

## **African American History Research Collection**

In the Genealogy and Local History Department at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County

The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County has a long-standing commitment to the collection of African American research materials. Prior to 2007 these materials were distributed throughout the Main Library subject departments. In 2007, as part of the Main Library for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century reorganization, the Library identified African American history and culture as one of four important areas of focus in the Genealogy and Local History Department and pulled items together that had previously been dispersed throughout the general collection. This enabled the Library to house a centralized research collection containing the most important resources in this diverse and important field of study.

The research-level collection emphasizes materials concerning slavery/freedom, Civil Rights, African Americans in the military, and African American literature and culture. Ranging from the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the present day, the majority of the materials are primary resources. Classic secondary works, reports and statistics relevant to African American history round out the collection. The descriptions that follow highlight some of the noted materials. The collection is a dynamic one with new items added each year.

### **African American Culture**

*The American Negro: His History and Literature*

(Call numbers vary by subject)

Compiled in the 1950's and 1960's, this eclectic collection of primary documents encompasses works on history, literature, science, and other topics, which pertain to African American culture in the United States. Encompassing works dating from the nineteenth century through the compilation of the collection, the series not only brings together a plethora of subjects but also represents a sizeable time span in the African American experience.

*Selection of Titles from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture*

Filmed from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture located at the New York Public Library, this collection of over 650 microfilms is one of the most extensive and important resources on African American culture in the world. The collection brings together a wide array of periodicals and literature that documents the growth and expansion of African American literature and culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Harper Reader* by Frances Smith Foster

### **Biographical Dictionaries**

*Black Biography, 1790-1950*

An extensive microfiche set pulling together biographies of African Americans from a wide range of sources.

## **Slavery**

The Genealogy and Local History Department has pulled together some of the most important primary and secondary resources on slavery. Some of these include.

### *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*

This 38-volume set encompasses the first-hand slave narratives compiled by the Federal Writers Project in the 1930's. As primary resources on slavery in the United States go, these narratives are unique in that they give a sense of what life was like in the institutions as conveyed by those who lived within it. The narratives cover a wide geographic range in terms of both where the individuals lived in the 1930's and in Antebellum America.

### *Papers of the American Slave Trade*

A collection of ship's logs, store books, letter books, and other primary sources documenting the business aspect of the slave trade in British North America and the United States. This collection contains documents from custom Houses, seaports (in New England as well as the South) and collections of personal papers that are invaluable to the researcher of this important yet often overlooked chapter in our history.

### *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* by Kenneth Stampp

### *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution Through the Civil War*

This extensive set of over 1300 microfilms compiled and edited by renowned historian Kenneth Stampp include: business records, account books, slave lists, reports, slave owners' letters and diaries, and occasional letters written by slaves. As the title indicates, this resource focuses on the time period between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and covers a wide swath of geographic territory including almost every slave state.

## **Resistance to Slavery**

### *American Negro Slave Revolts* by Herbert Aptheker

### *Black Abolitionist Papers*

Letters, speeches, pamphlets and other primary documents by African Americans involved in the abolitionist movement make up the content of this multi volume set. The set gives a diverse view of the movement in the fact that it covers The British Indies and Canada in addition to the United States.

### *Fugitive Slaves and American Courts*

A five volume set that traces some of the most interesting cases of men and women who resisted slavery by leaving it. This set documents these actions through the opinions of

justices and judges at all levels of the American judicial system from local courts to the U.S. Supreme Court.

*Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790*

*The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c., Narrating the Hardships, Hair-Breadth Escapes, and Death Struggles of the Slaves in their Efforts for Freedom as Related by themselves and Others, or Witnessed by the Author, Together with Sketches of some of the Largest Stockholders, and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers, of the Road* by William Still

## **Freedom and Reconstruction**

*Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* by W.E.B. Du Bois

*Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands*

Set up as the Civil War was winding down, the Freedman's Bureau sought to deal with the many difficulties faced by the millions of newly freed men, women, and children throughout the American South. This resource provides excellent insight into the condition of the people and geographic area at this particular time. Freedman's records can provide: names, residences, and occupations of former slaves, as well as orphan and marriage records, correspondence, labor contracts, records and reports, lists of abandoned and confiscated land, school reports, and former plantation owners and relatives' names.

*Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington

## **Civil Rights**

The African American research collection offers a variety of resources to aid in tracing the seminal movement in African American history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Fifty States Report* by the United States Civil Rights Commission

*The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*

This set documents the activities of one of the most important Civil Rights groups of the twentieth century. Founded by Marcus Garvey in the 1920's the UNIA would have a profound effect on the Civil Rights movement in the latter part of the decade.

*Martin Luther King, Jr. FBI File*

Microfiche collection tracing the government surveillance of the Civil Rights leader.  
*Papers of the N.A.A.C.P.*

Comprised of over 1400 microfilm, this collection traces the major events and individuals involved in the N.A.A.C.C. from its formation through the intense struggle for Civil Rights in the 1950's and 60's. Included in the resource are correspondence, reports of the Board of Directors, reports from selected branches, and extensive files on some of the most famous events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as the Scottsboro case and the Montgomery bus boycott among others.

*Selections from The Crisis* by W.E.B. Du Bois

Founded in 1910 *The Crisis* is the official publication of the N.A.A.C.P. This two-volume set includes some of the most important pieces appearing in the magazine during the publication's first twenty years.

### **Military Participation**

Since the American Revolution, African Americans have served in every American conflict. The Genealogy and Local History Department holds a wide range of military indexes that pertain to African Americans in the military. Including rosters of the United States Colored Troops in the Civil War and unit histories of black regiments. In addition, the African American Research Collection includes s items dedicated to the military.

*The Black Brigade of Cincinnati* by Peter H. Clark

*Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*

*A Brave Black Regiment: History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 1863-1865* by Luis Emilio

*A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865, Preceded by a Review of the Military Services of Negroes in Ancient and Modern Times* by George Washington Williams

### **Veterans History Project**

Partnered with the Library of Congress since 2006 PLCH has been conducting oral history interviews with local veterans. Along with the interviews, the Library has created a physical and online collection available for public viewing. Among those interviewed are a number of African American men and women whose stories give an interesting perspective of service in the armed forced including those who served in the segregated forces of WWII.

### **Companion Collections in the Genealogy and Local History Department**

Besides the African American Research Collection, the Genealogy and Local History Department's other collections support and enhance the study of African American history.

The Department's **Genealogy Collection** contains indexes to African American cemeteries and marriage records, periodicals, and many general indexes that provide valuable genealogical information to African American researchers. In addition the Department holds a number of research guides including *Black Roots* by Tony Burroughs and *Finding and Using African American Newspapers* by Timothy N. Pinnick among others.

In addition to genealogical reference materials the Department's **Local History Collection** all contains items pertinent to the study of African American history. City directories, School Board reports, and the Local History Index all contain valuable information for a more complete picture of the African American experience in the Greater Cincinnati area. The Department also collects secondary works on African Americans in Cincinnati such as *Cincinnati's Black Peoples* by Lyle Koehler, *Frontiers of Freedom* by Nikki Taylor, and *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens* by Wendell Phillips Dabney.

The **Inland Rivers Collection** holds riverboat logs that describe the activities of African Americans along these arteries of trade and communication. The **Rare** books collection, located in the Department's Cincinnati Room, houses many unique items related to African American history including historic programs from conventions of African American groups that have met in Cincinnati, rare histories of African American military regiments, and *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*, an extraordinary treatment of the famous letter by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with illustrations by renowned artist Faith Ringgold.

**The Magazine and Newspapers Department's African American Collection**  
Few items can capture the facts and feeling of a particular time period than newspapers. The Library has historically maintained an excellent newspaper collection in general and African American newspapers in particular. Indexes, guides and histories of the African American press (located in the Genealogy and Local History Department) enhance the value of the newspapers as a research tool. African American Newspapers of note held in the collection include; *Union (1918-1952)*, *Cincinnati Herald (1961-Present)*, *Call and Post (Cincinnati Edition) (1979-Present)*, and *New Pittsburgh Courier (1911-present)*.

#### *Journal of African American History*

Formerly the *Journal of Negro History*, this renowned publication dates back to 1915. In its nearly century-long run, the journal has provided insight into the study of African American history that has become an invaluable tool for any researcher on the subject. The Library holds an extensive archival collection of the publication and continues to add new issues to the collection.

### **Research Databases and Websites**

The Library provides free access to subscription databases and recommended websites that enhance the study of African American history and culture, including:

- History Resource USA **with primary resources and full text magazine and newspaper articles about African American History.**
- HeritageQuestonline.com with indexes and copies of records from the Freedman's Bank and Trust.
- Proquest Obituaries with full text of African American obituaries from across the United States.
- Ancestry.com with millions of records including the US census 1790-1940
- Sites by Subject, librarian recommended websites on African American history. From <http://www.cincinnati.library.org/resources/sbs.asp>, click on "History."

### **Podcasts**

The Genealogy and Local History Department conducts and streams podcasts on African American research topics. Download the podcasts from the Library's homepage at [www.cincinnati.library.org](http://www.cincinnati.library.org).

### **Programs**

The Library sponsors numerous programs dedicated to African American history, culture, and genealogy throughout the year. For more information on these programs please visit our homepage or call (513) 369-6905 for more details.