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Roots of Justice: Historical Truth and Reconciliation in Lincoln and Nebraska

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Roots of Justice: Historical Truth and Reconciliation in Lincoln and Nebraska

A bibliography of resources about the history in Nebraska
of Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos,
Asian Americans and Recent Refugees

A project of the Lincoln NAACP and Lincoln Nebraskans for Peace

Research by Veronica Nohemi Duran, Crystal Dunning and Kathleen A. Johnson

October 2021

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Introduction: The Roots of Justice Bibliography

By Paul Olson and Kathleen Johnson

October 2021

The opportunity for the creation of this bibliography began in 2015 with so-called “Mandela picnics.” Lincoln NAACP and Nebraskans for Peace members organized these get-togethers to discuss what could be done about issues of race and prejudice in Lincoln and Nebraska. We focused at first on educational reform though we also had other arenas under consideration.

Considering the name of our gatherings, we decided that we could learn from the “truth and reconciliation” process that Nelson Mandela had invented to try to heal the wounds of South African oppression. This process has been emulated in many places around the world. We also decided upfront that we would look at racism in this state directed against five groups, though these are by no means the only ones who have suffered here. The five groups we chose as most obvious and numerous are Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, Asian peoples, and recent émigrés or refugees who have come since the Vietnam War from various war-torn or hungry areas around the world.

To examine the truth of our racial situation in Nebraska, we felt that we had to know what the truth about it is. This meant establishing a research base from scholarly books, dissertations, archives, and journals; from memoirs, taped personal accounts, live personal accounts and newspaper reports. We did not find any studies that put together the whole history of racism in Nebraska using the best scholarly resources. We did find scholarly studies of families, settlement patterns, Native American tribal destruction and land theft, patterns of prejudice against African American peoples in housing and employment and town “sunset” clauses, similar sorts of discrimination against Native American and Hispanic peoples in housing and jobs, and abuse of Asian people during the period of the building of railroads and again during and after World War II, continuing to the present. We also knew of a variety of patterns of micro-aggression directed against recent émigrés and refugees.

There are obviously patterns of discrimination that unite all ethnic groups of color in a similar pattern: the assumption of white superiority, efforts to prevent people of color from holding land or real property that has any value or from occupying jobs of responsibility and remuneration, and the sanctioning of discrimination in many religious organizations, fraternal groups, and country clubs. We also knew of the pseudoscientific sanctioning of discrimination by disciplines such as phrenology,

intelligence testing, and some forms of earlier evolutionary theory. On the other hand, each form of racism has also had its own unique flavor and patterns.

The discovery of what has happened in Nebraska in the last hundred and seventy years is not an easy task, but it is our goal in putting together this bibliography to begin that task. By putting together a picture that has, to this point, been fragmentary we hope to achieve something like the truth. We envisage that filling in the picture will allow us to understand what people have suffered and what will constitute proper reconciliatory measures.

This is the first iteration of a bibliography pointing to primary and secondary resources that focus on the history of race and racism in Lincoln, Omaha, and the entire state. Veronica Duran, a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, researched and identified more than 800 sources. Members of the history project's steering committee also suggested resources. Crystal Dunning and Kathleen Johnson edited and formatted the entries.

The bibliography is not definitive; as new resources are identified, updated revisions of it will be created and made available online.

In using this bibliography, researchers, educators and others may find it useful to consult:

- **History Nebraska library staff** to learn about additional collections for which a finding aid has not yet been created. They also may suggest other relevant collections either at History Nebraska or other archives about the state or elsewhere. The History Nebraska library has microfilms of all Nebraska newspapers through about 2000/2001.
- **Archives and Special Collections staff at UNL Love Library** for relevant items or collections, some of which may not yet have online finding aids.
- **UNL and University of Nebraska at Omaha library databases** that any Nebraska citizen may freely use on site. Library staff can give instructions on how to set up a free user's account to search the databases on campus. These databases include 1. Government publications, such as congressional documents; 2. Documents such as online newspapers, scholarly journals and subject-specific indices that focus on fields such as history, literature, politics, sociology, psychology; 3. Legal resources and the extensive collections of the UNL law library.

We hope that these five bibliographies will prove fruitful in helping us to understand what our history has been, where we have gone astray, and what we can do to help bring about reconciliation in our community and in our state.

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History Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society

Many of the print and microform collections are housed in History Nebraska, 1500 R Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. In addition to the selection noted below of resources available through History Nebraska, the researcher should search specific terms or names in the Search box on the Research and Reference Services web page: <https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/research-and-reference-services>.

A selection of the collections at History Nebraska is available online. Use the search options on <https://nebraskahistory.pastperfectonline.com/>.

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"Location of Originals Original 16mm films are housed at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's University Archives and Special Collections." History Nebraska Archives Record RG4943.MI: RG 4943.MI also contains the raw, unedited film of interviews with Nebraska/Great Plains elders done by the Junior League of Lincoln cited in the citation above. Videotape copies of filmed interviews with tribal elders of Native tribes residing in the Great Plains, including Nebraska. Tribes represented are the Brule Sioux (Richard Fool Bull), Oglala Sioux (Lydia Bluebird), Omaha (John and Suzette Turner), Otoe-Missouria (Truman Washington

Dailey and others of the Otoe-Missouri), Pawnee (Garland Blaine), Santee (Paul Robertson, Irene Smith and Edna Peniska), and Winnebago (Felix White). The project, called both the "Indian Literature Project and the "Indian Culture Project," was sponsored and funded by the Junior League of Lincoln with technical support of Nebraska Educational Telecommunications. The interviewer was usually Paul Olson of the University of Nebraska. Cf. History Nebraska Archives Record, Junior League Indian Literature Project (AV2.091).

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The Wounds of Whiteclay: Nebraska's Shameful Legacy. Rebekka Herrera-Schlichting, project coordinator, and others. Lincoln: College of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. http://www.woundsofwhiteclay.com/_home.html. Eleven students in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Journalism and Mass Communications received the grand prize at the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards ceremony, May 23, 2017, for this in-depth study of Nebraska racism.

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African Americans

October 2021

African American Collections in History Nebraska, 1500 R Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

Note: Consult “African American Resources at the Nebraska State Historical Society” (nebraskahistory.org). https://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/services/refrence/la_pubs/african-american.htm. This resource provides brief scope notes for the collections, as well as dozens of links and **references to resources throughout Nebraska**, including holdings of History Nebraska, the Douglas County Historical Society, the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, and the Plainsman Museum.

The following list of History Nebraska resources is based on this document and on the document “AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES AT HISTORY NEBRASKA”.

<https://history.nebraska.gov/sites/history.nebraska.gov/files/doc/15.%20African%20American%20Resources%20at%20History%20Nebraska.pdf>.

Many of the entries below provide direct links to full descriptions of the scope of the collections, as well as the complete finding aids. The brief descriptions included on some of the entries are taken from one or both of these two documents.

Adams-Douglass-Vanderzee-McWilliams Families. RG5440.AM. History Nebraska. <https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/adams-douglass-vanderzee-mcwilliams-families-rg5440am>.

African Americans. RG2301. History Nebraska. “A collection of miscellaneous photographs of and relating to African Americans in Nebraska. [photographs only]”.—“AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES AT HISTORY NEBRASKA.”

Amaranthus Grand Chapter of Nebraska Eastern Star (Omaha) RG4250.AM. History Nebraska. <https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/amaranthus-grand-chapter-nebraska-eastern-star-omaha-neb-rg4250am>.

Anderson, Robert Ball. Robert Ball Anderson, 1843-1930. RG2973.AM. History Nebraska. <https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/robert-ball-anderson-1843-1930-rg2973am>.

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- Burden, Henry. RG3249. History Nebraska. "Henry Burden was a former slave and Civil War veteran who homesteaded in Saline County, Nebraska. The collection contains three photographs relating to his homestead and family. [photographs only]".—"AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES AT HISTORY NEBRASKA."
- Citizens Against Racism and Prejudice (Lincoln). RG1583.AM. History Nebraska. <https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/citizens-against-racism-and-prejudice-lincoln-neb-rg1583am>.
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- Folley, Ruth (Talbert) Greene. Ruth (Talbert) Greene Folley. RG5349.AM. History Nebraska. <https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/ruth-talbert-greene-folley-rg5349am>.
- Hall, Norman C. Norman C. Hall. RG1580.AM. History Nebraska. <https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/norman-c-hall-rg1580am>.
- Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (Lincoln, Nebraska). RG0301. Report, 1972. History Nebraska. "...written in response to the Cleveland Randolph charge of police brutality."—"AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES AT HISTORY NEBRASKA."
- Lutheran Film Associates. *A Time for Burning*. RG4669. History Nebraska. "...a 1966 award-winning documentary film about race relations in Omaha, Nebraska."—"AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES AT HISTORY NEBRASKA."

- Malone, Robert Thomas. Robert Thomas Malone, 1891-1963. Papers, 1925-1963. RG2759. History Nebraska. "...relating to social and welfare legislation, race relations, and associated problems. The collection contains personal correspondence, 1925-1963; extensive Urban League materials; speeches; and includes files on Clyde Malone, social legislation, housing, labor, unemployment compensation, and social justice, among other topics."— "AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES AT HISTORY NEBRASKA."
- Maston, George A. George A. Maston, 1849-1913. RG3206.AM. History Nebraska. <https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/george-maston-rg3206am>.
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This collection contains the personal and professional records of Dr. Hector Perez Garcia (1914-1996), a 20th century physician, soldier, political advisor, and civil rights activist [who was a major force in Omaha]. The materials span the years 1910-2015, although the bulk of them date from the time of his World War II service through his death in 1996. Materials dated prior to Dr. Garcia's birth are family records documenting the lives of his relatives; materials dating after his death consist of obituaries, retrospectives, and posthumous awards and honors. A significant amount of the collection is in Spanish. Researchers should note that there are digitized versions of a significant number of documents, photographs, and audiovisual media items from throughout the collection.

Documentation on Dr. Garcia's personal life, including his education, hobbies, family, speeches, appearances at events, and paper awards, may be found in Series I: Personal Files. His personal and professional correspondence is spread throughout the collection, with the most concentrated volume located in Series II: Correspondence. A limited amount of information on his military training and activities in the European Theatre of World War II is documented in Series III: Military Service. Series IV: Private Medical Practice contains a small volume of records regarding his activities as a physician in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Dr. Garcia's participation in the founding, administration, and expansion of the AGIF, along with the activities and interests of its membership, can be found in the Series V: American GI Forum (AGIF). Furthermore, Series VI: Latino Activism highlights his general activities as an activist defending the rights of Mexican Americans, Hispanic Americans, and other Spanish-speaking ethnic groups. His participation as a member of various boards, committees, and organizations as well as his activities as an advisor to several United States Presidents is documented in Series VII: Civilian Service.

Series VIII: Reference and Research Files contains clippings, publications, and other secondary source materials on a wide variety of people, organizations, and topics of interest to Dr. Garcia. There is an extensive amount of photographs, negatives, slides, and albums in Series IX: Photographic Materials that illustrate many of the personal and professional activities documented in the rest of the collection. Audio and video recordings featuring Dr. Garcia and others are located in Series X:

Audiovisual Media. Finally, personal and professional artifacts Dr. Garcia collected during his lifetime, including a substantial number of awards and AGIF-related items, can be found in Series XI: Artifacts.

The following institutions may be of some help:

El Museo Latino

4701 South 25th Street

Omaha, NE 68107

Phone: (402) 731-1137; Fax: (402) 733-7012

Email: webmaster@elmuseolatino.org

Also: <https://www.mundolatinonetwork.com/category/omaha/>.

Researchers should explore the on-line records of Severiano (Sam) Franco, Ben Salazar, Ramon Perez, Norma Cantú (in her Nebraska period), Marty Ramírez, and other active Latino spokespersons for additional insights into anti-Latino racism and Latino life in Nebraska.

Asian Americans

October 2021

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History Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society

Many of the print and microform collections are housed in History Nebraska, 1500 R Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. In addition to the selection noted below of resources available through History Nebraska, the researcher should search specific terms or names in the Search box on the Research and Reference Services web page:
<https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/research-and-reference-services>.

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Encyclopedia of the Great Plains. Edited by David Wishart. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/>. Search especially the links to articles about refugees or immigrants, as well as specific nationalities. <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/search/?q=immigrants>.

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