

Julius Rosenwald Fund  
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September 25, 1939

Dear Mr. Parris: We are preparing a full report for our trustees on persons who have held fellowships, and would like to have up-to-date information. It will be of great service to us if you will give the information called for below, and return the sheet to us at once. In addition to these bare facts we should be glad to know of anything interesting that has happened to you, or that you have accomplished either during your tenure of fellowship or since you finished your work. Our trustees have a continuing interest in the Fellows and we like to keep them informed.

GMR:MLU

Very truly yours,  
*George M. Reynolds*

Mr. Guichard B. Parris  
322 Convent Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Present address: 322 Convent Avenue, New York City

Institutional connection: none

Rank or title:

Present status of work toward degree: In course of revising already

completed translation of Grégoire's De la littérature des Nègres

Publications since you were awarded the fellowship. List publisher.

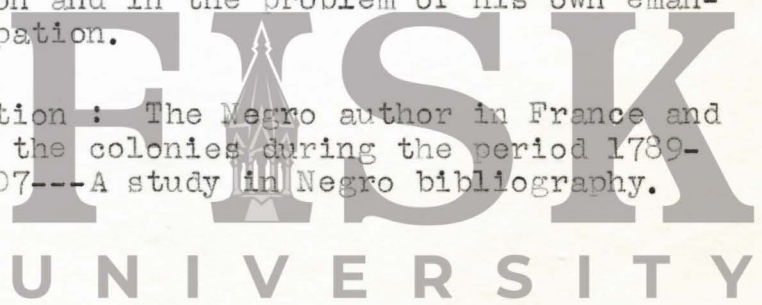
None

Additional information:

Two papers read in Paris: The Abbé Grégoire and his American relations.

Negro participation in the French Revolution and in the problem of his own emancipation.

Article in course of preparation: The Negro author in France and in the colonies during the period 1789-1807---A study in Negro bibliography.



GUICHARD B. PARRIS

322 CONVENT AVENUE

NEW YORK

30 September 1939

George M. Reynolds, Esq.  
Director for Fellowships  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
Chicago, Illinois


Dear Mr. Reynolds:

I thank you for the letter of September 25th which came while I was away from this city.

My grant from the Rosenwald Fund made possible the gathering of materials relating to certain problems arising from my doctoral dissertation and also to the participation of the Negro, as author, legislator and soldier, in the work of the French Revolution. It is regrettable, however, that much of the manuscript material relating to the philanthropic activities of the Abbé Henri Grégoire was unavailable to me during the stay abroad. The Bibliothèque Jansenist was closed for lack of a librarian. Rumblings of impending war prevented the Carnot family from going to their country home during the summer. The Carnot archives contain much valuable material seeing that M. Hippolyte Carnot, friend of Grégoire, his biographer and executor, possesses much of his political papers.

Yet through the splendid cooperation of the Société des Amis de l'Abbé Grégoire my investigations were very much facilitated. I had the privilege of reading two papers before that society. One paper dealt with the American relations of Grégoire, and the other, Negro participation in the French Revolution. The latter work commemorated the 150th anniversary of the French Revolution. The society deemed it fit to appoint me as one of its secretaries. It is at work to make possible a series of monograph studies on the various phases of this great man's life.

My researches in the life of Grégoire gave impetus to my investigations in Negro cultural and intellectual history. I was able to consult the unique collection of materials on slavery and the slave trade and the Negro author, which Grégoire himself assembled. He was the first in Europe to collect that kind of material and is rightly called the 'Father of Negro History'. No one who is studying the tribal origins of the New World Negro, their cultural endowment can fail to consult this collection.

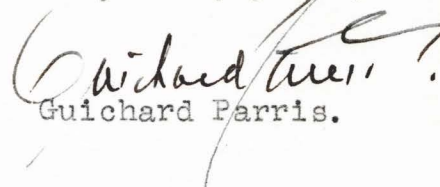
  
FISK  
UNIVERSITY

Julius Rosenwald Fund--2

I am at Columbia in the course of revising my already completed translation. My late arrival in the States prevented any success in finding employment South. I am hoping that it will be possible to find a position as an historical research worker or research librarian in an institution possessing Negroana or devoted to social studies relating to phases of early and contemporary Negro life.

In thanking the Julius Rosenwald Fund for making possible my work and the intellectual contacts abroad, I send you also my personal good wishes.

Very truly yours,

  
Guichard Parris.

P. S.

I enclose two documents for your information. Please be kind enough to return them to me whenever you find it convenient.

  
**FISK**  
UNIVERSITY

To Mr. George M. Reynolds.

Reprinted from THE ROMANIC REVIEW, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, January-March, 1936

### FRENCH CLASS-TEXTS FOR NEGRO INSTITUTIONS

- I. T. P. Gragnon-Lacoste, *Toussaint Louverture; surnommé le Premier des Noirs*, Extracts, Edited With Notes and Vocabulary by Georgiana R. Simpson, Washington, D. C., The Associated Press, [ca. 1924,] XI + 139 pp.
- II. *The Poets of Haiti, 1782-1934*, Translated from French into English by Edna Worthley Underwood, Portland, Maine, The Mosher Press, 1934, XLII + 159 pp.
- III. Mercer Cook, *Le Noir, Morceaux choisis de vingt-neuf Français célèbres*, Edited with Vocabulary and Notes, New York, The American Book Company, [ca. 1934,] X + 173 pp.
- IV. Alexandre Dumas, père, *La Tour de Nesle*, Edited with Introduction, Notes and Vocabulary by T. A. Daley, Williamsport, Pa., The Bayard Press, [ca. 1935,] V + 190 pp.

Some students of modern languages and literatures have realized that there is a wealth of material written in the foreign languages about the Negro and by him. These four volumes represent a modest but important step to bring into the classroom a glimpse of that body of literature and thought that have to do with the African and his descendants. Especially is this worth while when the material depicted is so little known and at the same time so attractive as that of the Negro character and type in European letters or his contribution to the development of European history. The illuminating studies recently made by Valaurez B. Spratlin,<sup>1</sup> Fernand Masse,<sup>2</sup> W. Napoleon Rivers,<sup>3</sup> and Mercer Cook,<sup>4</sup> attest to the quantitative and qualitative variety of this material. A visit to the 135th-Street Branch of the New York Public Library, in the Division of Negro Literature and History of which the excellent Arthur A. Schomburg Collection is a part, will convince the most skeptical of the richness of this unexploited material.

A program of this type in the schools and colleges, if offered along with the study of the masterpieces, would prove a fertile medium for obtaining a variability of reading assignments and of texts. It will also throw light on the little-known rôle that men of African descent have played in the course of

<sup>1</sup> "Juan Latino, Slave and Humanist", *The Crisis*, 1932, p. 281. Latino flourished in the full bloom of the Spanish Renaissance. He was eminent as scholar, teacher and humanist. His book of Latin verse, published in 1573, is very rare. There are only two copies in this country: The Boston Public Library owns one, and the Schomburg Collection, the other.

<sup>2</sup> "The Negro in French Literature", *The Journal of Negro History*, July, 1933, pp. 225-245. An informative, but very incomplete survey.

<sup>3</sup> "Placido", *Opportunity*, March, 1933, p. 86. A short essay on Cuba's great 19th-century lyricist and his contribution to Hispanic literature. Placido's real name was Gabriel Concepción de Valdés.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., the preface to *Le Noir* where the editor calls attention to this question.

## Reviews

Western intellectual history. These four volumes will help to meet the problem of finding suitable material for such a presentation.<sup>5</sup>

I. The interest of this life of Toussaint Louverture is unquestionable. For, as the editor states, if stories of the life and deeds of Napoleon Bonaparte may instruct and interest our youth, surely there ought to be counsel and inspiration for them in the historical sketches of the Corsican's unique contemporary. Henry Adams, in his *Political Essays*,<sup>6</sup> has already shown how intimately the history of the United States, in the last decade of the 18th century, was involved with the dynamic Toussaint and the fate of *Saint Domingue*. The text should prove very useful to students of language and literature as well as to those of history.

The Notes in Dr. Simpson's edition could have been a little more copious. Names such as Raynal, Grégoire and Julien Raymond deserve adequate footnotes, since they were among the most active Negrophiles of the French Revolutionary period. The last mentioned was one of the leading Negro political economists and statesmen of the era. In spite of this omission and a few errors in print, we do not hesitate to recommend this text as a suitable introduction to the study of the life and career of this remarkable man — Toussaint, *le Premier des Noirs*.

II. Mrs. Underwood's collection represents a wide selection of Haitian poems, written over a period of 150 years. The colorful verses of Oswald Durand or those of Etzer Vilaire have not lost very much of their form and feeling in translation. Among the contemporary poets, Emile Roumer and Jules Roumain are the best. Their verses sparkle with delicacy of taste, force and unrestrained emotion. The translator has contributed richly to the creation of a sympathetic and cultural interest in, and understanding of, things that are Gallo-African. She has also demonstrated, by her judicious selections, that the notion of *race* is no barrier to fine craftsmanship in art or to a vital and progressive culture. We hope that Mrs. Underwood will publish these poems in the original and so make them available to French language-classes.

III. *Le Noir* is the only work of its kind. "The teacher of French who desires to see an occasional black face among the Perrichons, Poiriers and Colombas, who invade his classroom, will welcome the publication of *Le Noir*." The edition may be used very profitably in classes of social history as well as literature. The selections cover a wide range of topics — political speeches on the subject of slavery, essays concerning Negroes of distinction, excerpts of stories from Daudet, Voltaire, Loti, etc. The notes are very copious. No teacher or student of French, especially in the classroom of a Negro school or college, should omit this text from his library.

IV. Those students and teachers interested in the French Romantic drama will be delighted to hear of the publication of Dr. Daley's edition of Dumas' *La Tour de Nesle*. A study of the development of French drama would be incomplete without some knowledge of this very successful play. As a school-text it should find favor, since it is the first time that the play has been edited

<sup>5</sup> Although Mrs. Underwood's edition is in English translation, it may be used with some profit in classes of general literature.

<sup>6</sup> "Napoleon I and St. Domingo", New York, Scribners, 1891, pp. 122-177. A scholarly and well-documented indictment of Napoleon in his relation to Toussaint and *Saint Domingue*.

for American students. Furthermore, Dr. Daley has traced in his Introduction the source of the popular 14th-century legend of the gloomy "Tower".

*La Tour de Nesle* was presented for the first time at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, May 29, 1832. It was a part of that sudden revolution that took place on the French stage in the third decade of the 19th century, when the French theatre broke loose from the influences of the "grand style" of the preceding century. Dumas was in the vanguard of the new literary and social development. Dr. Daley, in the preparation of this new edition, has described the part that Dumas played in the entire Romantic upheaval. The editor has placed his ample notes at the bottom of the page, a departure from the usual. Although there are a few misprints, especially in the vocabulary, these flaws do not mar the excellence of the work.<sup>7</sup> So far as this writer knows, no texts of this kind are available for the other foreign languages. The time has come when the Negro teacher of modern languages must exploit this wealth of material and make it available to the public at large. Students should become acquainted with the contribution of Negroes to European literature and history, and, in turn, with what has been said about Negroes by European writers.

In projecting a program of this kind one runs the risk of being accused, by some otherwise well-meaning persons, of preaching a doctrine of "race" philosophy. We hasten to plead not guilty. Why should not the Negro of the Americas, who collectively forms the *élite* of the descendants of Africans in the New World and who has contributed very positively to the formation and development of Western culture and civilization, make note of, and be seriously concerned with, this contribution? Certain universities and institutions in this country maintain centers of foreign culture in order that the different "racial" groups, of which their membership is composed, may find materials for the investigation and appreciation of the history and literature of the country of their respective ancestors. Notable among these institutions are the foreign culture centers at Columbia University and the more recent addition to the Louisiana State University of the "French house", a chateau-like structure that will be the center of activities for the Romance Languages Department. Since the University is in the heart of the Louisiana country, the school stresses the study of French literature and French culture.<sup>8</sup> The Mexican government has recently established a library in a city of Texas, where the Mexican population is large, in order to house materials for the instruction and entertainment of its Nationals and those interested in its culture. Certainly, it is not too much to ask Negro colleges and institutions to take note of these developments.

The day is not very far distant when courses such as that given by Dr. James Weldon Johnson, Visiting Professor of American Literature at New York University, on the subject, *Negro Contribution to American Art*, will find their way into the curricula of our great American universities. We hope that other institutions of learning will find it both socially expedient and intellectually profitable for the advancement of the arts and sciences to invite scholars, white or black, for the special purpose of giving courses or lectures illustrating the

<sup>7</sup> See also, Lamartine, *Toussaint Louverture*, edited by G. Raffalovich, New York, The Century Co., 1931.

<sup>8</sup> For a survey of the French literature of Louisiana see Edward Laroque Tinker, *Les Ecrits de la Langue française en Louisiane au XIXe Siècle, Essais biographiques et bibliographiques*, Paris, Champion, 1932, 502 pp.

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important and unique note that the Negro *per se* and the Negro character have added to European and American patterns of culture.

A fine beginning is being made in the classrooms of some Negro schools and colleges.<sup>9</sup> The Negro has been the object of many studies at certain universities in this country.<sup>10</sup> There is, however, much more which can be accomplished than has been achieved. Some are already at work on the life and works of Privat d'Anglemont, the well-known 19th-century French mulatto poet and short-story writer, friend of Hugo and Dumas; on the literature of early Haiti; and, on the life and works of Abbé Henri Grégoire, philanthropist and lover of men of all colors and creeds, first historian of Negro letters and arts.

GUICHARD B. PARRIS

NEW YORK CITY

<sup>9</sup> Especially at Howard University, Washington, D. C.

<sup>10</sup> The University of North Carolina is in the vanguard of this new development.



SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE ABBE GREGOIRE

Paris, June 11, 1939

Dear Mr. Guichard Parris:

The Bureau of the Society of the Friends of the Abbe Gregoire, at the meeting of the Society held yesterday, June 10, in the Library of the Arsenal, in recognition of your researches and works and of your remarkable speech on Gregoire and his relations with his American friends, has decided, in accordance with the wish expressed by the members of the Society, to name you Secretary for the United States of America of the Society of the Friends of the Abbe Gregoire.

Please accept our most cordial good wishes,

(Note: A group of signatures which are impossible for me to read)

