

Introducing Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass will probably require little introduction for most visitors. The renowned abolitionist, orator, author, printer, and statesman was a leader in the fight to end slavery in the United States and an enduring advocate for equal rights for Black Americans after the U.S. Civil War. Douglass told the story of his own experience enslaved in Maryland, along with his daring escape, in three autobiographies and in frequent lectures. Along the way, he became a celebrity, the single most-photographed American of the 19th century. In the 21st century, his name and likeness adorn schools, street murals, parks, and other public places throughout the United States as one of the country's greatest heroes.

This exhibition, featuring the Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers, tells a story of Douglass, his family, and his legacy. Douglass himself famously told and retold the story of his own life. In the two centuries since his birth, Douglass's family, historians, and antiquarian collectors, including Walter Evans, have represented and reframed Douglass, beginning with scrapbooks maintained by Douglass's sons Lewis and Frederick, now in the Evans Collection and on display on the mezzanine level of this exhibit. Other highlights from the Evans Collection are shown on the ground floor in this case. The Evans Collection joins a rich context for the study of Frederick Douglass in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. Exhibit viewers will also notice contributions by other donors to the James Weldon Johnson Collection, including Jerome Bowers Peterson and his daughter Dorothy Peterson, William Pickens YC 1904, Randolph Linsly Simpson, and Carl Van Vechten.

Portrait of Frederick Douglass, ca. 1853. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, Boston: Published at the Anti-Slavery Office, 1845. Gift of Carl Van Vechten.

Announcement for a lecture by Frederick Douglass, ca. 1840. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Portrait of Frederick Douglass, ca. 1865. Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass...*, bound in boards printed in Rochester, NY, at the North Star Office, 1848.

Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, New York and Auburn: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855. Gift of Carl Van Vechten.

Frederick Douglass, *Self-Made Men*, 1876-1877, manuscript notation likely by Charles Remond Douglass. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Portrait of Frederick Douglass, ca. 1870, Brady's National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Frederick Douglass, *The Race Problem: Great Speech of Frederick Douglass*. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Portrait of Frederick Douglass, ca. 1890, C.M. Bell Studio, Washington, D.C. Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Inscribed by Douglass to Mrs. Georgie Peterson, mother of Jerome Bowers Peterson, Washington D.C., March 13, 1882. Gift of Jerome Bowers Peterson.

Douglass After the War

The Evans Collection robustly represents Douglass's life in the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction periods, as well as those of his adult children, two of them Civil War veterans. Having learned to set type before the war, Douglass's children followed their father in pursuing careers as journalists and political activists. Their lives intersected with major events, like the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, several local and national Colored Conventions, and the rise and fall of the Radical Republican Party. Their efforts also illustrate the aftermath of the recent violent conflict, as in Frederick Douglass Jr.'s fundraising for the family of John Brown.

Douglass trained all three of his sons to set type, and Lewis, Frederick Jr., and Charles all had stints as printers at *The New National Era* (1870-1874), with "Douglass Brothers" listed on the masthead as publishers beginning in 1871. Douglass would tell several acquaintances that he had lost \$10,000 in the venture (roughly equivalent to \$265,000 today). But in its pages he found a mouthpiece for partisan editorializing, touting Republicans like Louisiana's P. B. S. Pinchback. *The New National Era* also conveniently provided employment to his sons. In a letter to a Judge Edmunds, Douglass excoriates the judge for choosing another printer over his own son Frederick.

All items from the Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Reproduction of ticket to impeachment of Andrew Johnson, original in scrapbook of Lewis Douglass.

Lewis Douglass, Letter to Amelia Loguen, January 7, 1866.

Reproduction of scrapbook page with clippings on Emancipation Day observance and Frederick Douglass's address at the Colored National Convention in Louisville, 1883.

“We had another stormy convention there being as many ignorant men as delegates, but on the whole the convention was a success and I feel morally certain will be productive of much good. We organized a State League and have taken measures to bring a suit against the State of Maryland for the purpose of making a test question as to the legality of refusing the colored man the right to give evidence in courts of Justice against white as well as colored citizens of the United States living in Maryland.”



Read a transcription of Lewis Douglass's letter to Amelia Loguen, January 7, 1866

Frederick Douglass, “The Louisiana Senator,” manuscript draft editorial about P.B.S. Pinchback for the *New National Era*.

“We can afford many things and make many sacrifices but we cannot afford to forsake our approved leaders and make ourselves contemptible by abandoning our right to be seen and heard in the senate of the Nation by a man of our own choice. [...] Sooner or later we certainly hope and believe that Senator Pinchback (who has conducted himself with so much dignity and intelligence during this struggle) will be safely in his seat in the senate.”



Read a transcription of Douglass's essay “The Louisiana Senator”

Address Delivered by Frederick Douglass at the Third Annual Fair of the Tennessee Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association, on September 18, 1873.
Washington: New National Era and Citizen Print.
With ownership inscription of Charles Douglass.

Reproduction of National Republican Convention badge for Lewis Douglass representing the New National Era, 1872, original in Scrapbook of Lewis Douglass.

Frederick Douglass, Letter to Judge Edmunds, August 29, 1876.

“I would like to see something like a recognition of my services in fair treatment of my son Fredk. I am a poor man and have lost ten thousand dollars following your words of encouragement in the effort to establish the New National Era, and I naturally enough feel grieved that you, fattening as you have done for years upon the triumph of the cause for which I have labored.”



Read a transcription of Douglass's letter to Judge Edmunds

Frederick Douglass Jr. participated in fundraising efforts on behalf of the family of the radical abolitionist John Brown, whom he viewed as a martyr and a hero of the abolition movement. His ledger and his scrapbooks record several donations. In a draft of a letter to an acquaintance in Boston, Frederick Jr. writes, “It would be a generous and appreciative act if the colored people should aid this family in their old age.”

Account book of Frederick Douglass Jr., ca. 1880-1892.

“Your Affectionate Father”: Letters from Haiti

Frederick Douglass served as U.S. minister resident and consul general to Haiti from 1889-1891. Several letters to Douglass’s sons in the Evans Collection provide further insight into his tumultuous tenure as a diplomat caught between U.S. imperial interests and those of the first Black republic. In a letter to Charles from April 1891, Douglass worries that the episode has tarnished his reputation. Nevertheless, Haitian President Florvil Hyppolite repaid Douglass with a position representing Haiti at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Douglass concludes his *Life and Times* calling his office as Minister Resident and the appointment to represent Haiti “a fitting and happy close to my whole public life.”

Even as he reflects on his own political fortunes and gripes about his old rival John Mercer Langston, Douglass asks with concern after his relatives, consoling Charles from abroad on the death of his teenaged daughter, Mary Louise. He asks Charles to save the winter apples at his Cedar Hill estate, and he expresses concern to both Lewis and Charles about his middle son, Frederick Jr., who struggled to find gainful employment. to Frederick Jr.’s malaise and poor health stemmed at least in part from grief over the death in 1889 of his wife Virginia. He himself would succumb to tuberculosis in 1892.

All letters from the Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

“I see that the Bee says I have resigned. The wish is father to the thought. The same paper said I would stay in Hayti only six months. No doubt my resignation would be very welcome news to those who want the place. With every disposition to be amiable I cannot bring myself to oblige them just yet. I say this for your private eye and not for the purpose of having the lie contradicted. I leave that to time – for I shall take my own time for resigning. The fellows that set afloat these stories should be allowed whatever satisfaction momentary lying can give them. [...] This country is about as peaceful as it ever is – and it is never without disturbance or rumour of disturbance.”

Letter to Charles Douglass, Port au Prince, February 25, 1891.



Read a transcription of Douglass's letter to Charles, February 25, 1891

“I am very anxious to know how Fred^k made out in obtaining a situation. [...] The more I think of Fredk's case, the more I see the need which a young man has of making and keeping friends with men of his day and generation. [...] In respect Fred^k has been unwise. He has never put himself in the way of making personal friends. He has met the world with a frown.”

Letter to Lewis Douglass, March 7, 1891.

NOTE The first page of the letter, which appears on the right, was written by a secretary. It changes over to Douglass's hand on the second page, and the final page, at left, is in Douglass's hand. The words appear to have been crossed out in pencil and then that pencil erased, perhaps because of Douglass's remarks about his son Frederick Jr.



Read a transcription of Douglass's letter to Lewis, March 7, 1891

“Yours is the only letter telling me of the death of Louisa [Mary Louisa Douglass, Charles’s daughter]. [...] The blow is a sad one to us all – but we must suffer and be strong. I feel deeply for you because yours had been a most bitter experience. Few families have been made to suffer as yours has in the loss of dear ones. But your experience should make you strong. [...] The world is still before you. You are leading an honorable life and setting a noble example. Your life is useful, if not all that you could wish it in some respects – but you can conquer all your ills – by bravely meeting them.”

Letter to Charles Douglass, Port au Prince, April 1891, with envelope showing wax seal of the United States Legation to Haiti.



Read a transcription
of Douglass’s letter
to Charles, April 1891

Douglass in the White City

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago, is infamous as a hallmark of modernity in the U.S., as well as for its grandiosity and affirmation of racist assumptions about progressive cultural development. The fair attracted nearly 30 million visitors to Jackson Park, with a 700-acre expanse of neoclassical structures dubbed, seemingly without intended irony, "The White City." African Americans were not admitted to the fair except on a hard-won designated day (on which Douglass delivered an address).

Douglass labored on the planning of the Haitian pavilion, fundraising and overseeing the operations at the fair from Chicago. To Charles, he declared, "I am holding up the standard for my people." But Douglass also contributed an introduction to a pamphlet critical of the fair, edited by Ida B. Wells in the midst of her fierce antilynching campaign. *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* indicted the fair organizers for ignoring the progress of African Americans since Emancipation and denounced the ongoing racism of the postwar years, from mob violence and unpunished lynchings to class exploitation. Douglass wrote that the exclusion of African Americans from the fair demonstrated that "though [slavery] is now gone, its asserted spirit remains."

Frederick Douglass, letter to Charles R. Douglass, October 7, 1893.

Reproduction of photograph of the Haitian Pavilion, *The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, St. Louis: N. D. Thompson, 1893.

Ida B. Wells, editor, *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition*, Chicago, 1893.

"Joseph H. [Douglass, Charles's son] is still in Chicago [...] He is playing finely, but I urge him on to perfection. I note what you say of the fruit at Cedar Hill. It grieves me much that trees I have planted with so much care – and fruit that should minister to our comfort and happiness – are going to waste. I should be glad if you would have my winter apples and pears picked and saved so that I can have a little apple sauce the coming winter. They might be put in barrels and left just back of the study. [...] I shall rejoice when I can again plant my feet on Cedar Hill. It seems hard to have such a home and enjoy it so little."

Letter to Charles Douglass, Jackson Park, Chicago, October 7, 1893.



Read a transcription
of Douglass's letter
to Charles,
Chicago, 1893

The Douglass Family

Frederick Douglass was husband, father, and grandfather to a large family, most of whom were financially dependent on him throughout his life. After Anna Murray Douglass, his wife of 44 years, died in 1882, Douglass prompted scandalized whispers by marrying Helen Pitts, a white woman 20 years his junior who was in his employ in the Recorder of Deeds office. Douglass's four adult children all followed in their father's footsteps vocationally, and they bore the tremendous weight of his reputation. All four children worked to preserve their mother's memory, with Rosetta penning an essay, "My Mother as I Recall Her," in 1900.

The Douglass Family was plagued by tragedy and grief. In 1860, they lost their youngest daughter, 11-year-old Annie, "the twinkle of her father's eye." Her mother's grief endured for decades. While serving in the Army during the Civil War, Lewis Douglass suffered injuries in the much-venerated Second Battle of Fort Wagner that left him unable to have children. Douglass's adult children were often squabbling and at odds, vying for their father's attention, financial support, and assets. Of the 21 children born to Rosetta, Frederick Jr. and Charles Douglass, half died before reaching adulthood, five in infancy. The eldest Douglass outlived half of his grandchildren and two of his children, including his namesake, Frederick Douglass Jr., who died at 50. How the patriarch bore these losses is hinted at by the condolences he offered his son Charles when he had lost his daughter Louisa, making five of the six children from his first marriage, as well as their mother:

[Y]our experience should make you strong. You are still young and strong and I hope much of life and usefulness before you. It is not for you to despair. The world is still before you. You are leading an honorable life and setting a noble example. Your life is useful, if not all that you could wish it in some respects – but you can conquer all your ills – by bravely meeting them.

Photograph of Cedar Hill, Douglass's home in Anacostia, Washington, D.C. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Frederick Douglass (1818-1895)

Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Charles Remond Douglass (1844-1920)

Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Anna Murray Douglass (1813-1882)

Facsimile photograph from original in Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Annie Douglass (1849-1960)

Facsimile photograph from original at John B. Cade Library, Southern University.

Rosetta Douglass (1839-1906)

This photograph is inscribed, likely to Lewis Douglass.

Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Six children of Estelle Sprague Weaver, daughter of Rosetta Douglass Sprague: William Weaver, Frederick Weaver, Rosetta Weaver Scott, Douglass Weaver, Rudolph Weaver, and Anna Weaver Teabeau

Woodard Studio, Kansas City. Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Lewis Henry Douglass (1840-1908)

Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Joseph Douglass, son of Charles Douglass, playing violin in 1905; with his wife, Fannie Douglass, and children, Blanche Elizabeth Douglass and Frederick Douglass III, in 1917

Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Frederick Douglass Jr. (1842-1892)

Facsimile photograph from original at Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, National Park Service.

Haley Douglass, son of Charles Douglass, with his wife Evelyn Virginia Dulaney Douglass

Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

“Your affectionate Grandpa, Frederick Douglass”

Frederick Douglass was, in his way, a doting grandfather, lavishing his grandsons Joseph and Haley, in particular, with praise and gifts. Both were sons of Charles, Douglass’s youngest and dearest son. Joseph Douglass, the sole surviving child from Charles’s first marriage, grew to become an accomplished concert violinist. Joseph and his grandfather played violin together frequently, performing in public at least once. One of Douglass’s eulogists recalled that the senior Douglass’s favorite song was “Suwanee River.”

The senior Douglass also expressed great pride in Charles’s youngest son, Haley, the only child from Charles’s second marriage. In a letter to Haley in the Evans collection, his grandfather urges him: “Go on, my dear boy, you are a boy now, but you will be a man some day, and I hope a wise and good man.” Haley went on to study at Howard and Harvard Universities and taught history and science at the storied Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. He seems to have inherited most of the papers in the Evans Collection from his uncles and his father.

Photograph of Joseph Douglass and Frederick Douglass, ca. 1890. Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Haley Douglass, letter to Frederick Douglass, March 3, 1893, and Frederick Douglass, letter to Haley Douglass, March 7, 1893. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

“Remember if I die I die in a good cause” The Douglasses as Soldiers

Black men were not admitted as soldiers in Union Army regiments until 1863, two years into the Civil War. Frederick Douglass led the recruitment effort, beginning with his own sons: his youngest son, Charles, was the first man in Rochester to enlist in the celebrated 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. Older brother Lewis quit his job to follow. Frederick Jr. did not enlist but accepted the dangerous assignment of traveling down the Mississippi River to recruit troops. Sustaining injuries in the 54th's famous engagement at Fort Wagner, Lewis was among nearly half the regiment wounded, captured, or killed, their sacrifice memorialized in song and statuary, including Augustus Saint-Gaudens's monument on Boston Common.

The Evans collection includes 42 richly detailed letters from Lewis to Helen Amelia Loguen, his sweetheart and later wife of 38 years, whom he unfailingly hails as “My Own Dear Amelia.” Several of the letters report on Lewis's time in the army, from training at Camp Meigs in Readville, Massachusetts, to the battlefield in South Carolina and Georgia. Boasting to Amelia about meeting war hero Robert Smalls and an already-immortal Harriet Tubman upon his arrival in Beaufort, Lewis would encounter the “irrepressible” Tubman again after being wounded at Fort Wagner – more gravely than he let on to either Amelia or his family. Illness from his injuries would lead to his discharge from the army.

Lewis Douglass, letters to Helen Amelia Loguen Douglass. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

“Our men are learning very fast and are now quite proficient in the manual of arms, our evening dress parades all ready [sic] attract many many visitors from the city of Boston every evening, of both complexion the paler brethren and sisters however predominating. Charley [i.e., Charles Douglass] is here and has taken charge of his company, he is a little green at first and has not learned yet to boss his men around, which is very necessary. [...] something tells me I will not be killed, though I may be wounded, and that is not so bad you know, it will be an honor. [...] I have been feeling lately like a person who is said to be homesick [...] ”



Read a transcription of Lewis's letter to Amelia Loguen, April 15, 1863

Charles Remond Douglass in his Grand Army of the Republic veterans' uniform, ca. 1900.

Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

“[W]e were six sea-sick days coming from Boston to Port Royal on Hilton Head. Our steamer the ‘De Molier’ was tossed and pitched about by the waves like a plaything in the hands of a child [...] frightening some while others held very serious expressions on their faces. To see the men huddled about on deck looking as though Death would be [a] welcome visitor was sad enough, many wishing they never had gone for a soldier. I stood it first rate, I was sick only a half hour. Arriving at Beaufort S.C. the first man to whom I was introduced was Robert Smalls. I then met Harriet Tubman, who is a captain of a gang of men who pilot the Union forces into the enemy's country.”



Read a transcription of Lewis's letter to Amelia Loguen, June 18, 1863

Henry Jones, composer, *Grand March of the 54th Mass. Vols.*, New York: Wm. A. Pond & Co., 1864.

Richard Benson and Lincoln Kirstein, *Lay This Laurel: An Album on the Saint-Gaudens Memorial on Boston Common ...* New York: Eakins Press, 1973.

“I have not been in any fight since the 18th of July [i.e., the battle at Fort Wagner], but three or four mornings ago we were called out at two o’clock expecting [they] were going to attack us, but they did not, so we marched back to our camp, after being among the shells a half hour. I see myself lionized in the New York Tribune the letter containing the puff I herewith enclose. [...] The colored women of Beaufort have shown their appreciation of the cause by helping take care of our sick and wounded under the irrepressible Harriet Tubman.”



Read a transcription
of Lewis’s letter
to Amelia Loguen,
August 15, 1863

“Old Man Eloquent”

Frederick Douglass is best remembered for his writings and his magnificent oratory, which served to spread his message and, perhaps less obviously, provide him with an income. For a two-year period in the late 1860s, Douglass lectured between twice a week and daily, frequently repurposing the same speeches. The 1860s and 1870s found him promoting suffrage and equal rights, campaigning for Republican presidential candidates like Ulysses S. Grant, and, importantly, reminding audiences of the purpose of the recent war. In a brief address given at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in 1871, Douglass insisted, “We must never forget that victory to the rebellion meant death to the Republic. We must never forget that the loyal soldiers who rest beneath this sod flung themselves between the nation and the nation’s destroyers.”

The Evans Collection includes several typescripts of Douglass’s speeches, many of which appear to have issued from the same typewriter, well after their original delivery. (Typewriters were not common in homes until the 1870s.) It is possible that one of Douglass’s sons typed the speeches so that the family could have a copy of these texts for their own consultation and memory.

“Now that this man has filled up the measure of his years, now that the leaf has fallen to the ground as all leaves must fall, Let us guard his memory as a precious inheritance, let us teach our children the story of his life, let us try to imitate his virtues, and endeavor as he did, to leave the world freer, nobler and better than we found it.”

Frederick Douglass, Oration on the Death of William Lloyd Garrison, 1879, corrected draft in Douglass’s hand. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.
Facsimiles have been substituted due to light sensitivity.



Read the published version of Douglass’s Oration on the Death of William Lloyd Garrison

“Now that this man has filled up the measure of his years, now that the leaf has fallen to the ground as all leaves must fall, Let us guard his memory as a precious inheritance, let us teach our children the story of his life, let us try to imitate his virtues, and endeavor as he did, to leave the world freer, nobler and better than we found it.”

Frederick Douglass, Oration on the Death of William Lloyd Garrison, 1879, corrected draft in Douglass’s hand. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.



Read the published version of Douglass’s Oration on the Death of William Lloyd Garrison

Photograph of Black GAR veterans at the Monument to the Unknown Dead, Arlington National Cemetery, ca. 1905. Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Frederick Douglass, speech delivered in Arlington, VA on May 30, 1871, undated typescript. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Frederick Douglass, *Address by Hon. Frederick Douglass, Delivered in the Congregational Church, Washington, D. C., April 16, 1883, on the Twenty-First Anniversary of Emancipation in the District of Columbia.* Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Invitation to Frederick Douglass to deliver a speech in Stamford, CT, 1888. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

“Providing a Legacy”: Walter O. Evans & Linda J. Evans

For over 40 years, Walter O. Evans and Linda J. Evans have fostered and promoted African American art and literature as collectors, patrons, and educators. Beginning his art collection as an undergraduate at Howard, Walter Evans eventually gathered a staggering who's who of African American artists, his collection including works by Edward Bannister, Richmond Barthé, Romare Bearden, Margaret Burroughs, Elizabeth Catlett, Robert Duncanson, Norman Lewis, Marion Perkins, Henry Ossawa Tanner, and Charles White. Along the way, he began collecting books and manuscripts, including collections of Frederick Douglass, James Baldwin, and Ollie Harrington, which have now joined the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection at Beinecke Library.

The Evanses have been committed to sharing their collection with a diverse audience. Frequently hosting and supporting artists and scholars over the years, they have convened events, toured their collection, and established programs in support of arts education and research. A traveling exhibit drawn from their art collection toured 45 institutions over a 16-year period. Portions of the collections currently on display were exhibited at the University of Edinburgh, the National Gallery of Art, Savannah College of Art and Design, and the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum at The Ohio State University, before the collections were acquired by Beinecke in 2014 and 2020. The Evanses have also regularly hosted researchers in their home in Savannah, turning their dining room into a veritable reading room, including for Yale Sterling Professor David Blight. Blight's Pulitzer Prize-winning biography *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* is dedicated to the Evanses.

In His Father's Footsteps— and Shadow: Lewis H. Douglass

In 1866, Lewis Douglass and Frederick Douglass Jr. went west, seeking livelihoods in Denver. There, Lewis began his first scrapbook, repurposing a discarded ledger. Perhaps inspired by his father, who also kept scrapbooks, Lewis clipped mentions of his father and his own letters to the editor from Denver newspapers, maintaining the album after he returned to Washington, D.C., in 1867. He accepted a position in the Government Printing Office but was denied admission to the racist printers' union, sparking a widely reported controversy.

Determined to work in his father's legacy, Lewis often lived in his shadow: an article reporting on a "Meeting of Colored Citizens in Denver" no sooner declares that Lewis was appointed chair of the proceedings than it compares his face to that of "the old Champion." A letter from his father alluding to the printers' union controversy anticipates Lewis becoming "one of the leaders of your people, a representative of their cause." Typical of the communication between Frederick Douglass and his eldest son, the letter expresses a stern, demanding pride, wanting of the tenderness Douglass offered his other children.

Scrapbook compiled by Lewis H. Douglass with reproduced pages, chiefly 1866-1872. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

P.S. Ryder, portrait of Lewis Douglass, undated. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

“If the effort now making to cast you down
and through you to cast down and destroy
your race shall serve to place you before
the country as one of the leaders of your
people, and a representative of their cause —
your experience will only conform to that
of many other men who have risen to
distinction in the world by persecution.”



Read a transcription of
Douglass's letter to Lewis,
July 21, 1869

“The Delegation in self respect cannot consent to be colonized”

This scrapbook, kept by Lewis Douglass, focuses on an 1866 delegation of Black men, including Lewis and the senior Frederick Douglass, who traveled to Washington to lobby Congress for the passage of civil rights legislation following the Civil War, before the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. When the delegation was denied admission to the gallery of the Senate, Lewis recorded a letter appealing to Senator Charles Sumner: “We are anxious to hear the discussions, but our self respect is greater than that desire.” The delegation insisted on and received an audience with President Andrew Johnson, their contentious encounter reported in several newspapers.

In a note bequeathing this scrapbook to Haley Douglass, his nephew, Lewis Douglass is careful to correct the mistake of the *Washington Weekly Chronicle*, which in 1866 attributed the group’s public statement solely to George T. Downing. Downing, a hotel owner and Underground Railroad agent, had jointly led the delegation with Frederick Douglass, but Lewis insists, “Frederick Douglass indited the reply to the President of which George T. Downing sought to claim credit. I wrote the reply according to my father’s dictation and not a word came from anybody else.”

Scrapbook compiled by Lewis H. Douglass with reproduced page, chiefly 1866. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

“A portion of the above delegation, decently attired presented themselves in an orderly manner to one of the doors of the Senate Gallery to enter it. When they were refused admissions by the door, alleging as the reason for the refusal that he had received orders not to admit colored persons but to direct them to a certain portion of the gallery. The delegation in self respect cannot consent to be colonized and do therefore respectfully pray to you as a friend of Justice and impartial liberty to do what in your Judgement the case may demand. We are anxious to hear the discussions, but our self respect is greater than that desire.”



Read a transcription of
the delegation's letter to
Charles Sumner

“FRED DOUGLASS CONFIRMED”

Most of the Douglass Family scrapbooks are dense with newspaper clippings covering the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction exploits of their celebrity patriarch. Notable topics include Colored Conventions, congressional proceedings, and presidential campaigns, as well as events in Douglass’s personal life. In 1877, Rutherford B. Hayes became President of the United States after a highly contested election that effectively ended the postwar Reconstruction. Hayes nominated Douglass as marshal of the District of Columbia, making Douglass the first African American to be nominated for an office requiring Senate confirmation. The appointment would give Douglass a regular income and offer him a break from his relentless lecture tours. The nomination and his confirmation garnered widespread press attention, even from overseas. An engraving of Douglass receiving African American visitors in his office appeared in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*. Four years later, President James Garfield appointed Douglass as Recorder of Deeds, another lucrative position that afforded him an opportunity to grant positions to his children Rosetta and Lewis.

Scrapbook compiled by Lewis H. Douglass with reproduced page, 1867-1877. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Frederick Douglass, a Celebrity at Home

In 1878, in part using the income from his new appointment as marshal of the District of Columbia, Frederick Douglass purchased a twenty-room house in the Anacostia section of Washington, D.C., then known as Uniontown. The estate, which would grow from nine to 24 acres of land, was called Cedar Hill. In 1880, *The Republic* (forerunner to *The New Republic*) published a feature about Douglass under the title “Celebrities at Home,” showcasing the Anacostia property.

Frederick Douglass Jr. seems to have begun keeping scrapbooks after, and possibly in emulation of, his older brother Lewis, or of his father, from whom a handful of scrapbooks also survive. Frederick Jr.’s scrapbooks include scattered manuscript notes. Sometimes these comment directly on the clipping at hand, while other notes offer facts about family life, especially his brothers, as when Frederick Jr. took in two of his brother Charles’s children for over two years: “Charles Fred.[rick] and Joseph Douglass came to live with F. Douglass Jr. on Monday before Thanksgiving November 1878, and were taken away by their father on Monday Jan’y 3d 1881”.

Scrapbook compiled by Frederick Douglass Jr. with reproduced page, 1868-1886. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Hillsdale D.C. Nov 29th 1880

Sunday Nov. 21 1880

President Hayes and John Sherman,
Secretary of the U.S. Treasury called on
Frederick Douglass Sr. at his residence
at Uniontown D.C., to pay their respects
to him. This was the first time that a
President of the United States ever called
on a colored man at his residence.

Fred^k Douglass Jr.

Curating His Father's Legacy: Frederick Douglass Jr.

Frederick Douglass Jr. carefully and intentionally annotated and labeled his scrapbooks, in some cases very obviously for future readers, whether his descendants or other imagined readers. In this scrapbook, Frederick Jr. has tipped in a page cut from another scrapbook, in an apparent effort to collate clippings related to the 1883 National Colored Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, where the elder Douglass delivered the inaugural address.

Frederick Jr.'s and Lewis's curation of their scrapbooks invites questions about each of their perspectives on their famous father. Frederick Jr. clipped several articles reporting on his father's remarriage to Helen Pitts in 1884, less than two years after the death of Anna Murray Douglass, the mother of Frederick Jr. and his siblings. Pitts was a clerk in Douglass's employ at the Recorder of Deeds office and had also acted as something of a personal assistant. Some twenty years his junior and white, Pitts came from a suffragist and abolitionist family. Her marriage to Douglass drew criticism from many sides. Commentators objected to an interracial marriage on obviously racist grounds, but the surprise union also caused tension in Douglass's family, especially with his daughter Rosetta, who was quoted in the press indicating she'd expected her father not to remarry in his mid-sixties.

Scrapbook compiled by Frederick Douglass Jr. with reproduced page, 1880-1890. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

The Pedestrian Frank Hart and Racial Equality in the Gilded Age

Though news coverage of their famous father predominates in the Douglass family scrapbooks, both Lewis and Frederick Jr. also saved general items of interest, especially in the broader cause of racial equality. Frank Hart, billed as “The Pedestrian,” was a competitor in the 19th century spectator – and wagering – sport of endurance walking. In a standard “six-day, go-as-you-please” competition held at Madison Square Garden in 1880, Hart covered 565 miles running, walking, and napping (on cots kept on sidelines for the purpose). His feat set the first world record held by a Black American in the sport of pedestrianism and earned him around \$20,000, close to half a million dollars today. Hart would later play in segregated baseball leagues, making him in many respects a forerunner of figures like Jesse Owens and Jackie Robinson, who were held up as champions of racial equality through representation in Olympic and professional sports. Frederick Douglass Jr.’s attention to Hart offers a broader view of his conception of race pride and progress, beyond the accomplishments of his father.

Scrapbook compiled by Frederick Douglass Jr. with reproduced page, 1870-1890. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Douglasses, Printers

The elder Douglass taught his four children to set type as adolescents, and everyone in the family contributed to the publication of Douglass's newspapers *The North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. The amateur newspaper *The Weekly Sun* may show how the Douglass Brothers played at their father's trade in their youth. The paper states that it is published "By Douglass, Belkizer & Company." Beinecke Library research fellow Benjamin Fagan has speculated that the paper was a collaboration of the Douglass brothers: the editorials were written by an 11-year-old Charles Remond Douglass; the correspondent signing "Jr." is 14-year-old Frederick Douglass Jr., and Lewis, who at 16 had taken on significant responsibilities in the offices of *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, may have printed the sheet. Rosetta Douglass, the oldest at 17, appears not to have been involved and may have been away at school at the time. She could also set type and composed editorials for *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

***The Weekly Sun*, April 12, 1856. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.**

Douglasses, Printers and Businessmen

All of the Douglass family scrapbooks were repurposed from other kinds of record books, mostly discarded ledgers. In the scrapbook in this case, Lewis Douglass pasted clippings in a scrawled, makeshift ledger for the operations of the *New National Era*, the newspaper venture on which the elder Douglass collaborated with his three sons from 1870-1874. Perhaps mindful of their interest to posterity, Lewis left most of the used ledger pages visible, using the blank pages for clippings. The entries reflect loans to the business from the Freedmen's Bank, where their father was briefly president, as well as loans from and payouts to Lewis, Frederick Jr., and Charles Douglass. The ledger also records income from various job printing gigs, including from a Masonic Order, and payments to a sizable staff of printers and apprentices, numbering as many as 11 at a time.

Scrapbook compiled by Lewis H. Douglass, with reproduced page, 1883-1889, with underlying records ca. 1870-1874. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Frederick Douglass Jr.'s Remembrances

In 1889, Virginia Hewlett Douglass died of tuberculosis, leaving her husband Frederick Douglass Jr. bereft. The two had been young sweethearts: another scrapbook includes a dance card and invitation for Frederick Jr. to join Virginia at her graduation from Cambridge High School in 1868, and they married the following year. Frederick Jr. seems to have turned to his scrapbooks to salve his grief, carefully copying Virginia's occasional verse into this book, recording birth and death information about his children, nieces, and nephews, and offering wrenchingly factual, detailed calculations: "We were married 20 years, 6 months, and 10 days. She was 40 years 6 months and 13 days old at the time of her death. She was married 4 months and 10 days longer than she remained single."

Frederick Jr. also catalogs his own life in this scrapbook, hinting at the source of his lifelong devotion to radical abolitionist John Brown. An impressionable 17-year-old the year of the Harper's Ferry raid, Frederick Jr. was sent by his father on an errand on behalf of Brown: "In 1859, I was the bearer of letters from the Rochester post office for John Brown, addressed 'Jay Hawkins,' care of Frederick Douglass, Lock Box 583."

Scrapbook compiled by Frederick Douglass Jr. with reproduced page, 1870-1890. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.



Read a transcription of
"F. Douglass in brief
from 1842 to 1890"

“One of note—a Personage”

On February 20, 1895, Frederick Douglass gave an address at the National Council of Women in Washington, D.C. That evening, at home in Anacostia, he collapsed, dying of heart failure. He was 77 years old.

Douglass’s family mourned along with the nation. Lewis Douglass, the eldest son, faithfully saved reports of Douglass’s death, sermons and ephemera from local memorial services, pamphlets of elegiac poems, and reports on memorials, including the 1899 dedication of the memorial statue of Douglass in Rochester. *Harper’s Weekly* re-ran on their cover an engraved portrait of Douglass, which had previously appeared in an 1883 issue. The obituary stated, “There was something strikingly noble in Mr. Douglass’s appearance, and whoever beheld him felt immediately sure that the man before him was one of note – a personage.” Some of the clippings in this volume came from press clipping services, agents who would save pieces on the topic of a client’s choosing. Lewis compiled these remembrances in a large U.S. Army Medical Department Morning Report Book originally created to log sick and wounded in the Civil War and already used as a ledger.

Scrapbook compiled by Lewis H. Douglass with reproduced page, 1895-1907. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Managing Their Father's Legacy: Compiling the Douglass Family Scrapbooks

Douglass's sons might be considered the first historians of their father's life. Lewis Douglass and Frederick Douglass Jr. took great care in curating scrapbooks (displayed on the other side of this floor) of press coverage, letters from their father, and other information. Lewis left his scrapbooks to his nephew Haley Douglass, one of just two surviving children of Lewis's younger brother Charles. Frederick Jr.'s scrapbooks may have gone to Lewis after his untimely death in 1892, and then on to Haley as well. In addition to documenting their father, the Douglass sons seem to have been conscious of writing themselves into history by way of these compilations.

Notes such as the one Lewis has written reminding himself to "insert in scrapbook the balance of proceedings of New Orleans Convention" suggest that Lewis and Frederick Jr. both kept their scrapbooks with future readers in mind, whether their descendants or other imagined readers. The brothers seem to have returned to the scrapbooks, reviewing them and adding notes on subsequent occasions.

Reproductions of cover, flyleaf, and note from scrapbooks compiled by Lewis H. Douglass. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Photograph of Charles Douglass, Joseph Douglass, and Lewis Douglass and photograph of Lewis Douglass with unidentified children in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Don't forget to
cut out and insert
in scrapbook
the balance of proceedings
of New Orleans
Convention
Upstairs in Mamy's
room in washstand
draw [drawer]

This Scrap Book I wish to have taken care of and which I give to my nephew Haley G. Douglass. It contains the history of my doing in re the Government Printing Office and several other matters. This book will be given on my death to Haley G. Douglass.

Lewis H. Douglass

August 2, 1907

Washington, D.C.

Lewis H. Douglass

1866

This Scrap Book is valuable for it shows in part the action of a committee of Colored people who visited the Capital of the Nation as a delegated body in the winter of 1866. Frederick Douglass indited the reply to the President of which George T. Downing sought to claim credit. I wrote the reply according to my father's dictation and not a word came from any body else.

This book is to be given to Haley G. Douglass at my death.

There are several other scraps that do not pertain to the above scrap book included in these pages.

Lewis H. Douglass

August 2, 1907

Remembering Anna Murray Douglass

Anna Murray Douglass, Frederick Douglass's wife of 44 years and an abolitionist who aided in her husband's escape from bondage, left scant records of her life in her own voice. As her daughter Rosetta wrote, "Unfortunately an opportunity for a knowledge of books had been denied her, the lack of which she greatly deplored. Her increasing family and household duties prevented any great advancement, altho' she was able to read a little."

Douglass wrote very little about Anna in any of his three autobiographies, but she is recalled in devoted remembrances from her children, including a speech given by Charles Remond Douglass. Charles recounts his mother taking up shoe-binding while supporting four children, aged one to six years, during a period when his father had fled the country to avoid capture. He adds, "My mother was the head of the house. She was the banker, the baker and general manager of the home." And, as if raising five young children with a frequently absent partner weren't enough, the Douglasses frequently hosted guests for long stretches and served as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Charles Remond Douglass, "Some Incidents of the Home Life of Frederick Douglass," speech delivered at Lincoln Memorial Church on February 13, 1917; Condolence notes to Lewis Douglass on the death of Anna Murray Douglass, 1882. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Death notice for Anna Murray Douglass, 1882, Frederick Douglass Correspondence with William L. Thomas.

Recovering Anna Douglass's Voice

In a 21st century effort to imagine Anna Douglass's interior life, M. Nzadi Keita poignantly captures Anna's thoughts. The collection of poems *Brief Evidence of Heaven* speculates about Anna's responses to her famous husband and the devastating loss of her 11-year-old daughter Annie, expressing both pride in and emotional distance from her sons.

M. Nzadi Keita, *Brief Evidence of Heaven: Poems from the Life of Anna Murray Douglass*, Camden, NJ: Whirlwind Press, 2014.

“If any sacrifice was made it was made by my mother who toiled side by side with my father from the day he escaped from bondage until the day of her death in 1882.”



Read a transcription
of “Some Incidents
in the Home Life of
Frederick Douglass”

Recording Douglass

Frederick Douglass's rhetoric was a breathtaking blend of fiery righteousness, Biblical lyricism, and lawyerly reason. On July 5, 1852, in what is among the best and best-remembered specimens of his oratory, Douglass delivered a self-described "fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke." Speaking to the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, Douglass laid the hypocrisy of American ideals at the feet of a majority-white audience of 600 attendees. The speech was soon published with the unassuming title "Oration, Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester." It is now most commonly known by the name Douglass added when he excerpted it in his second autobiography: "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

The Evans Collection includes typescripts of several of Douglass's speeches, some, like the two shown here, originally delivered long before the typewriter became a common household item in the 1870s. More research is needed to fully identify these typescripts, many of which seem to have issued from the same typewriter. We can speculate that they are copies created for the Douglass family's own use, at a time when printed copies of small-run pamphlets may have been difficult to obtain.

Frederick Douglass, "Speech of Mr. Douglass at a Mass Meeting Faniel [sic] Hall for Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia," February 4, 1842, undated typescript copy; "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" July 5, 1852, excerpts, undated typescript copy. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

Douglass, *Oration, Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, Rochester: Lee, Mann, & Co., 1852. Slavery Pamphlets Collection.*

Honoring Douglass

Douglass's sometime hometown of Rochester, New York, was the first to erect a statue in his memory, and that statue was the first in the United States to memorialize an individual Black American. The Douglass Monument was to be dedicated in September 1898. When the planners learned that the statue's delivery would be delayed, it was too late to cancel the ceremonies, which took place as scheduled. John Dancy, in a eulogy for Douglass, extolled the great abolitionist's prowess as an orator: "he transformed rebellious and antagonistic mobs into enthusiastic supporters." The monument shows Douglass in a speaking posture, and the pedestal features quotations from some of his most celebrated addresses. It was at last dedicated on June 9, 1899, before a crowd of 10,000, including New York Governor Theodore Roosevelt and antilynching activist Ida B. Wells, who declared, "He is not dead; his words live after him, and will be an inspiration to us in the many problems which confront us."

Photograph of the unveiling of Frederick Douglass Monument in Rochester, NY, June 9, 1899; Photograph of Frederick Douglass Monument. Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers.

"Unveiling Douglass" pinback button. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection.

John C. Dancy, *Frederick Douglass: An Address... on the Occasion of Unveiling the Monument Erected to the Memory of Frederick Douglass at Rochester N.Y., September 1898*, Charlotte, N.C.: A.M.E. Zion Publication House, 1899. Gift of Jerome Bowers Peterson.

John W. Thompson, *An Authentic History of the Douglass Monument*, Rochester: Rochester Herald Press, 1903. Gift of Jerome Bowers Peterson and Dorothy Peterson.

Steve Kingston, *Frederick Douglass: Abolitionist, Liberator, Statesman*, Brooklyn: National Negro Congress, Brooklyn and Manhattan Councils, 1941. Gift of Arthur B. Spingarn.

Collecting Douglass

Frederick Douglass's words and writings achieved a certain collectability even in his lifetime, as evidenced by his response to Robert Coster's request for a specimen letter at far right. Especially after his death, the events of Douglass's life were frequently abstracted to support various causes, including Booker T. Washington's educational programs and U.S. war efforts.

Some may find the commodification of so-called "Douglassiana" ironic, given his life's work against the auction block. Others may see in the valuation of Douglass artifacts a form of regard that rightfully equals that of his contemporaries Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman. Since its founding in 1941, The James Weldon Johnson (JWJ) Memorial Collection at Beinecke Library has received many contributions of Douglass material. Several of the items in this case belonged to Randolph Linsly Simpson, a white collector whose interest in Douglass bloomed into a large collection of photographs of African Americans and other memorabilia. The letters to Thomas Higginson (a copy, not written or signed by Douglass) and "Mr. Cook" were both purchased for the collection – presumably for the prices penciled on them – by Carl Van Vechten, the founder of the JWJ Collection.

Frederick Douglass autograph note, souvenir spoon, and souvenir textile. Randolph Linsly Simpson African American Collection.

Frederick Douglass, copy letter to Thomas Higginson, letter to Mr. Cook, and letter to Robert Coster. James Weldon Johnson Collection Files. Gifts of Carl Van Vechten.



Read transcriptions of
Douglass's letters to
Thomas Wentworth Higginson,
"Mr. Cook," and Robert Coster

Picturing Douglass

While Douglass's words may seem omnipresent, they are far outstripped by his likeness, which appears on everything from street murals to postage stamps, comic books to skateboard decks. Douglass himself was a great lover of photography and used the medium to his advantage. As John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier have demonstrated in their exhaustively researched book *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, Douglass was photographed more than any of his American contemporaries, including Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman, with 160 distinct portraits of him surviving. Douglass coincidentally gained his freedom in 1838, the year before the earliest form of mass photography, the daguerreotype, was invented. Several of his addresses focusing on the medium have inspired works including Sir Isaac Julien's *Lessons of the Hour—Frederick Douglass*, a ten-screen film installation that in part imagines both Frederick and Anna Douglass sitting for their portraits in J. P. Ball's salon.

Photographic portraits of Douglass have been frequently copied, and Douglass has been depicted by innumerable African American artists, including Elizabeth Catlett, Charles White, and Harlem Renaissance artist-illustrator Albert Alexander Smith.

Golden Legacy *Illustrated History Magazine*, *Frederick Douglass, Part One and Part Two*. Fitzgerald Publishing Co. Inc., 1969 and 1970.

John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American*, New York: Liveright, 2015.

Albert Alexander Smith, portrait of Frederick Douglass, etching, ca. 1922.

Representing Douglass

Charles Chesnutt and Shirley Graham

Frederick Douglass published three autobiographies, in 1845, 1855, and 1881 (with a revised edition in 1892). But biographers have found the pull of his life story irresistible, with the first book-length biography of Douglass, by Howard University dean James Monroe Gregory, appearing in 1893, two years before Douglass's death. Several of Douglass's biographers, including Booker T. Washington, are celebrated household names in their own right.

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection includes drafts and notes for two Douglass biographies. Charles Chesnutt, best remembered for his fiction, published his account of Douglass in the series Beacon Biographies of Eminent Americans. The drafts of this work include Chesnutt's notes, in shorthand, recording a Douglass speech in Raleigh, N.C., that he witnessed in 1880. Shirley Graham DRA '40 (later Shirley Graham Du Bois) produced an account of Douglass's life aimed at younger readers, trying on the titles *The North Star* and *The Unquenchable Flame* before settling on *There Was Once a Slave*.

Charles W. Chesnutt, Notes from Frederick Douglass speech, Raleigh, N.C., 1880; draft of *Frederick Douglass*. Charles W. Chesnutt Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection.

Charles W. Chesnutt, *Frederick Douglass*, Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1899. Gift of Jerome Bowers Peterson.

Shirley Graham [Du Bois], *There Was Once a Slave... The Heroic Story of Frederick Douglass*, New York: J. Messner, Inc., 1947. Gift of Carl Van Vechten.

Shirley Graham [Du Bois], Research and draft, *There Was Once a Slave*, 1947. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection.

Reading Douglass

William Pickens and Langston Hughes

Many Black writers and intellectuals have acknowledged their debt to the writings of Frederick Douglass. The library of author, activist, and 1904 Yale graduate William Pickens includes a first edition of *My Bondage and My Freedom*, with annotations apparently made in the years 1938-1939. Notes include remarks like “hot!”, “a hit!”, “ah ha!”, and “doggone good!” Pickens frequently compares the incidents of Douglass’s life in the late 1830s to his own present a century later: “Not even in 1939 has it entirely subsided.” Responding to excerpts from Douglass’s famous July 4th oration, he writes, “The Old Boy had righteous wrath that day. – A great denunciation!”

Langston Hughes, one of the most celebrated poets in the United States, grew up reading Frederick Douglass, recalling the great orator in his autobiography *The Big Sea* as one of the “folks who left no buildings behind them – only a wind of words fanning the bright flame of the spirit down the dark lanes of time.” Late in his own life, Hughes penned a poem in homage to Douglass. It would be published in *The Liberator* less than six months before his death and concludes with the lines: “He died in 1895./*He is not dead.*”

Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, with autograph and manuscript notes by William Pickens, New York and Auburn: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855; *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, Hartford, CT: Park, 1881. From the library of William Pickens.

Langston Hughes, drafts of “Frederick Douglass,” 1965-66. Langston Hughes Papers.

“He is not dead”: A Library of Douglass

As both Ida B. Wells and Langston Hughes declared of Frederick Douglass, more than half a century apart, “he is not dead.” Douglass has served as the inspiration for later rhetoric, political action, and movements, as well as countless works of both fiction and non-fiction. Black History Month itself, now nearly a century old, was chosen to coincide with Douglass’s birthday. While his story is well told, research about Frederick Douglass is ongoing and far from settled. The Walter O. Evans Collection helps to complicate and elaborate our picture of this celebrated but complex figure.

Selected works from the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of African American Arts and Letters.

LOVE JIMMY:

Letters from James Baldwin to Mary Painter, 1957

When he moved from Greenwich Village to Paris in 1948, novelist James Baldwin met fellow American Mary Garin Painter, who had recently moved to the city as an economist with the Marshall Plan. In the years to follow, Painter would become one of Baldwin's closest friends. Their relationship is well documented in the more than 100 letters Baldwin wrote to Painter between 1953 and 1964.

The Walter O. Evans Collection of James Baldwin makes evident the depth of their friendship: he confides in Painter about struggles with writing, romance, and family; he considers current events, chronicling his increasingly public role in the Civil Rights Movement. His letters are, by turns, loving and troubled, humorous, and searching, joyful, and heartbroken. The group on view are a selection from 1957, an eventful year during which Baldwin traveled widely, including his first trip to the American South. He wrote Painter from France, New York, Alabama, and Switzerland, about his experiences and observations, his love life, their mutual friends, the ups and downs of his writing career. He described new and ongoing projects, including his third novel, *Another Country*, a dramatic adaptation of his novel *Giovanni's Room*, and essays about race and civil rights in America.

Though we can learn much from an archive of correspondence, the view of the past such collections offer is often fragmentary. Along with complete letters, envelopes marked with dates and return addresses, and picture postcards, we find empty envelopes, scattered pages of incomplete missives, messages that become indecipherable out of context. This is to say nothing of the ways the content of an intimate letter can be obscure to all but its recipient: inside jokes, private nicknames, shared secrets referenced by allusion. In libraries, we often find just one side of an exchange, leaving us to make guesses about responses, questions, and perspective (Mary Painter's letters to Baldwin are in the James Baldwin Papers at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Black Research).

James Baldwin, photographed by Carl Van Vechten in 1955; postcard, telegram, loose envelopes, letters from Baldwin to Painter, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection, Beinecke Library.

Reproduction of a photograph of Mary Painter in 1940s, from the Mary Garin-Painter Papers, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University.

In 1957, James Baldwin was at work on his third novel, *Another Country*. Published in 1962, *Another Country* is an ambitious narrative considering the lives and relationships of a group of friends and acquaintances in New York in the 1950s. The novel explores many then-provocative subjects: interracial love and friendship, homosexuality and bisexuality, suicide and adultery.

Though it would be years before he completed the book, in 1957 Baldwin already planned to dedicate it to Mary Painter; in his letters to her throughout that year, he often discussed his work on the novel, referring to it as “your book.”

Volume two of a typescript draft of *Another Country*, annotated and inscribed to Mary Painter, (undated).

It's your book after all

February 2, Corsica;

Undated letter, Corsica

Having retreated from Paris to the Mediterranean island of Corsica, James Baldwin wrote to Mary Painter in early 1957 about his daily life, his writing, and his plans for the coming year. His 1957 letters from Corsica address Baldwin's writing life in all its aspects – from physically sitting at his typewriter with his curious cat pawing the moving keys, to his editors' deadlines and demands, from literary prizes to the publication of his work in translation. Living by his pen, Baldwin was ever aware of the financial aspects of a professional writer's career (writing for Hollywood, he noted, "can bring in quite a little change...and a little change, to quote Pearl Bailey, is exactly what I need"). Alongside these professional concerns, Baldwin included intellectual and emotional details of his progress writing his third novel, *Another Country*, which he would dedicate to Painter. Sharing the challenges and pleasures of his work with his friend, Baldwin added: "I'm in the thick of it and very scared...I keep looking at your photograph and saying to myself, It's got to be a good book, it's got to be."

"...and that wretched band of people who are cutting up all over *Another Country*. Great God, baby, they are turning into something...They are a little more than I bargained for..."

Already in the early months of the year, Baldwin had upcoming travels on his mind; a return to the United States was beginning to take shape, though his plans were not at all set. Around this time Mary Painter moved from Paris back to the U.S. Her move signaled a major change to the community the friends shared in Paris, where they were known to spend evenings talking, drinking, and listening to jazz records, and pointed toward new shared acquaintances they might yet have in Washington, D.C., and New York City.

Toiling my way homeward

March 17, Corsica;

March 19, Nolay, France, postcard;

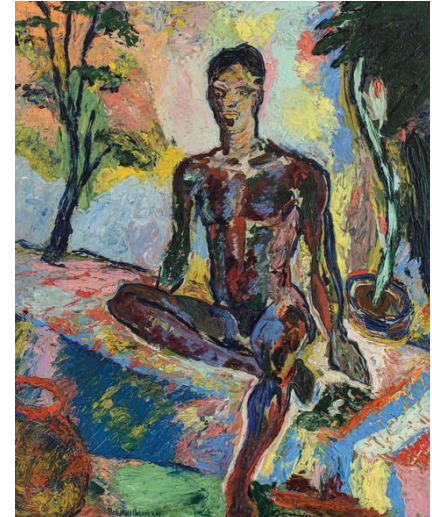
May 23, Corsica

In the spring of 1957, James Baldwin wrote Painter as he returned to Paris for the French publication of his first novel, *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. While still a teenager in New York City, Baldwin started the years-long process of writing the book, which is based in part on his own early life. When it was published by Knopf in 1953, the novel earned nearly universal praise by critics; Baldwin was celebrated as a novelist of great promise. His March trip to Paris was complicated by a bus breakdown in the town of Nolay (“... which I rather hope I never see again....”). About the translation, Baldwin expressed trepidation about the French title, *The Chosen Ones*: “Mountain comes out here on March 15th under the title Les Elus Du Seigneur, which is rather uninspired, I think....” When he told Mary “I’m toiling my way homeward...” Baldwin referred both to his progress writing *Another Country* and his plan to return to the U.S. later in the year.

Baldwin's plan to introduce Painter to playwright Owen Dodson included his hope that Dodson might give her a portrait, painted by their mutual friend Beauford Delaney; Baldwin left the painting behind when he visited Dodson in 1955 – a visit that ended with a disagreement and an enduring rift. What happened next is unclear: Dodson refused to return the painting or claimed not to have it. Thought to be lost for decades, it surfaced among Dodson's belongings after his death in 1983.



What happened next is unclear: Dodson refused to return the painting or claimed not to have it. Thought to be lost for decades, it surfaced among Dodson's belongings after his death in 1983.



Owen Dodson, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1948; *Dark Rapture* (James Baldwin), 1941, Beauford Delaney. Collection of halley k harrisburg and Michael Rosenfeld.

**“Splendors and miseries of
the African-American people”**

Baldwin sent Painter clippings about the French publication of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* – a prominent notice in *Le Monde* and an interview published in *Combat*. For French readers, he described the book as “essentially a psychological novel.” About his treatment of race, Baldwin said: “I never insisted particularly on the racial question.... Naturally, the fact that my characters are Black adds a problem to their other human problems.” And he praised the work of his translators, noting: “...it was especially difficult to translate because it had to do with rendering the almost-untranslatable irony of African-Americans, an irony which is indeed less in words than in the rhythm of speech.”

To tell a particular story

June 14, Corsica

With his trip to the U.S. coming into focus, Baldwin wrote a searching letter to Mary Painter, an associative exploration of aspects of his writing life in recent months and, by extension, his understanding of the responsibilities and risks of being a writer. “This letter, which will not be coherent,” he began, “is yet not meant to be frivolous.” Baldwin told his friend: “what I’m thinking about right now is... perhaps, something to do with getting my private and my public lives in something resembling an alignment.” Noting the high stakes of all he’d been considering, Baldwin added: “For, otherwise, I’ll not have either.” Finding the demands of his vocation tangled with his need to live with dignity, he sought his friend’s counsel: “Now, think about me as you know me, as coldly as you can. I mean: I trust your love for me and I also trust your judgment.” He returned to the state of his manuscript *Another Country*, set in New York City, writing: “I plan to come home, look hard at New York one more time, then probably tear the goddamned thing to pieces...and either emerge with the [manuscript] or get carried to the graveyard.”

“...I can, apparently, create convincing humans on paper; and never seem to be prepared for them in real life.”

“Dreadful indeed, because, you know, the things which threaten me are also the things which made me; if I hadn’t been born black or poor or American I’d have a very different psychology and very different problems; but I wouldn’t, on the other hand, exist.”

“The novel is both done and undone....All those people. And I’ve got to tell the truth about them all...”

Having, after all, come so far

July 10, French Line;

July 23, New York City

After much anxious anticipation, James Baldwin finally returned to the United States in July of 1957. It had been nearly ten years since he'd moved to Paris and two years since his last visit. The prospect of returning home had occasioned in Baldwin a probing introspection; during his journey on a French Line ship, he felt an increasing sense of dread. He wrote Painter: "Become rather more depressed with each day that we get closer to my hometown...." In part, Baldwin's dismay rose from a sense that during his years away he had changed in fundamental ways, ways others might not like. In deep emotional turmoil, Baldwin experienced a painful outburst soon after arriving in the States. During a visit with Painter in D. C., Baldwin broke with his lover Arnold, an American jazz musician with whom he'd had a volatile relationship for some time. Days later, he sent a "Special Delivery" letter to Painter, apologizing for "running out" on their time together and sharing his feelings of confusion and heartbreak.

A STORY THE NATION IS WRITING

October, letters from the South

In the fall 1957, just weeks after President Eisenhower had signed the Civil Rights Act into law, Baldwin traveled to the South, visiting Atlanta, Georgia, Birmingham, Alabama, Nashville, Tennessee, Little Rock, Arkansas and other cities. Though he understood himself to be an American “native son,” he had never been to this part of the country, and he arrived to a region in turmoil. With financial support and article commissions from the *Partisan Review* and *Harpers*, Baldwin visited Tuskegee, Alabama, five months into a boycott of city stores in protest of policies that effectively barred Black citizens from voting. He later arrived in Montgomery just a year after the end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. When he visited Charlotte, North Carolina, school desegregation was just beginning, three years after the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* declared school segregation unconstitutional. Baldwin interviewed activists, students, and families about their experiences; he attended church services and mass meetings; he met and spent time with Reverends Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy and other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. Baldwin wrote detailed letters about his experiences and ideas; he told Painter about the emotional and physical strain of his travels: “Having reactions symptomatic of hysteria barely controlled,” he wrote from Birmingham, “always on the edge of tears; can’t sleep; headaches – a touch of the flu or something.” Baldwin described the work of the civil rights activists he met; lamenting the many forms of resistance they faced – political, personal, violent – Baldwin wrote: “And still the bloody, suicidal comedy drags on.” The significance of his work documenting his experience and, further, his increasingly important role in the Civil Rights Movement became undeniable during this trip. Essays recounting his journey would be collected in Baldwin’s influential book *Nobody Knows My Name* in 1961. In the title essay, Baldwin described his sense of feeling like a stranger in his own country: “A Negro born in the North who finds himself in the South is in a position similar to that of the son of the Italian emigrant who finds himself in Italy.... Both are in countries they have never seen, but which they cannot fail to recognize.”

Co-curated by Brittany Levingston & Nancy Kuhl

Far too much to begin
the attempt

October 1, Charlotte, North Carolina

Writing from the office of local newspaper *The Charlotte Israelite*, Baldwin asked Painter to send a copy of his book *Notes of a Native Son* to Gus Roberts, one of four students then desegregating Charlotte high schools. Baldwin noted in the margin of his letter that from a population of around 50,000 Black people, only 45 applications were received to desegregate schools, a consequence of the threats and intimidation Black students and families faced after *Brown v. Board of Education*. Baldwin wrote about Roberts and his mother in an essay, "The Hard Kind of Courage," published in *Harper's* in 1958. He changed the title to "Fly in the Buttermilk" when the essay was republished in *Nobody Knows My Name* in 1961.

"...my head and my heart seem to grow heavier by the hour."

"Life would be simpler than it is if you could simply condemn vast bodies of people as wicked--but most people are not wicked. They are cowards and they are afraid...."

Entering a ghost town

October 14, Tuskegee, Alabama;

Winter 1959, “The Partisan Review”

After having been “badly frightened” in Montgomery, Baldwin wrote the longest letter of his “grueling trip” through the South from Tuskegee, where African Americans were engaged in a boycott of white-owned businesses, leaving shops empty or closed and rendering the city “a ghost town.” Staged in response to Local Act 140, State redistricting legislation that redrew Tuskegee boundaries to deprive Black citizens of their right to vote in city elections, the protest started in June; it would continue for more than a year. Referring to the desegregation of busses that followed the Birmingham Bus Boycott, Baldwin wrote that Alabama segregationists “...are not taking their defeat in the matter of the busses with anything like grace.” “They are,” he continued, “compelled to keep trying—with what interior consequences only God can tell. And when the deal at last goes down, they will only have added blood to blood.” He shares impressions of meeting leaders Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Ralph Abernathy and provides detail of a failed desegregation attempt in Charlotte after a Black student, Dorothy Counts, refused to return to her high school after suffering violent threats. Baldwin offers insight on ways social class, self-interest, and the cowardice of government leadership contributed to a silence that amounted to “tacit consent to the mobs.” The essay Baldwin wrote for *The Partisan Review* about this leg of his trip would become the title work of his enduringly influential book, *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961).



“Met Rev. King: great man, who looks rather like some of the snot-nosed kids I’ve watched grow up. Also met his aide-de-camp and the man who calls the strategic shots, Rev. Abernathy, a ferociously patient, gentle, rock-like man whose calmly stated intention is to abolish segregation--‘in all forms’....”



“... nor did any of the ‘many children’ take [Dorothy Counts’s] side against the ‘hoodlum’ element; nor did any business-man, or any person of weight in the city do anything: they were simply ‘sickened’ and ‘shamed,’ which is, after all, pretty easy.”

A city which is busy preparing its doom

October 18, Birmingham, Alabama;
October 1958, “Harper’s”

From Birmingham, Baldwin wrote of walking the city, talking to people; he met a white civil rights activist preparing to leave the city: “[he] can’t take any more burning crosses, the isolation, economic reprisals.” The activist told Baldwin: “he dare not ever leave [his wife] alone in their house at night.” His letter was written from the A. G. Gaston Motel, run by an African American entrepreneur in the segregated city. Hotels, motels, and inns like the Gaston Motel were critical safe places for Black travelers in the South who could not count on availability or safety at residences or restaurants owned and patronized by white citizens. In 1963, the Gaston Motel became the headquarters of Martin Luther King’s consequential Birmingham protests; in room 30 of the motel, King planned his march with his followers in defiance of an Alabama Circuit Court injunction against civil rights protests. After his resulting arrest, King wrote one of his most vital and imperative statements of the movement, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” In closing, Baldwin reminded Painter that he would visit just two more cities before he returned for “a drink in your spectacularly integrated house.”

“This poor country. No body seems to give a damn about it. I’ve never in my life been on a sadder journey or through a sadder country....”

It scarcely means anything to say that one will try. And yet, one must keep trying.

December 7, Peterborough, New Hampshire

Baldwin's trip in the South left him depleted and depressed. After a few weeks in New York City, he withdrew to the MacDowell Colony, an artists' retreat in rural New Hampshire. MacDowell was a favorite place to write – he was tired, but in truth he'd gone to MacDowell to work, not to rest. *Another Country* was still unfinished, but now Baldwin was shifting focus. A theatrical production of his novel *Giovanni's Room* was in the works; when he read the draft script, Baldwin realized immediately that it was “unplayable.” “Though it depended very heavily on my dialogue,” he wrote Painter, “it had nothing whatever to do with my book.” After rereading the script – “my heart descending each time into my boots,” he decided to write it himself. A production of his play *The Amen Corner* was also in development – another script to write. Baldwin was troubled by relationships, too, he told Painter – an argument with a friend, the still fresh grief of his summer break-up. Finding connection among love, passion, and art, he wrote: “I... am compelled to respect, wherever I find it, and in whatever guise, or surrounded by whatever dangers: the sacred fire.”

Even in the earliest stages, Baldwin was hoping to involve well-known collaborators in a stage production of his novel *Giovanni's Room*. He hoped actor Marlon Brando, an acquaintance, might sign on to play a key role, and director Elia Kazan, who had previously expressed interest in his work, might direct.



He told Mary: “If I can get Kazan, then I can get Brando; if I can get Brando, then I can get Kazan. So.” Baldwin considered comparable equations for *The Amen Corner*, setting his sights in this case on singer and actor Ethel Waters.



Elia Kazan and Marlon Brando, on the set of *On the Waterfront*, 1954; Ethel Waters, *A Member of the Wedding*, 1952.

“Love is the only thing that makes this sad world bearable in the least, all that redeems any one of us from the horror of ourselves and our condition.”

Yes, my dear.

December 26, Lausanne, Switzerland;

1962, New York: Dial Press, “Another Country”

Late in December of 1957, Baldwin made an unexpected trip to Switzerland, sent by *Esquire* magazine to interview pioneering comedic actor and director Charlie Chaplin. Baldwin had long admired Chaplin’s work and was eager to meet him; in the end, however, the meeting couldn’t be arranged. In a darkly comic reflection on his recent experiences, Baldwin wrote to Painter of an imagined future critic “who is even now practicing throwing rocks.” This critic, he suggested, “will begin his dissertation on Baldwin thus: ‘Around the age of thirty five, Baldwin underwent an artistic and racial crisis and began to hate everyone...’” As he had earlier in the month and with his recent time in the U.S. still on his mind, Baldwin considered a painful – even hopeless – tangle of love and work, happiness and grief, responsibility, and expectation: “I don’t think I have ever suffered before as I have in these last few months. I do not regret it. My choices were fearfully clear, in spite of the fact that I did not want to know it.” In a postscript, Baldwin referred to a now-lost photograph, “the best I have of myself,” taken a week earlier. He returned, with bitter apprehension and with pride, to “Mary’s book,” *Another Country*, which he had been writing throughout: “In all of this, somehow, or perhaps not ‘somehow’ at all, I’ve managed to beat the novel into shape sufficiently.”



In the midst of the pressures and demands Baldwin felt at the end of 1957, he wrote to Painter about a painful strain in his relationship with long-time friend and one-time mentor, artist Beauford Delaney. Baldwin met Delaney, who was some 20 years his senior, when he was just 16 and seeking footing as a Black artist. A successful Black painter, a gay man from a similar background, Delaney offered a crucial life example to the emerging writer; he also took Baldwin to galleries, played him jazz records, and introduced him to a like-minded community. In turn and in time, Baldwin would inspire Delaney with his social consciousness, activism, and expatriatism. The two men would influence and support one another throughout their lives.

Beauford Delaney, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1953.

“It’s been a terrible, terrible, invaluable time.”

RONALD REAGAN AND OTHER EVILS

Homelessness, hunger, poverty, and Ronald Reagan (pictured above on horseback) are among the most-repeated subjects of Ollie Harrington's work. From his first assignments at the *National News* and the *New York State Contender* in the early 1930s, to his work for the *New York Daily World* in the late 1960s and beyond, Harrington bore witness to many phases of American social and political life. To Harrington, President Reagan embodied governmental greed and dishonesty. Harrington disapproved of what he saw as failure after failure to help Americans across races and classes live with dignity.

These three iterations of "Free Soup," published separately, depict a pattern in America's past, present, and future. Without a revolution, poor Americans would continue to be at the mercy of a vicious government and, consequently, would continue to struggle – regardless of their skin color.

"HOW BOOTSIE WAS BORN"

The character that Harrington credits with propelling his career is Bootsie, a relatable Harlemit with a balding head, round belly, and prominent mustache. Born in December of 1935, Bootsie regularly appeared in Harrington's *Dark Laughter* comic strip in the *New York Amsterdam News*. Though Bootsie never spoke a word himself, Harrington used other characters' words to and about Bootsie to explore how Black Americans navigated racism, poverty, interpersonal conflict, romance, parenting, and more. As a silent participant, Bootsie collected information about the world around him.

Much like Bootsie, Harrington viewed himself as a filter for his world. "There I was right in the middle of all this action," Harrington writes. "I didn't have to think up gags. All I had to do was walk across to the Big Apple, or Small's, latch onto a shorty and watch. The cartoons drew themselves."

THE SYMBOLISM OF CHILDREN

Children appear frequently in Ollie Harrington's work. They joke, they work, and they parrot the adults around them. As they figure out the world, they represent Harrington's hope for a safer, more just future.

On a more personal note, children gesture toward the origin of Harrington's career. One of Harrington's earliest and most influential encounters with racism occurred in a Bronx classroom. His teacher called Harrington and the only other Black student "both trash that belonged to the wastebasket" in front of their peers. With few avenues for expressing his emotions, Harrington found catharsis in drawing his teacher in various harrowing situations. Thus began roughly half a century of Harrington's using visual media to cope with U.S. racism, imperialism, capitalism, and other social ills that plagued the country.

These images are the verso and recto of the same sheet.

WHAT WE HOPE TO BE

"We are not people who despair – we are people who, having lived on the edge of life, want simply to live life fully, to live life without barriers, to be all that we can be and a little of what (like you) we hope to be." Ollie Harrington, "Where Is Justice?"

We can still laugh and cry along with Harrington today, in part because the change he wished to see is still in progress. As Black Americans and their allies continue to fight – to insist that Black lives matter – we can see so much of our current condition in Harrington's renderings of the past. His work testifies to the bridging power of art, making connections between *us* and *them*, *here* and *there*, *then* and *now*.

DARK LAUGHTER

In his own words, “satire and humor can often make dents where sawed-off billiard sticks can’t.” The comic format allowed Harrington to draw viewers in with an approachable and eye-catching medium, then deliver a gut-punching truth or gut-busting laugh. Often, Harrington’s work evokes both.

In the early 1960s, after the death of his good friend Richard Wright, Harrington took up residence in East Berlin and remained there after the erection of the Berlin Wall. He sustained himself by providing cartoons to *Eulenspiegel* and *Das Magazin*, platforms that presented Harrington the opportunity to create and print his work in color for the first time. He provided German publications with insights into racism, politics, and international conflicts while showcasing more of his artistic ability through another means of expression. He enjoyed his work and remained a resident until his death in 1995.

“WHY I LEFT AMERICA”

In 1951, Ollie Harrington was sitting in a hotel bar when an army Intelligence agent warned him of the target on his back. In a speech he delivered in Detroit entitled “Why I Left America,” Harrington recounted that he had been labeled a suspected Communist after his 1946 debate with Attorney General Tom Clark. Though he was not worried for his own safety, he did worry about damaging the reputation of the NAACP, in which he was then serving as a public relations director. This concern is likely one of the reasons that Harrington left the organization in 1947.

With his worldly life experience, Harrington was able to connect the events he witnessed in the South Bronx to the struggles faced by marginalized groups across the country and the globe. That synthesizing skill made him an indispensable asset to the publications for which he worked. His art made the entangled nature of the world’s issues plain.

HARRINGTON'S POLITICAL LIFE

Though he never served as a soldier, Harrington witnessed events of World War II and the Cold War up close. In 1944, the *Pittsburgh Courier* sent Harrington to North Africa and Italy as a war correspondent. In 1961, he watched the Wall rise in East Berlin, though he elected to stay and remained there even after it fell. Each of these experiences, in addition to his work as an organizer for the NAACP and life as a Black man, allowed Harrington to see U.S. imperialism from a unique point of view. In the final decades of his career, Harrington was an invaluable resource to European publications interested in American issues.

NOTE: The word “spook,” which has historically derogatory racial connotations, saw a reclamation in the late 1960s. Like Sam Greenlee and his 1969 novel *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, Harrington could be gesturing toward the double entendre of the slur and espionage jargon.

THE 1940S: A CHANGING WORLD

Still early in his career, Harrington began to expand his artistic and political prowess throughout the 1940s, starting with his *Jive Gray* comic strip in the *Courier*, which often featured commentary about the Black military experience. That work led to his position as the *Courier*'s war correspondent, covering North Africa and Italy. While abroad, Harrington met the NAACP's Walter White, who called on Harrington to form the organization's public relations department in 1946. Though he left the organization by the end of 1947, he would likely be familiar with Roy Wilkins, prominent Civil Rights activist and Executive Secretary-turned-Director of the NAACP (1955-1977).

Harrington's mid-century work continued to respond to the cascade of societal changes around him, as schools integrated and nations warred and recovered. Through it all, Harrington demonstrated unwavering commitment to political action and artistic representation.

HARRINGTON, THE BULLDOG

Before graduating from the Yale School of Fine Arts in 1940, Ollie Harrington honed his artistic talent at a vocational textile high school, as well as the National Academy of Design. He spent the first three decades of his career working almost exclusively in black-and-white or grayscale, but in the 1960s, German publications presented Harrington with the opportunity to work in full color. As such, admirers of Harrington's work can track the progression of his long career not only from the content of the art, but the medium itself. From black pen drawings about integration, to watercolor renderings about corporate greed, to a spoof of an early Apple computer, Harrington bore witness to many different ages and eras in American culture.

“A BLACK RENAISSANCE HAS ALREADY BEEN BORN.”

Harlem and the Bronx left imprints on Ollie Harrington that would appear in his work for the rest of his life. As a nexus of cultures and communities, the city serves as more than a backdrop: it becomes a character in its own right. Harrington believed that environments like New York had the power to produce uniquely equipped Black thought leaders and creators. By 1973, he held a deep faith in the next generation of urban talent:

A revolution is taking place in the ghettos if one has the eyes to look behind the frightening facade. And revolutions require expression. Black kids painting huge murals on discouragingly neglected slum buildings are expressing that revolution. Sidestreet theaters, poetry readings, and neighborhood museums are part of that expression. They're all expressing ideas with which Black people can identify. A Black Renaissance has already been born.