS/PRESENTATIONS

Screening/discussions of *Machanic Manyeruke: the Life of Zimbabwe's Gospel Music Legend* at the World Christianity Conference hosted by Princeton Theological Seminary and at the American Society of Missiologists, 2021.

Screening/discussions of *Kwame Bediako: His Life and Legacy* at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN and for the Ghana Missions Network Conference at Stony Point, NY. 2018 and for the Yale-Edinburgh Conference of Scholars of World Christianity and Mission.

Presentations of *African Christianity Rising* include those at annual meetings of the SSSR, the African Studies Association, the American Academy of Religion, at Princeton, Wesleyan, inter alia., and in the United Kingdom at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Leeds University, the University of Edinburgh, Oxford, and Liverpool Hope University.

Parish Portraits screened as part of the national teleconference, "Roots and Wings:⁶ Episcopal Identity and Vocation in the New Millenium," Trinity Institute, NYC, September, 1999.

Screening/discussions of *Leading Out*, Council of Independent Colleges' Presidents Institute, the Assoc. of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities, the Assoc. for College and University Religious Affairs, Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, Columbia University's Teacher College, the Kellogg Foundation's Leadership Studies Project, *inter alia*, 1995-6.

Screening/discussion of select works for conference on "Media Representations of Religion," Princeton University, 1994.

Screening/discussion of *Keep Goin' Juice*, 2nd Annual Conference on Visual Sociology and Anthropology, Univ. of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, June 1992; American Anthropological Association, Annual Meeting, December 1992.

"The Social Bases of Fundamentalist Conservatism," Center for European Studies, Harvard University, 1984; the Divinity School, University of Chicago, 1989.

Presentations and discussions of *Born Again*, 1988-9: American Academy of Religion, Museum of Modern Art, American Sociological Assoc., American Anthropological Assoc., Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, American Psychiatric Assoc., Harvard Divinity School, *inter alia*.

REFERENCES

Dr. Egon Bittner

Harry Coplan Professor in the Social Sciences (Deceased) Department of Sociology
Brandeis University
Waltham, MA 02254

Egon Bittner's assessment: "*among the two or three most gifted and serious Ph.D. students I had the good fortune to guide.*"

(N.B.: Dr.Bittner's letter of recommendation available through the department office or sent electronically)

Dr. Barrington Moore, Jr. (deceased)
Russian Research Center
Harvard University
1737 Cambridge Street

Cambridge, MA 02138

Barrington Moore's assessment: "*...just about the best student I have had in the last decade of my teaching at Harvard.*"

(N.B.: Dr. Moore's letter available through from Brandeis Dept. of Sociology, above.)

Dr. Robert Wood Lynn
Retired, Senior VP, Religion
The Lilly Endowment, Inc.
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Portland, ME 04102
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Dr. Andrew Walls (deceased)
Founding Editor, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, and founding Director, Center for the

Study of Christianity in the Non-Western
World, University of Edinburgh
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