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The Center for Black Music Research was established in 1983 to discover, disseminate, preserve, and promote aspects of black music in all its forms—from blues, jazz, gospel, and ragtime to opera and concert works.

The publications of the Center for Black Music Research include:

Black Music Research Journal
CBMR Monographs
Black Music Research Bulletin
CBMR Digest

"Freedom in the Air": An Overview of the Songs of the Civil Rights Movement

by Guy and Candie Carawan, New Market, Tennessee

The Civil Rights Movement has often been described as the greatest singing movement this country has experienced. The freedom songs came from the historical experience and the creativity of southern black communities. They are of many kinds and range through many moods. The important ones are the old, slow-paced spirituals and hymns that sing of hope and determination and the rhythmic jubilee spirituals and bright gospel songs that protest boldly and celebrate eventual victory. Many of these songs have new or revised words to old familiar tunes.

Having witnessed the civil rights era, most of us take for granted the notion of adapting well-known songs to situations of protest, and we do not stop to question the emergence of a powerful singing movement. But from our personal experience in the South in the early 1960s, we know that some very specific work went into stimulating and nurturing the growth of the freedom repertoire. Rev. C. T. Vivian, who pastored a church in Nashville in the early 1960s and is currently the director of the Center for Democratic Renewal, recently spoke to us about the early attempts at group singing in the movement:

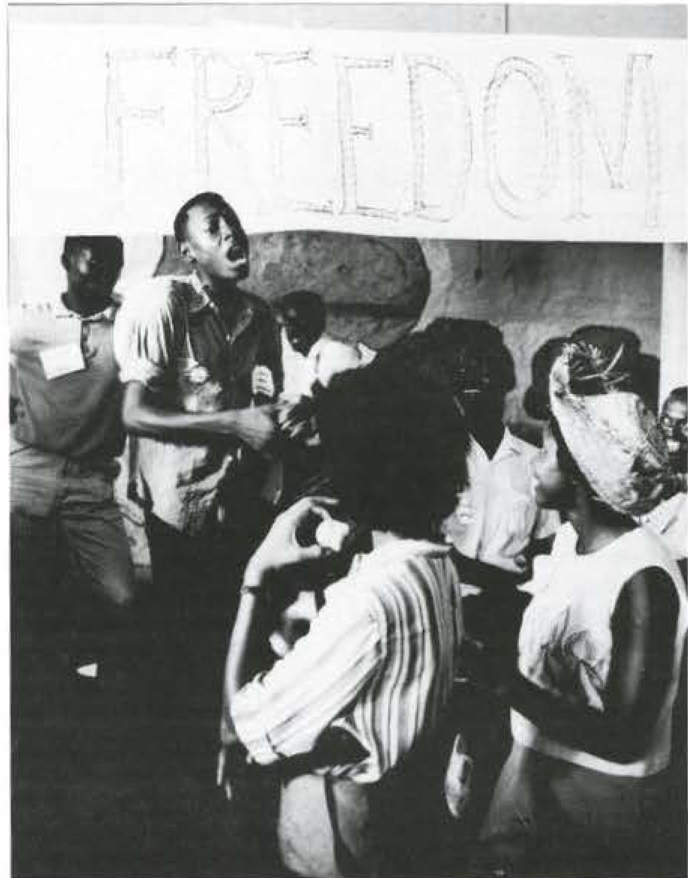
> At the beginning of the movement, we really didn't have any music that we could call "movement music." We had church music, but remember that it was largely a young movement; it was a movement of change. It needed something that fit it. We also didn't realize how important a dynamic music would be to the movement. That was the beginning of a movement, and we didn't know what was necessary and what wasn't. We weren't thinking about it in terms of "what is going to inspire us?"
>
> When we did start seeking for songs to use at mass meetings, the only thing we had among us that had any sense of life to it was church music. And some of the church music didn't fit at all. For instance, I was giving a movement speech once and the choir followed with "I'll Fly Away." Now that didn't fit at all. In fact, it was a direct contradiction with what I was saying. How much different it could have been if they had followed with a movement song that was also religious.
>
> I don't think we had ever thought of spirituals as movement material. When the movement came up, we couldn't apply them. The concept has to be there. It wasn't just to have the music, but to take the music out of your past and apply it to the new situation, to change it so it really fit.

So how did this begin to happen? One place it happened was at the Highlander Folk School in Montea-

gle, Tennessee. In the early days, Highlander was one of the gathering places of the movement. Weekend after weekend in the early 1960s, community leaders and activists from across the South came to the school to share information, to strategize and to plan, and to bolster each others' spirits as they returned home to confront segregation.

As the campaigns moved into the deepest parts of the South, the singing reflected the richness of the traditions alive in the southernmost communities.

At Highlander a basic lesson had been learned during the Labor Movement—that group singing could be a strong unifying force in struggle and that commonly known songs were most effective, particularly southern gospel and religious songs with repetitive stanzas adapted with new words to fit the situation. For many years Zilphia Horton, the cultural coordinator at Highlander, had worked with grassroots community people coming to Highlander. She drew from them their favorite songs and helped to shape them slightly differently to fit situations such as union campaigns. She also taught songs that she knew from different parts of the South, from other parts of the country, and from abroad. In the 1940s and 1950s she and others carried songs from Highlander to picket lines across the South and brought back new songs from the various union struggles. Others helped with this process. Zilphia, her husband Myles, and Lee Hays (who spent a period working with her) knew, for example, of John Handcox in the Southern Tenant Farmers Union who contributed effective union songs based on familiar melodies. His "Roll the Union On," "There's Mean Things Happening in This Land," and "Raggedy, Raggedy Are We" all became widely known in the South and are still sung today. Pete Seeger had been in contact with Zilphia and with Highlander. His repertoire as he sang with progressive movements in the North included many songs from the South. He came to Highlander to share his music and, in 1945, carried away from the school a labor version of "We Shall Overcome" which had been developed by striking Food and Tobacco Union workers in Charleston, South Carolina.



Freedom singing in the 1960s. Photo by Ken Thompson

I [Guy] had been greatly influenced by Pete, struck by his exciting way of playing the banjo and his collection of songs from grassroots Americans. In 1959, on his suggestion, we came to Highlander and tried to carry on Zilphia's way of working with people. (Zilphia had died in 1956.) We met with groups gathered there and learned their songs, helping to adapt them to the movement activity in their communities. We were also invited to visit people in their homes and churches and asked to lead singing in mass meetings and at civil rights conferences.

It did not take long for the practice of adapting songs to catch on and to hit its stride. As Rev. C. T. Vivian told me,

> The first time I remember any change in our songs was when Guy [Carawan] came down from Highlander. Here he was with this guitar and that tall frame, leaning forward and patting that foot. I remember James Bevel and I looked across at each other and smiled. Guy had taken the song "Follow the Drinking Gourd," and I didn't know the song, but he gave some background on it and boom, that began to make sense. And little by little, spiritual after spiritual began to appear—with new sets of words, new changes. "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize, Hold On" or "I'm Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table." Once we had seen it done, we could begin to do it.

As the movement spread, so did the songs. The Nashville campaign was one of the first city-wide efforts against segregation, and a variety of songs emerged from it to suit the sit-ins. There in the American Baptist Theological Seminary was a talented quartet of ministerial students who introduced humorous and satirical rhythm & blues and rock & roll songs to the movement's growing repertoire of spirituals and gospel songs. Bernard Lafayette and James Bevel (later to become leaders in SNCC and SCLC) in particular would carry the Nashville songs to many new situations in the coming years.

In the spring of 1960 at a conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, students from across the South met and organized the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). It was a chance for students from dozens of southern cities to compare experiences, to plan a coordinated campaign for the coming months, and in the midst of discussing and strategizing, to sing together. When they went home, they took with them many newly adapted freedom songs. At the same time, SCLC (the older, adult organization) was pulling its membership together at South-wide conferences. Since many movement preachers could claim song-leading as one of their skills, the practice of adapting songs was making its way into their churches—particularly at the mass meetings that were now a regular part of community life.

In 1961 the freedom rides swept through the South. When more than 350 freedom riders from many parts of the nation were arrested and decided to stay in jail in Mississippi for the summer, the freedom song repertoire got a big boost. This was probably one of the most important events in the development of movement singing. Most of the freedom riders spent forty days in jail and had lots of time to learn and sing together all the best songs that had come from many areas. All the Nashville songs were taken over and the repertoire was enriched by songs from CORE workers. (CORE, the Congress on Racial Equality, had started the freedom rides and had been joined by riders from other organizations when they were violently attacked and the rides were in danger of being canceled.)

Many songs were created or adapted in jail, and the freedom riders carried them back to their home communities. We think of Cordell Reagon, for example, who began singing freedom songs as a teenager in Nashville during the sit-ins, came to Mississippi as a freedom rider, and then moved on to Albany where he taught songs and helped form the SNCC freedom singers.

Of course, jail time was also spent strategizing and planning future campaigns. Parchman Penitentiary became a training ground for civil rights workers who would then go forward to new communities in southwest Georgia, in Mississippi, and in the Black Belt of Alabama. As the campaigns moved into the deepest parts of the South, the singing reflected the richness of the traditions alive in the southernmost communities.

As the movement and the music spread throughout the South, it simultaneously moved north, making an impact on the country as a whole. The SNCC freedom singers—Cordell Reagon, Bernice Johnson, Rutha Harris, and Chuck Neblett—began to travel outside the South, raising money and telling about the movement. In 1963 and 1964 the Newport Folk Festival, an important gathering place in the early 1960s for the folk music revival, included groups of freedom singers from Albany, Selma, Birmingham, and locations in Mississippi. Northern singers also traveled in the South in those years: Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Barbara Dane, Bob Dylan, and others brought news and songs of the movement to their southern audiences. And when I [Guy] traveled north in those days to give concerts or to sing at national conferences, I often took with me someone from the movement.

A series of music workshops, planned and organized in the South, also fed into this cross-fertilization. The first had been held at Highlander in the summer of 1960 and had brought together song-leaders from some of the very early civil rights campaigns—including Montgomery and Nashville—with northern protest singers and songwriters.

Called a "Sing for Freedom," the event was jointly sponsored by Highlander, SCLC, and SNCC and was organized by Bernice and Cordell Reagon, Dorothy Cotton, Andrew Young, and ourselves.

In 1964 a much richer exchange took place in Atlanta. Called a "Sing for Freedom," the event was jointly sponsored by Highlander, SCLC, and SNCC and was organized by Bernice and Cordell Reagon, Dorothy Cotton, Andrew Young, and ourselves. By this time there were powerful singing campaigns in Albany, Selma, Birmingham, several parts of Mississippi, and many smaller communities. Each campaign was invited to send song-leaders to the Atlanta event to teach and to learn freedom songs. A small group of northern singer-songwriters were invited, and those who came included Tom Paxton, Len Chandler, Phil Ochs, and actor Theo Bikel. Also invited to share life experiences and songs were some older traditional southern artists—Bessie Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers and Doc Reese, a Texas minister who had served time in the Texas prison system and was a masterful singer of prison work songs.

In 1965 two more workshops followed this first "Sing for Freedom"—one in Edwards, Mississippi, and one at Highlander. These gatherings, in addition to focusing on the current freedom culture, encouraged the reclaiming of a rich Afro-American past. Folklorists such as Alan Lomax, Willis James, and Ralph Rinzler met freedom fighters at these conferences, and intense discussions took place about the value of older cultural tra-

ditions to contemporary struggles. Several communities in the Sea Islands, in Mississippi, and in Louisiana began to sponsor local folk festivals.[1]

Recently, there is renewed interest in the Civil Rights Movement and in the powerful singing that became such an integral part of the struggle. As we honor that history and try to build on it in our continuing quest for justice and equality in this country, it is worthwhile to remember that neither the movement nor the music arrived full-blown in the South. Each evolved step by step creatively as ordinary people in communities recognized problems and came together to learn from one another and to pass along what they had learned until finally the music moved a nation.

1. Bernice Johnson Reagon, former Director of the Program in Black American Culture at the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution, wrote to us recently that being with Bessie Jones, the Sea Island Singers, and Doc Reese in those early gatherings changed her life. Indeed, she and others from the movement (we think particularly of Worth Long, Julius Lester, and Jerome Smith) have gone deeper and deeper into Afro-American culture since those days and have shared what they have learned with the nation through albums, publications, and, in Bernice's case, conferences and workshops at the Smithsonian Institution.

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The Lined Hymn as a Song of Freedom

by Bernice Johnson Reagon, Washington, D.C.

During February 1980, the Smithsonian Institution's Program in Black American Culture sponsored a national conference titled "Voices of the Civil Rights Movement" which gathered as participants veteran organizers of the 1960s movement. The testimonies of the participants related what they, as young students, community leaders, farmers, and business owners, had done as activists. They spoke of why they had risked their lives to be involved in this struggle against racism in America.

When Charles Sherrod walked to the front, he began to sing:

A charge . . .

Those assembled stirred, for Sherrod was beginning his testimony with this old hymn, and he was singing it in the style of the lined hymn. As he slowly moved through the first phrase, he called to me and to Rutha Mae Harris, both natives of Albany, Georgia, to join him, and we all raised our voices:

. . . to keep I have
A God to glorify

On this last line, Carlton Reese, a powerful freedom-song composer in the gospel style and a great gospel pianist and singer from Birmingham, Alabama, joined Sherrod at the front and slipped into leadership of the old hymn by lining the second section of the first verse:

Who gave his son my soul to save
And fitted for the sky.

And those of us who knew, and a few who still remembered, breathed the song into a vibrant life in the halls of the national museum of the country.

In April 1988, at a conference of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) held at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, Sherrod was on one of the panels. When his turn came to speak, he

again began the same hymn, penned in 1707 by Charles Wesley:

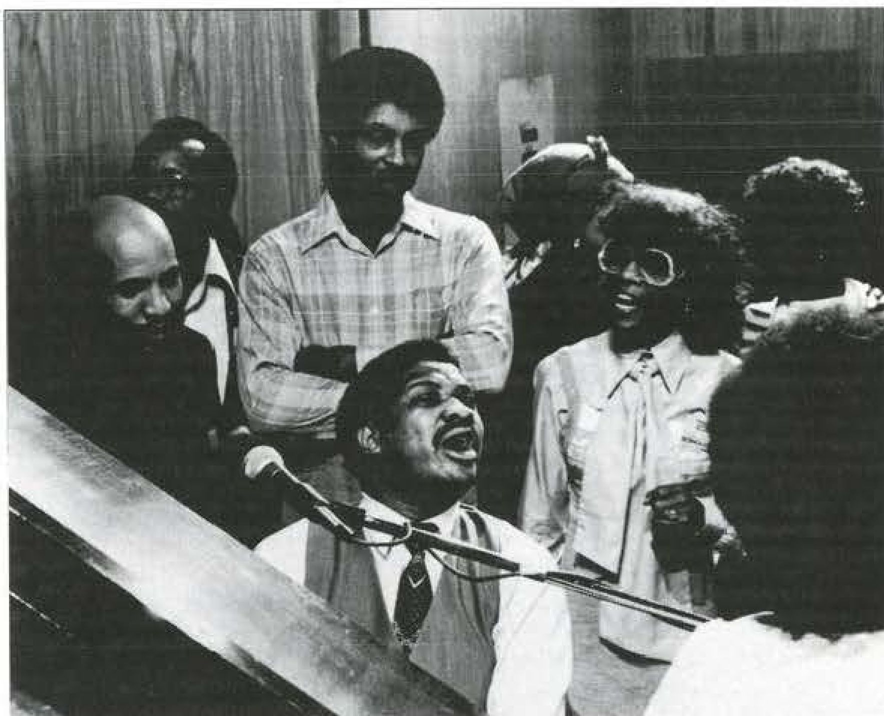
> A charge to keep I have
> A God to glorify
> Who gave his son my soul to save
> And fitted for the sky.

Again, he urged everyone who would to join the singing. During the discussion that followed the panel, Rev. Prathia Hall from Philadelphia discussed the text of the song, contending that it actually articulates the sense of mission that people who were organizers in the movement and people who rose to resistance in their home communities had about the fight they were waging. To illustrate her point, she lined the second stanza:

> To serve the present age
> My calling to fulfill
> O may it all my powers engage
> To do my Master's will.

Prathia Hall was a student working in southwest Georgia in 1963, when she received a bullet wound while organizing in Terrell County. Rev. Charles Sherrod was director of the Southwest Georgia Project, organized by SNCC to mount voter registration drives in what were called Black Belt counties because the number of African-Americans outnumbered whites by three to one. The political structure remained in the hands of the minority whites through a rein of terror, for it was dangerous for African-Americans who were born, raised, and working in that county and others in South Georgia to register and vote.

Sherrod was now a member of the Board of Commissioners of Albany, Georgia—the same Board that had refused to negotiate with the leaders of the Albany Movement that Sherrod had helped to start. A native of Petersburg, Virginia, and a young Baptist minister, Sherrod, by 1961 when he arrived in Albany, Georgia, to begin his work as a field organizer, was already a veteran of the sit-in movement and the freedom rides. When asked why, when relating his experience in the movement, he began with a hymn sung in an old eighteenth- and nineteenth-century style. Sherrod responded:



Voices of the Civil Rights Movement Conference, 1980. Left to right: James Bevel, Charles Sherrod, Chuck Neblett, Cleo Kennedy, Amanda Perdur, Carlton Reese at the piano. Photo by Candie Carawan

> I didn't know "A Charge to Keep I Have" the way we sing it in South Georgia. We sang the lined hymn in Virginia where I come from, but they didn't have that swooning feeling—you know what I mean.
>
> I grew to like it. You know how a dog will look at you with his head turned diagonally to the side? Well, that was me the first time I heard those hymns. I felt it, but I also was asking, "Is this me? OK, where is that enumerated in my computer?" It was strange, like the red clay, the moss, the beauty and the death; the hellish crackers, the racism, and the beauty. It was strange, but it was like South Georgia . . . beautiful.
>
> When I [went] before people at those conferences, I sang that song because of its meaning. It's saying to these people—most of them Christians—how close to me do you want to be in this dialogue? Are you ready to be open? Do you really want to dialogue? I put up a wall there. You know you never have enough time to speak. . . . I need to say, you don't know me! You don't know this movement we built, you don't know what it was and where it is still going! I put up a wall, not to be away from them, not to be bragging my voice, not to be lauding but quickly and deeply wanting them to know if they really want to dialogue with me, where they have to come to be open (Sherrod 1989).

While Rev. Hall spoke only of the text as a way of giving voice to the mission of the civil rights activists, Sherrod clearly utilized the blend of text and the sound created by the power of the song genre to establish an identity and territory for himself as he moved in circles outside his adopted home in South Georgia. Carlton Reese's moving to the front and moving into leadership of the raising of the hymn at the Smithsonian conference indicate how wide is the geographic region of some of the hymn tunes.

The ages of Hall, Sherrod, and Reese also give credence to the fact that these old hymns still have meaning for many in younger generations who have the full range of twentieth-

century songs from which to choose in their worship practices. It is true that the dominant sacred music of the twentieth-century African-American church is gospel. In fact, Carlton Reese is a premiere gospel musician, a trainer of gospel choirs, and still a practitioner *par excellence* of the older style of lining hymns. It seems probable that the Civil Rights Movement, with its elevation of song as the articulate voice of its masses, became a part of an oral transmission process that moved the older repertoire of songs further along in time than they would have gone had not the movement existed.

The singers actually share a communal moan that encircles the depth of struggle and pain and rises in peaks of celebration—joy—and, sometimes, shouting.

When people think of the freedom songs of the 1960s, they begin appropriately with "We Shall Overcome," the most important song of that generation. Others well known would be Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind" and Pete Seeger and Lee Hays's "Hammer Song." People who follow the labor movement would also know of the reworking of Florence Reese's "Which Side Are You On." "This Little Light of Mine" and "We Shall Not Be Moved" are probably also thought of as songs that came from the African-American experience. The Civil Rights Movement provided the sixties with its most powerful sound culture (see Carawan and Carawan 1963 and 1968). It was the sound of African-Americans singing (sharing with contemporaries the age-old African tradition of songs) as a way of expressing community and making a movement visible and clear across language and culture.

At the base of the singing movement was a rich African-American oral tradition. The songs that worked in the jails, mass meetings, marches, and conferences were old and new, side by side. They were offered and exchanged because they were the songs of the participants who would not go into life-threatening situations without the tools and weapons of identity and survival: their prayers and their songs.

In Montgomery, Alabama, during the bus boycott, the dominant song repertoire was the hymns and spirituals. Hymns like "Onward Christian Soldiers," or "Lift Him Up" were staples in the Montgomery mass meetings. Almost nightly in the meetings, one heard "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," a hymn that expressed the joy and peace that came from those joined in battle in that community:

> What a fellowship, what a joy divine
> Leaning on the everlasting arms.
> What a blessedness, what a peace is
> mine
> Leaning on the everlasting arms
> (Abernathy 1987).

This hymn, sung in mass meetings across the South, was performed in congregational style, gospel style, and "by the book." No matter what the performance style, songs like "Leaning" were always sung with the melody line found in the standard Baptist and Methodist hymnals—what older singers call the round-note tunes.

The lined hymns, however, have their own system of tunes that differ from the standard hymnal tunes melodically, harmonically, metrically, and emotionally. Most of the lined hymns are sung from memory or from the "worded" edition of the Baptist Hymn Book.[1]

Hymns performed in the metered or lining-out song form and singing style are the most unfamiliar to those outside the traditional African-American church. These hymns are sometimes called "meter" hymns because they are sung in what are known as short, common, and long meter. Each meter carries with it a number of tunes, so that any song text that is compatible with a particular meter can be sung to any of that meter's tunes. The tunes are learned and disseminated orally and through practice, rather than through organized rehearsal. Most of the songs that were heard in mass meetings were of the short- or common-meter types because more people know tunes in those meters than in the long meter.

The metered hymns are slow songs. They create a different force in a congregation because of the way their numerous melodic lines bend to create harmonies. Sherrod referred to them as creating a swooning feeling and "reaching deep." Words seem inadequate to describe their power and the ambiance they create within the singing group. The singers actually share a communal moan that encircles the depth of struggle and pain and rises in peaks of celebration—joy—and, sometimes, shouting.

The practice of the lined hymn began among congregations in Europe. This practice moved to the new settlements in the New World and was a popular practice during the eighteenth century as missionaries moved south, mining the African-American slave community for Christian converts. It is within the African-American Christian church, primarily the Baptists, that the practice of lining hymns has evolved to a powerful and superb sacred choral music tradition.

The performance of lined hymns has continued wherever the people who loved them were powerful enough to set the worship style in the churches they helped to form and maintain. Thus, one could hear them in mass meetings throughout southwest Georgia, in the urban community of Albany, as well as in the rural surrounding counties like Terrell, Worth, Mitchell, and Baker.

In the 1960s, when student activists moved south, they assumed active leadership in the communities into which they moved. This meant that the movement culture in a particular community was in part shaped by the repertoire of that com-

1. "Worded edition" meaning that only the text, meter, tune indications, and sometimes the composer's name and dates are printed, but not the music staff or notes.

munity. Song styles and repertoire (except for the lined hymns) that could be easily taught were spread by the activists as they moved from one campaign to another.

The singing and transmission of a lined or metered hymn were another matter. Learning the form requires apprenticeship to and within a congregation. The case of Charles Sherrod is rare—that of an activist who learned the form well enough to raise the hymn in company in which many present did not know the form and would not learn it in one singing. Usually these hymns were heard in gatherings where the songs were a regular part of the worship tradition of that community. "A Charge to Keep I Have" was heard more than any other, but there were also other favorites.

In 1963, in a meeting in Mississippi, Fannie Lou Hamer lined the common-meter hymn "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone," composed in 1852 by George Nelson Allen, as her text. Hamer, a SNCC field secretary and one of the most effective organizers of the community struggles in Mississippi, became a national voice and model for the movement because of her uncompromising clarity about the purpose of the fight for freedom and because of her brilliance as an orator and songleader. On this night, she lined two verses:

> Must Jesus bear the cross alone
> And all the world go free?
> No: there's a cross for everyone
> And there's a cross for me.
>
> The consecrated cross I'll bear
> Till death shall set me free
> And then go home my crown to wear,
> For there's a crown for me
> (Moses Moon Collection).

Hamer saw participation in the movement as a cross. She also saw her activism as compatible with her practices as a Christian—for strength and inspiration she always went to the Bible and to the text of the lined hymns that formed the foundation of her music culture.

In 1963, the night before a festival in Greenwood, Mississippi, we gathered in a church for a mass meeting. The meeting opened with the traditional devotional service which began with an upbeat song followed by a lined hymn; this time it was "Amazing Grace," composed by John Newton in 1779:[2]

> Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
> That saved a wretch like me.
> I once was lost, but now I'm found
> Was blind, but now I see.
>
> Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
> I have already come;
> 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
> And grace will lead me home.

As on many other occasions during the freedom struggles that raged throughout the country, as the meeting evolved, in walked the sheriff and some of his deputies. Those gathered responded by giving more fervor to the songs and prayers and testimonies, determined not to give in to fear.

The "Amazing Grace" hymn is one of the most prominent hymns worldwide, known within and without the Christian community. There is a folk story about the composer, John Newton, who was captain of a ship that took on a load of captured Africans and headed across the Middle Passage toward the United States. As the story goes, Newton was unable to handle the contradictions of his religious beliefs and his role as the captain of a slaver; so he turned the ship around, took the cargo back to Africa, and later penned the text of this hymn.

Joining this legend is the story of the descendants of these and other African peoples engaged in a struggle for freedom and justice more than two hundred years later, bathing their courage and determination in songs that ring truest when used for major and radical change.

2. For a more detailed account of the Greenwood mass meeting, see Reagon (1987).

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Paul Robeson, Civil Rights Activist: An Opinion

by Hale Smith, Freeport, New York

During his lifetime, Paul Robeson achieved both legendary and mythical status. So intertwined were the perceptions of his contemporaries that few seemed able to see him in terms of his true dimensions. In fact, it may be unrealistic to expect that a true measure of the man can be drawn even today. He was, without question, a very famous man, and fame is often equated with importance, or even greatness. But fame and celebrity can be easily acquired

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by selfish, shallow, and innocuous people—qualities that seem to characterize many celebrities of the past and present. The superficial glitter of fame often obscures those substantive qualities that are more characteristic of true greatness.

The greatness of Robeson has been a subject of controversy from his youth until now and will probably remain so for many more years. Such controversy suggests by its persistence that there was more substance to the man than his detractors have been willing to admit. After all, his was no "media-created" fame but the real article—generated by his own accomplishments, which were achieved in nearly every case over great odds and opposition. That he might have excelled in even one discipline would have been remarkable, given the social conditions of his time. That he was able to excel in several disciplines and become a world figure as well indicates that he must have possessed both towering intelligence and strength of character. His stature, when compared with that of most celebrities, whose lives are a voyeur's paradise, should require that the basic facts of his life be known to every literate American. He was a high school sports star, an All-American football star from Rutgers University, a Phi Beta Kappa scholar, an actor on the American and European stages and in film, a singer, a civil rights activist; and he had sympathy towards the Soviet Union and the causes of oppressed people everywhere—especially those of his own people, black Americans. But most Americans—including blacks, who today seem to have interest in little beyond pop-culture—are aware of Robeson only through grossly distorted information that continues to deny him recognition as one of the greatest figures of the twentieth century.

Most persons who have achieved greatness appear to have done so in response to external forces. Harriet Tubman, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and even Winston Churchill might have lived their entire lives in obscurity or (in the case of Churchill) on the sidelines of history were it not for the forces that released their latent abilities. Others have seemed destined for greatness from childhood, but most of those never fulfilled their potential. Da Vinci, Mozart, and Einstein are among the few who demonstrated extraordinary potential while young and who continued to develop throughout their lives. Paul Robeson exhibited a continually maturing brilliance most of his life, but there are reasons for believing that he might have achieved even more had the racial and political opposition directed toward him been less intense.

That he might have excelled in even one discipline would have been remarkable, given the social conditions of his time. That he was able to excel in several disciplines and become a world figure as well indicates that he must have possessed both towering intelligence and strength of character.

His political activities and beliefs were the sources of great controversy and became the focus of cynically vicious attacks which eventually destroyed his performing career. His outspoken rejection of racial prejudice was portrayed as being un-American. He was accused of being a traitorous charlatan because of his support of the Soviet Union and of civil rights activity in the United States. Today, he is probably better known as a great political martyr than as the great artist he also was, but he was already a famous man when he became publicly committed to social and political issues.

Robeson's fame, and potential for even greater fame and wealth, would have been sufficient for those possessing less inner strength and substance. He (and his equally maligned older contemporary, W.E.B. Du Bois) might well have saved himself and his friends much trouble, without loss of "public honor," with a few innocuous statements or a donation to some safe "charity" organization. (That is still a safe and honored way of being recognized as humanitarian.) In this way, Robeson might never have suffered the criticism that continues to obscure his reputation.

Several of Robeson's acquaintances have privately expressed their opinion that he was in error—not because of his opposition to racial discrimination but because of his way of expressing those beliefs. They (many of whom inwardly agreed with his position) felt that he would have been a more formidable foe of racial oppression had he not been perceived as an advocate of communism and the Soviet Union. Such reservations regarding Robeson must be taken seriously, especially because any pro-civil rights position is regarded in the United States as being to the left and, probably, un-American. The inclination of many white Americans to regard pro-black civil rights activity as being synonymous with pro-communism or, at the very least, as liberalism as a negative value has enabled unscrupulous politicians, law-enforcement officials, and religious leaders to outrageously contravene the rights of black Americans and other minorities while professing the highest motives of honor and Americanism. In the 1930s and 1940s every important black spokesman was subject to being labeled communist or fellow-traveler; and Robeson, Du Bois, and Langston Hughes were only the most prominent among those who were harassed by powerful government and religious agencies.

The fact that Hughes and Robeson might have had something of value to say to this country, both having lived in the Soviet Union, made them natural targets of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and Senator Joseph McCarthy. Their public statements were called anti-American and anti-Christian, and Hughes survived professionally only by repudiating his leftist activities.

The case of Du Bois is different

from that of Robeson and Hughes. Du Bois was one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century and, for the first eighty years of his life, worked clearly within the American political framework. His failure to be taken seriously in the United States led him late in life to embrace socialism and communism as being the only hopes for the ultimate freedom of black Americans.

It seems clear that Robeson had also lost faith in the possibility of the United States facing its hypocricy with sincerity. His speeches were strong indictments of this country's racial practices and public posturing. But, submerged under all of the bitterness of his public affairs, Paul Robeson remained a man who loved his people. And because his people were inseparably a part of the United States, he loved his country too—perhaps more deeply than his attackers ever could because their patriotism was based on slogans and lies that still besmirch the ideals upon which this country was founded.

The silencing of Robeson and his contemporaries has been treated as an "American" victory by the radical reactionaries who masquerade as patriotic conservatives. The cost to society, however, of highly gifted people having to contend with unrelenting class and racial prejudices is immeasurable.

Because ours is an immature and wasteful country which has never acknowledged the truth of its own history and character, the example of Paul Robeson singing folk songs and the *Ballad for Americans* might seem naive today. But such expressions of belief in the greatness of the American dream were common during the years of the Great Depression and World War II. Many of the most patriotic novels, paintings, and films from that period seem dated and naive precisely because they proclaim an undisguised hope and belief in the future of this country.

It is ironic that the most articulate advocates of that future "kinder and gentler" nation were—perhaps without exception—persons who were and are still regarded as being enemies of American-style democracy. The list of persons persecuted by the Congress, FBI, other political agencies, and religious organizations—all in the causes of patriotism and religious purity—include the greatest American thinkers and artists. One must acknowledge that such persecution is not unique to the United States; it is common throughout the world. However, the United States must be held to a higher standard: the ideals articulated by the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and "The American Dream."

If the citizens of this country ever choose to honor and to live by the true meaning of its ideals, many victims of its persecution would be given places of honor in its history. Of those, Paul Robeson—despite his alleged errors of judgment—must then be accepted as one of the greatest artists and patriots the United States has produced.

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Twentieth Century Civil Rights Collections in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress: A Selected Checklist

by Debra Newman Ham, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress has one of the most valuable collections for the study of Afro-American history and culture in the nation. Its holdings include information about slavery and the slave trade as well as various aspects of plantation life. Papers of slave masters and mistresses give the perspective of the owners while slave narratives tell the history from the Afro-American vantage point. The papers of black and white abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and Salmon Portland Chase chronicle the efforts of those who attempted to alleviate the plight of blacks in bondage. The vast collection of American

Colonization Society records minutely details the saga of those blacks who left the United States during the nineteenth century to establish the nation of Liberia in West Africa. Diaries of black Americans give first person accounts of their lives in slavery and in freedom.

Papers relating to blacks as participants in and victims of the Civil War abound in the collections. Black history during the Reconstruction period is reflected in papers relating to black congressmen and public officials such as John Mercer Langston, Blanche K. Bruce, Hiram Revels, and Francis Cardozo. Efforts of blacks to educate themselves and find meaningful employment can be reconstructed through the papers of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

The Manuscript Division's civil rights collections provide rich sources for the study of the struggle by blacks and whites to obtain equal rights and opportunities for all people regardless of race, creed, sex, or religion during the twentieth century. The collections described briefly below continue to be in constant demand by students of social history and are regularly opening up new vistas for the study of black history and race relations in the United States and the third world. Other collections in the Division, not included in this select list, relate to the struggle to achieve equal rights for all Americans. Papers of some twentieth century jurists, government officials, print and broadcast journalists, social and political activists, sports figures, and women's rights advocates provide useful sources for the study of civil rights.

Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching
Records, 1930–1942. 8 microfilm reels reproducing original records at Atlanta University.

In its efforts to prevent lynching, the ASWPL generated correspondence, meeting minutes, clippings, pamphlets, legislation, reports, newsletters, press releases, speeches, resolutions, and petitions. The records relate to lynchings committed and prevented and the role played in the suppression of lynchings by organizations affiliated with ASWPL, particularly churches. A finding aid is available.

Bethune, Mary McLeod (1875–1955)
Papers, 1923–1942. 1 microfilm reel reproducing originals in the Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, La., ca. 505 items.

Mrs. Bethune's papers include correspondence, travel diaries, speeches, writings, invitations, programs, clippings, and photographs. The materials relate to Mrs. Bethune's work as founder and president of Bethune-Cookman College, Daytona Beach, Florida; her leadership in the work of the National Association of Colored Womens Clubs; and her receipt of the NAACP's Spingarn Medal in 1935. The papers document her busy speaking schedule, especially as a guest of black churches, Young Women's and Men's Christian Associations, segregated high schools, and historically black colleges and universities.

Brooke, Edward William (1919–)*
Papers, 1962–1978. ca. 610,000 items.

Brooke, a lawyer and public official, served as the Attorney General of Massachusett (1962–1966) and as U.S. Senator from that state (1967–1979). His papers include his Massachusetts Attorney General files and materials generated during his service in the U.S. Senate. Some of the subjects covered in his papers are civil rights issues, affirmative action measures, and the Watergate cover-up.

* There are some restrictions relating to the use of these records. Please address inquiries to the Chief, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20504 or consult Manuscript Reading Room staff for further information (202) 707-5387. For copies of the checklist, write to the address above.

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
Records, 1920–1968. 41,000 items.

The records document the growth and functions of the union and reflect its various activities in the areas of civil rights and equal employment opportunity. Some of the correspondence is with labor unions representing dining car employees, locomotive firemen, and railway clerks, and with officials of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). Records relating to women's auxiliaries of the union and to the work of railroad maids are included in this collection. Correspondents include Paul Robeson. A finding aid is available.

Burroughs, Nannie Helen (1879–1961)*
Papers, 1900–1963. 110,000 items.

Nannie Burroughs was an educator, a religious leader, and a civil rights and women's rights advocate. Most of her papers consist of materials relating to her establishment of a trade school for young black girls in Washington, D.C., in 1909. Other materials relate to her leadership in the Women's Auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention and its publication, *The Worker*. The collection also includes materials relating to the National League of Republican Colored Women; the National Association of Wage Earners; the 1931 President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership; missionary activities in Africa; Cooperative Industries, a community self-help program in northeast Washington, D.C.; and the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association. A finding aid is available.

Center for National Policy Review*
Records, 1971–1986. ca. 60,000 items.

The Center for National Policy Review (CNPR) was a non-partisan civil rights advocacy group established in 1970 at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. The

records of the Center provide analyses of the civil rights records of federal and state government agencies during the Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan Presidential administrations. The collection includes reports, publications, studies, clippings, articles, and correspondence relating to various aspects of the civil rights issues studied by the staff, such as employment, voting rights, capital punishment, judicial and political nominations, legislation, and litigation. A finding aid is available.

Clark, Kenneth Bancroft (1914–)*
Papers, 1936–1976. ca. 226,000 items.

These papers, chiefly 1960–1976, document Clark's activities in New York as a university professor, president of the Metropolitan Applied Research Corporation, research director of the Northside Center for Child Development, author, and independent researcher whose findings were cited in the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. His correspondence, speeches, reports, research notes, book chapters, manuscripts, book reviews, clippings, articles, photographs, printed matter, and tape recordings relate largely to his work in the field of race relations, segregation, discrimination, urban ghettos, black youth programs such as HARYOU (Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited), and related social issues. Unprocessed.

Commission on Interracial Cooperation
Records, 1919–1944. 55 reels of microfilm reproducing originals at Atlanta University.

The collection consists of administrative and organizational files, church correspondence, annual reports, financial records, publications, research notes, legal reports, clippings, and meeting minutes relating to a wide range of subjects such as accomplishments of black Americans, criminal proceedings against blacks, the Ku Klux Klan, peonage, sharecropping, employment of blacks, voting rights, political campaigns, and lynching. A finding aid is available.

Congress of Racial Equality
Records, 1941–1968. 74 microfilm reels (49 reels of microfilm reproducing originals in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison, and 25 reels reproducing originals in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia).

Originally called the Committee on Racial Equality, CORE was established in 1942. Most of the materials in this collection are dated 1959–1964. CORE initially directed its protests against discrimination in public accommodations, but its emphasis later changed to discrimination in employment and housing. Its activities were primarily freedom rides, voter registration projects, sit-ins, and sponsorship of grass-roots political action groups like the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The records include correspondence of the organization's officers, operational records of the national pamphlets, publications and copies of the organization's newsletters, the *CORE-lator*, 1947–1967. A finding aid is available.

Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt (1868–1963)
Papers, 1803–1965. 79 reels reproducing originals at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Du Bois, who received his doctorate degree from Harvard University, was an educator, a writer, civil rights leader, and sociologist. These papers cover most aspects of his life and work. His papers include correspondence, speeches, clippings, articles, newspaper columns, research materials, novels, pageants, plays, photographs, and memorabilia. He corresponded with many civil rights leaders, national and local NAACP officers, government agencies, officials of black colleges and universities, and editors of national newspapers as well as black weeklies on a vast array of subjects including education, elections, back-to-Africa movements, lynching, blacks in the military, racial violence, discrimination, and segregation. A finding aid is available.

Hamer, Fannie Lou (1917–1977)
Papers, 1966–1978. 17 microfilm reels reproducing originals in the Amistad Research Center.

Mrs. Hamer, who worked for many years as a sharecropper, became an outspoken leader in the southern civil rights movement. Her papers document her work with organizations such as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the Freedom Farm Corporation, the Delta Ministry, Mississippians United to Elect Negro Candidates, the National Council of Negro Women, and Delta Opportunities Corporation. The papers relate to voter registration drives, political campaigns, the Poor People's Campaign, and civil rights initiatives throughout the South and consist of correspondence, press releases, reports, publications, minutes, and agendas. A finding aid is available.

Harris, Patricia Roberts (1924–1985)*
Papers, 1960–1980. 196,150 items.

Mrs. Harris was a lawyer, civil rights advocate, public official, and ambassador. These papers relate principally to her cabinet service in the Carter Administration (1977–1981) as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and Secretary of Health and Human Services. Some of her records relate to community development, neighborhood organization and development, fair housing, and equal opportunity. The materials include correspondence, speeches, statements, staff reports, news conference transcripts, logs, news releases, reading files, legislation, subject files, clippings, publications, photographs, Presidential

commission files, hearings, journals, reports, studies, and memorabilia.

Houston, William LePre (1870–1953)
Family papers, ca. 1901–1935. ca. 4,000 items.
William LePre Houston was a lawyer and educator who in 1891 married Mary Ethel Hamilton, a teacher trained at Wilberforce University. The papers document Houston's establishment of his own law firm in 1921 and its expansion into a partnership with his son in 1924. The papers show the firm's work in behalf of black labor and civic organizations and the Houstons' active role in politics. Many of the papers reveal the everyday life of an urban black middle-class family. The collection consists of correspondence, legal briefs, pamphlets, printed matter, financial papers, scrapbooks, clippings, records of the Odd Fellows Lodge, financial accounts, diaries, photographs, and memorabilia. A finding aid is available.

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
Records, 1952–1984. ca. 117,000 items.
The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), organized in 1949, is a coalition of more than one hundred national civil rights, religious, labor, civic, professional, and fraternal organizations working to bring about legislative and executive measures to ensure full civil rights protection for all Americans regardless of race. The records include general and legislative correspondence, administrative and subject files, financial papers, organizational files, affiliate group records, government agency correspondence, newspaper clippings, recordings, and printed matter. A finding aid is available.

Logan, Rayford Whittingham (1897–1982)*
Papers, 1926–1980. ca. 600 items.
Logan, a Harvard-trained historian, pioneered in the study of black history and served as chairman of the history department at Howard University. A civil rights activist, Logan was a participant in the Pan-African Congresses and an outspoken critic of segregation policies in the military. His papers include diaries, 1940–1982; travel journals; correspondence; telegrams; and notebooks.

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records*
Records, ca. 1945–1970. ca. 65,000 items.
Originally founded in 1939 as the litigating arm of the NAACP, the Legal Defense Fund later became an independent organization working toward equal rights for all people regardless of race, sex, or creed. The records consist of correspondence, printed matter, legal files, and subject files concerning issues such as desegregation, discrimination, riots, crime, education, fair employment practices, housing, the Ku Klux Klan, labor, police brutality, racial tensions, sit-in demonstrations, discrimination in the military, and transportation. The materials include printed copies of briefs before the U.S. Supreme Court for *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. Among the correspondents is Josephine Baker.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*
Records, 1909–1969. ca. 1,900,000 items.
The NAACP was organized in 1909 in order to protest lawless acts against blacks, provide equal treatment for blacks before the law, and lead in the abolition of segregation, discrimination, lynching, and other forms of racial violence. These records provide extensive materials for the social history of black Americans in the twentieth century. They consist of board of directors minutes, annual reports, office and administrative files, branch files, records relating to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, correspondence, legal briefs, congressional and legislative files, trial transcripts, speeches, NAACP publications such as the *Crisis* and the *Bulletin*, reports, articles, clippings, photographs, recordings, scrapbooks, pamphlets, records documenting the growth and development of the association and its branches, financial papers, and fund-raising records. The records treat subjects such as discrimination in business and government; segregation in schools and public and private establishments; lynching and mob violence; the Ku Klux Klan; race riots; antilynching bills in Congress; suppression of black voting rights in the South; labor disputes and labor union discrimination; and political contests involving race issues. A finding aid is available.

National Urban League*
Records, 1910–1960. ca. 800,000 items.
The aim of the National Urban League (NUL) was to promote the improvement of the industrial, economic, social, and spiritual conditions in black communities. The NUL also attempted to facilitate the migration of blacks from rural to urban areas. The records include the files relating to the general department, internal departments, regional offices, affiliates, special projects, and personnel matters. The materials consist of correspondence, minutes of meetings, financial papers, speeches, reports, surveys, statistical data, NUL publications, press releases, scrapbooks, clippings, and printed matter, chiefly 1930–1960, relating to the programs and policies of the League and its affiliates. Subjects include community service, housing, industrial relations, public relations, research, vocational services, blacks and the war effort, the League's adoption program, the training of black social workers, civil rights, race relations, the 1941 March on Washington, sit-in demonstrations, job placement, im-

provement of employment opportunities, urban renewal, housing, medical care, fund-raising, and other League efforts in the field of social welfare. A finding aid for these records is available.

National Urban League, Southern Regional Office*

Records, 1912–1979. 110,000 items.

Southern Regional Office records consist of correspondence, memoranda, notes, reports, surveys, minutes of meetings, speeches, and articles, chiefly for the period 1940–1961. Topics include the office's founding (1919) and organization, relations with its thirteen regional affiliates and the national office, and its role in a broad range of social and economic issues relating to blacks in the South, including employment, education, housing, and community and economic development. A finding aid is available.

National Urban League, Washington Bureau*

Records, 1961–1967. 25,000 items.

The Washington Bureau, organized in 1961, provides the NUL with information on legislation pending in Congress and lobbies for League interests and programs before many government agencies. The records consist of correspondence, reports, publicity files, personnel data forms, lists, charts, bulletins, news releases, articles, statistical information, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and photographs relating to job development, day care services, voter registration, industrial relations, poverty, and equal employment opportunity. A finding aid is available.

Randolph, Asa Philip (1889–1979)

Papers, 1909–1979. 13,000 items.

Randolph was a labor union organizer and official and a civil rights leader. His papers relate to the organization and operation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters of which he was president (1925–1968), the March on Washington movement during World War II, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, the 1936 National Negro Congress, the establishment of the Committee on Fair Employment Practices, the White House Conference to Fulfill These Rights, Pan-Africanism, and various civil rights demonstrations and protests. The collection consists of family papers, general correspondence, subject files, legal papers, speeches and writings, biographical material, and other papers, chiefly 1941–1968. A finding aid is available.

Rauh, Joseph L. (1911–)*

Papers, 1934–1985. ca. 72,000 items.

Rauh, a lawyer, civil libertarian, and civil rights activist, was a cofounder of the Americans for Democratic Action in 1947. Most of his legal cases pertain to civil rights, government security measures, and labor disputes. His papers, which consist of correspondence, subject and legal files, printed materials, appointment books, interviews, clippings, and speeches document his activities as chief lobbyist for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Acts of 1965, 1970, and 1975, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Southern Regional Council

Records, 1944–1968. 225 microfilm reels reproducing originals at Atlanta University.

From its origin as the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, the Southern Regional Council has, since 1944, gathered data and provided financial support to help confront social and economic problems in the South since World War II. The records include correspondence, administrative and reading files, reports, publications, articles, and clippings relating to subjects such as human relations, labor, voter registration and education, women's work, urban planning, crime and corrections, public education, and community organization. A finding aid is available.

Spingarn, Arthur Barnett (1878–1971)

Papers, 1911–1964. 37,000 items.

Spingarn, a lawyer, served as the NAACP's third president from 1945 to 1965 and in numerous other capacities in the organization during his lifetime. His papers consist of correspondence; legal files; minutes of the NAACP board of directors; reports; a file of *Crisis* materials; printed matter; and legal, estate, and financial papers of the NAACP. The collection includes the outline of a study of blacks in the military during World War II, reports on hospitals for blacks in Harlem, materials relating to the Circle for Negro War Relief and the New York Vigilance Committee, and an autograph collection. Among others, the records include information about James Weldon Johnson. A finding aid is available.

Storey, Moorfield (1845–1929)

Papers, 1847–1930. ca. 5,000 items.

Storey, a lawyer, author, and reformer, was a founder of the NAACP and its first president (1910–1929). Storey's papers consist of correspondence, scrapbooks, lecture notes, manuscripts, petitions, press releases, clippings, photographs, speeches, articles, and printed matter relating to the operations of the NAACP, American occupation of Haiti and the Philippines, the integration of Harvard dormitories, and the Anti-Imperialist League. James Weldon Johnson is among those with whom Storey corresponded. A finding aid is available.

Terrell, Mary Church (1863–1954)

Papers, 1851–1962. 13,000 items.

Mrs. Terrell, a feminist, was an author, lecturer, educator, and civil rights advocate. Her papers consist of correspondence, diaries and travel journals, printed materials, clippings, speeches, and manuscripts, chiefly 1886–1954, focusing primarily on her career as an advocate of both women's rights and equal treatment for blacks. Manu-

scripts of Mrs. Terrell's autobiography, *A Colored Woman in a White World,* and information about her terms as a member of the District of Columbia Board of Education are among these papers. Her correspondents include W. C. Handy and William Monroe Trotter. A finding aid is available.

Terrell, Robert Heberton (1857–1925)
Papers, 1870–1925. 2,750 items.

Terrell, Mary Church's husband, was a Harvard graduate, teacher, lawyer, and judge. His records consist of correspondence, writings and speeches, newspaper clippings, printed material, and other papers, chiefly 1884–1925, relating to his interest in education for black youths, the welfare of the black race, the condition of District of Columbia courts and schools, Republican politics, and the Washington, D.C., Board of Trade, of which he was a member. A finding aid is available.

United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, Martin L. King Assassination Investigation
Records, 1967–1978. 25 reels of microfilm of originals in the FBI offices, Washington, D.C.

This collection includes FBI records released under the Freedom of Information Act relating to the congressional investigation of the assassination of non-violent civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Wilkins, Roy (1901–1981)*
Papers, 1938–1977. ca. 20,000 items.

Wilkins, a civil rights leader and journalist, worked with the NAACP in various capacities from 1931 until he retired as executive director in 1977. His papers consist of correspondence, engagement calendars, awards, telegrams, memoranda, manuscripts, copies of his newspaper columns, reprints, clippings, printed material, bound copies of the *Crisis*, NAACP files, biographical materials, family papers, reports, and articles. Among the many subjects addressed are African education, NAACP conventions and annual reports, school desegregation crises, black history, campus unrest, FBI activities, minority employment, the Committee on Fair Employment Practices, desegregation in the armed forces, and black newspapers. A finding aid is available.

Woodson, Carter Godwin (1875–1950)
Woodson's collection of papers relating to black history and civil rights, 1803–1936. 5,000 items.

Woodson, who received his doctorate from Harvard, was a collector of black history materials, an author, editor, and historian. He founded the Association for the Study of Afro-American (originally Negro) Life and History and the *Journal of Negro History*. His collection consists of correspondence, diaries, speeches, legal documents, newspaper clippings, and biographical materials very few of which pertain to Woodson's life. They relate to subjects such as the National Urban League, black history, the *Journal of Negro History*, race relations, slavery, discrimination, employment opportunities for blacks, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, politics, and business endeavors of black entrepreneurs. A finding aid is available.

BMR Bulletin is devoted to the encouragement and promotion of scholarship and cultural activity in black American music and is intended to serve as a medium for the sharing of ideas and information regarding current and future research and activities in universities and research centers.

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