

Candidate Arna Wendell Bontemps

Special Field

Creative Writing

Principal Shiloh Academy - Writing  
606 E. 46th Street, Chicago, Ill.

Plan of Work

- (a) To gather background material for books in the children's field.  
 (b) To complete the research and finish writing a broad-canvas historical novel.

Digest of Application

Born 1902 Alexandria, La. Four Children

Obtained A.B. in 1923 from Pacific Union, Angwin, California. Expects M.A. from University of Chicago in Summer 1938. Special study at Columbia, N.Y.U. 1925-30

Teacher at Harlem Academy (now defunct) 1924-31, \$165 per month. Teacher Oakwood Junior College, Huntsville, Ala., 1931-34, \$110 per month. Principal at Shiloh Academy, Chicago, \$1800.

Won 2 Opportunity prizes for poetry (\$100 each). 1 Crisis poetry prize (\$75) and 1 Opportunity short story prize (\$100). Two plays produced by Gilpin Theatre. Pamphlet on T. B. widely circulated. Novels: Black Thunder (Macmillan '36), God Sends Sunday (Harcourt, Brace & Co. '31) Books for Children: Sad-Faced Boy (Houghton Mifflin '37), You Can't Pet A Possum (Morrow '34), Popo and Fifina (Macmillan '32). Book of American Negro Poetry--Johnson, Caroling Dusk--Cullen. Our Singing Strength--Kronenberg, The New Negro (2nd edition) Lock, Braithwaite Anthology '36, The Negro Genius and Heroes & Builders--Brawley, Afrika Singt--Neusbaum, etc.

References

James Wellon Johnson, Fisk University  
 Benjamin Brawley, Dept. English, Howard University  
 Miss Helen English, Los Angeles Public Library  
 Professor Melville Herskovitz, Northwestern University

Budget Summary

Total amount needed	\$2,250
From applicant	350
From Fund	\$1,900

Committee Notes

Granted



*Daily News 5/10/39*  
Arna Bontemps, Chicago author of "Drums at Dusk," reviewed today. Mr. Bontemps says that his first inspiration as a writer came from the works of Dumas, a Negro of similar lineage. The material for "Drums at Dusk" was gathered in Haiti on a Rosenwald scholarship.

# THE LIBRARY QUARTERLY

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## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS OF NEGROANA

ARNA BONTEMPS

REFERENCES to special collections of Negro lore have been cropping up in library literature for a long time. Soon or late, no doubt, it was inevitable that someone should have a look at the whole species. The present report is the result of such an inspection. Obviously, all Negro collections could not be examined at first hand or studied closely. A few outstanding, and perhaps representative, examples were selected after preliminary inquiry, and these (minus one described elsewhere)<sup>1</sup> are the collections treated herein.

### THE SCHOMBURG COLLECTION OF NEGRO LITERATURE

Perhaps the best known—certainly the most publicized—of the Negro collections is located in the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch of the New York Public Library. The Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, as it was originally designated, was established in 1925. A year later it obtained the Schomburg Collection, one of the largest and most important private libraries on the Negro. With this acquisition, containing between five and six thousand books, three thousand

<sup>1</sup> "The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters," *Yale University Library Gazette*, XVIII (1943), 19-26.

manuscripts, two thousand etchings, and several thousand pamphlets, the division at once became a center for scholarship dealing with Negro life and history.

Actually, the collection has a longer history than the date of its founding implies. Indeed, it has three histories. The first can be traced in the history of the New York Public Library itself. The second is rooted in the Harlem community. And the third is a personal story.

As early as 1902 the bulletin of the New York Public Library mentioned a "list of works relating to the American Colonization Society." Later surveys of resources and guides to special collections have noted the "slavery" collection of the New York Public. While these items do not relate directly to the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, a certain kinship may be detected. Almost from the beginning of its existence the New York Public Library appears to have shown some interest in Negro materials.

Moreover, there was precedent of another sort in the New York system. The central library includes other racial divisions which antedate even the "slavery" collection. The Jewish, the Slavonic, and the Oriental divisions are examples.

Even the notion of putting such material in a neighborhood library was familiar. The collection of Czechoslovakian literature is located in the Webster Branch, and the Russian literature collection, formerly located at One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Street, is now at the Hamilton Grange Branch, following the ethnic group as it shifted from one section of the city to another. So, while the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, including the Schomburg Collection, was at the time of its establishment the only division of its kind in any public library, it was not without a certain background in New York.

Its roots in the community are perhaps equally significant. When the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch was established in 1905, the neighborhood which it expected to serve was a quiet, well-to-do American Jewish section. By 1920 it had become half-Negro, and the influx was just starting. Ernestine Rose, chosen because of her experience in developing library service among racial groups, was made librarian for the express purpose of adapting the staff, service, and book stock of the branch to its altered public. By 1924 Harlem had become the acknowledged capital of Black America. Its population, thanks to the migrations of the preceding decade, had reached approximately 150,000. At the same time it had drawn Negro talent and leadership from all parts of the United States and from the Caribbean. Young musicians and writers assembled there. Serious scholars took note of the group and of its relation to the burgeoning community. All-Negro shows became Broadway hits. The *American Mercury*, at the peak of its popularity, came out with a series of spectacular articles on uptown doings. Novels like Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* became best-sellers. Park Avenue dis-

covered a fabulous night life centered around the Cotton Club, Baron's, the Nest, and other spots in Harlem. The *Survey Graphic* published a large special issue devoted to Harlem. The attention thus drawn to the new nerve center of Negro life in America resulted in a book called *The New Negro*, in which the same material was greatly expanded. These, and scores of related developments, gave the community a new spurt of growth, a fresh surge of race consciousness.

By the end of 1924 Ernestine Rose had a serious library problem on her hands. Books on the Negro were in such demand that they could not be kept on the shelves. So avidly were they read, in fact, that their mortality exceeded their birth rate. Titles which continued in print could not be replaced fast enough with the available funds. Books hard to obtain were deteriorating without hope of replacement. The branch librarian was frankly distressed. In her perplexity she called together a group of influential scholars and leaders from the community. Among them were Arthur A. Schomburg, James Weldon Johnson, Hubert H. Harrison, and John Nail.

The first result of the consultations which followed was the decision to start a modest collection of rare books relating to the Negro, books difficult to replace. These were to be withdrawn from the circulation department, the primary aim being simply to preserve the existing resources in this field. This modest gesture provoked an immediate response on the part of the community and of those who had been called in to represent it. Gifts and loans came to the new collection from the private libraries of people like J. E. Bruce, Louise Latimer, Hubert H. Harrison, George Young, Dr. Charles D. Martin, and Arthur A. Schomburg.

Perhaps the idea of building up a col-

lection that would give the Harlem public a sense of background had already occurred to Miss Rose. The New York Public Library's general policy of buying books of special neighborhood interest would suggest this. In any case, the books withdrawn from circulation and placed in the reference room soon began to supply material to students of Negro history and culture both in the neighborhood and elsewhere; and on May 8, 1925, the new Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints was officially opened.

In outlining the division's plans to the press, Miss Rose called attention to the fact that, although there were then collections of the same kind in the Library of Congress, in the libraries of such institutions as Tuskegee and Howard University, in certain large city reference libraries, and in a few private libraries, the collection at the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch promised to become one of the largest and most valuable in the whole country. She gave her reasons for this prediction:

To begin with, there is the question of availability. Works of this nature in private collections and in institutions are not readily accessible to great numbers of students of these problems, either white or colored. We have here in Harlem the greatest negro city in the world—approximately 175,000 colored inhabitants. There should be available for these people and for those who have their interests at heart the most interesting and complete collection that can be formed. These books will foster the interest of the children and young folk in the history of their own race and inspire them to develop their own talents. The collection should be available equally to scholars, to the man in the street and to school children of all races.

She called attention to several unique items in the collection as it existed then (none of them impressive by later standards) and announced the organization of a group of prominent persons to promote the new department. Today her

statement seems overly optimistic, on the basis of the collection in hand and the immediate prospects, but it was taken seriously by the *Times* and other New York newspapers, and in 1926 the collection received the windfall that justified Miss Rose's optimism and raised the division to its present importance. This came with the acquisition of the Schomburg private library.

The third history behind the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature is, as has been suggested, a personal story. Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, a Puerto Rican partly of Negro descent, was born in 1874. He was educated in Puerto Rico and later at St. Thomas College. In 1891 he came to the United States. Here he was employed for a number of years as a clerk by the Banker's Trust Company. But the force behind his long and zealous career as a collector of Negro lore appears to have been generated by a casual statement by one of his elementary teachers on the island. That individual, as Schomburg later recalled, dropped the remark before his pupils that the Negro had no history. There was no bitterness in the observation as he made it, no intended aspersion. Yet the assertion touched off a fire in Schomburg that was still burning brightly at the time of his death on June 10, 1938.

Oddly enough, this story is essential to an understanding of the collection which the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch has built around the private library of Arthur A. Schomburg. Here, in fact, is its point of unity, its principle of selection, its area of interest. That the story encompasses and reflects a special need of the community can also be assumed. "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future," Schomburg wrote in an essay included in *An Anthology of American Negro Literature*. "When we consider

the facts, certain chapters of American history will have to be reopened." He then pointed to an exhibit of pamphlets, documents, prints, and engravings from the collection in the New York Library and asserted proudly, "Here is the evidence." His argument is worth following:

Though it is orthodox to think of America as the one country where it is unnecessary to have a past, what is a luxury for the nation as a whole becomes a prime social necessity for the Negro. For him, a group tradition must supply compensation for persecution, and pride of race the antidote for prejudice. History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generations must repair and offset. So among the rising democratic millions we find the Negro thinking more collectively, more retrospectively than the rest, and apt, out of the very pressure of the present, to become the most enthusiastic antiquarian of them all.

This point of view, Schomburg admitted, is not new. In 1808 Abbé Grégoire, the genius of French abolitionist sentiment, published in Paris a book about distinguished Negroes. Two years later the volume was issued in translation in Germany and England. Compendiums of the same sort have followed at intervals ever since. Many of them, Schomburg grants, have been "over-corrective, ridiculously over-laudatory," but the purpose has generally been sound. Today scholarship in this area is better balanced, and the need is for a well-documented history—a history that is "less a matter of argument and more a matter of record."

Schomburg's own research had, he felt, established at least three conclusions:

First, that the Negro has been, throughout the centuries of controversy, an active collaborator, and often a pioneer, in the struggle for his own freedom and advancement. This is true to a degree which makes it the more surprising that it has not been recognized earlier.

Second, that by virtue of their being regarded as something "exceptional," even by friends and well-wishers, Negroes of attainment and genius have been unfairly disassociated from the group, and group credit lost accordingly.

Third, that the remote racial origins of the Negro, far from being what the race and world have been given to understand, offer a record of credible group achievement, when scientifically viewed, and more important still, that they are of vital general interest because of their bearing upon the beginnings and early development of culture.

The international flavor of his collection becomes understandable when these points are held in mind. Schomburg's European quests and his preoccupation with Latin-American materials begin to make sense. The rarities and treasures which he unearthed begin to take their places in a clear-cut scheme. Under these conditions one would scarcely expect to find the collection putting great store by slave documents. Even folklore could be expected to take second place to records of achievement and evidences of Negro progress.

Jupiter Hammon's *An Address to the Negroes in the State of New York* (edition of 1787), the work of America's first Negro poet, was obviously in the right mood, for Schomburg could heartily applaud the poet's now famous remark: "If we should ever get to Heaven, we shall find nobody to reproach us for being black, or for being slaves." Manuscript poems and early editions of the works of Phillis Wheatley, slave girl, immediately became part of the "evidence" which the collector had dedicated himself to assembling. In the same category were the sermons of Lemuel Haynes, the Negro who served as pastor of a white church in Rutland, Vermont, for thirty years following the Revolutionary War, and John Marrant's St. John's Day eulogy to the "Brothers of African Lodge, No. 459," delivered at Boston in

1789. The scrapbook of Ira Aldridge, Negro actor who won fame in Europe as a Shakespearean actor during the nineteenth century, became an appropriate item. The same could be said for the various editions of *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter; A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, the first novel by an American Negro.

Items acquired abroad, some of them even rarer than his American discoveries, frequently tended to reinforce Schomburg's conclusions about the Negro's past. Naturally, a copy of Juan Latino's Latin verse (Granada, 1573) was cause for excitement. The same author's book on the Escorial (1576) was a find of almost equal value. Remembered as incumbent of the chair of poetry at the University of Granada during the reign of Philip V and spoken of as the "best" Latinist of Spain in his day, Latino had not been thought of as a Negro for generations. Schomburg reminded scholars that Juan Latino was a full-blooded African Negro and offered the poet's verse on the return of the Spanish prince from the battle with the Turks at Lepanto, published twenty years before the first of Shakespeare's writings, as an exhibit of Negro accomplishment.

These were starting-points. Latin and Dutch treatises were found. The autobiography of Gustavus Vassa, which led to Granville Sharp's attack on slavery in the British colonies, was included in various editions. Schomburg found copies of the *Almanacs* (1792 and 1793) compiled by Benjamin Banneker, the Negro whose unusual abilities were employed by Thomas Jefferson and others. It is not surprising that the collection had become widely known before the New York Public Library set eyes on it or that Schomburg himself should have been called into the conferences when it

was first proposed to set up the new division in the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch.

The transaction by which Schomburg's private library was acquired was not a complicated one. The collection was purchased by the Carnegie Corporation at the suggestion of L. Hollingsworth Wood, Charles S. Johnson, and Eugene Kinckle Jones, officials of the National Urban League. The price, \$10,000, was regarded as token payment, a mere fraction of the collection's actual value. It is thus suggested that Schomburg had a personal interest in placing the books in the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints. The first attendant of the collection was Mrs. Catherine Latimer. A later gift from the Carnegie Corporation in 1932 enabled the New York Public Library to retain Mr. Schomburg as curator, a position he held, with certain interruptions, until his death.

In 1939 Lawrence D. Reddick succeeded Schomburg. Since that time accounts of the collection have appeared regularly in the yearly reports of the New York Public Library. Meanwhile, the holdings of the collection have been expanded and the directions of its future development outlined. The search for rarities continues; "old" items still get more than a third of the annual book budget. New books dealing with the subject of the Negro and books by Negro authors are added to the division as soon as published. The collection of manuscripts and letters has been enriched by subsequent contributions. The correspondence between Paul Laurence Dunbar and his agent, Paul R. Reynolds, donated by the son of the latter, was such a gift. Several African collections have come in. These include the Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection from the

Congo, gathered by Dr. Alain LeRoy Locke; the Nigerian Collection from West Africa, donated by Mrs. Florence Bruce; and the African masks and fetishes placed on exhibit by Mary Hoyt Wiborg. From other patrons of art, as well as artists, have come various single pieces to be added to the collection. There are in the division at least two thousand etchings, lithographs, engravings, and water colors by Negro artists and of Negro subjects. A spectacular new acquisition is the Eric de Kolb Collection of African arms, containing representative war weapons from all over that continent.

The collection has many autographed letters and inscribed volumes. A number of Negro newspapers and magazines of America, as well as some from the West Indies and Africa, are to be found in its files. The projected "Calendar of the Manuscripts in the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature" will be a large volume. The division also owns a micro-filmed version of the most nearly complete existing file of Frederick Douglass' newspaper.

By reason of its location in the heart of Harlem the Division of Negro History, Literature, and Prints has been associated with a number of related activities. One of these was an experiment in adult education, because "the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch Library was recognized throughout the city library system as one that had successfully attempted to make itself a part of its community." Another has been an annual "Honor Roll of Race Relations," the result of an extensive poll of scholars and leaders conducted by the division. Still another has been a series of forums and book evenings which have at one time or another included such speakers as Franz Boas, Percy Stickney Grant,

James Weldon Johnson, Alexander Goldenweiser, May Lamberton Becker, Heywood Brown, W. E. B. DuBois, Carl Van Doren, John W. Vandercook, Christopher Morley, Richard Wright, and scores of others. The division has been visited by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and praised by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, who, on the occasion of the cornerstone ceremony, October 28, 1941, made it the object of some of his most ringing eloquence. "We give you the key to the temple of knowledge," said the Mayor. "Come in and use it."

In 1935 a Citizens' Committee of the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch Library was formed for the purpose of obtaining more adequate quarters for the steadily expanding work of the library in general and of the division in particular. Twenty prominent Negroes supported the library's request for funds, and in 1940 the Board of Estimate and Apportionment appropriated the final sum and Louis Allen Abramson was named as architect for a new building. For a year, during construction, the division was housed at the Harlem Branch on One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Street. The new quarters into which it moved at the end of that period included the entire top floor of the newest and finest branch library building in New York. Subsequently it adopted officially the name by which it was best known: The Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature.

The collection can now offer its users ample room in which to carry on their investigations. That this was needed is indicated by the steadily increasing number of patrons and the mounting number of books whose authors make due acknowledgment of the collection's value to them.

Like all other collections of its kind,

the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature has come to the point where it must define the field of its future growth and expansion. Dr. Reddick has set these forth in a recent interview. The collection will continue to add to its resources all new publications that fit into the categories already established. It will consider any title which concerns the Negro in the United States within its scope. Outside the United States it will seek to be exhaustive in the Negro in Latin America, with special reference to the Caribbean, and in Africa in the twentieth century. The collection will take a positive interest in race relations at home and abroad.

Obviously, Schomburg's principles are still the basis for the expansion of the collection which he founded. Dr. Reddick's proposals in no way conflict with Schomburg's own forward glance. "The . . . most fascinating of all of the attempts to open up the closed Negro past," the latter once said, "[is] the important study of African cultural origins and sources. The bigotry of civilization . . . must be corrected at its source. Fundamentally, it has come about from that depreciation of Africa which has sprung up from ignorance of her true rôle and position in human history." The recognition which African sculpture, for example, had received, first in France and Germany, then gradually in the United States, seemed to him to be highly significant.

The treasure of treasures in the Schomburg Collection is, of course, the volume of Juan Latino's poems. Edward Laroque Tinker, columnist for the *New York Times Book Review*, is authority for the statement that this is one of the rarest books in the world. In the Schomburg Collection, however, the Juan Latino is both a treasure and a symbol. It

suggests both the past which the collection has sought to rediscover and the kind of future toward which it strives.

A LIBRARY OF NEGRO AUTHORS: THE  
ARTHUR B. SPINGARN COLLECTION

The Arthur B. Spingarn library is the only collection of its kind which limits itself to Negro authorship. All the others have focused their interest upon Negro life or history as a subject. The collection which has evolved from this principle of selection has more in common with the Schomburg Collection (with its accent on achievement) than with any of the others examined in connection with this study.

The result is not surprising. Arthur Schomburg started his collection for the purpose of correcting historical misrepresentations which embarrassed him as a Negro. Arthur B. Spingarn, a white man actively interested in the welfare of Negroes, started out to "assemble a small representative group of books that I could show to doubting friends who questioned the intellectual capacity of the Negro." He intended to offer these few specimen books to his own acquaintances who asked, "If the Negro has the capabilities you insist he has, why hasn't he published books to prove it?"

That this plan would gradually extend itself into an endeavor to collect *all* books written by Negroes certainly did not occur to him at that time. Yet this is its present scope and ambition. While the goal has not been achieved, it has undoubtedly been approached. This means that, barring a few score rare items that have eluded the collector, all books by authors known to have been Negroes have found a place on his shelves. Mr. Spingarn admits the obvious possibility that many foreign-language books which

would fall within the area he has selected may have escaped him.

The extension of his first modest endeavor to its present scope he attributes to a human instinct which he has described as the "mania for completeness." Thus, the endeavor to collect "something" the Negro had written became the really large task of acquiring "everything" the Negro had written.

The method by which he proceeded was not unconventional. He began with his own reading and experience. The first step was to acquire as large a list of Negro names as possible to carry in his memory for reference purposes. Whenever these basic names were encountered, they would be recognized. With this equipment he turned to the available check lists, to *Who's Who's*, to American Negro and African college catalogs, to histories, church records, biographies, autobiographies, proceedings of Negro conventions, transactions of lodges, anti-slavery literature, and Negro periodicals.

Abbé Grégoire's book of Negroes of achievement (Paris, 1808) offered a good point of departure. The names included in this volume were followed through the catalogs of the great American libraries, the British Museum, and the Bibliothèque Nationale. An anthology called *Les Cenelles*, published in New Orleans in 1845, became even more useful. Written in French by free men of color, *Les Cenelles* was the earliest collection of poetry by Negro poets in the United States. Its contributors, pursued singly, turned out to be surprisingly good material.

One of them, for example, was Victor Séjour. Spingarn's discovery of this author, one of the most popular dramatists of his period in France, is typical of the general results of his search. French encyclopedias like the *Nouveau Larousse*

*illustré* and the *Larousse du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* generally assume that Séjour was a Parisian and carelessly state that he was born in the French capital. Nothing is said of his Negro blood, for from their point of view, as in most countries other than the United States, and perhaps Great Britain, this has generally been regarded as an immaterial literary consideration. It has meaning for this collection, however, and Spingarn made it his business to establish the point.

When Séjour's name was found among the colored poets of New Orleans in *Les Cenelles*, Spingarn went to work on his bibliography. A diligent quest, here and in Europe, eventually yielded copies of nearly all the dramatist's twenty-two published plays. Later investigation by scholars whose attention had been drawn to Séjour's origin brought out the fact that he had been born in 1817 in the heart of the old French quarter of New Orleans. His white father, a native of Saint-Domingue (colonial Haiti), and his free colored mother were not married at the time, but later this omission was corrected. Séjour's baptism was recorded in St. Louis Cathedral.

The free colored caste numbered nearly twenty thousand in New Orleans at the time *Les Cenelles* was published. Many of its members were well-to-do, and a surprising number of them were sent to Paris to be educated. Many, like Victor Séjour, remained abroad to escape the restrictions imposed upon their group in New Orleans—though these were, in the main, far less severe than elsewhere in the southern states. Against this background the story of Séjour was easily understood. Moreover, it was a clue to other writers from the same background.

This type of historical and bibliographical detective work was essential to the principle of selection which Spingarn

had adopted. His sources were severely limited. Check lists on the so-called "Negro problem" seldom differentiated white and colored authors, being concerned as they were with the Negro as a subject, not as a point of view or as a voice. A few specialized histories were found to have bibliographies appended, but most of these were too sketchy to be helpful to a man who had undertaken to collect "everything the Negro had written." Even Monroe N. Work's extensive *Bibliography of the Negro* was so far from complete that Spingarn presently found that he had approximately a thousand books and pamphlets not listed in the volume.

None of this is meant to imply that conventional tools were of no help at all. Vernon Loggins' *The Negro Author*, restricted to American authors writing before 1900, was useful within those limits. Specialized check lists of poetry were found; also catalogs of exhibitions. More often, however, Spingarn appears to have relied on his own enterprise. He examined all the existing collections he could find, public and private. He wrote letters to editors and scholars in the United States, in Africa, in the West Indies, and in Central and South America. He made contacts with American consuls in a variety of places. And he hobnobbed with others who were working the same field, exchanging books, stories, and ideas with these kindred spirits. The current output he endeavored to follow through the usual book supplements and trade publications. This presented no special problem.

In the whole world of books, however, the question, "Who is a Negro?" is not an easy one. Neither Walter F. White (*The Fire in the Flint, Flight, Rope and Faggot*) nor Charles W. Chesnutt (*The Conjure Woman, The House behind the*

*Cedars*, etc.) nor Jean Toomer (*Cane*) would be considered a "Negro" any place other than in the United States or perhaps Great Britain. Yet they live and write as Negroes here. Alexandre Dumas, father and son, and Alexander Pushkin would be classified as Negroes in the United States, though they neither lived nor wrote under such a label. Others, like Audubon and Browning, must be put in a doubtful category.

Spingarn broadened the base of his selection to include any author who would be classified as a Negro in the United States. This, it need scarcely be added, gave him ample scope. It meant, for example, a wide swath for his blade in Brazil, Cuba, and most of Latin America and the Caribbean area. It meant, to put it in quite another way, the inclusion of more than two thousand authors before 1937. Even then the coverage was by no means complete, and since that date it has been steadily expanded.

While foreign publications covered some of the most interesting areas in the field which Spingarn had chosen for himself, they also offered some of the most annoying problems. As has been indicated, Negro authorship is a concept which lacks meaning in many foreign countries. Here and there, however, Spingarn managed to stumble upon the kind of help he needed. The *Bibliografía de autores de la raza de color de Cuba* by Trelles (1927), while neither exhaustive nor completely accurate according to the United States definition of "color," was nevertheless such a help. It listed something over a hundred Cuban writers of Negro blood. Similar assistance was found in an exhibit of books at the Club Atenas in Havana, where seven hundred works by colored Haitians were displayed. To these Spingarn was able to add a bibliography gleaned from the

hundred-and-fifty-year-old work by Abbé Grégoire and from the titles mentioned in Duraciné Vaval's history of Haitian literature and in the anthologies of Louis Morpeau. Then in 1941 Ulrick Duvivier published his useful *Bibliographie générale et méthodique d'Haïti* in two large volumes at Port-au-Prince. This was a start, but it added up to an unimpressive total when considered against the complete output of colored authors in languages other than English. For the rest, Spingarn worked unassisted.

How well he has succeeded can be judged by a sampling of some of his rarities. He has, to begin with, acquired works by all but one or two of the Negro authors mentioned by Grégoire. He has assembled nearly all the items recorded by Loggins. And, within the areas which these men sought to cover, he has found many titles missed by them. Typical of his acquisitions are the following:

1. Juan Latino's *Ad Catholicum pariter et invictissimum Philippum* (Granada, 1573).

2. J. E. J. Capitein's *Dissertation on Slavery* in Latin and in Dutch, published in Leyden in 1742 and his *Sermons* published in Dutch the same year; the former is interesting not only because it is an early, perhaps the first, dissertation of a native African presented to a European University but because of its content; it is a *defense* of slavery.

3. Some fifteen addresses and petitions by Julien Raymond and other colored residents of St. Domingo addressed to the National Assembly of France during the French Revolution.

4. Some *Royal Almanacs* published by the Court of King Christophe between 1816 and 1820.

5. Probably the only copy of Phillis Wheatley's *Poems* uncut in the original wrappers. The first and American editions, which are rarer than the English edition. Also, some of her verses in broadside pamphlet form published prior and subsequent to her volume of 1773.

6. Two original pamphlets by Jupiter Hammon.

7. The first and later editions of the works of Ignatius Sancho, Gustavus Vassa, and Ottobah Cugoano.

8. Original pamphlets by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Benjamin Banneker, Daniel Coker, Paul Cuffe, Abraham Johnstone, Hosea Easton, Lemuel Haynes, John Marrant, Henry Sipkins, Prince Saunders, William Whipper, Martin Delany, Henry Highland Garnett, Nathaniel Paul, Benjamin Hughes, James W. C. Pennington, David Ruggles, Robert Purvis, James McCune Smith, Frederick Douglass, Robert Elliott, P. B. S. Pinchback, Blanche K. Bruce, and F. L. Cardozo.

9. *The Constitution and By-Laws of the Brotherly Union Society* (1833).

10. *The African Methodist Hymn Book*, edited by Bishop Morris Brown (1833).

11. The first four editions of Walker's *Appeal* (two of them called "2d ed.").

12. *Proceedings* and *Minutes* of about twenty-five early Negro conventions, beginning with 1831.

13. A file of Frederick Douglass' paper, from the first number in 1851 to 1856, not complete.

14. A collection of several hundred slave narratives and autobiographies.

15. *Les Cenelles*, edited by Armand Lanusse in New Orleans (1845); the first anthology of Negro poetry in the United States.

16. Joseph C. Holly's *Freedom's Offerings* (1853); one of only two known copies.

17. The earliest extant known volume of Albery A. Whitman, believed to be unique.

18. A collection of over four hundred volumes of poetry and about an equal number of fiction titles published by colored authors.

19. Several hundred volumes on church history and Negro Masonry.

20. A representative group of works by native Africans and a number of works by natives of the British and French Colonies, Haiti, South and Central America, and Cuba.

21. A collection of upward of two thousand musical compositions by Negroes.

22. Most of the books and many of the pamphlets issued since 1900.

The Spingarn library, while still housed in the collector's home, is available to bona fide scholars, subject to a single stipulation: that they first exhaust the resources of such public institutions as are accessible to them. The books are arranged in six divisions: American, African, French, West Indian, Portuguese and Brazilian, and Dutch and

other languages. The African section is broken down into native dialects, English, French, Arabic, and Portuguese. One subdivision of the French section is devoted to Haitian authors. In the same way the writers who used the Portuguese language are divided geographically.

The American section has been subdivided even further. Here the headings include: (1) church history and theology; (2) slave narratives, biographies, autobiographies; (3) rarities; (4) history; (5) education; (6) proceedings and reports of conventions; (7) sociology; (8) law; (9) medicine; (10) fraternal organizations; (11) notable individuals: W. E. B. DuBois, Frederick Douglass, William Welles Brown, James Weldon Johnson, etc.; (12) poetry; (13) drama; (14) fiction.

These groupings, with the thousands of titles involved, are not to be taken as evidence that the Negro has thrived unduly under his disabilities in America. Spingarn is careful to note that

we have in the United States no Negro poet who can be compared with the Russian Pushkin, the Cuban Placido, the Haytian Durand; no novelist who can be compared with the Frenchman Dumas, or the Brazilian Machado de Assis; no dramatist who can be compared to the Frenchman Dumas fils; and no historian who can be compared in importance (to take but one illustration) to the African author of the *Tarikh-es-Soudan*.

#### SLAVERY AS A THEME: THE HENRY P. SLAUGHTER LIBRARY

If the Henry P. Slaughter library were recataloged, it could be made to fit neatly into a radial system of classification. In such a scheme the hub would consist of materials on Negro slavery in the United States. The spokes would represent such related subjects as Africa, abolition, freedmen, reconstruction, ancestry of the slaves, descendants of the slaves, etc.

This pattern is, of course, accidental from a librarian's point of view, but, like all accidents, it had its causes. In the case of the Slaughter collection the causes were mainly personal.

Henry P. Slaughter, a Negro and the son of former slaves, traces his book-collecting to impulses awakened in childhood. He recalls a day when, as a school-boy in Louisville, Kentucky, he came home puzzled by the question of how the slaves got the news that they were free. To his surprise his parents were unable to enlighten him. Indeed, he was obliged to wait until he learned to venture beyond conventional textbooks to find his answer.

The question seems insignificant in retrospect, but it was enough to awaken the boy's curiosity about a subject which, by its very nature, was close to his own people—his own family. Slavery could be remembered vividly in those days.

The boy's interest was further spurred when, a year or two later, he carried home a copy of Smith's *School History of Kentucky*. His mother happened to open the textbook during the course of the evening. In a few moments she found herself on familiar ground. The subject was slavery, and the area was one she knew from personal observation. Her interest mounted. Then, quite suddenly, she closed the book with a bang.

"It's not true," she announced. With that, she commenced to set the record to rights for the benefit of her son. The next day she sternly refused to allow the boy to return to school. It was her opinion that he was being maliciously misinformed concerning a vital, though delicate, subject, and she proposed to end it.

Fortunately for the youngster, her wrath was tempered in time, and Henry P. Slaughter returned to complete the school curriculum available to him in

Louisville. But the "damage" had been done. Another natural-born collector's fate had been sealed. Moreover, his field of interest had been staked out for him.

Young Slaughter went to Washington, D.C., just before the turn of the century. He found employment in the Government Printing Office. Here, on the limited income of a civil service employee, he began to gather books on the subject of his greatest curiosity. A few years later his bookish interests earned him the editorship of the Negro *Odd Fellows Journal*. He continued in this capacity twenty-seven years. By increasing his income he was able to intensify his collecting. Subsequent Wall Street investments further extended his capacity to collect. Under these conditions the present library in his Washington home began to take shape—a library which, in its area, has been called "fabulous" by Carl Van Vechten and described as "a very wonderful lot of material" by Charles E. Tuttle. Perhaps "fabulous," if it can be applied with meaning to any library collection, is the right word, for it has been more talked about than described in print, and some of the accounts have been on the marvelous side—witness the article by J. A. Rogers in the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In any case, the legends surrounding the collection and its collector do have genuine story value. The one about the first of Slaughter's wives, a woman who couldn't survive his book-collecting zeal, is typical.

This wife, according to Slaughter's own anecdote, presently found herself in a double quandary. Because her husband put all his financial resources into his library, he was habitually clad in frayed raiment. Because he was without a suitable hat, he was frequently unable to accompany her to social gatherings. The

situation reached a climax one day when Mrs. Slaughter offered to advance her husband the price of a new hat on condition that he attend a dinner with her. He could repay the loan at his own convenience. Slaughter was touched by this proposal. He promptly consented and straightway started toward the haberdashery. It was his misfortune, however, to pass a bookstore. To make matters worse, a clearance sale was in progress. Boldly displayed in the window was a five-volume set of books essential to the Slaughter collection. The little man entered the store shyly. By every means known to him he tried to persuade the clerk to put the books aside for him. This the bookseller was unwilling to do for several reasons, but he was inclined to make a special offer of the volumes to Slaughter on the condition that the latter take them away immediately. The special offer, as fate would have it, was exactly the amount the wife had advanced for the hat.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that the purchase was made on the spot—with dramatic domestic results. Slaughter vainly attempted to save the situation by having the books packed in a hatbox, but the ruse didn't work. His wife was wise to his ways.

There are many more stories, but this one is perhaps sufficient to indicate that Slaughter's quaint and unusual library has not been collected in a vacuum. The books themselves fill a medium-sized house—a house purchased by Henry P. Slaughter specifically for this purpose. Of course, he happens to live in it too, but he has reserved little enough space for this purpose and has virtually sold himself into slavery to his housekeeper in return for her tolerance of the unorthodox arrangements.

The following items, selected at ran-

dom, are perhaps representative of the character of the collection:

1. Approximately a thousand volumes on Africa.

2. Nearly five hundred on Abraham Lincoln.

3. More than one hundred and fifty slave narratives.

4. Sections devoted to books on Haiti, Negro fraternal orders, Negro churches, Negro soldiers, Negro music, and kindred topics.

5. A large collection of personal letters and autographs, including items from Abraham Lincoln, the members of Lincoln's cabinet, the leading Union generals in the Civil War, members of Congress, and abolitionists like Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Gerrit Smith, Horace Greeley, John Brown, and Wendell Phillips.

6. Letters of English abolitionists like William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and James Montgomery and of the prominent Haitian revolutionaries, including Toussaint L'Ouverture, Henri Christophe, Jean Jacques Dessalines, and Jean Pierre Boyer.

7. An assortment of autographs and manuscripts.

8. Numerous prints and photographs.

9. Files of various newspapers, including the *New York Age*, the *Odd Fellows Journal*, the *Louisville Defender*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, etc.

10. Files of such magazines as *African Repository*, *Anglo-African*, *Colored American*, *Opportunity*, *Crisis*, etc.

11. Approximately five hundred autographed books by Negro authors.

12. A large collection of poetry of similar authorship.

Slaughter's treasures include most of the known editions of Phillis Wheatley's poems and also those of Jupiter Hammon. He owns three of the rare Benjamin Banneker *Almanacs*—two for 1792 (Baltimore) and one of the 1793 issue (Philadelphia). He has complete sets in first editions of such writers as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Albin W. Tourgee, and Paul Laurence Dunbar—not to mention a sheaf of letters by Dunbar.

A catalog of the collection was made

by workers of the Work Projects Administration at the instance of librarians at Howard University and perhaps at the Library of Congress, but Slaughter is not enthusiastic over the results. He has certain reservations about "school-book" librarianship. Pending their gravitation to a public institution, however (after years of reluctance Slaughter is now open-minded on the question of a sale), his own arrangement of the books seems fairly adequate. He has lists of most of his holdings. The rest he remembers!

#### THE MOORLAND FOUNDATION HOWARD UNIVERSITY

The Moorland Foundation, the Library of Negro Life and History, was created by the board of trustees of Howard University, Washington, D.C., in 1914. The action of the trustees followed by a few months an action of another sort by one of their number. Earlier in the same year Rev. Jesse E. Moorland, a resident of New York City, an official of the Y.M.C.A., and a member of the Howard board since 1907, gave the university his private library. Included were more than three thousand items relating to the Negro, among them books, pamphlets, engravings, portraits, manuscripts, curios, pictures, and many envelopes of clippings. In the Howard Library Rev. Moorland's gift was combined with an older collection of anti-slavery literature, the gift of Lewis Tappan in 1873, and together they formed one of the important collections of such materials in the country.

Since 1914 other scattered collections have gravitated to the Moorland Foundation. The resources, too, have been expanded by year-to-year purchases. Funds have been available, thanks to a variety of circumstances which worked

to Howard's advantage, and they have been used energetically by an active and alert director, Mrs. Dorothy B. Porter. The result is a well-organized reference library, strategically located in the nation's capital, available for serious research, and housed in the new \$1,106,000 Founder's Library at Howard.

The distinguishing feature of this collection, as compared to the others described herein, is its relation to the curriculum of the university. Built originally around the two private collections mentioned above, the Moorland Foundation nevertheless reflects even more strongly another influence. Its growth and expansion have been, in the opinion of its director, basically conditioned by Howard courses in the various aspects of Negro life, literature, and history. The largest of the Negro institutions of higher learning, Howard has had many such courses and not a few others in which the Negro background of its students has tended to slant the teaching. Inevitably the library was affected.

The results of such a principle of selection are perhaps no more unusual than the principle itself. The Moorland Foundation, like the collections at Fisk, Atlanta, and other colored schools, includes everything about the Negro which promises to fit into the educational program of the institution. These materials, viewed as a spectrum, might show rarities like Hiob Ludolf's *A New History of Ethiopia* (London, 1682) and the pamphlet *An African's Anti-slavery Views* (1789) at one end and at the other the titles of "Howardiana," including the writings of Howard faculty members, material about the university, and the university's own publications. In between there would be a number of distinct shades, but where one ended and the other began would be hard to determine.

Perhaps this tendency toward fusion explains the arrangement of a "Catalogue of Books in the Moorland Foundation." This mimeographed publication, also a product of the Work Projects Administration, is broken down not by subject but by the publication dates of the titles listed. An odd side-view results. It is discovered, for example, that of the five hundred pages of annotated items ninety-four are devoted to titles printed between 1682 and 1849. The period between 1850 and 1899 is represented by listings which fill twenty-three pages. Nineteen pages are devoted to unpublished Howard University Master's theses. Some uncataloged pamphlets were also selected for inclusion.

By the spring of 1943 Mrs. Porter estimated that the catalog listings represented less than one-third of the collection's current holdings. New gifts, plus purchases in excess of \$10,000 worth of books in the four-year interval, had brought their number of cataloged items to about 16,500.

The influence of the Moorland Room has been considerable. Its director has written frequently about the collection and the special problems of librarianship which have grown out of it. Her Master's thesis (Columbia, 1932) was on "Afro-American Writing before 1835." Since that time Mrs. Porter has contributed to the *American Scholar* and frequently to the *Journal of Negro Education*.

A credit, too, goes to the Moorland Room for Naomi J. Rushing's "Cataloging and Care of Negro Collections," another Columbia Master's thesis. Miss Rushing is still on the staff of the Howard Library.

#### OBERLIN'S ANTISLAVERY PROPAGANDA

The antislavery materials in the library of Oberlin College are a part of the

history of the school. Oberlin, it should be remembered, is the school for which John Brown once solicited funds. Its campus was at one time the scene of a heated argument between Stephen Foster, the song-writer, and those who favored compromise and gradualism in the solution of the slavery problem. Founded in 1833 by John J. Shipherd, an avowed abolitionist, and Philo P. Stewart, it touched the controversial issue lightly at first, but two years later Oberlin's president and founder made history by persuading the trustees to permit Negroes to enter the school. The same year the Oberlin Antislavery Society was founded. The views expressed at this time were moderate, but a few months later a group of firebrands invaded the college. They were led by Theodore D. Weld, and all were former students of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, seceding from the latter institution because of their unbending stand on the slavery issue. Weld and his colleagues thoroughly converted Oberlin College and community to the abolitionist doctrine. Thereafter the place continued to be the center of underground railroad and anti-slavery activity.

With this background the library, inevitably, came into possession of a first-rate stock of the literature of protest issued by the advocates of emancipation during the years of their campaign. In 1932 Geraldine Hopkins Hubbard, preparing a Master of Arts thesis at Oberlin College, counted some seventeen hundred separate items dealing with slavery. This collection, she discovered, could be traced to the original Oberlin Collegiate Institute Library.

The institution passed through a severe financial crisis in 1839-40. Hoping to collect enough money to save the situation, William Dawes and Rev. John

Keep, agents of the college, went to England and made an appeal on the basis of the school's affiliation with the antislavery movement. The British responded, and the representatives of Oberlin acquired, in addition to the needed finances, about six thousand volumes for their library. Among these were many antislavery pamphlets and books, mostly from the British point of view. An indication of their success is the fact that the two-year period of 1822-24 is now represented in the collection by no less than twenty-eight British titles. These include a first edition of Elizabeth Heyrick's *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition* and items by Thomas Cooper, James Cropper, William Wilberforce, and many others. The copy of Buxton's *The African Slave Trade* which the school's agents brought back is inscribed "To the Deputation from the Oberlin Institution from their and its Friend and Servant, George Thompson, London, May 13, 1839." In a copy of J. J. Gurney's *A Winter in the West Indies* they brought home this inscription: "To John Keep, from his friend Geo. Sturge in pleasing remembrance of his visit to England, 1839-40." Not less valuable, though lacking an inscription, was the copy of Granville Sharp's *A Tract on the Law of Nature and Principles of Action in Man* (1777).

A number of years later, in connection with the opening of the Spear Library building in 1885, a campaign to enlarge the "Historical Collection on Slavery" was undertaken by a faculty committee composed of the Reverend Henry Matson, the librarian, Professor James Monroe, and Professor William Goodell Frost. Three times this committee issued the following appeal: "We have a very valuable collection and desire to make it complete. We desire to secure a copy of every book, pamphlet, report, speech,

tract, newspaper, or private letter bearing upon the subject."

Among those who responded with contributions from their private libraries were Professor John Morgan, Theodore J. Keep, Mrs. Sarah L. Dickinson, Reverend George Clark, and Reverend William W. Patton. Also acquired through the same appeal was the more important gift, through heirs, of the collection of William Goodell. As a front-line abolitionist, active in both the Liberty party and the "Liberty Leaguers," Goodell had assembled materials representing every phase of the movement from the time of its beginning in the United States. His gift, moreover, included his own antislavery works, among them the rare files of the newspapers he edited. Then there were autographed presentation copies which Goodell had received from his colleagues in the movement. Albert Barnes's *An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery* was such a volume, as were also La Roy Sunderland's *The Testimony of God against Slavery*, Lucius C. Matlack's *The History of the American Slavery and Methodism*, Foss and Mathews' *Facts for the Baptist Church*, and a first edition of *The Unconstitutionality of Slavery* by Lysander Spooner. And with the Goodell collection came a variety of manuscripts relating to the same subject. Most important of these is the "Declaration of Sentiments of the American Anti-slavery Society" in the handwriting of William Lloyd Garrison.

In the years that have followed, the collection at Oberlin has acquired, by one means or another, an interesting assortment of rarities. Typical of these, perhaps, are the following:

1. Several volumes of *The Liberty Bell*, two of which are autographed by Maria Weston

Chapman and another to S. Margaret Fuller, "with the regards of Oliver Johnson."

2. A copy of W. W. Brown's *Clotel*, autographed by the author.

3. *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* by Thomas Clarkson, inscribed to "Wm. W. Patton, from Joseph Sturge per Lewis Tappan."

4. Files of the *Anti-slavery Examiner*, *Anti-slavery Tracts*, *The Liberty Bell*, and *Liberty Minstrel*, not all complete.

Oberlin has also a good collection of the children's literature of the antislavery movement, a most interesting phase of the campaign.

#### OTHER COLLECTIONS

There are several other important collections of Negroana in the United States. Lacking any easy or convenient method of locating these or of evaluating them from a distance, this reporter employed a device which may not be without a certain quaintness. Knowing that the Charles E. Tuttle Company of Rutland, Vermont, had long made a specialty of the material in which these collections were interested and having seen the undated Tuttle Catalogue No. 113, *Books by and about the Negro and Slavery*, he struck upon the idea of tracing collections of Negro lore through the sales records of this company. The plan may be said to have worked, for it had the interest and co-operation of Mr. Charles E. Tuttle himself, and he had kept detailed notes of his company's transactions. From his cards it was not only possible to determine who was buying in the field and how much but also who had what among the rarer items. Inferences could also be drawn with respect to which collections were static and which growing.

While the more detailed descriptions in the foregoing sections are based in considerable part on personal observa-

tions and interviews with their directors, the following are mainly drawn from evidence and clues provided by the Tuttle files.

*Duke-North Carolina.*—The combined Negro collections of these two university libraries may be larger than any single collection described in the foregoing pages. Certainly, the Tuttle Company's sales to Duke, for its Flowers Collection of books about the South, would indicate this. Something of the nature and scope of the collections may be surmised from a few available facts. It is known, for example, that the division of the field has given folklore, sociology, and literature, as these pertain to the Negro, to North Carolina and assigned history, the Negro in the Caribbean, etc., to Duke. Even this division of area seems explainable. Guy B. Johnson, a member of the North Carolina faculty, has for years been a leading authority on the Negro, with a great knowledge of folklore and genuine enthusiasm for the material. His volume of "John Henry" songs is one bit of evidence. Howard W. Odum, sociologist in the same institution, made his reputation with books like *Rainbow round My Shoulder* and *Wings on My Feet*, imaginative treatments of Negro materials, and his sociological studies have never been far removed from the mores of those early books. Then there is Paul Green, the dramatist, who despite commercial success on Broadway has maintained his connection with the university at Chapel Hill. Paul Green's plays are predominantly Negro plays, from *The No 'Count Boy* to his Pulitzer Prize winning *In Abraham's Bosom* and his dramatization of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. The university community which includes all three of these unusual southern scholars surprises no one by owning what they have reason to feel is

a "right smart" collection of library materials dealing with the ways of black folks.

*Cornell and others.*—Like Oberlin, Cornell owns a large body of underground railroad lore and antislavery propaganda. Indeed, its collection is even better known in library circles and is said to be larger than the one at Oberlin. The history behind these resources is perhaps not entirely unlike the background of the Oberlin materials. It is known, for example, that the Gerrit Smith papers and effects went to Cornell and that the community around Utica was as strategically located for underground-railroad passengers as was central Ohio. Furthermore, the abolitionist sentiment was just as strong in Upper New York State. In fact, it would not be too great a mistake to say that for a number of years, while Frederick Douglass was editing his paper in Rochester, the center of gravity of the antislavery campaign shifted to that part of the United States. However that may be, Cornell, with its Samuel Joseph May Collection, is admittedly strong in slavery and antislavery materials.

Indications are that the collection is static, however. The Tuttle Company showed no sales to them and had no records reading "Cornell wants . . .," as was the case with most of the others. Wisconsin, Johns Hopkins, and Pennsylvania, all reputed to have extensive slavery and antislavery collections, were likewise relatively unrepresented on sales or want cards. Michigan, on the other hand, with no reputation for unusual holdings in this field, was buying antislavery items actively and increasingly within a limited area.

*Harvard.*—The interesting thing about Harvard was that, while it probably had as much Negro material as any library

in the country and while it was adding to its stock as actively as any, it had not thrown these materials together to form any sort of special collection. In its case—lacking any special motivation—this seemed a sensible way of handling the subject. There was both rhyme and reason behind collections like the Schomburg in New York, the James Weldon Johnson at Yale—indeed, behind all of those visited; but, wanting these purposes, it would be idle to invent them.

Two aspects of Harvard's holdings in this field, apart from its obvious volume, seem worth pointing out. First is the tendency to include slavery in the library of the School of Business. If this implies (I'm not sure it does) that Harvard regards the moral and sentimental and propaganda angles of the slavery controversy as of less importance than the business considerations, then librarianship at Harvard has taken a positive step which is interesting in its connotations.

A second point concerning Harvard's Negro materials was also derived from the Tuttle Company's records. T. Franklin Currier appeared to be the individual who represented the library in this field, and T. Franklin Currier is the scholar responsible for the definitive Whittier bibliography. Whittier, being the poet of the antislavery movement, would seem, then, to be the point of contact between the present library staff at Harvard and these Negro materials.

*Brown.*—The files of the Tuttle Company showed Brown University Library to be in the market for all Negro music and poetry. This special acquisitiveness could, in turn, be traced to S. Foster Damon, the individual in charge of Brown's Harris Collection of American Poetry. Mr. Damon had not only let it be understood that he was to have a

chance at all materials in this field but had frequently been a visitor at the Tuttle establishment and had inspected the cards in the "Negro" cases.

Further research revealed S. Foster Damon as the author of a monograph entitled *The Negro in Early American Songsters*, first read before the American Library Association and including a mention of "Backside Albany" (1812), one of the first of the genre. This paper seemed to throw a certain light on one aspect of his zeal as a curator.

*Swarthmore.*—Through the efforts of Henry J. Cadbury, whose specialty is the Society of Friends and books and collections which concern Quakers, Swarthmore College appears to have acquired a good stock of material from the Tuttle Negro list. The connection is accidental but obvious. Most historical works relating to the Friends are likely to be concerned with the Negro and slavery in some measure.

*Emory.*—The testimony of William C. Haygood, a former member of the Emory Library staff, had led me to expect references to their Negro collection in the Tuttle cards. None was discovered. The inference to be drawn is that the books with which they have surrounded the literary effects of Joel Chandler Harris, author of the "Uncle Remus" stories, are mainly "in-print" items. It may be further inferred that the Emory University Library has been more concerned with providing a background for their treasure than with reflecting the Negro scene in a broad context.

*Fisk.*—One of the foremost Negro collections is located at Fisk University. Fisk, founded in 1869, became a leading Negro institution of learning as a result of the triumphal world tour of its original "Jubilee Singers" in 1871. When Tuskegee Institute was established, based on

the vocational idea of Booker T. Washington, Fisk accepted responsibility for leadership in liberal education for Negroes.

The Fisk Negro collection is, therefore, a long-established one. Indeed, the moment of its creation cannot be fixed, though a certain genesis can be discovered. Determined efforts to build an important collection in this field began in the late 1920's. It was considered in the plans for the new library building, which provided a special room and other facilities for handling these materials. A year or two later Arthur A. Schomburg, not yet employed by the New York Public Library, was secured as curator for the department. During his years at Fisk he laid a basis for a collection not unlike the one he had assembled privately, the philosophy of which has already been discussed.

Later, the library of Willis D. Weatherford, then connected with the Y.M.C.A. College at Nashville, was purchased. This acquisition gave Fisk a Negro collection of impressive size. Subsequent purchases, plus exchanges of many duplicates found among the Weatherford books and among gifts, have given it a continuous growth. For several years S. E. Grinstead served the collection as curator.

Two publications, important to this report, have stemmed from this collection. One is Mr. Grinstead's bibliography of books by or about the Negro; the other, Frances L. Yocom's subject classification of books in this area, published by the H. W. Wilson Company.

*Other college and university libraries.*—Major and minor Negro collections are also located at such institutions as Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, Virginia Union, Morgan College, Tuskegee Institute, Dillard University,

and others. The ones at Atlanta and at Hampton are of major size, and the one at Dillard appears to be growing rapidly. Mr. Tuttle considered its development most promising from a dealer's point of view. Other circumstances confirm this. Dillard University sponsored extensive studies in the history of Negroes in Louisiana under the Work Projects Administration. Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration of Virginia prepared a "Classified Catalogue of the Negro Collection in the Collis P. Huntington Library of Hampton Institute" in 1940. This work, a thick mimeographed volume, lists 5,075 annotated items, of which 820 deal with the Negro in Africa, the Caribbean area, and Latin America, and the rest with the Negro in the United States.

*Other public libraries.*—Depending solely on the Tuttle files as a barometer, one would conclude that the Boston Athenaeum, the Cleveland Public, to a lesser extent the Birmingham Public, and, in a different category, the Newberry in Chicago were the most active public libraries in the Negro field, barring, of course, the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch in New York City. This, however, is not a complete picture, for it says nothing about popular collections of the kind that have been established in the Hall Branch of the Chicago Public, in the Vernon Branch of the Los Angeles system, and perhaps in many others. None of these would have occasion to do extensive business with a firm like the Tuttle Company, and their occasional purchases provided a basis for no enlightening assumptions. Also neglected by this reckoning are the public libraries of Brooklyn, Burlington, Houston, Providence, etc., all of which have at one time or another reported considerable resources in the field.

That the Newberry Library and the Boston Athenaeum have important strength in this general area could be deduced from the titles of their purchases—often rare pamphlets and other items generally associated with the more exhaustive collections.

*Library of Congress.*—At the time of the Paris Exposition in 1903, Dan Murray, a Negro and one of the assistants in the Library of Congress, was asked to prepare an exhibit of Negro books and related materials. The exhibition turned out to be so impressive by current standards that the collection was kept together when it was returned to Washington, and continuous additions were made to it during the remainder of Murray's life. Since the death of Dan Murray it has been known as the Murray Collection. Naturally, thanks to strategic advantages, its acquisitions have been impressive.

A good example of the type of material which seems to flow to that collection has just been announced: the complete letters and papers of Booker T. Washington, including a wide correspondence with many of the great historical figures of the past generation relating to the activities of Tuskegee and the whole scope of Negro development in the United States.

As the repository for all books copyrighted in the United States since July,

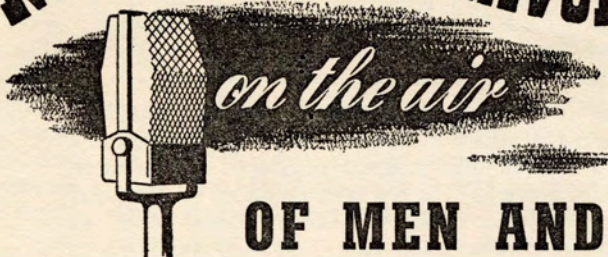
1898, the Library of Congress collection is, of course, complete within that period. It is by no means limited to the United States or to the years since 1898, however.

*Frederick Douglass Memorial.*—One of the most interesting and valuable collections of Negroana in America is one of the smallest. It consists entirely of the writings of Frederick Douglass and is housed in the Memorial Home at Anacostia, D.C. Douglass' stature as a Negro leader, before and after the Civil War, is constantly rising. Obscured for a time by the more conciliatory Booker T. Washington, he looms up with the developments of recent history. This new evaluation has drawn sharp attention to his life and works. *A Calendar of the Writings of Frederick Douglass in the Memorial Home at Anacostia, D.C.* was prepared by the District of Columbia Historical Records Survey, Division of Professional and Service Projects of the W.P.A. It is annotated and indexed, contains 310 entries, and has a section of "Documentary References" in addition to a Foreword by the Negro historian, Carter G. Woodson, and a Preface by H. B. Dillard, supervisor of the District of Columbia Historical Records Survey.

This small memorial collection, housed in a shrine, is perhaps a synthesis of all the others—their final meaning.

FELLOWSHIPS

# Northwestern University



## OF MEN AND BOOKS

Vol. 3: No. 33

May 27, 1944

Critic: JOHN T. FREDERICK

Professor of Modern Letters in Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism

Guest: ARNA BONTEMPS

In a radio conversation over the Columbia Broadcasting System

## Race Relations

Sylvestre C. Watkins, *Anthology of American Negro Literature*

R. M. MacIver, *Group Relations and Group Antagonisms*

Edwin R. Embree, *Brown Americans*

Howard W. Odum, *Race and Rumors of Race*

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

*Of Men and Books* is a weekly radio program presented by Northwestern University in cooperation with the Columbia Broadcasting System. The program originated as *The Book Shelf* in 1928. Since 1937 it has been produced by Mr. John T. Frederick, Professor of Modern Letters, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University. *Of Men and Books* is a book review program. Professor Frederick discusses books old and new, books of current interest and social significance, books that are destined to become important in the literature of our time. Prominent authors and literary critics appear with Mr. Frederick as his guests. The program originates in Station WBBM, Chicago, and is carried by the stations of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

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## Race Relations

PROFESSOR FREDERICK: I am very happy to welcome you to OF MEN AND BOOKS again, Mr. Bontemps. I believe that this is either your third or your fourth visit to our microphone as guest. And I very deeply appreciate, as I know our listeners do, your making the long journey all the way from Nashville to be with us here today. I think in one of those earlier broadcasts we discussed your anthology of Negro poetry, *Golden Slippers*, a book which you somewhat too humbly, I think, called "A Book for Young Readers"—because I think it is a very fine book for older readers. And on that broadcast I asked you to read some poems from that collection. I think that even very serious matters have their lighter side. One of the things I like about *Golden Slippers* is the fact that there is so much plain pleasure and good spirit in it.

I wonder if you would start us off today by reading a couple of those poems that I liked so much—of that lighter type?

MR. BONTEMPS: Well, I'd be very glad to, Mr. Frederick. I think I read one by Countee Cullen on that broadcast, called "Under the Mistletoe." It went like this:

"I did not know she'd take it so,  
Or else I'd never dared;  
Although the bliss was worth the blow,  
I did not know she'd take it so.  
She stood beneath the mistletoe  
So long I thought she cared;  
I did not know she'd take it so,  
Or else I'd never dared."

I think there was one, too, by Langston Hughes on about the same level of entertainment but in dialect, called "Dressed Up."

"I had ma clothes cleaned  
Just like new.  
I put 'em on but  
I still feels blue.

"I bought a new hat,  
Sho is fine,  
But I wish I had back that  
Old gal o' mine.

"I got new shoes—  
They don't hurt ma feet,  
But I ain't got nobody  
For to call me sweet."

FREDERICK: Thank you, Mr. Bontemps. I still like those very much indeed. There is a special timeliness in our getting together today to talk about books

which deal with the general matter of race relations and the Negro in American life. That timeliness consists in the publication just now of a new volume in the Modern Library—a volume called *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, which has been edited by Sylvestre C. Watkins. I think, if we are talking about enjoyable reading, that here is a lot of enjoyable reading. I feel that in this anthology Mr. Watkins has brought together a number of pieces that have that entertainment quality as well as other qualities.

BONTEMPS: Yes, and I think they also contain useful information for the general reader on the subject of the Negro.

FREDERICK: I feel that that is distinctly true. We shall have more to say about this anthology before we are through today, I suspect.

But I should like to mention here another new book which gives our broadcast special timeliness, which I think has particular value in relation to the subject that we are going to explore together for a little while today. This is the book called *Group Relations and Group Antagonisms*, edited by R. M. MacIver, and published by the Institute for Religious Studies, but distributed by Harper & Brothers. This is a symposium, a collection of talks, given at a meeting of the Institute for Religious Studies on various aspects of the subject of group relations.

BONTEMPS: I was impressed with the fact that this book places the discussion of the Negro in a frame with other minority problems. I suggest that much of the current attention which has been paid to the Negro in books has been a result of the discovery that this problem is part of a larger one, that it is not limited to certain areas of the United States, and not to a certain part of the world. It is, in other words, part of a larger context.

FREDERICK: I feel that this book, *Group Relations and Group Antagonisms*, is a particularly important and valuable contribution. It is also a very heartening and interesting indication of broader thinking in this whole field that this book is the result of a conference of representatives of many religious groups.

BONTEMPS: That is very interesting. As a librarian I have had a great many inquiries about the church's attitude toward the race problem. People ask for books disclosing the positions taken by different denominations. The only substantial books that I have been able to suggest in the past were Oldham's rather old *Christianity and the Race Problem*, more or less from the Protestant point of view, and La Farge's *The Race Question and the Negro*, published last year by Longmans, Green and Company—a Catholic view.

Quite recently, however, one hears that a number of the religious groups are taking forward positions on this subject. Many of them seem definitely committed to programs to promote race relations and better understanding. These include the Presbyterians, the Baptists, and quite definitely the Methodists, who just this Spring have taken up the question in rather clear terms at their St. Louis Conference.

FREDERICK: I suppose coming from Nashville you are acquainted with the magazine called *Motive*, Mr. Bontemps, the magazine of the Methodist Student Movement?

BONTEMPS: Yes, I am acquainted with it and admire it. I think it is on the right road. I have also observed positive actions on the part of Catholic individuals and groups in this general field: the establishment of the Friendship Houses in New York and Chicago seem to be representative of their position.

Another religious group that seems to me to be alert to the problems of the Negro in America is the Christian Science Church. I got this impression from reading the *Christian Science Monitor*, which almost daily carries at least one article of news which makes a contribution to understanding and amity.

FREDERICK: I am glad that you mentioned that newspaper and its quality in the handling of the news, Mr. Bontemps. In fact, I feel like taking time to recommend both of these periodicals rather earnestly to our listeners. The magazine *Motive* is primarily edited for the Methodist Student movement, as I said, but it is certainly a magazine of very real interest to the general reader; and I think that its treatment of matters related to our group relations in this country is typical of its whole attitude of constructive and clear thinking. And, of course, I have the most profound enthusiasm for the *Christian Science Monitor* as a great newspaper. Perhaps we could safely say that it is the world's best newspaper. The treatment of news of all kinds, again including the news that bears on group relations, that we have in the *Monitor* is just not paralleled, it seems to me, in the most of our daily newspapers.

I think I am going to go so far as to give a couple of addresses here. The address of *Motive*, the magazine of the Methodist Student Movement, is 810 Broadway, Nashville 2, Tennessee. And I think that anyone of our listeners who has a young reader in the family who might like this magazine would do well to get acquainted with it.

I think any listener who doesn't know the *Christian Science Monitor* would be well rewarded for writing to the Christian Science Publishing Society, Boston 15, Massachusetts, and asking for a sample copy of that great newspaper. He would be particularly interested in the treatment of the news that it handles on group relations.

To come back to Mr. MacIver's book—that is, the book edited by Mr. MacIver, *Group Relations and Group Antagonisms*—there is one idea developed in an introductory essay to that book, (the essay contributed by Mr. MacIver himself) which I thought was particularly helpful in my own thinking. This is the portion of his discussion which deals with what he calls "the social phenomenon of group images." He says:

"We carry in our heads images of other groups, and we bring those images into all our relationships. Nobody has studied these group images, though they are entertained by every group of every other group. We all do it all the time. These images that every group carries of every other group are misshapen images, misconceived. They do not represent the reality of the other group. They are themselves group created, and we find them everywhere.

"Thus in economic relations employers have got a group image of a worker, and workers have a group image of an employer. Each knows that the view of the other side is wrong; so we can agree that both images are probably wrong. Again, in the religious domain there is a group image of a Catholic, and there is a group image of a Protestant, and there is a group image of a Jew, and these group images are of the same kind, group created, and distorted.

"We find this process of image making wherever groups exist. In politics, for example, there is the group image that a Democrat has of a Republican, and the one that a Republican has of a Democrat. Again each side will agree that the other side distorts, and each side will be right. Pervading all our relationships are these strange mental pictures we form of the antithetical group . . . perhaps it makes life more exciting (to have these images) but it robs us of reality. Instead of really knowing people, most of us only know these poor distorted types that we set up for the other groups. We do not see the person when we meet him, if he belongs to one of the antithetical groups; we see the type, and we never get down to reality. I am sure that is not so good for us or for them."

That is what Mr. MacIver says in this introductory essay to his volume he edited called *Group Relations and Group Antagonisms*. I wonder if you feel that that group image concept is a good way of saying something of importance, Mr. Bontemps?

BONTEMPS: Yes, I do. I think that is a very useful concept. If we can get elements of truth into this image, we shall be getting where we want to go.

FREDERICK: I feel that, and I feel that we can find very good help toward doing that job—getting elements of truth into this group image in particular reference to the Negro group in America—by reading the other two books that were listed for our discussion today, Mr. Bontemps. That is Edwin R. Embree's *Brown Americans*, which has been published by Viking Press, and Howard W. Odum's *Race and Rumors of Race*, published by the University of North Carolina Press at Chapel Hill.

BONTEMPS: I think you are right. *Brown Americans* is very useful as an overview of the whole position of the Negro in America and American life, past as well as present. It seems to me most essential that this kind of information be widely circulated.

Mr. Embree's book is not hard reading, either.

FREDERICK: No, on the contrary, it is very good reading. It is written in an agreeable, reasonable style with a very open-minded and open-hearted approach to the whole problem, it seems to me. I feel that the breadth of view which Mr. Embree displays in that book is one of its elements of value. We get plenty of historical background, the kind of general information that we need to build up the picture that we want.

The other book—which I just mentioned—Howard W. Odum's *Race and*

*Rumors of Race*—affords a particularly interesting supplement on the most recent developments that that phrase “the group image” would suggest. This book shows how the distorted group image arises. It does that in an interesting way: Mr. Odum has made a collection of rumors—all kinds of rumors—about matters affecting race relations, from all parts of the country. He has traced these rumors back to their sources—as far as possible. That can’t always be done, of course. He has checked them against the facts of the things that have actually happened, and he has reported both the facts and the rumors in this book.

BONTEMPS: Yes, I think it makes valuable reading, as background for newspaper accounts of clashes and riots, tension areas and bad feeling.

FREDERICK: I have felt that. I think that for the person who is disturbed by reports of this kind there is much real illumination in Mr. Odum’s book.

Incidentally, I was quite gratified, and I might say mildly surprised, to find that this latest book of Howard W. Odum is also very readable.

BONTEMPS: Yes, the writing made me think of the happy style of Mr. Odum’s *Rainbow Round My Shoulder* and other more pleasurable books of an earlier period in his writing.

FREDERICK: I guess that my sociologist friends will forgive me for saying that in *Race and Rumors of Race*, Mr. Odum has forgotten to write like a sociologist, that he has written for the reader, instead.

And while we speak of good writing, there is no book that I am more inclined to give a general recommendation, in this field that we are discussing today, than the anthology we mentioned at the beginning of this broadcast: the *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, edited by Sylvestre C. Watkins, which is just being published by Modern Library. There is a lot of good writing, a lot of writing to enjoy and to savor for its own quality, in this book. I don’t believe that you and I are going to be accused of self-interest when we praise Mr. Watkins’ book, Mr. Bontemps, in spite of the fact that we both happen to be contributors to it. I feel honored to be invited to write the introduction to Mr. Watkins’ *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, and I think that I would certainly put in the category of readable items which it contains, the two contributions by which your work is represented in it. I like very much your story in the story section of the book. And my liking for your essay called “Rock, Church, Rock!” is indicated by the fact that I included it in an anthology I myself recently edited.

BONTEMPS: Well, I don’t think we can justly be accused of self-interest alone in praising Mr. Watkins’ book. After all, it is his job primarily—even though we are in it.

But my own contributions aside, I should like to single out at least two other items that I rate very highly as good reading which Mr. Watkins has included. First, there is the story, “The City of Refuge,” written by Rudolph

Fisher nearly twenty years ago during the early Harlem days, a superb short story, it seems to me, most pleasant and most delightful reading. And then, there is the autobiographical piece by Richard Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," an equally absorbing bit of narration, but a more profound and much more bitter transcript of the kind of life with which Negroes have to become acquainted.

FREDERICK: Yes, I feel that those are outstanding selections in this outstanding collection.

I think I should like to explain the structure, one might call it, the organization of the *Anthology of Negro Literature*. In the first place, there is a collection of short stories. There are seven of them—the group beginning with one by Richard Wright called "Almos' a Man." I'm glad to see that Mr. Watkins went back a little to a writer whose reputation was primarily in the 19th century, to give us C. W. Chesnutt's delightful story, "The Goophered Grapevine." And this group is completed with the story by Zora N. Hurston and by your story, Mr. Bontemps, "A Summer Tragedy."

And then there is a very rich group of essays with such writers as Roi Ottley, J. W. Johnson, Alain Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, Walter White, Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes, represented by essays on a variety of subjects in this general field. There are subjects such as "The History of the Spiritual," and "The Negro in American Fiction," giving us something of the cultural background, the cultural contribution of Negroes in various fields to American life.

And there are such subjects as "Why Should We March?" discussed by A. P. Randolph, and such subjects as "Fifty Years of Negro Citizenship," discussed by C. G. Woodson, in which the sociological and the economic areas of this general field are explored.

I guess I have particular fondness for autobiographical writing. I feel that sometimes we get closer to the truth in terms in which the truth is dynamic for us—has actual meaning for us—in what people write about their own lives, their own experiences, than we do in any other kind of writing. And, I think the autobiographical section of the *Anthology of American Negro Literature* is an especially rich one. Here we have W. E. B. Du Bois with a portion of an autobiography called "Revolution." We have that very fine piece of narrative that you mentioned, Mr. Bontemps, Richard Wright's "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," and we have some lighter things—W. C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues and Solvent Bank," for example, and T. R. Poston's, "The Revolt of the Evil Fairies." And then there is a selection called Biographies, in which "Rock, Church, Rock!" I mentioned before has its place; Zora Hurston contributes an essay on "Lawrence of the River;" J. E. Washington's essay on the historical character, "William de Fleurville." He was the barber at Springfield, was he not?

BONTEMPS: Who was a friend of Lincoln's—had a long acquaintance with him and actually, perhaps, was somewhat responsible for Lincoln's own attitude toward the Negro people.

FREDERICK: I think that is a particularly interesting essay and a particularly interesting sidelight on the character and life of Lincoln, and on the historical events and relationships in which Lincoln played so large a part.

I wonder if I could make any better general comment on this collection as a whole than to read what I have said about the collection in the introduction. I have said this about Mr. Watkins' work as an editor in assembling the *Anthology of American Negro Literature*:

"Very carefully, very thoughtfully and conscientiously, Mr. Watkins has assembled for the reader of this book a group of selections which present—as fully and fairly, I believe, as a single small volume could—the place of the Negro in American life today, and what the Negro thinks and feels about that place. It isn't an unrelated picture: the historical backgrounds are given, the way the place has been prepared and the way the Negro has come to occupy it. It isn't a partial or distorted picture: all sides of Negro life are presented here, and all attitudes and intentions characteristic of American Negroes today. Stories, essays and articles, biographical and autobiographical sketches, all dovetail together to give the reader—with detail, color, incident and action, with interpretation and analysis, comment and reflection, and finally, with power and completeness—the sense of truth."

BONTEMPS: Yes, I think that is very true of the collection, Mr. Frederick. I think this anthology is an admirable one and excellently suited to the general reader. From it such a person can get a very full picture, if he reads from cover to cover; or he may find what he wants on any one of a number of subjects, if he elects to pick and choose.

By way of rounding out our discussion of this book, however, I wonder if you would mind reading the last two paragraphs of the introduction you wrote for the anthology? They made a considerable impression on me.

FREDERICK: I'll be glad to because they do sum up what I think I would like to say about the whole subject:

"I do not know the specific ways in which the Negro's place in American life is to be made better. I do know that it will be made better in one way or another. And I know that it can be made better by all of us working together. The problem of the Negro's place in American life is not a local problem alone or primarily, or a state problem, or a regional problem. It is a national problem, because on the Negro's place in the American nation depends our future relations to other nations, the rising nations of that great majority of the people of the earth whose skins are colored. It is a national problem also because on its solution depend our national consistency, integrity and self-respect.

"That the Negro's place in American life is a national problem means that it is the individual problem of every citizen of the nation. It is a problem that cannot be ignored, evaded or postponed. It must be faced and dealt with now, while millions of American Negroes are fighting side by side with other millions of Americans against fascism and for the Four Freedoms.

"In our individual responsibility, most of us greatly need knowledge and understanding: knowledge of what the Negro's place in American life today really is; understanding of what the Negro thinks and how he feels about it." I believe that Mr. Watkins' book provides that knowledge and that understanding, and I am very happy that it has been put in the Modern Library, which means that it is going to be so generally and easily available to readers all over the country at all times.

I remember that when we talked together on a broadcast once before, Mr. Bontemps, I asked you to read at the close of the broadcast a poem of your own that I like so very much—a little poem that is in the *Golden Slippers* collection also. And I am sure we have plenty of time today for you to read that poem for us again. I know that anyone who happened to listen to the broadcast before and who is listening now would like to hear it again. It is the brief poem called, "The Daybreakers." Would you read it for us now?

BONTEMPS: I'll be glad to.

"We are not come to wage a strife  
With swords upon this hill;  
It is not wise to waste the life  
Against a stubborn will.  
Yet would we die as some have done:  
Beating a way for the rising sun."

FREDERICK: Thank you, Mr. Bontemps. Before we leave the air today I'd like to make a special request to regular listeners to this program, you who have been in the habit of tuning in OF MEN AND BOOKS when you've had the chance to do so. I hope that you will make a special effort to be in the audience a week from today, next Saturday. I am going to discuss at that time a subject which I think has a very broad interest and importance for all of us. The title I have chosen for the broadcast is "Reading and Living." I should like to try to state, or at least to suggest, in that discussion some of the underlying ideas which I have sought to emphasize and to express in these broadcasts during the past years: some of the attitudes toward reading, what reading is for, what reading really is, what reading can mean in our individual lives and our national life. That is in line, of course, with our discussion of today which is based upon the conviction that it is possible for us as citizens, by thoughtful reading, to become better citizens, better prepared to play our part and make our contribution not only in the particular field of group relations, but in all the fields of our citizenship.

I am also anxious that you might hear that broadcast because some especially important announcements in relation to the future of the program will be made at the broadcast a week from today.

Now I want to say again how much I appreciate your making the long journey up here to join us in this broadcast today, Mr. Bontemps, and how much I have enjoyed working with you on it.

BONTEMPS: Thank you.

FREDERICK: It has been good to have you here.

**Recent OF MEN AND BOOKS broadcasts:**

NO. GUESTS AND MAIN BOOKS	THEME
1. No guest .....	A New Understanding of China
2. W. Somerset Maugham, <i>Introduction to Modern English and American Literature</i> .....	A Common Literature for England and America
3. Col. Joseph I. Greene, <i>The Infantry Journal Reader</i> .....	Military Reading for Civilians
4. Gladys Hasty Carroll, <i>Dunnybrook</i> .....	New England: A Miniature America
5. Lt. John Mason Brown, <i>To All Hands</i> .....	Democracy in the Armed Forces
6. Christine Weston, <i>Indigo</i> .....	Insight into India
7. Richard Sullivan, <i>The Dark Continent</i> .....	Fresh Vision of Life
8. No guest .....	Books for Christmas Giving
9. No guest .....	Recent Books of Interest
10. Madame Wei Tao-Ming, <i>My Revolutionary Years</i> .....	China and the United States
11. Albert Spalding, <i>Rise to Follow</i> .....	Music in Wartime
12. No guest .....	Christmas Reading in Wartime
13. Count R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, <i>Crusade for Pan-Europe</i> .....	Plans for Peace
14. No guest .....	Great Americans: Our Contemporaries, Thomas Jefferson
15. Elizabeth Hawes, <i>Why Women Cry</i> .....	Women in Wartime
16. No guest .....	Great Americans: Our Contemporaries, Walt Whitman
17. Helen J. Clapesattle .....	Regional Literature in Wartime
18. No guest .....	Great Americans: Our Contemporaries, Abraham Lincoln
19. Mitford M. Mathews, <i>A Dictionary of American English</i> .....	New Reference Books
20. No guest .....	Great Americans: Our Contemporaries, George Washington
21. Lillian Smith, <i>Strange Fruit</i> .....	Notable New Novels
22. Sylvan Hoffman, <i>News of the Nation</i> .....	New Views of American History
23. Skulda Baner, <i>Latchstring Out</i> .....	American Patterns
24. William Sloane .....	China Book Week
25. Capt. Frederick J. Bell, <i>Condition Red</i> .....	Our Navy at War
26. Charles J. Rolo, <i>Wingate's Raiders</i> .....	The war in Southeast Asia
27. Jesse L. Lasky, Franklin J. Meine .....	The Adventures of Mark Twain
28. No guest .....	Literature and the War
29. A. C. Spectoraky .....	Contemporary Midwest Writing
30. Sir Bernard Pares, <i>Russia and the Peace</i> .....	Russian Book Week
31. Rev. Leo L. Ward, CSC .....	Religious Books
32. Dorothy Sparks .....	First Books of Distinction

Name Arna Wendell Bontemps Field: Library Science

Assistant Project Technician, Illinois Writers' Project  
703 East 50th Place, Chicago

#### Plan of Work

To work toward an M. A. degree in the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. While at it, I hope also to complete work begun several years ago in English and leading to a similar degree in that field.

Requests grant for one year. Has been admitted to the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. Seeks training for position as University or College Librarian.

Personal Data Born Alexandria, Louisiana, October 1902. Age: 39  
Married, five children.

Undergraduate Work Pacific Union College, B. A. 1923.

Graduate Work University of Chicago, has completed residence requirements for Master's degree in English.

Experience Teacher and Principal, Harlem Academy, 1924-31, \$1,248 to \$2,000; teacher, Oakwood Junior College, Huntsville, Alabama, 1931-34, \$1,400; principal, Shiloh Academy, Chicago, 1935-38, \$1,200; present position since 1940, \$2,336.

Accomplishments Publications: Novels, God Sends Sunday, Harcourt, 1931, Black Thunder, Macmillan, 1936, Drums at Dusk, Macmillan, 1939; four juvenile books, including Sad-Faced Boy and The Fast Sooner Hound (with Jack Conroy); editor of Father of the Blues, by W. C. Handy, Macmillan, 1941, and Golden Slippers, an anthology of poetry for children, Harpers, 1941.

Is included in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in the East.

Julius Rosenwald Fund Fellowship, 1938, \$1,900.

#### References

John T. Frederick, Northwestern University  
May Lamberton Becker, New York Herald Tribune  
Lois Dwight Cole, Macmillan Company  
Helen English, Los Angeles Public Library  
Napier Wilt, University of Chicago  
Jasmine Britton, Los Angeles Board of Education

#### Budget Summary

Total Amount Needed	\$2,550
From Applicant	150
From Fund	\$2,400

AMOUNT GRANTED

Fellowship Application  
ARNA BONTEMPS

Plan of Work

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My aim is to do creative writing in fields already indicated by some of my previous writing. A special interest of mine is literature with a special appeal to younger Negro readers. I want to gather, particularly in the West Indies, Mexico and Central America, background material for further writing in this field. Without binding myself in advance to a definite plot, I would like to propose at least one story with a tropical setting and possibly based on the past history of the ports and shore lines of the islands and countries mentioned.

Closely connected is my second aim. I have done some work on a historical novel dealing with the participation of French Colonials under d'Estaing in the Siege of Savannah. The time, about <sup>20</sup>ten years earlier than the time of Black Thunder. The expedition was a failure, as was the Siege, and the returning French ships--about twenty-two of them--were divided by a great autumn wind. If the incident is nearly forgotten in history, it is because it did not influence the outcome of the war, not because it lacked drama. Negroes were involved, Christophe himself, just a boy at the time, was said to have been among the troops.

I would like to complete this novel and could do so if granted a fellowship.

My plan would be to spend from two to four months of my time in the places mentioned, the remaining eight months in actual writing here in the United States.

Following the period of the fellowship I aim to seek a position in one of the Negro colleges or universities, for I have a feeling that I can make a more valuable contribution as a writer if I continue to engage in teaching during part of my time, but my hope is that the fellowship will enable me to realize fully whatever powers I may have as a writer.

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Report Requested of Mr. James Weldon Johnson, Creative Writing, Fisk University  
Nashville, Tennessee

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. A statement of the candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate a frank statement of your opinion of this applicant's abilities and personal characteristics, and an appraisal of his plan of work. An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for an adequate review of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.

Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

*Raymond Patey*  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Dear Mr. Patey - I think that Mr. Bontemps' record of accomplishment is a guarantee of his worthiness of a fellowship, and I hope his application will be favorably considered.

Sincerely -

*Anna Weldon Johnson*

OVER

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
4901 ELLIS AVENUE  
CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arns W. Bontemps  
Report Requested of Mr. James Weldon Johnson, Creative Writing, Fisk University  
Nashville, Tennessee

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. A statement of the candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

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Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

*Raymond Paty*  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

*Dear Mr. Kelly - I think that Mr. Bontemps' record of accomplishment is a guarantee of his worthiness of a fellowship, and I hope the position will be filled soon.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

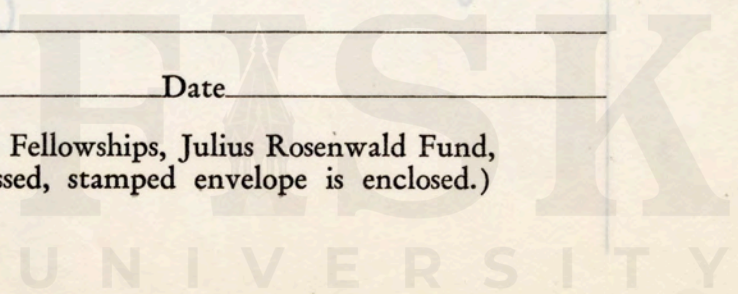
Position or Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Please return to Raymond Paty, Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.)

OVER





**ON RADIO BROADCAST—** On hand for the premiere of the new radio series by Bennett College, Greensboro, N. C., recently was Arna Bontemps, right, novelist, poet and writer of juvenile literature, who was featured speaker during the meeting of the North Carolina Negro Library Association. Sharing honors with the author on the program broadcast over WBIG, Greensboro, was Mrs. Martha Sebastian, center, first and present librarian of Carnegie Public Library which observed its twentieth anniversary the day of the broadcast. Left is Miss Peggy Toatley, interviewer and director of the radio programs. (Morisey Photo)



JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
(RENEWAL)

Candidate	Arna Wendell Bontemps Author 703 East 50th Place, Chicago, Illinois	Special Field Creative Writing
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Plan of Work

To continue research and complete writing on a broad-canvas historical novel on the Siege of Savannah and the participation of Haitian soldiers in the attempt.

Wishes to do research in New York, Charleston, Savannah, and possibly Paris; writing in New York or Chicago.

Digest of Application

Born 1902, Alexandria, Louisiana. Four children.

A. B. Pacific Union, 1923. Graduate work toward M. A. University of Chicago. Special work at Columbia University.

Novels: Black Thunder, Macmillan, 1936; God Sends Sunday, Harcourt, Brace, 1931; Books for Children: Sad-faced Boy, Houghton Mifflin, 1937; You Can't Pet A Possum, Morrow, 1934; Popo and Fifina, Macmillan, 1932; also many poems. Published during last grant Drums at Dusk, Macmillan, and article, "Sad-Faced Author," Horn Book, January-February, 1939.

References

Miss Lois Dwight Cole, Associate Editor,  
Macmillan Company

Budget Summary

Total amount needed	\$ 1,900
From applicant	---
From Fund	\$ 1,900

Committee Notes

Granted



January 17, 1939

## Report of progress under present Julius Rosenwald Fund grant:

Research in New York, August 1938, using the Negro collection in Harlem.

Research in Haiti, September and October, 1938. Visited all important historic spots, interviewed all well-known Haitian historians and scholars--including Dr. Price-Mars, writer and former minister, General Nemours, director of museum, Dr. Clement Lanier, M. Louis Mercier, historian and journalist, M. Jean Fouchard, editor of literary magazine and secretary to president, M. Charles Vincent, historian and brother to president, etc., etc. Collected numerous articles and books on the period of my work.

Creative writing in Chicago, June and ~~August~~<sup>July</sup>, 1938, ~~September~~ November and December, 1938, January-May, 1939.

Divided the large mass of material I had collected. Completed a novel.

Drums at Dusk represents material that I had planned to incorporate in the broad-canvas novel based on Haitian participation in the American Revolution during the Siege of Savannah. I decided to divide the two elements, however, following my trip to Haiti. I showed what I had done to the publishers. They suggested that I round out what had already been finished for spring publication. This was contracted for and the manuscript mailed January 16, 1939. A description of the book is to be found in their Spring Catalogue, now ready.

A new Juvenile story, a boy's adventure story based on Caribbean lore and history, is also on my slate. I hope to finish it during the months that remain on the present grant.

During remaining time, I propose to also keep the Savannah work moving.

## Plan of Work for the coming year:

- (a) There is an unpublished and almost unknown Haitian diary of my period in New York. It is privately owned, but Miss Frances Phillips, director of the publishing firm of William Morrow & Co., has promised to arrange for me to read and translate it in the home of the owner if it can be arranged for me to come to N. Y. for the month or so this will require. The owner will not allow it to be removed.
- (b) It has been discovered that the Haitian priests of my period regularly sent reports to Paris, reports to which were added extremely interesting little worldly observations, including delicious gossip. I could make capital of this in the novel.
- (c) Having availed myself of the above, I'd like to visit Charleston and Savannah for a look at such old newspapers as may be found.
- (d) Then, by fall, I'd settle down and give the book no rest till it is finished.

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Arna W. Bontemps

Miss Lois Dwight Cole, Associate Editor, The Macmillan Company

In our opinion Mr. Bontemps is the best of the Negro prose writers today. His earlier novel, BLACK THUNDER, had fine critical reception, but did not sell well, perhaps because of the subject, an abortive slave uprising in Virginia. His present novel, DRUMS AT DUSK, is not yet published. Our readers were enthusiastic about the beauty, color and charm of his writing, and recommended the manuscript in glowing terms. The book on the Haitian participation in the Siege of Savannah during the Revolution is certainly unusual in subject and background and we do not doubt Mr. Bontemps could handle both vividly and well; the popular appeal of the book is a different matter. We know nothing of Mr. Bontemps' financial status. We do believe that he is a hard-working writer of genuine and unusual ability.

# FELLOWSHIPS

November 11, 1937

Dear Mr. Bontemps: Your application for a fellow-  
ship has been received and I  
shall be glad to present it to our Committee.

It happens that Dr. Charles  
Johnson is a member of our Committee on Fellowships,  
and as we prefer not to use committee members as  
references, I wonder if you will not substitute for  
Dr. Johnson a person at the University of Chicago  
who is familiar with your work.

Very truly yours,

RP\*MLU

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
731 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

	RRP			

FELLOWSHIPS

731 E. 50th Place  
Chicago  
14 November '37

Mr. Raymond Paty  
Rosenwald Fund  
Chicago

Dear Mr. Paty:

I am sorry I did not know that Dr. Charles S. Johnson was a member of the Committee on Fellowships, and of course I hope that the fact that he had so much to do with launching me as a writer will be no disadvantage. I hasten to offer some additional names.

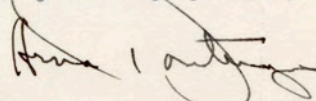
✓ Miss Helen English, Los Angeles Public Library (Main), in charge of branches, formerly teaching in the University of Southern California.

✓ Professor Charles Elliot Weniger, chairman of English Department, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

✓ Dr. Melville Herskovitz, Northwestern University.

You suggested that I give the name of a person at the University of Chicago. Professor Robert Morse Lovett knows me as a student and knows that I write. I am not certain, however, to what extent he, Dr. Millett or my other teachers are actually acquainted with my writings, so I hesitate to suggest them.

Very truly yours,



Arna Bontemps

# FELLOWSHIPS

November 29, 1937

Dear Mr. Bontemps: Thank you for the  
books which came  
today. I am returning the June, 1926  
copy of Opportunity and the December,  
1926 copy of The Crisis as we have these  
poems in "Caroling Dusk."

Very truly yours,

RP\*US

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
731 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

FELLOWSHIPS

RP<sup>o</sup>

731 E. 50th Place  
Chicago, Ill.  
29 November '37

Mr. Raymond Paty  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
Chicago

Dear Mr. Paty:

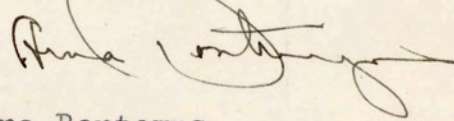
Here are some of my books and contributions to magazines, as many as I could get together at present. Only one of importance is missing, I believe: The copy of OPPORTUNITY containing my second Alexander Pushkin prize poem, THE RETURN. The poem, however, is to be found in CAROLING DUSK by Cullen.

Will you please note on my application blank and in your address file that my address, beginning December 6th of this year will be

703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois.

I will also appreciate it if you will give this last information to Mrs. Simon for her file.

Very sincerely,



Arna Bontemps

# FELLOWSHIPS

April 16, 1938

Dear Mr. Bontemps: It is a pleasure to inform you that you have been selected by the Committee on Fellowships of the Julius Rosenwald Fund to receive a grant of Nineteen hundred dollars (\$1,900) to assist you in carrying forward your plans for creative writing in accordance with the plan of work which you submitted to our Committee.

A plan covering the details of payments under this grant will be arranged to fit your particular needs.

Please let us know at once if you accept this grant. An official announcement of the Committee's selections for the year will be made soon and can include only those from whom acceptances have been received.

Very truly yours,

RAYMOND R. PATY

RP:McK

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna Bontemps  
 Report Requested of Miss Helen English, Los Angeles Public Library (Main)  
Los Angeles, California

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. A statement of the candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate a frank statement of your opinion of this applicant's abilities and personal characteristics, and an appraisal of his plan of work. An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for an adequate review of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.

Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

*Raymond Paty*  
 Director for Fellowships

REPORT

November 19, 1937

My dear Mr. Paty: I am glad that you asked me about Arna Bontemps, for though my knowledge of him is limited to a few brief meetings, his work, his personality and particularly the spiritual quality of the man made a profound impression on me.

I regret that I have not read his adult novels, though they have all been favorably reviewed in all the periodicals. But I do know his children's books and consider them a real contribution to children's literature. There are two negro branches in Los Angeles, but his books are not limited to these children, since they are full of humor and charm for all. His understanding of his own people enables him to write amusing and tender stories about them that have no sting.

One morning he came to the Public Library to talk to a group of 75 children's librarians about adult books. His talk was one of the finest I have ever heard because of his wide knowledge of books, his cultured background and his sense of spiritual values.

He must be a wonderful teacher for he has already developed into a leader among his own race. His work in the community at Watts proved that. There is not a doubt in my mind that Mr. Bontemps should be helped to develop his power and if any word of mine can help to carry on his work, I give it most thankfully.

OVER

and I know that every person who has had the privilege of working with him would agree with me.

Sincerely yours,

Gladys English

Gladys English  
Supervisor of Children's Work  
Los Angeles Public Library

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. A statement of the candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate a frank statement of your opinion of this applicant's abilities and personal characteristics, and an appraisal of his plan of work. An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for an adequate review of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.

Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

Raymond Paty  
Director for Fellowships

November 19, 1937

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

I regret that I have not read his adult novels, though they have all been favorably reviewed in all the periodicals. But I do know his children's books and consider them a real contribution to children's literature. There are two negro branches in Los Angeles, but his books are not limited to these children since they are full of humor and charm for all. His understanding of his own people enables him to write amusing and tender stories about them that has no equal.

Signed Gladys English

Position or Title Supervisor of Children's Work

Address Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles California

Date Nov. 19, 1937

(Please return to Raymond Paty, Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.)

9

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Report Requested of Mr. Benjamin Brawley, Department of English

Howard University, Washington, D. C.

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. A statement of the candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate a frank statement of your opinion of this applicant's abilities and personal characteristics, and an appraisal of his plan of work. An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for an adequate review of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.

Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

*Raymond Patey*  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

As to Mr. Arna W. Bontemps permit me to say that he is one of the two or three Negro writers of to-day whom I regard as most promising. His Black Thunder, published by Macmillan, blazed a new path, and seemed to me to show in some ways very unusual ability. The plan of work that he has submitted has my hearty approval, and I do not see how a scholarship could be better bestowed than if given to him. I recommend him most ~~heartily~~.

*cordially.*

OVER

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
4901 ELLIS AVENUE  
CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate: Mr. Arna W. Boncompagni  
Report Requested of: Mr. Benjamin Brawley, Department of English  
Howard University, Washington, D. C.

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. A statement of the candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate a frank statement of your opinion of this applicant's abilities and personal characteristics, and an appraisal of his plan of work. An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for an adequate review of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.

Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

Raymond Paty  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

Yes, and I have the hope that after a year of study and writing he might indeed, as he suggests, find a place as a teacher in one of the stronger of our Negro colleges.

Signed: Benjamin Brawley  
Position or Title: Professor of English  
Address: Howard University,  
Washington, D. C. Date: Nov. 20, 1937.

(Please return to Raymond Paty, Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.)

OVER

UNIVERSITY

Add to  
Project

P

**JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND**  
4901 ELLIS AVENUE  
CHICAGO

**Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship**

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna Bontemps  
Report Requested of Dr. Melville Herskovits, Northwestern University  
Evanston, Illinois

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. A statement of the candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate a frank statement of your opinion of this applicant's abilities and personal characteristics, and an appraisal of his plan of work. An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for an adequate review of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.

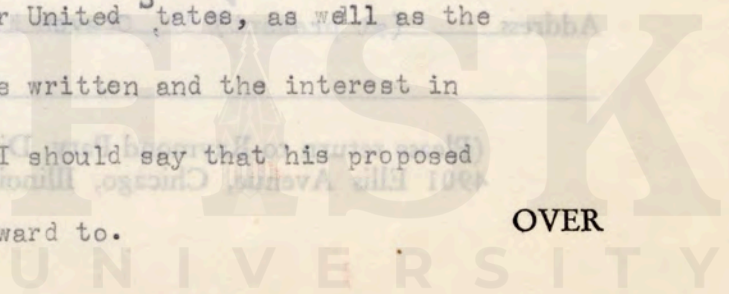
Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

*Raymond Stetson*  
Director for Fellowships

**REPORT**

I have for a long time been an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Bontemps' work, not only when I look at it as a specialist in the study of Negro cultures, but also in my enjoyment of it as literature. I think Mr. Bontemps' novel Black Thunder is one of the most significant pieces of work in its line that has been done in many a long day, and with the perspective he shows that he has in that book on the history of the Negro in pre-Civil War United States, as well as the excellent manner in which the book is written and the interest in its theme sustained for the reader, I should say that his proposed novel would be something to look forward to.

OVER



Personally, I like Mr. Bontemps as much as I admire his work, though I am more familiar with the latter than I am with him through first-hand contact. My impression, however, is that he would be an excellent teacher, and that the institution that got a man of his productive powers on its faculty would be fortunate.

I thus am glad to give Mr. Bontemps my heartiest recommendation for a Rosenwald Fellowship; I ~~mean~~<sup>hope</sup> that my absence in Europe on a sabbatical leave-of-absence, which has ~~not~~ delayed this reply, will not prevent any use that might ordinarily be made of it.

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. A statement of the candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate a frank statement of your opinion of the applicant's abilities and personal characteristics, and an appraisal of his plan of work. An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for an adequate review of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.

Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

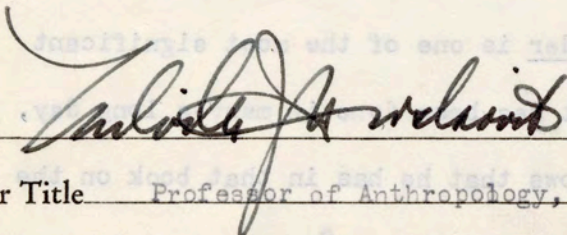
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

As far as I know, yes.

Signed



Position or Title

Professor of Anthropology, Northwestern University.

Address

(at present) 11, Craven Hill, London, W. 2, England

Date 3 December, 1937

(Please return to Raymond Paty, Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.)

OVER



	RRP	19	BP	0

## FELLOWSHIPS

703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois  
18 April 1938

Mr. Raymond Paty  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago

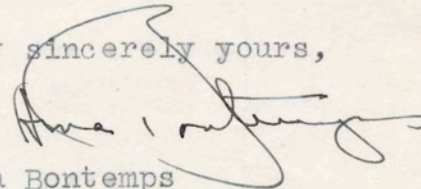
Dear Mr. Paty:

Your report of the committee's action in my behalf thrills me. I am delighted and abundantly grateful. I accept with pleasure.

Within a few weeks, as I complete arrangements, I hope to be able to make suggestions that may be of some help when the time comes to arrange details of payments.

Above all I hope to be able to do a piece of work worthy of the Fellowship.

Very sincerely yours,



Arna Bontemps

# FELLOWSHIPS

May 5, 1938

My dear Bontemps: I cannot refrain from sending this personal note of congratulation on your award of a Rosenwald fellowship. All the members of the committee were delighted to be able to make possible this year of free writing. I am sure we are making a sound investment. Beyond the formal award, I think all of us feel a warm interest in the fine work which you have been doing.

Very truly yours,

EDWIN R. EMBREE

ERE:JW

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
705 East Fiftieth Place  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
708 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 6753

Date May 31, 1938

First payment on fellowship granted 4/16/38 - - - - - \$150.00

Ck.#19672

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$150.00	

Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 6915

Date July 1, 1938

Second payment on fellowship granted 4/16/38 ----- \$150.00

Ck.#19854

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$150.00	

Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

## FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 6944

Date July 29, 1938

Third payment on fellowship granted 4/16/38 ----- \$180.00

Chk. #19905

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$180.00	

Prepared by  
DAE

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 6972

Date August 1, 1938

Fourth payment on fellowship granted 4/16/38 - - - - - \$540.00

Ck./19930

Accounts

Negro Fellowships

Appropriation No.

37-8

Debit

\$540.00

Credit

Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# FELLOWSHIPS

SE	8/5	SE.		

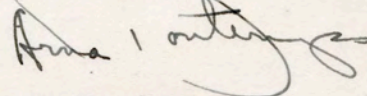
703 E. 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois  
4 August 1938

Miss Dorothy A. Elvidge  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
Chicago

Dear Miss Elvidge:

This is just to confirm our conversation of a few days ago in which I requested you to make out my September and October checks to my wife, Alberta Bontemps, and mail them to her at the above address during my absence in Haiti. I shall be very pleased to have you do this.

Sincerely,



Arna Bontemps

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

WHEN REPLYING, PLEASE REFER TO OUR ORDER NUMBER

ORDER NO. AND DATE **Let.8-12** SHIPPER'S ORDER NO. **RO-41714**

REQUISITION NO. \_\_\_\_\_ INVOICE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

CONTRACT NO. \_\_\_\_\_ AGENT'S ORDER NO. \_\_\_\_\_

SHIP TO **Julius Rosenwald Fund,**  
**4901 Ellis Ave.,**  
**Chicago, Illinois.**

DESTINATION \_\_\_\_\_

DATE REC'D. **8-15**

DATE **8-17**

TRANS. CHARGES PAID BY US \_\_\_\_\_

BILLING INSTRUCTIONS **same**

CHARGE TO

**Julius Rosenwald Fund,**  
**4901 Ellis Av.**  
**Chicago, Ill.**

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

SHIP VIA **INS.PP**



MODEL OR PATTERN	CUST. ORD. NO.	DESCRIPTION	OUR ORD. NO.	QUANTITY	ACCESSORIES		NET PRICE
					LIST PRICE	DISCOUNT	
			<b>RO-41714</b>				
<b>627</b>		<b>Exp.M. 7660</b>		<b>1</b>			<b>\$ 3 90</b>
							<b>Incl.p.p.chges.</b>
							<b>Supply inst.book</b>

THE INSTRUMENTS OR PARTS LISTED HAVE BEEN RECEIVED. PLEASE REPORT ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS PROMPTLY. REPAIR CHARGES ARE NET 30 DAYS TO ESTABLISHED ACCOUNTS.

1. MAY WE PLEASE HAVE YOUR APPROVAL TO PROCEED AT THE ABOVE QUOTED PRICES.

3. PLEASE FORWARD YOUR ORDER SHOWING BILLING AND SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS.

2. PLEASE REMIT THE TOTAL AMOUNT AS SHOWN ABOVE OR AUTHORIZE C. O. D. SHIPMENT.

4. NO INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED PERTAINING TO THIS EQUIPMENT.

SHIPMENT ON OR BEFORE **8-22**  
 PROVIDED 2 & 3 HAVE BEEN COMPLIED WITH IF REQUESTED.

WESTON ELECTRICAL INSTRUMENT CORP.  
 SERVICE DIVISION  
 NEWARK, N. J.

7/25  
9/18  
exposure meter  
sent to Mr.  
Bontemps  
Aug 22

FELLOWSHIPS

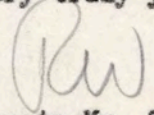
August 18, 1938

Dear Mr. Bontemps: Mr. Wright of Eastman Kodak Company, State 8130, called this morning to give an estimate of the repair work to be done on the movie camera. It will amount to \$4.20. Mr. Wright is waiting for word to go ahead with the work, and I am wondering if you would call him to give him an authorization.

Before Mr. Simon left the city he gave me instructions of where to send the exposure meter when it is returned. Until August 25 you will be at 703 East 50th Place in the city, and until September 1, I am to send it in care of Mr. Douglas, 409 Edgecombe Avenue, New York City. Are those addresses and dates correct?

I hope you have a pleasant stay in Haiti.

Very truly yours,



Secretary to Mr. Simon

RW

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mrs. Alberta Bontemps

705 East 50th Place

Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 7014

Date August 31, 1938

Fifth installment on fellowship granted 4/16/38 ----- \$130.00

(Mr. Arna Bontemps)

Ck.#19976

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$130.00	

Prepared by  
AM

Checked by

Posted by



Comptroller

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To  
Mrs. Alberta Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 7151

Date September 30, 1938

Sixth payment on fellowship granted Mr. Arna Bontemps on 4/16/38 -- \$130.00

Ck.#20146

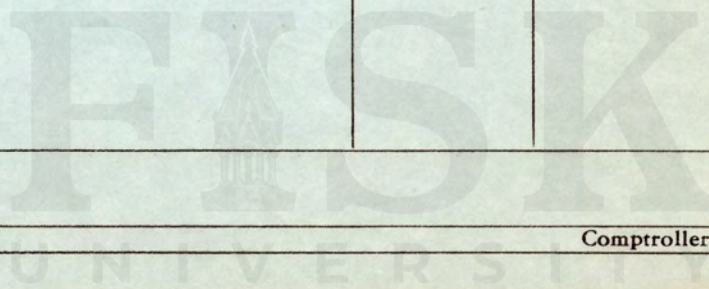
Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships.	37-8	\$130.00	

Prepared by  
AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIP 3

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 7281

Date October 31, 1938

Seventh payment on fellowship granted 4/16/38 - - - - - \$130.00

Ck.#20294

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$130.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
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# FELLOWSHIPS

November 3, 1938

Dear Mr. Bontemps: I am enclosing a marked copy  
of Opportunity which you may  
like to keep in your files.

I hope you had a delightful  
time in Haiti. Mr. Reynolds, our new Director for  
Fellowships, is now on duty and would like very  
much to have you stop in to see him. He will be  
out of town for a few days next week, so before  
coming over perhaps it would be well to telephone.

Very truly yours,  
MARGARET L. UTLEY

Secretary to Mr. Reynolds

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# FELLOWSHIPS

	DE	11/25	DE	,
	MLU		MLU	

703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois  
23 November '38

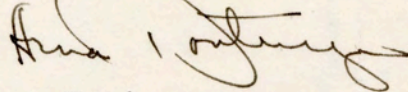
Mrs. Dorothy Elvidge  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
Chicago

Dear Mrs. Elvidge:

An invitation to speak to several high school groups in Los Angeles will take me away during the next few days. Will you therefore make out the forthcoming check to my wife, Mrs. Alberta Bontemps, as you did while I was in Haiti? This will be a convenience, and I'll greatly appreciate your doing it if it is no great bother.

Meanwhile I'll try to get you by phone today.

Sincerely yours,



Arna Bontemps

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mrs. Alberta Bontemps

705 East 50th Place

Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 7433

Date November 30, 1938

Ninth payment on fellowship grant to Mr. Arna Bontemps - - - - - \$150.00

Ck.#20466

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$150.00	

Prepared by	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
AM			



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

## FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
705 East 50th Place,  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 7570

Date November 30, 1958

Eighth payment on fellowship granted 4/16/58 - - - - - \$130.00

Ck.#20403

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	57-8	\$130.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
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# FELLOWSHIPS

January 20, 1939

Dear Mr. Bontemps:      You will remember you  
                                         borrowed from us a 16mm  
motion picture camera and light meter for your  
trip to Haiti. Since we are going to be using  
it shortly I wonder if you would be so good as  
to return it.

I am sorry I have been  
away when you have been in the office recently.

Very truly yours,

JAMES F. SIMON

JFS:RW

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Arna Bontemps

Dr. Melville Herskovits, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

I have for a long time been an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Bontemps' work, not only when I look at it as a specialist in the study of Negro cultures, but also in my enjoyment of it as literature. I think Mr. Bontemps' novel Black Thunder is one of the most significant pieces of work in its line that has been done in many a long day, and with the perspective he shows that he has in that book on the history of the Negro in pre-Civil War United States, as well as the excellent manner in which the book is written and the interest in its them sustained for the reader, I should say that his proposed novel would be something to look forward to.

Personally, I like Mr. Bontemps as much as I admire his work, though I am more familiar with the latter than I am with him through first-hand contact. My impression, however, is that he would be an excellent teacher, and that the institution that got a man of his productive powers on its faculty would be fortunate.

Thus I am glad to give Mr. Bontemps my heartiest recommendation for a Rosenwald fellowship; I hope that my absence in Europe on a sabbatical leave of absence, which has delayed this reply, will not prevent any use that might ordinarily be made of it.

- - - - -

Mr. James Weldon Johnson, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

I think that Mr. Bontemps' record of accomplishment is a guarantee of his worthiness of a fellowship, and I hope his application will be favorably considered.



Letters of Reference - Arna Bontemps (continued)

Miss Gladys English, Los Angeles Public Library.

I am glad that you asked me about Arna Bontemps, for though my knowledge of him is limited to a few brief meetings, his work, his personality and particularly the spiritual quality of the man made a profound impression on me.

I regret that I have not read his adult novels, though they have all been favorably reviewed in all the periodicals. But I do know his children's books and consider them a real contribution to children's literature. There are two Negro branches in Los Angeles, but his books are not limited to these children, since they are full of humor and charm for all. His understanding of his own people enables him to write amusing and tender stories about them that have no sting.

One morning he came to the public library to talk to a group of 75 children's librarians about adult books. His talk was one of the finest I have ever heard because of his wide knowledge of books, his cultured background and his sense of spiritual values.

He must be a wonderful teacher for he has already developed into a leader among his own race. His work in the community at Watts proved that. There is not a doubt in my mind that Mr. Bontemps should be helped to develop his power and if any word of mine can help to carry on his work, I give it most thankfully, and I know that every person who has had the privilege of working with him would agree with me.

- - - - -

Mr. Benjamin Brawley, Department of English, Howard University, Washington.

As to Mr. Arna W. Bontemps, permit me to say that he is one of the two or three Negro writers of today whom I regard as most promising. His Black Thunder, published by Macmillan, blazed a new path, and seemed to

Letters of Reference - Arna Bontemps (continued

me to show in some ways very unusual ability. The plan of work that he has submitted has my hearty approval, and I do not see how a scholarship could be better bestowed than if given to him. I recommend him most cordially.

RW



PLEASE RETURN  
TO  
JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

ARNA BONTEMPS: Statement of Plan of Work

1. I propose to complete the course of study which leads to the M. A. degree in Library Science.
2. The Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago has just admitted me to regular standing. Some time ago I completed residence requirements for an M. A. in English; the Thesis and the Examinations are outstanding.
3. The proposed study would be done at the University of Chicago. Studies in Library Science would be done under Dean Louis Round Wilson and his Library Science faculty. Further work in English, under Napier Wilt.
4. Expected results: To improve scholarship and stabilize career.
5. Subsequent plans: I look forward to a position as librarian in a College or University. Working in such a capacity, I would aim to continue creative writing, and I would expect to undertake various research projects now in mind.

Submitted with application for Julius Rosenwald Fund Fellowship.

1942

CHICAGO

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Arna Bontemps

Mr. John T. Frederick, Professor of Modern Letters, Northwestern University

I am very glad to have opportunity to make a statement in relation to the application of Arna W. Bontemps for a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. I have known Mr. Bontemps for more than three years. He was employed as a writer on the Illinois Writers' Project when I was its State Director, and I subsequently promoted him to an editorial position because of his excellent work. I found him trustworthy, tactful, and unusually competent in everything he undertook.

I have read all, or nearly all, of Mr. Bontemps' published work. I feel that it is of outstanding merit. In fact, I regard his historical novel, Black Thunder, as the finest single creative work of fiction yet produced by an American Negro.

I have expressed my high opinion of Mr. Bontemps and his work by inviting him to participate on one of the Columbia Broadcasting System network broadcasts of my program "Of Men and Books," sponsored by Northwestern University. It seems to me that his present plan is a sound and sensible one which should work out well for his future, in which I am deeply interested. I hope sincerely that it may be possible for you to give him the assistance of a fellowship.

- - - - -

Miss May Lamberton Becker, Readers Guide, New York Herald Tribune

I have never met Arna Bontemps nor written to him, but I feel especially honored that he should have sufficient confidence in my judgment to feel sure, without consulting me, that I would speak for him. For Mr. Bontemps is by all means the soundest, the most delicate, and the

most distinctive of the young Negro novelists. The poetic vein is rich, yet his hold on the realities is firm: especially, his sense of the music in words does not lead him to say more with them than he means. I believe that here is a voice worth developing, a talent worth encouraging.

His books are as well liked by white children as by those of color - I am speaking now of his distinguished juveniles - and the added dignity of the M. A. degree would give him the proper prestige in a profession where a man or woman of color is needed but needs all the support he can get.

I have seldom been called upon to speak for a candidate in whose gifts I had more confidence.

-----

Miss Helen English, Children's Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library

Mr. Bontemps would make a wonderful librarian of a college library for Negroes in the South. He is a scholar and a gentleman and has the highest ideals and standards, also a capacity for hard work. I have known Mr. Bontemps for some years but have not seen him recently, though I have followed his contributions to literature with deep interest. He has visited the Los Angeles Public Library a number of times, alone and with his friend Langston Hughes. On every occasion those of us who have met and talked to Mr. Bontemps have been deeply impressed by his personality, by his knowledge and charm. Given an opportunity, he would be a leader among his people. He spoke here twice in the Public Library to staff members, a number of years ago, but we still remember his talk. It was brilliant with a deep spiritual quality, and delivered with ease and finesse. You would be making a real contribution to the whole Negro race if you gave Mr. Bontemps a scholarship.

Dr. Carleton Joeckel has recently been made head of the Library School at the University of Chicago. He is one of the important leaders of the profession and would take Mr. Bontemps in hand and direct him in his study and also his future work, for Dr. Joeckel is a practical man.

I have not seen Mr. Bontemps for three or four years, but the last time that I saw him, he seemed to be free from any physical handicaps. He is a distinguished looking man.

- - - - -

Mr. Napier Wilt, Professor of English, University of Chicago

I have had Mr. Bontemps in a class where he did not do good work, but fortunately I have talked with him a great deal outside of class and I am convinced that he is a highly intelligent and capable person. I have read his novels, and while I don't think they are great, I think they are competent pieces of work. I think it would be an excellent thing if Mr. Bontemps were given an opportunity to take a degree in the Graduate Library School. Obviously his writing is not going to support him, and if he gets a degree in the Library School he should be able to get a good position. I think he is very definitely worthy of being underwritten for a year.

January 17, 1939

## Report of progress under present Julius Rosenwald Fund grant:

Research in New York, August 1938, using the Negro collection in Harlem.  
 Research in Haiti, September and October, 1938. Visited all important historic spots, interviewed all well-known Haitian historians and scholars--including Dr. Price-Mars, writer and former minister, General Nemours, director of museum, Dr. Clement Lanier, M. Louis Mercier, historian and journalist, M. Jean Fouchard, editor of literary magazine and secretary to president, M. Charles Vincent, historian and brother to president, etc., etc. Collected numerous articles and books on the period of my work.

Creative writing in Chicago, June and <sup>July</sup> August, 1938, ~~September~~ November and December, 1938, January-May, 1939.

Divided the large mass of material I had collected. Completed a novel.

Drums at Dusk represents material that I had planned to incorporate in the broad-canvas novel based on Haitian participation in the American Revolution during the Siege of Savannah. I decided to divide the two elements, however, following my trip to Haiti. I showed what I had done to the publishers. They suggested that I round out what had already been finished for spring publication. This was contracted for and the manuscript mailed January 16, 1939. A description of the book is to be found in their Spring Catalogue, now ready.

A new Juvenile story, a boy's adventure story based on Caribbean lore and history, is also on my slate. I hope to finish it during the months that remain on the present grant.

During remaining time, I propose to also keep the Savannah work moving.

## Plan of Work for the coming year:

- (a) There is an unpublished and almost unknown Haitian diary of my period in New York. It is privately owned, but Miss Frances Phillips, director of the publishing firm of William Morrow & Co., has promised to arrange for me to read and translate it in the home of the owner if it can be arranged for me to come to N. Y. for the month or so this will require. The owner will not allow it to be removed.
- (b) It has been discovered that the Haitian priests of my period regularly sent reports to Paris, reports to which were added extremely interesting little worldly observations, including delicious gossip. I could make capital of this in the novel.
- (c) Having availed myself of the above, I'd like to visit Charleston and Savannah for a look at such old newspapers as may be found.
- (d) Then, by fall, I'd settle down and give the book no rest till it is finished.

Fellowship Application  
ARNA BONTEMPS

Plan of Work

My aim is to do creative writing in fields already indicated by some of my previous writing. A special interest of mine is literature with a special appeal to younger Negro readers. I want to gather, particularly in the West Indies, Mexico and Central America, background material for further writing in this field. Without binding myself in advance to a definite plot, I would like to propose at least one story with a tropical setting and possibly based on the past history of the ports and shore lines of the islands and countries mentioned.

Closely connected is my second aim. I have done some work on a historical novel dealing with the participation of French Colonials under d'Estaing in the Siege of Savannah. The time, about <sup>20</sup>ten years earlier than the time of Black Thunder. The expedition was a failure, as was the Siege, and the returning French ships--about twenty-two of them--were divided by a great autumn wind. If the incident is nearly forgotten in history, it is because it did not influence the outcome of the war, not because it lacked drama. Negroes were involved, Christophe himself, just a boy at the time, was said to have been among the troops.

I would like to complete this novel and could do so if granted a fellowship.

My plan would be to spend from two to four months of my time in the places mentioned, the remaining eight months in actual writing here in the United States.

Following the period of the fellowship I aim to seek a position in one of the Negro colleges or universities, for I have a feeling that I can make a more valuable contribution as a writer if I continue to engage in teaching during part of my time, but my hope is that the fellowship will enable me to realize fully whatever powers I may have as a writer.

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 7645

Date January 31, 1939

Tenth payment on fellowship granted 4/16/38 - - - - - \$130.00

Ck.#20697

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$130.00	

Prepared by	Checked by	Posted by
AM		



Comptroller

# Drums at Dusk

By ARNA BONTEMPS, *author of "Black Thunder."*

Diron Desautels is so absorbed in his ideal of freedom for the slaves of Saint Domingue that he hardly realizes his love for Céleste, an orphan who has been befriended by the kindly overseer of Bréda, one of the island's most magnificent colonial estates. In contrast to gentle Céleste is the beautiful and sinister Madame Viard, wife of Diron's close friend.

Echoes of the French Revolution are in the air, and plans for a negro insurrection are guardedly discussed. Because of his aristocratic birth, Diron must conceal his connection with the revolutionary liberals. By night he attends the secret meetings of the principal black agitators of Saint Domingue. Although on some of the estates, as at Bréda, the slaves receive kind and wise treatment, even there they taste callousness, brutality, and ignominy when Count de Sacy, cousin of the absentee owner, turns up for a visit. The celebration in his honor, with cock-fights, banqueting, and dazzling finery, sets off the rebellion brewing in the countryside.

The crisis which Mr. Bontemps pictures in this novel is historically significant, and one of the most picturesque of the many struggles for freedom throughout the world. The story moves in a series of brilliant scenes: the Count's abuse of his blacks; the wrangling of his two cast-off mistresses; mass suicide of some newly arrived slaves; and the glittering elegance of the entertainment at Bréda.

Arna Bontemps is the distinguished American Negro poet and novelist, and he writes of Haiti from study and a visit there.

*Cloth, 12mo. \$2.50. To be published May 2.*

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
Chicago

Application for renewal of fellowship should be filed by February 15, 1939. Please attach six copies of a report of your progress under your present grant, and of your plan of work for the coming year.

Negro

White Southerner

Concise statement of plan of work No continue research and complete writing on a broad-canvas historical novel based on the Siege of Savannah and the participation of Haitian soldiers in the attempt. Creative writing.

Name in full Arna Wendell Bontemps

Present address 703 East 50th Place, Chicago, Illinois

Permanent address Same

Place of study during present grant Chicago, New York, Haiti

If fellowship is renewed, where and how do you propose to spend your time?

(a) Research in New York, Charleston, Savannah and possibly Paris

(b) Writing in New York or Chicago

Under whose supervision? The same as at present

For what period are you requesting a renewal? One year, June 1939-June 1940

Amount requested from the Fund 1,900 (This supposes a short European errand will cost about the same as the Haitian expedition)

List as references people under whom you have worked during your present fellowship:

My creative work has been done independently, but the Macmillan Co.

60 Fifth Avenue, New York (Lois Dwight Cole, Associate Editor), have

read the portion of the work which has been completed and expressed their approval by scheduling it for publication on March 28th, 1939

Do you plan to return to your former position? No. Am interested in post at Fisk.

If you have published during the year, please list publications:

Drums at Dusk--Macmillan

Sad-Faced Author--Horn Book, January-February 1939 (article)

Are you applying elsewhere for a fellowship for the same period? If so, where?

No

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
708 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 7777

Date February 28, 1939

Eleventh payment on fellowship granted 4/16/38 - - - - - \$130.00

Ck.#20843

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$130.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by
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Comptroller

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Arna W. Bontemps

Miss Lois Dwight Cole, Associate Editor, The Macmillan Company

In our opinion Mr. Bontemps is the best of the Negro prose writers today. His earlier novel, BLACK THUNDER, had fine critical reception, but did not sell well, perhaps because of the subject, an abortive slave uprising in Virginia. His present novel, DRUMS AT DUSK, is not yet published. Our readers were enthusiastic about the beauty, color and charm of his writing, and recommended the manuscript in glowing terms. The book on the Haitian participation in the Siege of Savannah during the Revolution is certainly unusual in subject and background and we do not doubt Mr. Bontemps could handle both vividly and well; the popular appeal of the book is a different matter. We know nothing of Mr. Bontemps' financial status. We do believe that he is a hard-working writer of genuine and unusual ability.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

CABLE ADDRESS  
PACHAMAC NEW YORK

*Publishers*

TELEPHONE  
ALGONQUIN 4-2100

SIXTY · FIFTH AVENUE · NEW YORK

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IN CHARGE OF ALL EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENTS

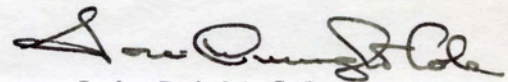
March 9, 1939

Mr. George M. Reynolds  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

We are returning herewith the application of Arna Bontemps and an outline of the project which you sent. We are also enclosing a description of Mr. Bontemps' forthcoming book taken from our Spring Announcement List. If this is not sufficient information, please do not hesitate to call on us again.

Very truly yours,



Lois Dwight Cole  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
Associate Editor

LDC/ms

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arne Bontemps  
708 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 7907

Date March 31, 1959

Twelfth payment on fellowship granted 4/16/58 - - - - - \$130.00

Ck. #21018

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$130.00	

Prepared by	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
DAE			



# FELLOWSHIPS

April 28, 1939

Dear Mr. Bontemps: Enclosed you will find our check for \$150 which represents the final payment on the fellowship grant awarded to you a year ago. For your information a schedule of the payments made on this grant is given below.

May 31, 1938	-----	\$150.00
July 1	-----	150.00
July 29	-----	150.00
August 1	-----	340.00
August 31	-----	150.00
September 30	-----	150.00
October 31	-----	150.00
November 30	-----	150.00
December 31	-----	150.00
January 31, 1939	-----	150.00
February 28	-----	150.00
March 31	-----	150.00
April 28 (enclosed)	-----	<u>150.00</u>
		<u>\$1,900.00</u>

We hope that this past year has been a most beneficial one for you.

Very truly yours,

DOROTHY A. ELVIDGE

DE:AM

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
705 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 8044

Date April 28, 1959

Final payment on fellowship granted 4/16/58 - - - - - \$130.00

Ck.#21158

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	37-8	\$130.00	

Prepared by  
AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller

## JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

(RENEWAL)

Candidate Arna Wendell Bontemps

Special Field

Author

Creative Writing

705 East 50th Place, Chicago, Illinois

## Plan of Work

To continue research and complete writing on a broad-canvas historical novel on the Siege of Savannah and the participation of Haitian soldiers in the attempt.

Wishes to do research in New York, Charleston, Savannah, and possibly Paris; writing in New York or Chicago.

## Digest of Application

Born 1902, Alexandria, Louisiana. Four children.

A. B. Pacific Union, 1925. Graduate work toward M. A. University of Chicago. Special work at Columbia University.

Novels: Black Thunder, Macmillan, 1956; God Sends Sunday, Harcourt, Brace, 1931; Books for Children: Sad-faced Boy, Houghton Mifflin, 1957; You Can't Pet A Possum, Morrow, 1954; Pope and Fifina, Macmillan, 1952; also many poems. Published during last grant Drums at Dusk, Macmillan, and article, "Sad-Faced Author," Horn Book, January-February, 1939.

## References

Miss Lois Dwight Cole, Associate Editor,  
Macmillan Company

## Budget Summary

Total amount needed	\$ 1,900
From applicant	---
From Fund	\$ 1,900

## Committee Notes

Granted

January 17, 1939

## Report of progress under present Julius Rosenwald Fund grant:

Research in New York, August 1938, using the Negro collection in Harlem.  
 Research in Haiti, September and October, 1938. Visited all important historic spots, interviewed all well-known Haitian historians and scholars--including Dr. Price-Mars, writer and former minister, General Nemours, director of museum, Dr. Clement Lanier, M. Louis Mercier, historian and journalist, M. Jean Fouchard, editor of literary magazine and secretary to president, M. Charles Vincent, historian and brother to president, etc., etc. Collected numerous articles and books on the period of my work.

Creative writing in Chicago, June and ~~August~~<sup>July</sup>, 1938, ~~savannah~~ November and December, 1938, January-May, 1939.

Divided the large mass of material I had collected. Completed a novel.

Drums at Dusk represents material that I had planned to incorporate in the broad-canvas novel based on Haitian participation in the American Revolution during the Siege of Savannah. I decided to divide the two elements, however, following my trip to Haiti. I showed what I had done to the publishers. They suggested that I round out what had already been finished for spring publication. This was contracted for and the manuscript mailed January 16, 1939. A description of the book is to be found in their Spring Catalogue, now ready.

A new Juvenile story, a boy's adventure story based on Caribbean lore and history, is also on my slate. I hope to finish it during the months that remain on the present grant.

During remaining time, I propose to also keep the Savannah work moving.

## Plan of Work for the coming year:

- (a) There is an unpublished and almost unknown Haitian diary of my period in New York. It is privately owned, but Miss Frances Phillips, director of the publishing firm of William Morrow & Co., has promised to arrange for me to read and translate it in the home of the owner if it can be arranged for me to come to N. Y. for the month or so this will require. The owner will not allow it to be removed.
- (b) It has been discovered that the Haitian priests of my period regularly sent reports to Paris, reports to which were added extremely interesting little worldly observations, including delicious gossip. I could make capital of this in the novel.
- (c) Having availed myself of the above, I'd like to visit Charleston and Savannah for a look at such old newspapers as may be found.
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# New Bontemps Novel To Be On Air May 6

Mrs. Ethel Reid Winser, director of the "Know Your Authors" program, has just acquired radio rights to permit a broadcast, in dramatic form, of scenes from the forthcoming Arna Bontemps' novel, "Drums at Dusk." The broadcast, scheduled for 8:45 p.m., May 6, comes four days after publication of the historical tale which Mr. Bontemps has been writing during the past year with the aid of a Julius Rosenwald fellowship.

Unlike most radio programs devoted to the newest books, Mrs. Winser's combines a four-minute interview with the author with the dramatization of highlights from the book. Her use of "Drums at Dusk" will put on the air a period and a people not frequently found in current fiction.

---

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
(RENEWAL)Age 37  
Rept

Candidate Arna Wendell Bontemps  
 Author  
 703 East 50th Place, Chicago, Illinois

Special Field  
 Creative Writing

## Plan of Work

To continue research and complete writing on a broad-canvas historical novel on the Siege of Savannah and the participation of Haitian soldiers in the attempt.

Wishes to do research in New York, Charleston, Savannah, and possibly Paris; writing in New York or Chicago.

## Digest of Application

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Novels: Black Thunder, Macmillan, 1936; God Sends Sunday, Harcourt, Brace, 1931; Books for Children: Sad-faced Boy, Houghton Mifflin, 1937; You Can't Pet A Possum, Morrow, 1934; Popo and Fifina, Macmillan, 1932; also many poems. Published during last grant Drums at Dusk, Macmillan, and article, "Sad-Faced Author," Horn Book, January-February, 1939.

## References

Miss Lois Dwight Cole, Associate Editor,  
 Macmillan Company

## Budget Summary

Total amount needed	\$ 1,900
From applicant	---
From Fund	\$ 1,900

## Committee Notes

Granted

# JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

## Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna Wendell Bontemps

Report Requested of Miss Lois Dwight Cole, Associate Editor

60 Fifth Avenue

New York City

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's abilities and personal characteristics, and an appraisal of his plan of work. *An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for an adequate review of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.*

Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

*George M. Reynolds*  
Director for Fellowships

## REPORT

In our opinion Mr. Bontemps is the best of the Negro prose writers today. His earlier novel, BLACK THUNDER, had fine critical reception, but did not sell well, perhaps because of the subject--an abortive slave uprising in Virginia. His present novel, DRUMS AT DUSK, is not yet published. Our readers were enthusiastic about the beauty, color and charm of his writing, and recommended the manuscript in glowing terms. The book on the Haitian participation in the Siege of Savannah during the Revolution is certainly unusual in subject and background and we do not doubt Mr. Bontemps could handle both vividly and well; the popular appeal of the book is a different matter. We know nothing of Mr. Bontemps' financial status. We do believe that he is a hard-working writer of genuine and unusual ability.

OVER

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
4901 ELLIS AVENUE  
CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

Report Requested of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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*James M. [Signature]*  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Position or Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.)

OVER

FBI UNIVERSITY

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Arna Bontemps

Dr. Melville Herskovits, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

I have for a long time been an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Bontemps' work, not only when I look at it as a specialist in the study of Negro cultures, but also in my enjoyment of it as literature. I think Mr. Bontemps' novel Black Thunder is one of the most significant pieces of work in its line that has been done in many a long day, and with the perspective he shows that he has in that book on the history of the Negro in pre-Civil War United States, as well as the excellent manner in which the book is written and the interest in its theme sustained for the reader, I should say that his proposed novel would be something to look forward to.

Personally, I like Mr. Bontemps as much as I admire his work, though I am more familiar with the latter than I am with him through first-hand contact. My impression, however, is that he would be an excellent teacher, and that the institution that got a man of his productive powers on its faculty would be fortunate.

Thus I am glad to give Mr. Bontemps my heartiest recommendation for a Rosenwald fellowship; I hope that my absence in Europe on a sabbatical leave of absence, which has delayed this reply, will not prevent any use that might ordinarily be made of it.

- - - - -

Mr. James Weldon Johnson, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

I think that Mr. Bontemps' record of accomplishment is a guarantee of his worthiness of a fellowship, and I hope his application will be favorably considered.



Letters of Reference - Arna Bontemps (continued)

Miss Gladys English, Los Angeles Public Library.

I am glad that you asked me about Arna Bontemps, for though my knowledge of him is limited to a few brief meetings, his work, his personality and particularly the spiritual quality of the man made a profound impression on me.

I regret that I have not read his adult novels, though they have all been favorably reviewed in all the periodicals. But I do know his children's books and consider them a real contribution to children's literature. There are two Negro branches in Los Angeles, but his books are not limited to these children, since they are full of humor and charm for all. His understanding of his own people enables him to write amusing and tender stories about them that have no sting.

One morning he came to the public library to talk to a group of 75 children's librarians about adult books. His talk was one of the finest I have ever heard because of his wide knowledge of books, his cultured background and his sense of spiritual values.

He must be a wonderful teacher for he has already developed into a leader among his own race. His work in the community at Watts proved that. There is not a doubt in my mind that Mr. Bontemps should be helped to develop his power and if any word of mine can help to carry on his work, I give it most thankfully, and I know that every person who has had the privilege of working with him would agree with me.

- - - - -

Mr. Benjamin Brawley, Department of English, Howard University, Washington.

As to Mr. Arna W. Bontemps, permit me to say that he is one of the two or three Negro writers of today whom I regard as most promising. His Black Thunder, published by Macmillan, blazed a new path, and seemed to

Letters of Reference - Arna Bontemps (continued)

me to show in some ways very unusual ability. The plan of work that he has submitted has my hearty approval, and I do not see how a scholarship could be better bestowed than if given to him. I recommend him most cordially.

RW



FELLOWSHIPS

## Julius Rosenwald Fund

Edwin R. Embree  
President  
Margaret S. Simon  
Secretary  
D.A. Elvidge  
Comptroller

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

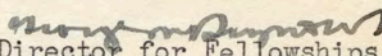
September 25, 1940

NEGRO HEALTH  
Director  
M.O. Bousfield, M.D.  
Consultants  
Franklin C. McLean, M.D.  
Clifford E. Waller, M.D., U.S.P.H.S.

Dear Mr. Bontemps: Our trustees have a continuing interest in the work and progress of those who have held Rosenwald Fund fellowships, and we are now in the process of preparing a report for the fall meeting. We will greatly appreciate your bringing us up to date on your career since you were awarded a fellowship, and to expedite your furnishing this information we have listed several questions at the bottom of the page. Will you please answer these and return this sheet to us at your earliest convenience?

Very truly yours,

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

  
Director for Fellowships

Present position:

Editor, Illinois Writers' Project

Address:

703 E. 50th Place, Chicago, Illinois

Publications, if any: (Since Drums at Dusk)

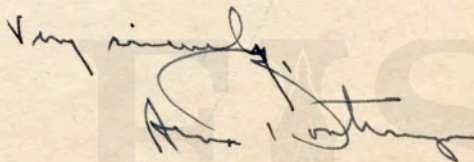
The Autobiography of W. C. Handy, edited, arranged and prepared for publication by me will appear in the spring. Macmillan is bringing it out under both our names.

Special honors or activities:

Included for first time in WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA

General remarks:

The novel on the participation of French colonials in the siege of Savannah is still in process. All materials were gathered and a part of the book written during my fellowship, but the story has broadened out and is still a year from completion.

Very sincerely,  


HSK  
UNIVERSITY

ERS  
Lts Prof - info

FELLOWSHIPS

# Northwestern University



Vol. I No. 8 November 18, 1941

## OF MEN AND BOOKS

Critic JOHN T. FREDERICK

*Professor of Modern Letters in Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism*

Guest ARNA BONTEMPS

*Author of God Sends Sunday and Black Thunder*

In a radio conversation over the Columbia Broadcasting System

### "Negro Writers"

Arna Bontemps, *Golden Slippers*

W. C. Handy and Arna Bontemps, *Father of the Blues*

Richard Wright, *Twelve Million Black Voices*

William Attaway, *Blood on the Forge*



## "NEGRO WRITERS"

FREDERICK: "We are not come to wage a strife  
With Swords upon this hill;  
It is not wise to waste the life  
Against a stubborn will.  
Yet would we die as some have done:  
Beating a way for the rising sun."

WHEATLEY: John T. Frederick reads "The Daybreakers" by Arna Bontemps on Columbia's OF MEN AND BOOKS.

FREDERICK: This collection of poems which has just been published by Harper and Brothers, *Golden Slippers*—a very attractive title, it seems to me—is described on the jacket, Mr. Bontemps, as "An Anthology of Negro Poetry for Young Readers", but my experience in going practically straight through it would indicate that it's an anthology for adults which may be read by children.

BONTEMPS: I hoped they wouldn't find it entirely unacceptable.

FREDERICK: I think it's equally acceptable to the younger reader and to the adult. I think there's no limitation such as is perhaps suggested by that sub-title. I like the collection a great deal. I like the representation you've given to older writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, the presence here of some of the traditional poems from the 19th century, and of course, the representation of Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, and many other poets of our own time whose work I know and like. I've been particularly interested in the way you've arranged the poems: these sections under such titles as "Playtime" beginning with the traditional poem, "Did You Feed My Cow?"; and the section, "Hard Work"; the section, "Chariot Wheels"; the sections called "Brown Boy and Girl", "Big Cities", "Dressed Up"—I think that those groupings are something quite new in an anthology. I wonder how you happened to make such an arrangement?

BONTEMPS: Well, I had in mind what might be called the poetic tradition among Negroes. It seems to me that the Negro's poetic tradition is a very old one. It goes back to one hundred years before Dunbar. It survives from those early times in the lyrics of the spirituals and in the ballads of work and play so often sung by slaves. Later it manifests itself in the lively verse that James A. Bland and others of his day put into their minstrel songs. When Paul Laurence Dunbar commenced to write, he took up where these unknown makers of song had left off. Then there followed a long line of interesting twentieth century poets. I grouped the poems by subjects rather than by authors in order to focus the attention on the body of song as a whole. I hoped that as a result readers would feel that the poems were meant primarily to be enjoyed rather than to be studied.

FREDERICK: That seems to me an extremely good purpose in making an anthology. It reminds me of a little note in the book we discussed on the broadcast last week, E. B. White's *Subtreasury of American Humor*, in which he says "this book is not meant to be studied", and then there's an asterisk and a footnote saying, "Professors of English, please disregard this statement". You wouldn't mind if professors disregarded your statement, would you?

BONTEMPS: Well, I hope they will.

FREDERICK: I think it would be very pleasant—I know we would all like it—if you would illustrate for us this idea of grouping by the tradition of song by reading some of the related poems.

BONTEMPS: I notice that I have here a poem—a traditional one—called "Precious Things", which goes like this:

"Hold my rooster, hold my hen,  
Pray don't touch my Grecian Bend.  
Hold my bonnet, hold my shawl,  
Pray don't touch my waterfall.  
Hold my hands by the finger tips,  
But pray don't touch my sweet little lips."

Then, much later on in the tradition, I discovered a poem very similar in theme but very formal in structure by Countee Cullen, called "Under the Mistletoe". It seems to me to be the descendant of the one I just read:

"I did not know she'd take it so,  
Or else I'd never dared;  
Although the bliss was worth the blow,  
I did not know she'd take it so,  
She stood beneath the mistletoe  
So long I thought she cared;  
I did not know she'd take it so,  
Or else I'd never dared."

There might be the same relationship between one of the spirituals and a recent poem by Langston Hughes. For example, the old spiritual, "The Gospel Train", went like this:

"The Gospel train's a-coming,  
I hear it just at hand,  
I hear the car wheels moving  
And mumbling through the land.  
"Get on board, little chillun,  
Get on board, little chillun,  
Get on board, little chillun,  
There's room for many a mo'.  
"The fare is cheap and all can go,  
The rich and poor are there.  
No second class aboard this train,  
No difference in the fare."

Langston Hughes, writing a poem in the same vein, seems to have somewhat the same philosophy. It's called, "My Lord".

"Ma Lord ain't no stuck-up man,  
Ma Lord, he ain't proud.  
When he goes a-walkin'  
He gives me his hand,  
'You ma friend,' he 'lowed.  
'Ma Lord knowed what it was to work.  
He knowed how to pray.  
Ma Lord's life was trouble, too,  
Trouble every day.  
'Ma Lord ain't no stuck-up man.  
He's a friend o' mine.  
When He went to Heaben,  
His soul on fire,  
He told me I was gwine.  
He said, 'Sho you'll come wid Me  
An' be ma friend through eternity.'"

FREDERICK: I think those do illustrate that continuity of the tradition of song among the Negro people, the Negro writers.

I suppose that the same relationship is illustrated to some extent in your own dual function as a writer this year, Mr. Bontemps. We have this collection of poems, *Golden Slippers*, from which you've just been reading, which I like so much; and somewhat earlier in the year there was published the book called *Father of the Blues*, the autobiography of W. C. Handy, which was edited by Mr. Bontemps, and published by the Macmillan Company. This is a thoroughly enjoyable book, it seems to me. It's a volume that belongs in any library that professes to bring together the books that represent the cultural history of our time, because Mr. Handy has played such an important part in the recent development of music. He was truly "Father of the Blues" and I suppose a good deal more than that in American music; and the story of that contribution, the story of his relation to American music, it seems to me, is admirably told in this extremely readable book. Possibly I can give you a good suggestion of its quality by picking almost at random a bit of description of an experience when Mr. Handy and his orchestra played at Dixie Park in Memphis.

"The dance floor at Dixie Park was a spectacle. It accommodated a thousand dancers at a time. . . . Everybody and his brother were there. . . . Sometimes they looked like a drill corp in review before a grandstand. More often I saw it as a monstrous pinwheel, blazing with color and spinning magically. One or the other of the two gaudy floor managers—Slick Henderson and Edgar Hodges—would signal with a whistle. My band would then play four bars of the next dance, and pause while the dancers took their places. A moment later it would be underway. We played one-steps, polkas, schottisches and waltzes. Many times I remember wishing that the white folks for whom we played most of the time could have witnessed that Dixie Park scene. It was an extravaganza, a pageant, a sea of gliding figures. I remember the hands in particular—ebony hands, brown hands, yellow hands, ivory hands, all moving in coordination with nimble dancing feet. Then there were the teeth, the pearly teeth, and the gay smiling faces that had forgotten yesterday and never heard of tomorrow."

I like the quality of that writing very much. I don't know how much of it is due to you, Mr. Bontemps, and how much of it to Mr. Handy. I don't care. It's a good book.

BONTEMPS: It seems to me, Mr. Frederick, that Mr. Handy should be included with Negro poets as well as composers. In a double sense he is a part of the tradition of song. I've heard it said, and I agree, that the lyric of the "St. Louis Blues", had it never been set to music, would have become a part of American poetry. The lyrics of all Mr. Handy's songs, and he wrote most of these lyrics himself, are remarkable for a poetic quality far deeper than the average song lyrics. I have included one of these in *Golden Slippers*.

FREDERICK: "The Hesitating Blues"? Why don't you read it for us?

BONTEMPS: "Hello, Central, what's the matter with this line?"

I want to talk to that high Brown of mine,

Tell me, How long will I have to wait?

Please give me 298. Why do you hesitate?

What you say, 'Can't talk to my Brown!

A storm last night blowed the wires all down!"

Tell me how long will I have to wait?  
Oh, won't you tell me now? Why do you hesitate?

"Procrastination is the thief of time,"  
So all the wise owls say,  
'One stitch in time may save nine',  
Tomorrow's not today,  
And if you put it off  
Somebody's bound to lose,  
I'd be his, he'd be mine,  
And I'd be feeling gay.  
Left alone to grieve and pine,  
My best friend's gone away.  
He's gone and left me  
The Hesitating Blues.

"Sunday night my beau proposed to me;  
Said he'd be happy if his wife I'd be,  
Said he, 'How long will I have to wait?  
Come be my wife, Kate. Why do you hesitate?'  
I declined him just for a stall  
He left that night on the Cannon Ball.  
Honey, how long will I have to wait?  
Will you come back now  
Or will you hesitate?"

FREDERICK: I think we agree that Mr. Handy belongs to the tradition of poetry as well as to the tradition of song on the musical side.

I feel that you've performed a real service for all of us as readers in bringing these poems into this collection, Mr. Bontemps. I think there was a need for such a collection, a place in which one could find representative poems of the Negro writers of our own time, along with the work of earlier writers, some of them now nameless, who have contributed to that tradition. I feel that I have a particular right to congratulate you on the achievement that you have here, and also in *Father of the Blues*, and I think they may bring some of us back—these new books—to your earlier writing: the novels, *God Sends Sunday*, and *Black Thunder*, for example, and to your books for children. And I'm sure also that we will turn from the very good biographical sketches which you've included in *Golden Slippers* for your writers—I value that feature especially—to the work of Negro writers who are represented here, to read more of their books, both in poetry and in prose.

I suppose, Mr. Bontemps, you had the usual difficulty of anthologists in deciding what you had to leave out of *Golden Slippers*, but I'm sure you must have had some of these poems which you put in that you had no trouble deciding upon. You had some favorites, I guess?

BONTEMPS: Yes, indeed, several poems came immediately to mind when the anthology was proposed—Langston Hughes' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers", and his "Mother to Son"; Claude McKay's "The Tropics in New York" and "After the Winter"; then Countee Cullen's epitaphs, "For A Lady I Know", and "For A Poet", and James Weldon Johnson's "The Creation". One could hardly compile an anthology of Negro poetry of any sort without including most, if not all of these.

FREDERICK: I should agree surely on those choices; some of my own favorites in your collection are among them. May I choose one or two from that group and ask you to read them? Let's say Countee Cullen's "For A Lady I

Know" and Claude McKay's "The Tropics in New York".

BONTEMPS: "For A Lady I Know" happens to be illustrated, too, in this volume, for which I'm glad. It goes:

"She even thinks that up in heaven  
Her class lies late and snores,  
While poor black cherubs rise at seven  
To do celestial chores."

FREDERICK: The illustrations are very pleasant, too.

BONTEMPS: Claude McKay, you know, is a Jamaican poet. He came to the United States from Jamaica and is living here now, of course. And this poem, "The Tropics in New York", bears that out and makes it clear:

"Bananas ripe and green, and ginger-root,  
Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,  
And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit,  
Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs.  
"Set in the window, bring memories  
Of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,  
And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies  
In benediction over nun-like hills.  
"My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;  
A wave of longing through my body swept,  
And, hungry for the old familiar ways,  
I turned aside and bowed by head and wept."

FREDERICK: Thank you, I do like those poems. Perhaps the poem I like best of all in this collection, one of the best of modern American short poems, is Langston Hughes' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers". Mr. Hughes was our guest on OF MEN AND BOOKS just a little more than a year ago and read this poem for us. I'd like to hear it again if you'd like to read it.

BONTEMPS: Yes, I'd like to:

"I've known rivers:  
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than  
the flow of human blood in human veins.  
"My soul has grown deep like the rivers.  
"I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln  
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its  
muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.  
"I've known rivers:  
Ancient, dusky rivers.  
"My soul has grown deep like the rivers."

FREDERICK: That's a beautiful poem. It has occurred to me that these three men from whom you've just been reading are all novelists as well as poets. Has it ever occurred to you that to an unusual degree the people you've represented in *Golden Slippers* are people who would be represented in anthologies of prose writing, too?

BONTEMPS: Yes, the Negro novelists and prose writers seem to me definitely to belong to the poetic tradition of which we've been speaking. Readers of *Native Son* perhaps may have felt that Richard Wright is an exception, but those who read his *Twelve Million Black Voices* will no doubt be reminded that he, too, began as a poet and that he is still a writer of poetic

prose. His new book is to me a prose poem. It's written in a minor key, but there's a profound music in the book. I'm fully convinced that Richard Wright belongs to the long line of Negro singers which began with the spirituals.

FREDERICK: I agree with that. I like particularly the poetic quality you mention in *Twelve Million Black Voices*, and I think that one function of your collection, *Golden Slippers*, should be to stimulate us all to further reading of these several writers in the various fields of their endeavor in non-fiction and in fiction as well. I want to talk about *Twelve Million Black Voices* today, but first I want to say a word about a novel just published by Doubleday Doran and Company, called *Blood on the Forge*, by William Attaway.

This novel has as its core the experience of three Negro brothers who came from the life of sharecroppers in Kentucky to work in a steel mill in the North during the boom days of the first World War and to serve as strike breakers. Now this mass migration of Negroes and the resulting problem of adjustment is a very great literary theme indeed. William Attaway's novel falls far short of doing it justice, chiefly because, although he writes well, sometimes with sharpness and beauty, he fails to make his major characters real. They're conceived artificially and portrayed in part conventionally, and in part with unfortunate sensationalism. Granted the material and the writing ability of Mr. Attaway, *Blood on the Forge* should have been a much better novel than it is.

As for *Twelve Million Black Voices* by Richard Wright, published by the Viking Press, I regard it as a fine book, truly important, and truly valuable. The text is called in the sub-title, *A Folk History of the Negro in America*. Actually about only half of the brief text is historical, and with the historical portion I might find some fault on the ground of oversimplification and of faulty emphasis. But even these faults are minor. For the second and the more important part of the text, a statement and analysis of the ways of life of Negro Americans today, I have only praise. This seems to me an extremely fine piece of work on a most important subject. It is, as you said, Mr. Bontemps, poetical in tone and to some degree in method; but it is abundantly implemented by hard facts. The writing is very largely free from the element of special political direction which Mr. Wright's preceding book, *Native Son*, had led me somewhat to expect. There is passion in this book surely, but it is controlled passion. The whole statement of the Negro's position, as Mr. Wright sees it, seems to me admirably reasonable and appropriately forceful, sound as a social document and as literature.

The 147 photographs which have been assembled by Edwin Rosskam for this book surely demand a special word of comment. All but two of them were taken by staff photographers of the Farm Security Administration. Their subjects are individual Negroes and groups of Negroes, Negroes on the land and Negroes in the city, Negro homes, Negro churches, Negro feet, Negro hands. Most of them are of the highest interest and worth as concrete portions of the social document which the book as a whole surely is. They are admirably integrated with the text. Also, many of them are works of photographic art of the very highest excellence. The beauty of texture, of composition, of whole meaning and experience possessed by many of these pictures is truly and deeply memorable. It is my thoughtful verdict that I have never seen so many pictures which I consider distinguished examples of the photographer's art at its best assembled in a single volume as I find here. The book is worth owning, in more ways than one, for the pictures alone. It reminds me of the very wonderful pictures in a book which we reviewed a little over a month ago, *Let Us Now*

*Praise Famous Men*, by James Agee and Walker Evans with photographs also taken, I think, by the Farm Security Administration, and representing the lives of poor white farmers in the South. It seems to me that these photographs with their documentary value and their artistic value are really exciting reading experiences, and I hope that some of the faces in the pictures in *Twelve Million Black Voices* will fix themselves in your mind and stay as they do in mine, not in fear or in pity, but in earnest recognition of our mutual responsibility.

We are engaged as a nation, in these days, in a mighty effort to check the spread of doctrines that we hold detestable, to prevent the domination of the world by the demonstrated evils of violence and intolerance. It is no negation of this effort to remind ourselves in season of the ancient teaching that applies to nations as well as to individuals, "Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye". It is the greatest loyalty to remind ourselves that our highest duty as American citizens in these times—clearly our first and highest duty—is to seek for increasing realization at home of those democratic ideals for which we are helping to fight abroad. If we can afford these billions for battleships and tanks and warplanes—agents of death—and we can and do afford them, we can likewise afford billions for schools and hospitals and libraries and homes—agencies of life—for Americans of all races who lack these things. If we can protest with our minds and our hearts and our dollars against the suffering of millions in Europe and Asia today, as we most rightly do, we can even more reasonably turn thought and effort towards the needs of millions here at home. I do not know how to solve the problems which Richard Wright has stated here in this new book, the problems that are implicit in many of the poems of *Golden Slippers* and eloquent in many of the pictures in *Twelve Million Black Voices*. I am not so foolish as to think of myself as so wise as that; but I do know that these problems cannot be solved by Negroes alone or by the rest of us alone. They must be solved by all of us working together; and to work together we must know each other, understand each other, trust each other. That is why I feel the books of Negro writers are peculiarly important and valuable. They are, in addition to their intrinsic worth as poetry, or fiction, or whatever they may be, means to this knowledge, this understanding which we so greatly need. A reading of the beautiful poems in *Golden Slippers*, of the somber appeal in *Twelve Million Black Voices*, may be for you a first step toward some personal contribution—important, however small—toward the end we all desire, of increased security and opportunity for wholeness of life for Negro Americans. As your companion in reading and in some degree, I hope, your friend, I beg you to take that step.

---

OF MEN AND BOOKS

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 Radio Department  
 Evanston, Illinois

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I enclose \$1 for a 26-week subscription beginning Sept. 30, 1941

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# The University of Chicago

Graduate Library School

# FELLOWSHIPS

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

February 13, 1942

	WCH	14	WCH	17

Mr. William C. Haygood  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Haygood:

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps has applied for admission to the Graduate Library School and has given your name for reference.

We shall greatly appreciate a frank statement from you concerning Mr. Bontemps' personal and social qualities, his ability as a student, and his qualifications for carrying on research in library science.

Sincerely,

*Grace E. Castle*  
Secretary

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

The University of Chicago FELLOWSHIPS

Graduate Library School

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

	ERE	16	16
February 13, 1942			

President Edwin R. Embree  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear President Embree:

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Sincerely,

*Grace E. Castle*  
Secretary

# FELLOWSHIPS

February 16, 1942

Dear Miss Castle: I am very glad to write in behalf of Mr. Arna Bontemps' application for admission to the Graduate Library School. Mr. Bontemps is a student and writer of national distinction. His books include God Sends Sunday, Black Thunder, Drums at Dusk which are novels, three children's books, an anthology of poetry, and other works. For the past year and a half he has been in charge of the Negro division of the Illinois Writers' Project. As you probably know, he is being considered for appointment as librarian at Fisk University, one of the most important of the Negro institutions of the country. From the standpoint of scholarship and general acquaintance and appreciation of books he is highly qualified for such a post. It seems desirable, however, for him to learn specifically about library administration and the various technical services of libraries which he would be administering. Personally and socially he is a charming and in every way acceptable man. I recommend him without qualification for admission to the Library School.

Very truly yours,

ERE:JW

EDWIN R. EMBREE

Miss Grace E. Castle, Secretary  
Office of the Dean  
Graduate Library School  
The University of Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

February 18, 1942

Dear Miss Castle: I have your letter of February 13, asking for a statement in support of Mr. Arna Bontemps' application for admission to the Graduate Library School. I am very happy to have the opportunity to recommend Mr. Bontemps, since I have been rather closely associated with him during the past year. I think it is the general critical opinion that Mr. Bontemps is one of the best historical novelists in the United States today, and certainly he is one of the foremost Negro writers of fiction and poetry that we have. His two historical novels, Black Thunder and Drums at Dusk, are ample evidence of his ability to handle historical material, and his current work with the Writers' Project is proof of his general administrative and research ability. I have no doubt whatsoever that he would be able to measure up to the standards of the School in this respect.

I have had occasion to see the wide esteem and respect in which Mr. Bontemps is held by younger writers, both white and Negro. He is generally respected for his intellectual honesty and personal integrity, and is admired for his social charm. I think I can say truthfully that Mr. Bontemps is the best balanced Negro intellectual that I know, and I feel that he has every qualification necessary to the successful librarian.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM C. HAYGOOD

WCH:McK

Miss Grace E. Castle  
Graduate Library School  
University of Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois

The University of Chicago **FELLOWSHIPS**  
Graduate Library School

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

February 28, 1942

Mr. William Haygood  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

	WCH	3/2	WCH	0

Dear Mr. Haygood:

I am admitting Mr. Bontemps as a regular student. I do not know what the other members of my staff will think about it, but they will have to worry over it next year after I am away. If you have occasion to talk to Bontemps during the next few days, I think it would be a good thing to urge him to read as many of the Columbia syllabi and titles that I suggested as possible before he begins his work in the Spring Quarter. It will save him embarrassment and will ease the situation somewhat for me.

This thing of taking a student who is irregular and holding out the expectation that he will have a degree by a certain date always has its disadvantages for the School, for the student, and for the prospective employer. I am giving Bontemps every opportunity to show what he has, and I hope that he will be able to satisfy his sponsors and his prospective employers. It is up to him, of course, to come through with work that will justify our taking him on.

Sincerely,

*Louis R. Wilson*

Louis R. Wilson  
Dean

# JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

## Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate            Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Report Requested of        Mr. John T. Frederick

                                         Northwestern University, 339 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. *An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.*

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

*William C. Haygood*  
Director for Fellowships

### REPORT

I am very glad to have opportunity to make a statement in relation to the application of Arna W. Bontemps for a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. I have known Mr. Bontemps for more than three years. He was employed as a writer on the Illinois Writers' Project when I was its State Director, and I subsequently promoted him to an editorial position because of his excellent work. I found him trustworthy, tactful, and unusually competent in everything he undertook.

I have read all, or nearly all, of Mr. Bontemps' published work. I feel that it is of outstanding merit. In fact, I regard his historical novel, Black Thunder, as the finest single creative work of fiction yet produced by an American Negro.

I have expressed my high opinion of Mr. Bontemps and his work by inviting him to participate on one of the Columbia Broadcasting System network broadcasts of my program "Of Men and Books," sponsored by Northwestern University. It seems to me that his present plan is a sound and sensible one which should work out well for his future, in which I am deeply interested.

OVER

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

I hope sincerely that it may be possible for you to give him the assistance of a fellowship.

Name of Candidate Mr. Arno W. Bontemps

Report Requested of Mr. John T. Frederick

Northwestern University, 339 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

*William C. Thompson*  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

I am very glad to have opportunity to make a statement in relation to Julius Rosenwald Fund. I have been employed as a writer on the Lincoln project for several years. He was employed as a writer on the Lincoln project when I was its State Director, and I subsequently promoted him to an editorial position because of his excellent work. I found him trustworthy, tactful, and unusually competent in everything he undertook.

Signed *John T. Frederick*

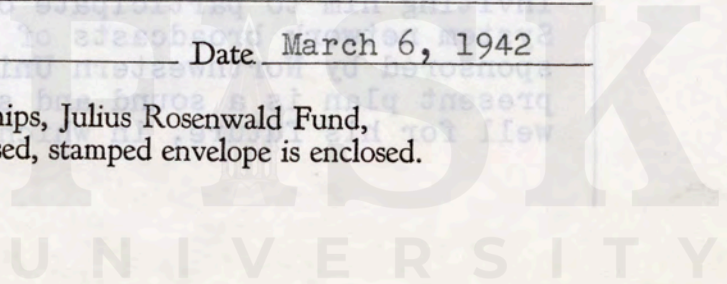
Position or Title Professor of Modern Letters

Address Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois

Date March 6, 1942

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

OVER



JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

a

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
Report Requested of Mr. Napier Wilt  
University of Chicago

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. *An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.*

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

*William C. Haygood*

Director for Fellowships

REPORT

I have had Mr. Bontemps in a class where he did not do good work, but fortunately I have talked with him a great deal outside of class and I am convinced that he is a highly intelligent and capable person. I have read his novels, and while I don't think they are great I think they are competent pieces of work. I think it would be an excellent thing if Mr. Bontemps were given an opportunity to take a degree in the Graduate Library School. Obviously his writing is not going to support him, and if he gets a degree in the Library School he should be able to get a good position. I think he is very definitely worthy of being underwritten for a year.

*Napier Wilt*

Professor of English

University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

Date March 6, 1942

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.



OVER

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
4901 ELLIS AVENUE  
CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidates for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arne W. Boncompagni

Report Requested of Mr. Hagler Will

University of Chicago

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement. We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

*William C. Ferguson*  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

Signed *Hagler Will*

Position or Title Professor of English

Address University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

Date March 6, 1942

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

OVER

F A S K  
U N I V E R S I T Y

# JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

## Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate      Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
Report Requested of      Miss Helen English  
                                 Los Angeles Public Library

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. *An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.*

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

*William C. Haygood*

Director for Fellowships

## REPORT

March 9, 1942

Mr. Arna Bontemps would make a wonderful librarian of a college library for negroes in the South. He is a scholar and a gentleman and has the highest ideals and standards, also a capacity for hard work. I have known Mr. Bontemps for some years but have not seen him recently though I have followed his contributions to literature with deep interest. He has visited the Los Angeles Public Library a number of times, alone and with his friend Langston Hughes. On every occasion those of us who have met and talked to Mr. Bontemps have been deeply impressed by his personality, by his knowledge and charm. Given an opportunity, he would be a leader among his people. He spoke here twice in the Public Library to Staff members, a number of years ago, but we still remember his talk. It was brilliant with a deep spiritual quality, and delivered with ease and finesse. You would be making a real contribution to the whole negro race if you gave Mr. Bontemps a scholarship.

Dr. Carleton Joeckel has recently been made head of the Library School at the University of Chicago. He is one of the important leaders of the profession and would take Mr. Bontemps in hand and direct him in his study and also his future work, for Dr. Joeckel is a practical man.

OVER

I have not seen Mr. Bontemps for three or four years, but the last time that I saw him, he seemed to be free from any physical handicaps. He is a distinguished looking man.

Mr. Bontemps as you probably know is a poet, has written a number of novels on his race and three children's books, (one a collaboration with Langston Hughes) They are all excellent and are read as eagerly by white children as by negroes, because they have a universal appeal.

Name of Candidate

Report Requested of

Los Angeles Public Library

The above named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

William E. Ferguson  
Director for Fellowships

March 9, 1942

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

Signed Gladys English

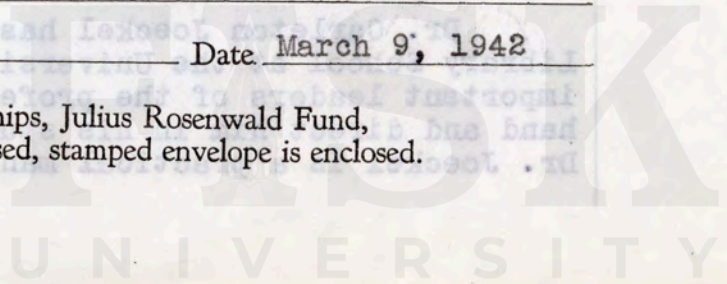
Position or Title Dept. Librarian, Work with Children

Address Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, California

Date March 9, 1942

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

OVER



JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Report Requested of Miss Lois Dwight Cole

The Macmillan Company, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York City

*BB:*  
*Return to Ark*  
*Please*

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. *An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.*

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

*William C. Haygood*

Director for Fellowships

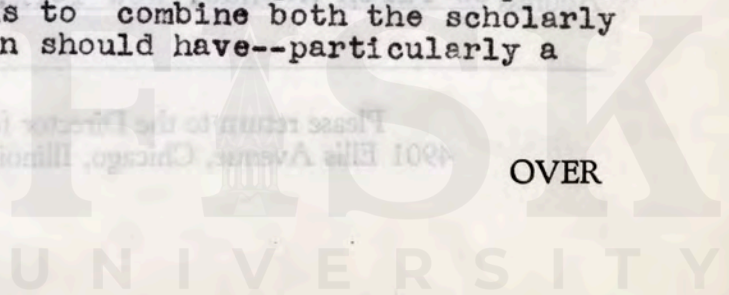
REPORT

The Macmillan Company has had the pleasure of publishing two novels for Arna Bontemps (BLACK THUNDER and DRUMS AT DUSK). Both received high critical praise from the leading reviewers of the country. They spoke of the excellence of the author's writing, his ability to create character and his skillful evocation of atmosphere. It is difficult for a writer of fiction to support himself and his family on the proceeds of his novel sales alone (except, of course, in unusual instances) and this proved to be the case with Mr. Bontemps. Unfortunately neither of his two novels had the sales for which both author and publisher had hoped.

We know from Mr. Bontemps books (and from the two projects which he has suggested and which we could not in all fairness encourage because they seemed to us to lack popular appeal though of intrinsic interest) that he is greatly interested in historical research and that he makes effective use of that research. This type of mind might well be particularly adapted to library work. He seems to combine both the scholarly and practical interests that a librarian should have--particularly a college librarian.

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

OVER



Since the returns from his novels cannot support either Mr. Bontemps or his family his desire to complete a course of study that might lead to a stable and remunerative position seems extremely sensible. As far as his publishers can tell, he seems well worthy of a grant-in-aid from the Rosenwald Foundation towards the furtherance of his library career.

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Report Requested of Miss Lois Dwight Cole

The Macmillan Company, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York City

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

Signed

*Arna W. Bontemps*

Position or Title Associate Editor, The Macmillan Company

Address 60 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York

Date

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
Report Requested of Miss May Lamberton Becker  
c/o New York Herald Tribune, New York City

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. *An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.*

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

*William C. Haygood*  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

*I have never met Arna Bontemps nor written to him, but I feel especially honored that he should have sufficient confidence in my judgment to feel sure, without consulting me, that I would speak to him. For Mr. Bontemps is by all means the soundest, the most delicate and the most distinctive of the Negro novelists. The poetic vein is rich, yet his hold on the realities is firm: especially his sense of the music in words does not lead him today more than than he means. I believe that here is a voice worth developing; a talent worth encouraging.*

OVER

His books are as well liked by white children as by those of color - I am speaking now of his distinguished juveniles - and the added dignity of the M. A. degree would give him the proper prestige in a profession where a man or woman of color is needed but needs all the support he can get!

I have seldom been called upon to speak for a candidate in whom I had more confidence. As I say, I have not met Mr. Bateaux, but I did once meet some of his relatives, and they were evidently much respected in the community.

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

I am not sure of any. I know him only as a writer - not a mighty good writer and clearly a fine character.

Signed

Harriet M. Becker

Position or Title

Reader's Guide

Address

New York Herald Tribune 230 N. 41. N.Y.

Date

March 9/1942

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund,  
4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

*Brett*

# FELLOWSHIPS

## THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

CABLE ADDRESS  
PACHAMAC NEW YORK

*Publishers*

TELEPHONE  
ALGONQUIN 4-2100

SIXTY • FIFTH AVENUE • NEW YORK

GEORGE P. BRETT, JR., PRESIDENT  
H. S. LATHAM, VICE PRESIDENT

E. L. MEAD, SECRETARY  
R. M. BRETT, TREASURER

March 26, 1942

Mr. William C. Haygood  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Haygood:

I must apologize for the delay in returning this report on Arna Bontemps. As it happens, we have been under a great deal of pressure here because of the absence of our Editor-in-Chief. I am sending it back to you along with Mr. Bontemps' own statement of his plan of work.

When you have only seen a person once or twice for a few moments, it is rather difficult to make any estimate of character or abilities but we have been happy to speak for Mr. Bontemps and we hope that he will receive a fellowship from you.

Very truly yours,

*Lois Dwight Cole*  
Lois Dwight Cole  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
Associate Editor

LDC/mb

F. S. K.  
UNIVERSITY

negro.

# FELLOWSHIPS

April 18, 1942

Dear Mr. Bontemps: It is a pleasure to inform you that you have been selected by the Committee on Fellowships of the Julius Rosenwald Fund to receive a grant of Two thousand four hundred dollars (\$2,400) to assist you in carrying forward your studies in library science at the University of Chicago for a twelve-month period.

Will you please let us know at once whether or not you can accept this grant? An announcement of the Committee's selections will be made soon and it can include only those from whom acceptances have been received.

Sincerely yours,

WCH:MLJ

WILLIAM C. HAYGOOD

Mr. Arna Wendell Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

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40-11  
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UNIVERSITY

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# FELLOWSHIPS

703 E. 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois  
20 April '42

Mr. W. C. Haygood  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago

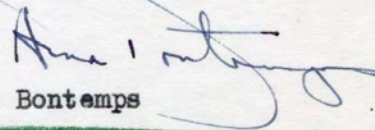
Dear Mr. Haygood:

My gratitude to the Fund and to the Fellowship  
Committee for taking me on again. I accept with ecstasy.

Your letter of notification has just been delivered.

Again, thanks!

Sincerely,



Arna Bontemps

# FELLOWSHIPS

April 23, 1942

Dear Dean Wilson: I am glad to report that our Committee on Fellowships, at its final meeting last week, awarded Mr. Arna Bontemps a Fellowship to enable him to attend the Graduate Library School. Since these awards will not be made public until May 1, it will be impossible for Mr. Bontemps to begin his studies this quarter. Although our understanding was that he would be enrolled for the spring term, I hope the fact that he will not begin his work until summer will not cause any inconvenience.

At your suggestion, I have been putting Mr. Bontemps through a rather stiff course of supervised reading, so he will come to you with facts and figures in his head and phrases on his tongue.

All of us here are grateful to you and to the Library School for your co-operation.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM C. HAYGOOD

WCH:MLU

Dean L. R. Wilson  
Graduate Library School  
University of Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

**Name** Arna Wendell Bontemps **Field:** Library Science

Assistant Project Technician, Illinois Writers' Project  
703 East 50th Place, Chicago

**Plan of Work**

To work toward an M. A. degree in the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. While at it, I hope also to complete work begun several years ago in English and leading to a similar degree in that field.

Requests grant for one year. Has been admitted to the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. Seeks training for position as University or College Librarian.

**Personal Data** Born Alexandria, Louisiana, October 1902. **Age:** 39  
Married, five children.

**Undergraduate Work** Pacific Union College, B. A. 1923.

**Graduate Work** University of Chicago, has completed residence requirements for Master's degree in English.

**Experience** Teacher and Principal, Harlem Academy, 1924-31, \$1,248 to \$2,000; teacher, Oakwood Junior College, Huntsville, Alabama, 1931-34, \$1,400; principal, Shiloh Academy, Chicago, 1935-38, \$1,200; present position since 1940, \$2,336.

**Accomplishments** Publications: Novels, God Sends Sunday, Harcourt, 1931, Black Thunder, Macmillan, 1936, Drums at Dusk, Macmillan, 1939; four juvenile books, including Sad-Faced Boy and The Fast Sooner Hound (with Jack Conroy); editor of Father of the Blues, by W. C. Handy, Macmillan, 1941, and Golden Slippers, an anthology of poetry for children, Harpers, 1941.

Is included in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in the East.

Julius Rosenwald Fund Fellowship, 1938, \$1,900.

**References**

John T. Frederick, Northwestern University  
May Lamberton Becker, New York Herald Tribune  
Lois Dwight Cole, Macmillan Company  
Helen English, Los Angeles Public Library  
Napier Wilt, University of Chicago  
Jasmine Britton, Los Angeles Board of Education

**Budget Summary**

<b>Total Amount Needed</b>	\$2,550
<b>From Applicant</b>	150
<b>From Fund</b>	\$2,400

**AMOUNT GRANTED**

FILE COPY

a

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND  
4901 ELLIS AVENUE  
CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate     Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
Report Requested of     Miss Jasmine Britton  
                                         Los Angeles Board of Education

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. *An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.*

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

*William C. Haygood*  
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

First - I hope my delay in replying has not hindered the granting of a Fellowship to Mr. Bontemps. Conditions here have been abnormal - since Dec 9 - 1941

We had Mr Bontemps lecture for us before high school students on the life of a negro in Haiti. Langston Hughes also shared the honors with his poetry. They went to three of our large high schools

OVER

and were very successful in holding their audiences.

Mr. Bontemps has dignity and poise. He is essentially the quiet scholarly type of mind appreciating the fine things of the spirit.

I believe he would be an able librarian appreciating keenly the part books can have in improving the life of the negro - He has a rare quality which seems French in essence - He is dependable - fair and just - He works slowly but carefully His books have shown growth and development with the years - He will make a fine contribution to life.

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Jasmine Sutton

Position or Title \_\_\_\_\_

Director Library and Textbook Section

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Los Angeles Schools - California

1205 West Pico St

Date \_\_\_\_\_

May 26 - 1942

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

# FELLOWSHIPS

703 E. 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois  
2 December '42

WCH	12/2	WCH	17

## MEMORANDUM

To Mr. William Haygood, Dr. for Fellowships, J. R. Fund

From Arna Bontemps, Fellow in Library Science

The question of a dissertation has arisen. This is one of the requirements of the course in which I am enrolled at the University of Chicago. During the first two quarters of my study I have tried to find a topic which will a) tie-in with the work I am likely to do in the future, b) have some likelihood of publication in one form or another and c) serve some practical use in the library field. A subject which seems to satisfy these requirements is "The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection at Yale." Dr. Pierce Butler, my adviser, approves; and a letter from the Yale Library professes more than ordinary enthusiasm for the idea. The latter also requests me to write an article about the collection (the official article) for the "Yale Library Gazette." Two further steps remain before the work can be definitely scheduled as part of my course: First, it would be necessary to get the Fund's approval—since such a study would involve some additional expense—and second, it would be necessary to have a preliminary outline approved by the faculty of the Graduate Library School. I would rather not ask for the second without the first.

Does this seem reasonable to you? If not, of course, I can continue to cast about for a subject on which I can work locally. The above, as I would guess, could best be done in two brief trips to Yale, rather than by working on the scene for a longer period; and I suspect that it would be just as economical. Moreover, I could thus keep my other course requirements moving along.

*Arna Bontemps*



ARNA BONTEMPS: Statement of Plan of Work

1. I propose to complete the course of study which leads to the M. A. degree in Library Science.
2. The Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago has just admitted me to regular standing. Some time ago I completed residence requirements for an M. A. in English; the Thesis and the Examinations are outstanding.
3. The proposed study would be done at the University of Chicago. Studies in Library Science would be done under Dean Louis Round Wilson and his Library Science faculty. Anything further in English under Napier Wilt.
4. Results: To improve scholarship and stabilize career.
5. Subsequent plans: I hope to get a position as librarian in a College or University. Working in such a capacity, I would aim to continue creative writing and I would expect to undertake research projects now in mind.

Submitted with application for Julius Rosenwald Fund Fellowship.

1942

CHICAGO

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Arna Bontemps

Mr. John T. Frederick, Professor of Modern Letters, Northwestern University

I am very glad to have opportunity to make a statement in relation to the application of Arna W. Bontemps for a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. I have known Mr. Bontemps for more than three years. He was employed as a writer on the Illinois Writers' Project when I was its State Director, and I subsequently promoted him to an editorial position because of his excellent work. I found him trustworthy, tactful, and unusually competent in everything he undertook.

I have read all, or nearly all, of Mr. Bontemps' published work. I feel that it is of outstanding merit. In fact, I regard his historical novel, Black Thunder, as the finest single creative work of fiction yet produced by an American Negro.

I have expressed my high opinion of Mr. Bontemps and his work by inviting him to participate on one of the Columbia Broadcasting System network broadcasts of my program "Of Men and Books," sponsored by Northwestern University. It seems to me that his present plan is a sound and sensible one which should work out well for his future, in which I am deeply interested. I hope sincerely that it may be possible for you to give him the assistance of a fellowship.

- - - - -

Miss May Lamberton Becker, Readers Guide, New York Herald Tribune

I have never met Arna Bontemps nor written to him, but I feel especially honored that he should have sufficient confidence in my judgment to feel sure, without consulting me, that I would speak for him. For Mr. Bontemps is by all means the soundest, the most delicate, and the

most distinctive of the young Negro novelists. The poetic vein is rich, yet his hold on the realities is firm: especially, his sense of the music in words does not lead him to say more with them than he means. I believe that here is a voice worth developing, a talent worth encouraging.

His books are as well liked by white children as by those of color - I am speaking now of his distinguished juveniles - and the added dignity of the M. A. degree would give him the proper prestige in a profession where a man or woman of color is needed but needs all the support he can get.

I have seldom been called upon to speak for a candidate in whose gifts I had more confidence.

- - - - -

Miss Helen English, Children's Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library

Mr. Bontemps would make a wonderful librarian of a college library for Negroes in the South. He is a scholar and a gentleman and has the highest ideals and standards, also a capacity for hard work. I have known Mr. Bontemps for some years but have not seen him recently, though I have followed his contributions to literature with deep interest. He has visited the Los Angeles Public Library a number of times, alone and with his friend Langston Hughes. On every occasion those of us who have met and talked to Mr. Bontemps have been deeply impressed by his personality, by his knowledge and charm. Given an opportunity, he would be a leader among his people. He spoke here twice in the Public Library to staff members, a number of years ago, but we still remember his talk. It was brilliant with a deep spiritual quality, and delivered with ease and finesse. You would be making a real contribution to the whole Negro race if you gave Mr. Bontemps a scholarship.

Dr. Carleton Joeckel has recently been made head of the Library School at the University of Chicago. He is one of the important leaders of the profession and would take Mr. Bontemps in hand and direct him in his study and also his future work, for Dr. Joeckel is a practical man.

I have not seen Mr. Bontemps for three or four years, but the last time that I saw him, he seemed to be free from any physical handicaps. He is a distinguished looking man.

- - - - -

Mr. Napier Wilt, Professor of English, University of Chicago

I have had Mr. Bontemps in a class where he did not do good work, but fortunately I have talked with him a great deal outside of class and I am convinced that he is a highly intelligent and capable person. I have read his novels, and while I don't think they are great, I think they are competent pieces of work. I think it would be an excellent thing if Mr. Bontemps were given an opportunity to take a degree in the Graduate Library School. Obviously his writing is not going to support him, and if he gets a degree in the Library School he should be able to get a good position. I think he is very definitely worthy of being underwritten for a year.

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 4657

Date May 26, 1942

First payment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Ch. #26953

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	40-11	\$165.00	

Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To Arna W. Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 4763

Date June 19, 1942

Second payment on fellowship - - - - - \$100.00

(To cover first quarter's tuition at  
University of Chicago.)

Chk. #27074

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	40-11	\$100.00	

Prepared by      Checked by      Posted by



Comptroller

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To Arna W. Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 4777

Date June 24, 1942

Third payment on Fellowship grant - - - - - \$200.00

Chk. #27087

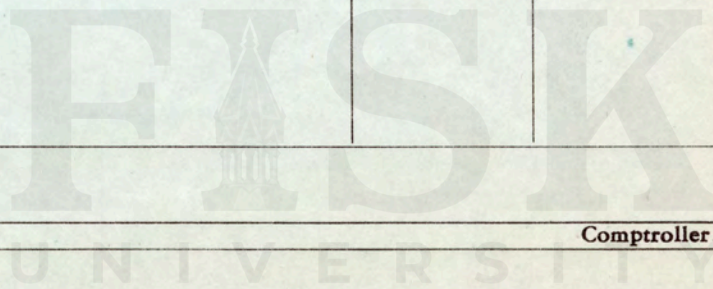
Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	40-11	\$175.44	
Negro Fellowships	41-7	<u>24.56</u>	
		\$200.00	

Prepared by

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

## FELLOWSHIPS

To Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 4845

Date July 1, 1942

Fourth payment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Chk. #27155

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_  
Checked by \_\_\_\_\_  
Posted by \_\_\_\_\_



Comptroller

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

## FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 4927

Date July 31, 1942

Fifth payment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Ck. #27253

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
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# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

703 East 50th Place

Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 4980

Date August 31, 1942

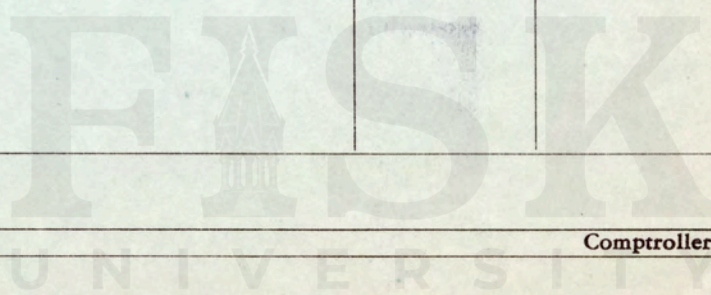
Sixth payment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Ch. #27322

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
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FELLOWSHIPS

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 5072

Date September 15, 1942

Seventh payment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$100.00

Chk.#27413

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$100.00	

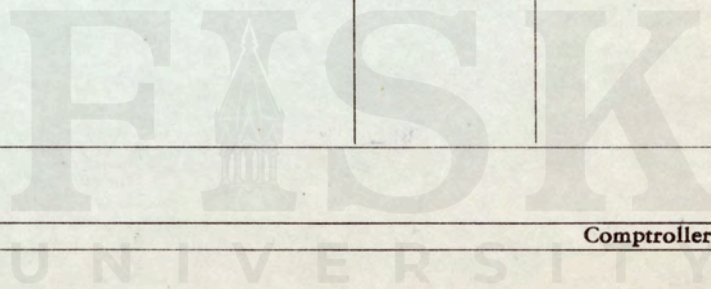
Prepared by

Checked by

Posted by

MA

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

703 East 50th Place

Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 5126

Date September 30, 1942

Eighth payment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Chk. #27470

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 5289

Date October 30, 1942

Ninth payment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Chk. #27647

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

Prepared by	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
AM			



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To Mr. (Arna W.) Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 5459

Date November 30, 1942

December installment on Fellowship Grant --- \$165.00

Ch. #27834

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

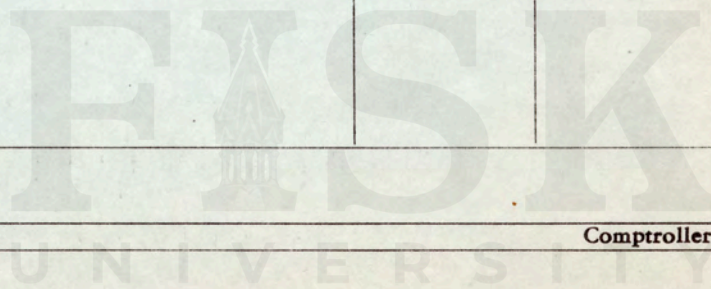
Prepared by

*ae*

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



86  
FELLOWSHIPS

May 12, 1943

Dear Mr. Bontemps: We are happy to be able to  
grant you an extension of  
\$600 to your 1942 fellowship, to cover the  
months of June, July, and August. Will you  
please let Miss Elvidge know the way in which  
you would like to receive this additional money?

Sincerely yours,

VANDI V. HAYGOOD

Mrs. William C. Haygood  
Acting-Director for Fellowships

VH:MLJ

Mr. (Arna) Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# FELLOWSHIPS

INVITATION LIST FOR (ARNA BONTEMPS) PARTY, JULY 30, 1943

Mr. and Mrs. Claude Barnett	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Redfield
Mrs. M. O. Bousfield & Maudelle	Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Rieser
Horace Cayton	Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Rorem
Jack Conroy	Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz (Duffy)
Theodora Pitkowsky	Mr. and Mrs. Austin Scott
Dr. and Mrs. Allison Davis	Bishop Bernard J. Shell
Owen Dodson	A. G. Spectorosky
Charles Sebree	Mr. and Mrs. Frank L. Sulzberger
Frank Silvara	Mr. and Mrs. Willard Townsend
Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Field	Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Warner
Mr. and Mrs. A. Richard Frank	Mr. and Mrs. Louis Wirth
Mr. and Mrs. John T. Frederick	Sally Marks
Mr. and Mrs. John Frederick, Jr.	Marcella Ricks and Mrs. Walker
Mrs. James Frederick	Charla Mae Rollins
Mary Jane Grunsfeld	Mrs. Fountain
Dorothy Donegan	Miss Bell
Vivian Harsh	Miss Hobson
Mr. and Mrs. S. I. Hayakawa	Mr. and Mrs. Leon Carnovsky
Mr. and Mrs. Melville Herskovits	Mrs. Rhaua Pearce
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hayes	Mr. and Mrs. Frank Marshall Davis
Mr. and Mrs. George McCray	Metz Lochard
Mary Elizabeth McKay	Mr. and Mrs. Lucius Harper
Dr. and Mrs. Franklin McLean	Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Watkins
Mr. and Mrs. William Patterson	Mr. and Mrs. Rousseau van Voorhies
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Pollak	John Storm

**Rackham Holt**

Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy (Dorsey)

Ida Margolis

Mr. and Mrs. John Drury

Peggy Brown

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Muzon

Vincent Starrett

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Abranson

Mr. and Mrs. Max Siegal

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Romaine

Nelson Algren

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Johnson

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Meyers

Mrs. Ann Cook

Dr. and Mrs. Curtis Reese

Mrs. Edna Hansen

Mary Matsamura

James Gilman

Mrs. James T. Farrell

Suzanne Tory

George Martin

Horace Cayton's friend

Miss Hadley

Miss Whitney (Book Week)

Elizabeth Bullock

Saul Alinsky

Officers and Staff

Mr. Embree

Mr. and Mrs. Arna Bontemps

Dr. and Mrs. Charles Johnson

Dr. W. W. Alexander

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Wale

Mr. and Mrs. H. Scudder Mekeel

Mrs. W. C. Haygood

Miss Dorothy Elvidge

Mrs. C. E. Merrill

Miss Frances Howland

Mrs. Nanette Thayer

Eleanor Nakagawa

Sumiko Oura

Margaret L. Utley

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Abrahamson

460  
FELLOWSHIPS

APPROPRIATION

December 17, 1942

Dear Mr. Bontemps: I am glad to be able to write you that the officers of the Fund, acting under the authorization of the Committee on Fellowships, have awarded you three hundred dollars as a supplementary grant to your current fellowship to enable you to study the James Weldon Johnson Collection at the Yale University Library.

In accordance with our recent conversation, it is my understanding that if the entire amount of this extension is not used for this travel and research, the balance will revert to our general fellowship funds.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM C. HAYGOOD

WCH:MLJ

Mr. Arna Bontemps  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago

negro fellow  
41-7  
FISK  
UNIVERSITY

21 December '42

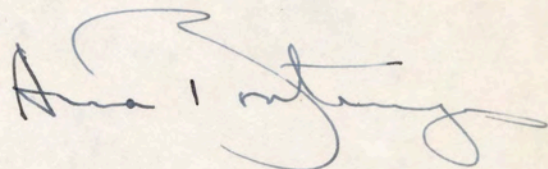
MEMORANDUM

To Dorothy Elvidge

From Arna Bontemps

*RT to New York*

Will you please pay the Pennsylvania Railroad \$33.00 for the ticket they sent me at the Fund, the same to be deducted from the \$300 granted me for purpose of making a study of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection at Yale University? At the same time I would like to get \$67.00 ~~in cash from the same grant~~ of the grant to cover expenses of my first trip to New Haven. The rest will not be needed before the latter part of March.



*me. 7 loc  
Travel  
3 r4 in Mich.*

DOROTHY A. ELVIDGE

*RT Travel 12/30 - 12 1/6*



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To  
Pennsylvania Railroad Company  
  
c/o Mr. Phil Flohr  
Travel Shop  
354 North Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 5637

Date December 22, 1942

Round-trip ticket Chicago to New York on Trailblazer

leaving December 30, returning January 6 - - - - - \$33.00

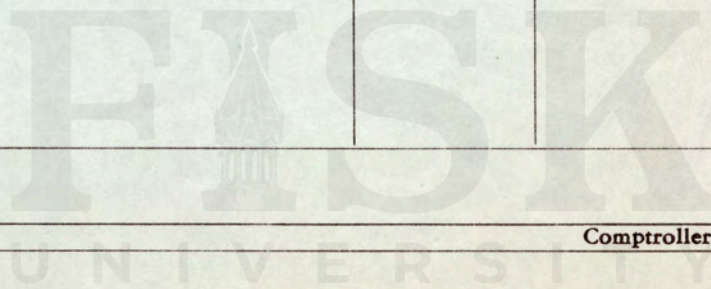
(For Mr. Arna Bentemps)

Chk. #28039

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$33.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
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# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

*7 up DE*  
*1/15/43*  
*acting*

To Mr. Arna W. Pontemps

Payment Voucher No. 5638

Date December 22, 1942

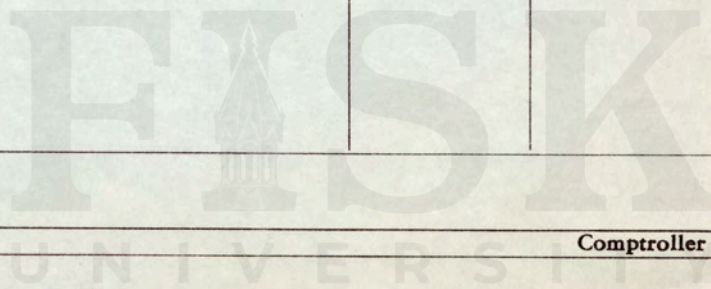
Payment on extension to fellowship grant - - - - - \$67.00

Ck. #28040

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$67.00	

Prepared by <b>AM</b>	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
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# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 5560

Date December 31, 1942

January installment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Ch. #27949

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
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# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 5736

Date January 29, 1943

February installment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Ck. #28141

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

Prepared by	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
AM			



# CROSS REFERENCE RECORD

FIRM NAME OR SUBJECT		FILE NO.
DATE 2/24/43	FELLOWSHIPS BONTEMPS, ARNA REMARKS Stewart G. Cole of Service Bureau for Intercultural	
	Relations asks for confidential statement re Mr. Bontemps	
	in connection with a particular project.	

SEE		FILE NO.
	SERVICE BUREAU FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION	

DATE	SIGNED

FILE CROSS REFERENCE RECORD UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED AT TOP OF THIS SHEET, AND IN PROPER DATE ORDER. THE PAPERS REFERRED TO SHOULD BE FILED UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED UNDER "SEE"

**YAWMAN AND ERBE MFG. CO.**  
ROCHESTER, N. Y.



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To  
Mr. Arna W. Bontemps  
703 East 50th Place  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 5889  
Date February 26, 1943

March installment fo fellowship grant - - - - - \$165.00

Ck. #28310

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00	

Prepared by AM  
Checked by  
Posted by



Comptroller

# FELLOWSHIPS

well 3/15 well 0

WHITE SOUTHERNERS: Comments by Arna Bontemps, March 15, 1943

There is, in my opinion, a touch of greatness in at least two of this year's applicants in creative writing: Woody Guthrie and Thomas Sancton. Both are wonderful bets. The rest of the field shapes up about as indicated <sup>by</sup> ~~in~~ the following order:

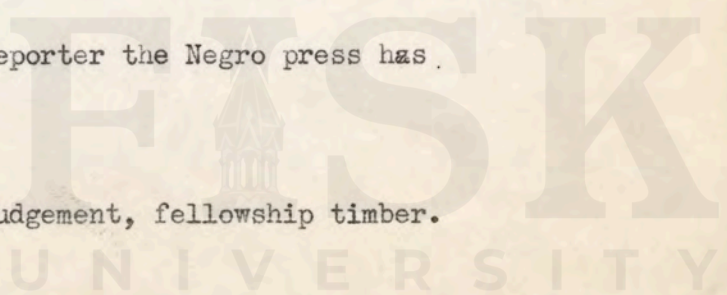
1. Woody Guthrie\*\*\*\*
2. Thomas Sancton\*\*\*\*
3. Robert Penn Warren\*\*\*
4. Robert Ramsey\*\*\*
5. Robert Gibbons\*\*\*
6. Hudson Strode\*\*\*
7. Stetson Kennedy\*\*
8. Barbara Tunnell Anderson\*\*
9. William Kimbrough\*\*
10. Frank Goodwyn\*
11. Mary B. Gwathmey

The stars indicate my own odds. One or two observations might be added:

- a) The case of Strode seems rather odd. One wonders how he could be helped by a fellowship, considering his age, his secure position and the nature of his project. It would seem a pity (from my point of view) to deny the young fellow who follows him on the list a chance in view of the above, despite the fact that Strode's accomplishment is obviously far greater.
- b) Gibbons looks very good, but it might be fair to ask what he did with his Knopf fellowship.
- c) Kimbrough is rather remarkable in view of his age, but the above list was not influenced by such consideration. He is a talented story-teller but doesn't seem to have anything important to say at this stage of his career.
- d) I'm impressed with Kennedy's last book, ~~but not with his project. It is too "grand" for his kind of talent.~~ *His new one, too, is promising*
- e) Barbara T. Anderson's outline puzzles me. The mulatto theme is a great one and urgent, but I'd hate to see it muffed. The note about Strode also applies to her (though her achievement is less): age, security, etc.
- f) Mary B. Gwathmey--?!!!

## NEGROES:

1. Roi Ottley\*\*\*  
Ottley is easily the best reporter the Negro press has produced in recent times.
2. Florence Rogers Murray  
Mrs. Murray is not, in my judgement, fellowship timber.



MEMORANDUM

# FELLOWSHIPS

3-16-43

To Dorothy Elvidge

From Arna Bontemps

Re: Travel, as authorized by special grant

The first of two trips involved in the study for which I was granted expenses included the following: ~~EXPENSES~~

1. Train fare to and from New York, \$33.
2. Side trip to Yale, taxis, etc. 12.
3. Hotel accomodations 18.
4. Meals on train 7.50
5. Meals in N. Y. and New Haven 23.
6. Tips, telegrams, ~~etc~~ telephone 4.

Total: 97.50

A balance of \$2.50 remains of the \$100 advanced for the above trip.

*Arna Bontemps*

FISK  
UNIVERSITY



Chicago Ill March 18 19 43

(City and Date)

Ref 23-13

Miss D. Elvidge

Rosenwald Fund,

4901 Ellis Ave.

Chicago Ill

TO

**THE NEW YORK CENTRAL  
RAILROAD COMPANY**

Dr.

1 round trip coach ticket Chicago to NY #3495, P.S.C. Chicago to  
Albany #58433, round trip coach Albany to Rutland, Vt. #90684

45 03

1 lower berth Chicago to Albany #454

6 40

Tax

5 15

56 58

*Received above ticket -  
Dorothy A. Elvidge*

DOROTHY A. ELVIDGE

6051  
28503

New York Central System - Room 627 - 139 W. Van Buren St. Chicago Ill

Please remit to \_\_\_\_\_

Att: Mr. C. M. Hantsch

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

The New York Central Railroad Company

Att: Mr. G. M. Hantsch  
New York Central System  
Room 627  
139 West Van Buren Street  
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 6051

Date March 19, 1943

One round trip coach ticket Chicago to New York via Albany, and  
one round trip coach Albany to Rutland, Vermont - - - - - \$45.03

One lower berth Chicago to Albany - - - - - 6.40

(For Mr. A.) Bontemps Tax - - - 5.15

\$56.58

Ch.#28503

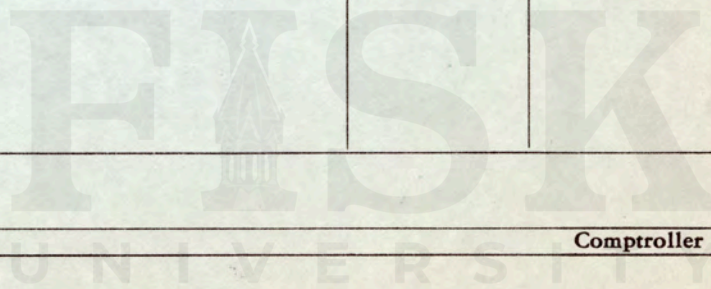
Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$56.58	

Prepared by  
AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

7 ✓  
4/25/43

To

Mr. (Arna W.) Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 6052

Date March 19, 1943

Final payment on extension to fellowship grant - - - - - \$143.42

Ck. #28504

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$143.42	

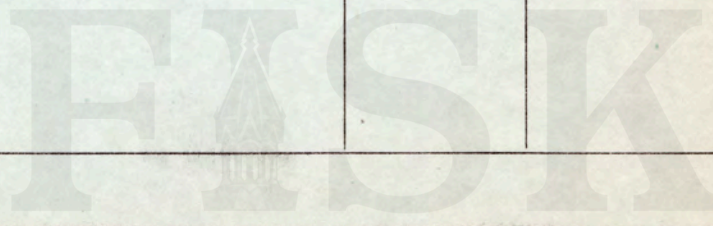
Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

# FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 6073

Date March 31, 1943

April installment on fellowship - - - - - \$165.00

Ck. #28525

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$165.00.	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by
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Comptroller

Alice Merrill: for Mr. Bontemps

NEW YORK CENTRAL

Chicago to Cleveland - coach	\$7.54	
Tax	<u>.75</u>	\$8.29
Cleveland to Chicago - Pullman	\$11.28	
Tax	<u>1.13</u>	\$12.41
Lower	2.95	
Tax	<u>.30</u>	\$ 3.25
TOTAL		\$23.95

*Alice Merrill* en

DOROTHY A. ELVIDGE

DOROTHY A. ELVIDGE  
UNIVERSITY

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To  
New York Central Railroad  
By - JRF messenger

Payment Voucher No. 9435  
Date April 22, 1943

Transportation, Chicago to Cleveland by coach - - - - - \$ 8.29  
Transportation, Cleveland to Chicago and lower berth - - - - - 15.66  
(For Mr. Bontemps)  
\$23.95

Ck. #9435 W. P.

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$23.95	

Prepared by AM  
Checked by  
Posted by



Comptroller

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. (Arna W.) Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 9436

Date April 22, 1943

Advance for travel - - - - - \$25.00

Ok. #9436 W. F.

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Working Capital Control Advance for Travel		\$25.00	

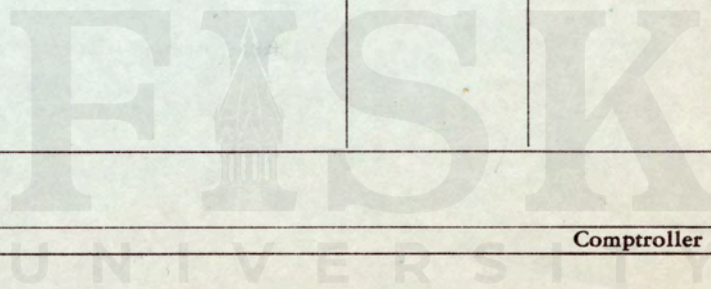
Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

To

Mr. (Arna W.) Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 6230

Date April 30, 1943

FELLOWSHIPS

Final payment on fellowship granted 4/18/42 - - - - \$185.00

Chk. #28685

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	41-7	\$185.00	

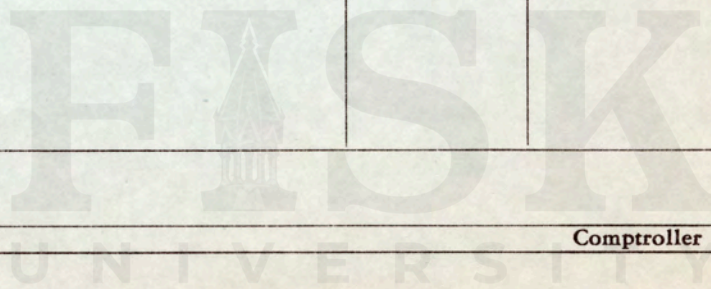
Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# FELLOWSHIPS

460

MEMO

27 May '43

To Dorothy Elvidge

From Arna Bontemps

Re: Travel expenses

First trip, Rutland, N. Y. City, etc.

Fare, side trips to Washington, New Haven (2), etc.	\$52.93
Hotels (15 days)	45.00
Meals (including those on trains)	49.00
Misc. (taxis, tips, phone, wires, etc.)	19.00

Total \$145.93

Final accounting  
of 3rd extension  
made 12/17/42

Second Trip, Cleveland and Oberlin

Bus Fare	\$1.76
Room (3 days)	7.50
Meals (inc. train)	9.00
Misc. (taxis, wires, phones, tips)	6.50

Total \$24.76

Advance 25.00  
Expenses 24.76  
    .24

*Arna Bontemps*



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

## FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. Arna W. Bontemps

Payment Voucher No. 6393

Date May 28, 1943

June installment on extension to fellowship grant - \$200.00

Ch. #28870

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	42-5	\$200.00	

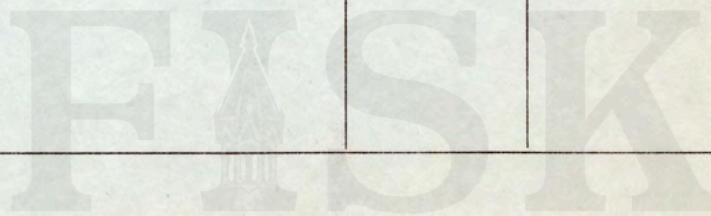
Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

To

Mr. (Arna W. Bontemps)  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago

Payment Voucher No. 6657

Date July 1, 1943

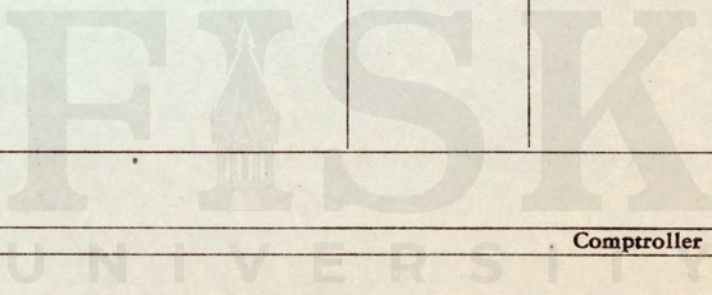
FELLOWSHIPS  
FELLOWSHIPS

July installment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$200.00

Ck. #29178

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	42-5	\$200.00	

Prepared by	Checked by	Posted by	Comptroller
MLU			



# CROSS REFERENCE RECORD

FIRM NAME OR SUBJECT		FILE NO.
DATE 7/16/43	FELLOWSHIPS (BONTEMPS ARNA)	
	REMARKS ERE to Mr. Bontemps: Informs him of his selection as	
	member of fellowship committee.	

SEE		FILE NO.
	FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE	

DATE	SIGNED

FILE CROSS REFERENCE RECORD UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED AT TOP OF THIS SHEET, AND IN PROPER DATE ORDER. THE PAPERS REFERRED TO SHOULD BE FILED UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED UNDER "SEE"

**YAWMAN AND FRBE MFG. CO.**  
ROCHESTER, N. Y.



# FELLOWSHIPS

15

July 21, 1943

Dear Mr. Dodson: You are cordially invited to a cocktail party in honor of Mr. Arna Bontemps on Friday, July 30, from 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. at the Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago.

I should like to extend the same invitation to Mr. Charles Sebree and Mr. Frank Silvers. Would you be good enough to invite them in my name?

We shall all be looking forward to having the Great Lakes contingent with us.

Very truly yours,  
EDWIN R. EMBREE

ERE\*JW:SO

Mr. Owen Dodson, Seaman 2/c  
Ship's Company  
Eighteenth Regiment  
Camp Robert Small  
U. S. Naval Training Station  
Great Lakes, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# FELLOWSHIPS

15

July 21, 1943

Dear Miss Donegan: We are giving a cocktail party in honor of Mr. (Arna Bontemps) on Friday, July 30, from 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. at the Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago. We should like very much to have you with us and hope you will be able to come.

I have been wanting to have you visit the Fund for some time. If this occasion makes such a call possible, I shall be very glad.

Very truly yours,

EDWIN R. EMBREE

ERE\*JW:SO

Miss Dorothy Donegan  
4738 St. Lawrence Avenue  
Chicago 15, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# FELLOWSHIPS

115

July 22, 1943

Dear Mr. Ahlgren: We are giving a cocktail party in honor of Mr. Arna Bontemps on Friday, July 30, from 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. at the Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago. We should like very much to have you with us and hope you will be able to come.

Very truly yours,  
EDWIN R. EMBREE

ERE\*SO

Mr. Nelson Ahlgren  
1907 West Evergreen Street  
Chicago, Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# FELLOWSHIPS

15

July 22, 1943

Dear Mrs. Holt: We are giving a cocktail party in honor of Mr. Arna Bontemps on Friday, July 30, from 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. at the Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago. We should like very much to have you with us and hope you will be able to come.

Very truly yours,  
EDWIN R. EMBREE

ERE\*SO

Mrs. Rackham Holt  
Doubleday Doran & Co., Inc.  
14 West Forty-ninth Street  
New York, New York

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# FELLOWSHIPS

15

July 22, 1943

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Redfield: We are giving  
a cocktail party  
in honor of Mr. (Arna Bontemps) on Friday, July 30,  
from 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. at the Julius Rosenwald  
Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago. We should like  
very much to have you with us and hope you will  
be able to come.

Very truly yours,  
EDWIN R. EMBREE

ERE\*SO

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Redfield  
Windy Pines  
Glenview Illinois

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

15

July 23, 1943

Dear Miss Dunham:       The Julius Rosenwald Fund  
                                  is giving a cocktail party  
in honor of Mr. Arna Bontemps on Friday, July 30,  
from 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. at 4901 Ellis Avenue,  
Chicago. We should like very much to have you  
with us and hope you will be able to come.

I understand that Mr. Pratt  
will be leaving for the Army shortly. If by good  
fortune he should be free on July 30, he is, of  
course, included in the invitation.

Sincerely yours,

LILIA WAXMAN

JW:SO

Miss Katherine Dunham  
Room 637  
Hotel Sherman  
Chicago, Illinois

ERE	28	EDD	0
JW	0	JW	0
AB	0	AB	0

Hotel Sherman  
Rm. 637  
July 26, 1943

Dear Miss Watman

FELLOWSHIPS

Bontemps Anna (Accepted)

Thank you so much

for your invitation for Friday.

However, John leaves then for Camp Custer, and I'm afraid that it would just be too hard to count on being there.

Please give both Mr. Embree and Anna Bontemps my regrets, and I hope to see all of you later.

Sincerely -

Katherine Sanborn

CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

# WESTERN UNION (08).

SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter

NL = Night Letter

LC = Deferred Cable

NLT = Cable Night Letter

Ship Radiogram

A. N. WILLIAMS  
PRESIDENT

NEWCOMB CARLTON  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

J. C. WILLEVER  
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

NHA116 26=NASHVILLE TENN 28 959A

FELLOWSHIPS

EDWIN R EMBREE =

Duplicate of Telephoned Telegram

JUL 28 AM 10 12

*Arna Kontemps*

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND 4900 ELLIS AVE CHGO:

REGRET CANNOT JOIN FUND FAMILY FRIDAY EXPECTING SON ON SHORT  
LEAVE INFORM STAFF OF CONTINUED OBLIGATION FOR PERFECT  
INDUCTION LAST MONTH PARDON LIMITATIONS IN TRANSMISSION

SINCERELY:

MARIE B JOHNSON.

ERE	28	ERE	0

*DR 100*

*EN RB  
20 10380 Miller*

# FELLOWSHIPS

INVITATION LIST FOR (ARNA BONTEMPS) PARTY, JULY 30, 1943

Mr. and Mrs. Claude Barnett	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Redfield
Mrs. M. O. Bousfield & Maudelle	Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Rieser
Horace Cayton	Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Rorem
Jack Conroy	Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz (Duffy)
Theodora Pitkowsky	Mr. and Mrs. Austin Scott
Dr. and Mrs. Allison Davis	Bishop Bernard J. Sheil
Owen Dodson	A. C. Spectorisky
Charles Sebree	Mr. and Mrs. Frank L. Sulzberger
Frank Silvara	Mr. and Mrs. Willard Townsend
Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Field	Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Warner
Mr. and Mrs. A. Richard Frank	Mr. and Mrs. Louis Wirth
Mr. and Mrs. John T. Frederick	Sally Marks
Mr. and Mrs. John Frederick, Jr.	Marcella Ricks and Mrs. Walker
Mrs. James Frederick	Charla Mae Rollins
Mary Jane Grunsfeld	Mrs. Fountain
Dorothy Donegan	Miss Bell
Vivian Harsh	Miss Hobson
Mr. and Mrs. S. I. Hayakawa	Mr. and Mrs. Leon Carnovsky
Mr. and Mrs. Melville Herskovits	Mrs. Rhuea Pearce
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hayes	Mr. and Mrs. Frank Marshall Davis
Mr. and Mrs. George McCray	Metz Lochard
Mary Elizabeth McKay	Mr. and Mrs. Lucius Harper
Dr. and Mrs. Franklin McLean	Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Watkins
Mr. and Mrs. William Patterson	Mr. and Mrs. Rousseau van Voorhies
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Pollak	John Storm

Rackham Holt

Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy (Dorsey)

Ida Margolis

Mr. and Mrs. John Drury

Peggy Brown

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Muzon

Vincent Starrett

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Abramson

Mr. and Mrs. Max Siegal

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Romaine

Nelson Algren

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Johnson

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Meyers

Mrs. Ann Cook

Dr. and Mrs. Curtis Reese

Mrs. Edna Hansen

Mary Matsamura

James Gilman

Mrs. James T. Farrell

Suzanne Tory

George Martin

Horace Cayton's friend

Katherine Dunham and John Pratt

Miss Hadley

Officers and Staff

Mr. Embree

Mr. and Mrs. Arna Bontemps

Dr. and Mrs. Charles Johnson

Dr. W. W. Alexander

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Wale

Mr. and Mrs. H. Scudder Mekeel

Mrs. W. C. Haygood

Miss Dorothy Elvidge

Mrs. C. E. Merrill

Miss Frances Howland

Mrs. Nanette Thayer

Eleanor Nakagawa

Sumiko Oura

Margaret L. Utley

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Abrahamson

# Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue  
CHICAGO

To

Mr. (Arna W. Bontemps)

Payment Voucher No. 6616

Date July 30, 1943

FELLOWSHIPS

Final payment on extension to fellowship grant - - - - \$200.00

Ch.#29137

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	42-5	\$200.00	

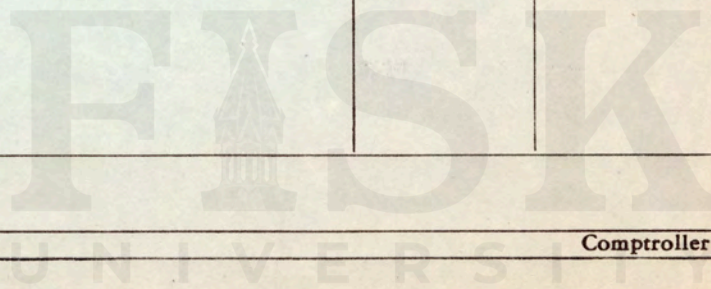
Prepared by

AM

Checked by

Posted by

Comptroller



April 1943



# Arna BONTEMPS

PROLIFIC AND POPULAR **NOVELIST**...  
AUTHOR OF "GOD SENDS SUNDAY," "SAD  
FACED BOY"; "BLACK THUNDER," A STIRRING  
STORY OF THE GABRIEL SLAVE REVOLT;  
"DRUMS AT DUSK," A SPIRITED NOVEL ON  
HAITI; AND OTHER WORKS. GRADUATE OF  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.... NATIVE OF  
LOUISIANA.....

Chicago Sun

8/8/43

Arna Bontemps leaves Chicago shortly to take over the duties of librarian at Fisk University. At a farewell party given for him at the Rosenwald Foundation, Jack Conroy told of receiving a request for a copy of "The Fast Sooner Hound," which he co-authored with Bontemps. The request came from a soldier stationed somewhere in the South Pacific. He wanted it sent to his wife in Missouri as a gift for his expected heir. He asked that it be inscribed with both a girl's name and a

*Create writing*

Please fill out and return in order that we may complete our records on former Rosenwald Fellows:

Name: Arna Lontemps

Present position: Librarian Fisk University

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

# FELLOWSHIPS

Significant recent activities: two, three, maybe four new

books  
etc.

for 1945!!!  
They See a City  
St. Louis Woman

Also magazine articles  
Tomorrow the World  
Arche about the Road  
W. Geo history

(Use additional sheet if desired)

# CROSS REFERENCE RECORD

FIRM NAME OR SUBJECT	FELLOWSHIPS BONTEMPS ARNA	FILE NO.
DATE 9/3/43	REMARKS So to Arna Bontemps asking him about reference	
	"Belden" or "Belding" commenting and denouncing Dr. Johnson.	

SEE	ERE Articles and Talks (Top Negroes General)	FILE NO.

DATE	SIGNED

FILE CROSS REFERENCE RECORD UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED AT TOP OF THIS SHEET, AND IN PROPER DATE ORDER. THE PAPERS REFERRED TO SHOULD BE FILED UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED UNDER "SEE"

**YAWMAN AND ERBE MFG. CO.**  
ROCHESTER, N. Y.



# CROSS REFERENCE RECORD

FIRM NAME OR SUBJECT		FILE NO.
FELLOWSHIPS	BONTEMPS, ARNA	
DATE	REMARKS	
Vo. 9/1/43	Payment to Hotel Shoreland for Bontemps reception.	

SEE		FILE NO.
SHORELAND	HOTEL	

DATE	SIGNED

FILE CROSS REFERENCE RECORD UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED AT TOP OF THIS SHEET, AND IN PROPER DATE ORDER. THE PAPERS REFERRED TO SHOULD BE FILED UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED UNDER "SEE"

**YAWMAN AND ERBE MFG. CO.**  
ROCHESTER, N. Y.



# FELLOWSHIPS

September 9, 1943

Dear Mr. Bontemps:      What with vacations and general busyness outside Chicago, the office contingent has dwindled to seven. So, though we knew we would miss you under any circumstances, your absence now is doubly lamented. And there isn't anyone to annoy with requests for obscure information!

Which brings me to what I need - information. First, to report: Miss Harsh is delighted with the prospect of having the Negro in Illinois manuscript and will gladly sort, catalogue, re-arrange, etc., to get possession of it. But disposition of this material leaves the JRF still in possession of some very useful-looking card files (labeled "Newspaper File" and "The Negro in Illinois - Bibliographies") and a drawer full of correspondence representing so much time and effort that my frugal soul shudders at the thought of letting all that information go to waste. Do you think any institution you know would want these materials? What to do?

Regards, good wishes, and everything.

Sincerely,

JULIA WAXMAN

JW

Mr. Arna Bontemps, Librarian  
Fisk University  
Nashville, Tennessee

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# FELLOWSHIPS

*Bontemps  
Anna W.*

*W 13*

Fisk University Library

SERVING  
FISK UNIVERSITY  
MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE  
Nashville, Tennessee

OFFICE OF THE LIBRARIAN

10 September '43

Dear (didn't we decide on this at my party) Julie:

Too bad I just wrote you this morning, but I'm determined to be an executive and answer every letter promptly. Perhaps Miss Utley will be pleased to know this.

Anyhow, I'd suggest that you a) let Miss Harsh take the "Newspaper File" and "The Negro in Illinois - Bibliographies" along with the manuscript material in the filing case, b) keep the drawer of correspondence till I come back again. I plum forgot that, and it does contain some letters (those from Du Bois, for example) which other institutions would like to own. If, on the other hand, you wanted to clear the business up right away and wouldn't mind expressing the contents of the drawer to me, that would work, too.

So again,

Ever sincerely,

*Anna  
Wendell  
Bontemps*

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# FELLOWSHIPS

September 13, 1943

Dear (we did, but I wasn't sure you would remember, and I ain't one to be disrespectful to my superiors!) Arna:

Thanks for the two letters. I am impressed by your efficiency. If you hadn't pointed out that you were prompted by an executive complex, I might have thought this burst of correspondence was brought on by courtesy and thoughtfulness. However . . .

Mr. Embree will understand your dilemma about the spice. Maybe he can unearth it elsewhere. In any case, he will be grateful that you tried.

*see ER E  
articles + Talks  
(Top Negroes, etc.)*

Following your suggestion - as always - we are giving Miss Harsh the card files too, whether she wants them or not, and will hold the correspondence until you come back again. Which will be when, please? (While that was not meant really to be a rhetorical question, I don't want to strain too far your determination to be an executive. . . so, you don't have to answer this letter.)

The usual words of regards, etc. - and I mean 'em!

Sincerely,

*Julie*

JW

Mr. Arna Bontemps, Librarian  
Fisk University  
Nashville, Tennessee

FISK  
UNIVERSITY

# CROSS REFERENCE RECORD

FIRM NAME OR SUBJECT		FILE NO.
DATE	REMARKS	
	For correspondence after <u>Sept.</u> 15 see	

SEE		FILE NO.
	BONTEMPS ARNA W	

DATE	SIGNED
------	--------

FILE CROSS REFERENCE RECORD UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED AT TOP OF THIS SHEET, AND IN PROPER DATE ORDER. THE PAPERS REFERRED TO SHOULD BE FILED UNDER NAME OR SUBJECT LISTED UNDER "SEE"

**YAWMAN AND ERBE MFG. CO.**  
ROCHESTER, N. Y.



COLOR IN A SHRINKING WORLD

by

Arna Bontemps  
1943I. What Are We Fighting For?

ONE WORLD by Wendell Wilkie  
 A TIME FOR GREATNESS by Herbert Agar  
 IT IS LATER THAN YOU THINK by M. Lerner  
 THE FREEDOM TO BE FREE by James Marshall  
 THE PRICE OF FREE WORLD VICTORY by Henry A. Wallace  
 WAY FOR AMERICA by Alexander Laing  
 THE DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT by Bernard Smith, ed.  
 BASIS FOR PEACE IN THE FAR EAST by Nathaniel Peffer  
 MAKE THIS THE LAST WAR by Michael Straight  
 CHRISTIAN BASES OF WORLD ORDER. The Merrick Lectures, 1943.  
 TOMORROW - periodical

II. Russia Our Ally

WE'RE IN THIS WITH RUSSIA by Wallace Carroll  
 AMERICA, RUSSIA, AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY by Childs and Counts  
 THE LAST DAYS OF SEVASTOPOL by Boris Voyetkhov  
 U. S. S. R. by Walter Duranty  
 RUSSIA by Maurice Hindus  
 THE SOVIET POWER by Hewlett Johnson  
 THE RUSSIANS by Albert Rhys Williams

III. Mexico Our Neighbor

VIVA MEXICO by Charles M. Flandrau  
 THE DAYS OF OFELIA by Gertrude Daimant  
 THE WIND THAT SWEPT MEXICO by Brenner and Leighton  
 THE ITCHING PARROT by de Lizardi and Jobim  
 PASSENGERS TO MEXICO by Blair Niles  
 TOPEZTLAN, A MEXICAN VILLAGE by Robert Redfield  
 MODERN MEXICAN PAINTERS by Helen MacKinley  
 PORTRAIT OF MEXICO by Diego Rivera

IV. Brazil: Land of the Future

THE AMAZON THRONE by Bertita Harding  
BRAZIL BUILDS. The Museum of Modern Art  
FORT ON THE AMAZON by Carleton Beals  
BRAZIL IN CAPITALS by Vera Kelsey  
THE AMAZON by Caryl P. Haskins  
NEGROES IN BRAZIL by Donald Pierson  
BRAZIL, LAND OF THE FUTURE by Stefan Zweig

V. The Other Americas

FIESTA IN NOVEMBER by Flores and Poore, eds.  
CHILE by Benjamin Subercaseux  
OUR DAILY BREAD by Enrique Gilbert  
BROAD AND ALIEN IS THE WORLD by Ciro Alegria  
THE DONKEY INSIDE by Ludwig Bemelmans  
MEET THE SOUTH AMERICANS by Carl Crow  
BUILDERS OF LATIN AMERICA by Stewart and Peterson  
LATIN AMERICA by James E. Preston  
EPIC OF LATIN-AMERICAN LITERATURE by Arturo Torres-Rioseco  
AN ANTHOLOGY OF LATIN-AMERICAN POETRY by Dudley Fitts, ed.  
INDIANS OF THE AMERICAS by Edwin R. Embree  
CAPTAIN OF THE ANDES by Margaret Harrison  
WOMAN ON HORSEBACK by E. E. Barrett  
PORTRAIT OF MEXICO by Diego Rivera  
BOLIVAR THE PASSIONATE WARRIOR by T. R. Ybarra  
TALES FROM THE ARGENTINE by Waldo Frank  
THE ALL-AMERICAN FRONT by Duncan Aikman

VI. Troubled Islands

THE PAGEANT OF CUBA by Hudson Strode  
THE FRENCH IN THE WEST INDIES by Adolph W. Roberts  
THE CARIBBEAN by Adolph W. Roberts  
BLACK HAITI by Blair Niles  
THE HAITIAN PEOPLE by James G. Leyburn  
PUERTO RICO: A PROFILE by Merle Colby  
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS: A PROFILE by Merle Colby

VII. The Asiatics

THE BATTLE FOR ASIA by Edgar Snow  
THE WISDOM OF CHINA AND INDIA by Lin YuTang  
MOMENT IN PEKING by Lin YuTang  
FROM THE SOUTH SEAS by Margaret Mead  
MY INDIA, MY AMERICA by Krishnalal Shridarhani  
A WEEK WITH GANDHI by Louis Fischer  
INSIDE ASIA by John Gunther  
THE FOUR FREEDOMS IN INDIA by Sydney Greenbie  
CHINA SHALL RISE AGAIN by Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek  
INDIA WITHOUT FABLE by Kate L. Mitchell  
WHAT DOES GANDHI WANT? by T. A. Raman  
ASIA - periodical

VIII. Victory Through Africa

SOUTH OF THE CONGO by Selwyn James  
BEHIND GOD'S BACK by Negley Farson  
AFRICA: FACTS AND FORECASTS by Albert Q. Maisel  
AFRICA AND THE ATLANTIC CHARTER by Committee on Africa  
UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA by Lewis Sowden  
THE FIGHTING FRENCH by Aglion  
DAKAR: OUTPOST OF TWO HEMISPHERES by Emil Lengyel  
LIBERIA by Emil Ludwig  
MIRACLE ON THE CONGO by Ben L. Burman

IX. Within Our Gates

BROTHERS UNDER THE SKIN by Carey McWilliams  
RACE, SCIENCE AND POLITICS by Ruth Benedict  
THE HISTORY OF BIGOTRY IN THE UNITED STATES  
by Gustavus Myers  
AMERICAN NEGROES by Edwin R. Embree  
AMERICAN UNITY AND ASIA by Pearl Buck  
SHADOW OF THE PLANTATION by Charles S. Johnson  
HOW ODD OF GOD by Lewis Brown  
ALL IN THE NAME OF GOD by Everett Clinchy  
OVER-COMING ANTI-SEMITISM by Solomon A. Fineberg  
BLACK FOLK THEN AND NOW by W. E. B. Du Bois  
NIECE OF ABRAHAM PEIN by J. Wallis  
WITHIN OUR GATES by McLellan and DeBonis, eds.  
WHEN PEOPLES MEET by Locke and Stern  
ORIENTALS IN AMERICAN LIFE by Albert W. Palmer  
SOUTH TODAY - periodical

X. Our Reservoir of Good Will

TOWARD FREEDOM by Jawaharlal Nehru  
A LATIN AMERICAN SPEAKS by Luis Quintanilla  
FREE MEN OF AMERICA by Ezequiel Padilla  
12,000,000 BLACK VOICES by Richard Wright  
ALL WE HAVE AND ALL WE ARE by Chiang Kai-Shek  
WE CHINESE WOMEN by Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek  
JOURNEY AMONG WARRIORS by Eve Curie  
WARNING TO THE WEST by Krishnalal Shridarhani  
FATHER AND GLORIOUS DESCENDANT by Pardee Lowe  
THE NEGRO CARAVAN by Brown, Davis and Lee, eds.  
THE GOLDEN TREASURY OF JEWISH LITERATURE by Leo W. Schwarz, ed.  
AS LONG AS THE GRASS SHALL GROW by Oliver La Farge  
ILL FARES THE LAND by Carey McWilliams  
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FREDERICK DOUGLAS by Frederick  
Douglas  
I'VE COME A LONG WAY by Helen Kuo  
MY APPEAL TO THE BRITISH by Mahatma Gandhi  
THE BIG SEA by Langston Hughes  
FATHER OF THE BLUES by William C. Handy  
COMMON GROUND - periodical  
PHYLON - periodical

# THE LIBRARY QUARTERLY

Volume XIV

JULY 1944

Number 3

## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS OF NEGROANA

ARNA BONTEMPS

REFERENCES to special collections of Negro lore have been cropping up in library literature for a long time. Soon or late, no doubt, it was inevitable that someone should have a look at the whole species. The present report is the result of such an inspection. Obviously, all Negro collections could not be examined at first hand or studied closely. A few outstanding, and perhaps representative, examples were selected after preliminary inquiry, and these (minus one described elsewhere)<sup>1</sup> are the collections treated herein.

### THE SCHOMBURG COLLECTION OF NEGRO LITERATURE

Perhaps the best known—certainly the most publicized—of the Negro collections is located in the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch of the New York Public Library. The Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, as it was originally designated, was established in 1925. A year later it obtained the Schomburg Collection, one of the largest and most important private libraries on the Negro. With this acquisition, containing between five and six thousand books, three thousand

manuscripts, two thousand etchings, and several thousand pamphlets, the division at once became a center for scholarship dealing with Negro life and history.

Actually, the collection has a longer history than the date of its founding implies. Indeed, it has three histories. The first can be traced in the history of the New York Public Library itself. The second is rooted in the Harlem community. And the third is a personal story.

As early as 1902 the bulletin of the New York Public Library mentioned a "list of works relating to the American Colonization Society." Later surveys of resources and guides to special collections have noted the "slavery" collection of the New York Public. While these items do not relate directly to the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, a certain kinship may be detected. Almost from the beginning of its existence the New York Public Library appears to have shown some interest in Negro materials.

Moreover, there was precedent of another sort in the New York system. The central library includes other racial divisions which antedate even the "slavery" collection. The Jewish, the Slavonic, and the Oriental divisions are examples.

<sup>1</sup> "The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters," *Yale University Library Gazette*, XVIII (1943), 19-26.

Even the notion of putting such material in a neighborhood library was familiar. The collection of Czechoslovakian literature is located in the Webster Branch, and the Russian literature collection, formerly located at One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Street, is now at the Hamilton Grange Branch, following the ethnic group as it shifted from one section of the city to another. So, while the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, including the Schomburg Collection, was at the time of its establishment the only division of its kind in any public library, it was not without a certain background in New York.

Its roots in the community are perhaps equally significant. When the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch was established in 1905, the neighborhood which it expected to serve was a quiet, well-to-do American Jewish section. By 1920 it had become half-Negro, and the influx was just starting. Ernestine Rose, chosen because of her experience in developing library service among racial groups, was made librarian for the express purpose of adapting the staff, service, and book stock of the branch to its altered public. By 1924 Harlem had become the acknowledged capital of Black America. Its population, thanks to the migrations of the preceding decade, had reached approximately 150,000. At the same time it had drawn Negro talent and leadership from all parts of the United States and from the Caribbean. Young musicians and writers assembled there. Serious scholars took note of the group and of its relation to the burgeoning community. All-Negro shows became Broadway hits. The *American Mercury*, at the peak of its popularity, came out with a series of spectacular articles on uptown doings. Novels like Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* became best-sellers. Park Avenue dis-

covered a fabulous night life centered around the Cotton Club, Baron's, the Nest, and other spots in Harlem. The *Survey Graphic* published a large special issue devoted to Harlem. The attention thus drawn to the new nerve center of Negro life in America resulted in a book called *The New Negro*, in which the same material was greatly expanded. These, and scores of related developments, gave the community a new spurt of growth, a fresh surge of race consciousness.

By the end of 1924 Ernestine Rose had a serious library problem on her hands. Books on the Negro were in such demand that they could not be kept on the shelves. So avidly were they read, in fact, that their mortality exceeded their birth rate. Titles which continued in print could not be replaced fast enough with the available funds. Books hard to obtain were deteriorating without hope of replacement. The branch librarian was frankly distressed. In her perplexity she called together a group of influential scholars and leaders from the community. Among them were Arthur A. Schomburg, James Weldon Johnson, Hubert H. Harrison, and John Nail.

The first result of the consultations which followed was the decision to start a modest collection of rare books relating to the Negro, books difficult to replace. These were to be withdrawn from the circulation department, the primary aim being simply to preserve the existing resources in this field. This modest gesture provoked an immediate response on the part of the community and of those who had been called in to represent it. Gifts and loans came to the new collection from the private libraries of people like J. E. Bruce, Louise Latimer, Hubert H. Harrison, George Young, Dr. Charles D. Martin, and Arthur A. Schomburg.

Perhaps the idea of building up a col-

lection that would give the Harlem public a sense of background had already occurred to Miss Rose. The New York Public Library's general policy of buying books of special neighborhood interest would suggest this. In any case, the books withdrawn from circulation and placed in the reference room soon began to supply material to students of Negro history and culture both in the neighborhood and elsewhere; and on May 8, 1925, the new Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints was officially opened.

In outlining the division's plans to the press, Miss Rose called attention to the fact that, although there were then collections of the same kind in the Library of Congress, in the libraries of such institutions as Tuskegee and Howard University, in certain large city reference libraries, and in a few private libraries, the collection at the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch promised to become one of the largest and most valuable in the whole country. She gave her reasons for this prediction:

To begin with, there is the question of availability. Works of this nature in private collections and in institutions are not readily accessible to great numbers of students of these problems, either white or colored. We have here in Harlem the greatest negro city in the world—approximately 175,000 colored inhabitants. There should be available for these people and for those who have their interests at heart the most interesting and complete collection that can be formed. These books will foster the interest of the children and young folk in the history of their own race and inspire them to develop their own talents. The collection should be available equally to scholars, to the man in the street and to school children of all races.

She called attention to several unique items in the collection as it existed then (none of them impressive by later standards) and announced the organization of a group of prominent persons to promote the new department. Today her

statement seems overly optimistic, on the basis of the collection in hand and the immediate prospects, but it was taken seriously by the *Times* and other New York newspapers, and in 1926 the collection received the windfall that justified Miss Rose's optimism and raised the division to its present importance. This came with the acquisition of the Schomburg private library.

The third history behind the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature is, as has been suggested, a personal story. Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, a Puerto Rican partly of Negro descent, was born in 1874. He was educated in Puerto Rico and later at St. Thomas College. In 1891 he came to the United States. Here he was employed for a number of years as a clerk by the Banker's Trust Company. But the force behind his long and zealous career as a collector of Negro lore appears to have been generated by a casual statement by one of his elementary teachers on the island. That individual, as Schomburg later recalled, dropped the remark before his pupils that the Negro had no history. There was no bitterness in the observation as he made it, no intended aspersion. Yet the assertion touched off a fire in Schomburg that was still burning brightly at the time of his death on June 10, 1938.

Oddly enough, this story is essential to an understanding of the collection which the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch has built around the private library of Arthur A. Schomburg. Here, in fact, is its point of unity, its principle of selection, its area of interest. That the story encompasses and reflects a special need of the community can also be assumed. "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future," Schomburg wrote in an essay included in *An Anthology of American Negro Literature*. "When we consider

the facts, certain chapters of American history will have to be reopened." He then pointed to an exhibit of pamphlets, documents, prints, and engravings from the collection in the New York Library and asserted proudly, "Here is the evidence." His argument is worth following:

Though it is orthodox to think of America as the one country where it is unnecessary to have a past, what is a luxury for the nation as a whole becomes a prime social necessity for the Negro. For him, a group tradition must supply compensation for persecution, and pride of race the antidote for prejudice. History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generations must repair and offset. So among the rising democratic millions we find the Negro thinking more collectively, more retrospectively than the rest, and apt, out of the very pressure of the present, to become the most enthusiastic antiquarian of them all.

This point of view, Schomburg admitted, is not new. In 1808 Abbé Grégoire, the genius of French abolitionist sentiment, published in Paris a book about distinguished Negroes. Two years later the volume was issued in translation in Germany and England. Compendiums of the same sort have followed at intervals ever since. Many of them, Schomburg grants, have been "over-corrective, ridiculously over-laudatory," but the purpose has generally been sound. Today scholarship in this area is better balanced, and the need is for a well-documented history—a history that is "less a matter of argument and more a matter of record."

Schomburg's own research had, he felt, established at least three conclusions:

First, that the Negro has been, throughout the centuries of controversy, an active collaborator, and often a pioneer, in the struggle for his own freedom and advancement. This is true to a degree which makes it the more surprising that it has not been recognized earlier.

Second, that by virtue of their being regarded as something "exceptional," even by friends and well-wishers, Negroes of attainment and genius have been unfairly disassociated from the group, and group credit lost accordingly.

Third, that the remote racial origins of the Negro, far from being what the race and world have been given to understand, offer a record of credible group achievement, when scientifically viewed, and more important still, that they are of vital general interest because of their bearing upon the beginnings and early development of culture.

The international flavor of his collection becomes understandable when these points are held in mind. Schomburg's European quests and his preoccupation with Latin-American materials begin to make sense. The rarities and treasures which he unearthed begin to take their places in a clear-cut scheme. Under these conditions one would scarcely expect to find the collection putting great store by slave documents. Even folklore could be expected to take second place to records of achievement and evidences of Negro progress.

Jupiter Hammon's *An Address to the Negroes in the State of New York* (edition of 1787), the work of America's first Negro poet, was obviously in the right mood, for Schomburg could heartily applaud the poet's now famous remark: "If we should ever get to Heaven, we shall find nobody to reproach us for being black, or for being slaves." Manuscript poems and early editions of the works of Phillis Wheatley, slave girl, immediately became part of the "evidence" which the collector had dedicated himself to assembling. In the same category were the sermons of Lemuel Haynes, the Negro who served as pastor of a white church in Rutland, Vermont, for thirty years following the Revolutionary War, and John Marrant's St. John's Day eulogy to the "Brothers of African Lodge, No. 459," delivered at Boston in

1789. The scrapbook of Ira Aldridge, Negro actor who won fame in Europe as a Shakespearean actor during the nineteenth century, became an appropriate item. The same could be said for the various editions of *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter; A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, the first novel by an American Negro.

Items acquired abroad, some of them even rarer than his American discoveries, frequently tended to reinforce Schomburg's conclusions about the Negro's past. Naturally, a copy of Juan Latino's Latin verse (Granada, 1573) was cause for excitement. The same author's book on the Escorial (1576) was a find of almost equal value. Remembered as incumbent of the chair of poetry at the University of Granada during the reign of Philip V and spoken of as the "best" Latinist of Spain in his day, Latino had not been thought of as a Negro for generations. Schomburg reminded scholars that Juan Latino was a full-blooded African Negro and offered the poet's verse on the return of the Spanish prince from the battle with the Turks at Lepanto, published twenty years before the first of Shakespeare's writings, as an exhibit of Negro accomplishment.

These were starting-points. Latin and Dutch treatises were found. The autobiography of Gustavus Vassa, which led to Granville Sharp's attack on slavery in the British colonies, was included in various editions. Schomburg found copies of the *Almanacs* (1792 and 1793) compiled by Benjamin Banneker, the Negro whose unusual abilities were employed by Thomas Jefferson and others. It is not surprising that the collection had become widely known before the New York Public Library set eyes on it or that Schomburg himself should have been called into the conferences when it

was first proposed to set up the new division in the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch.

The transaction by which Schomburg's private library was acquired was not a complicated one. The collection was purchased by the Carnegie Corporation at the suggestion of L. Hollingsworth Wood, Charles S. Johnson, and Eugene Kinckle Jones, officials of the National Urban League. The price, \$10,000, was regarded as token payment, a mere fraction of the collection's actual value. It is thus suggested that Schomburg had a personal interest in placing the books in the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints. The first attendant of the collection was Mrs. Catherine Latimer. A later gift from the Carnegie Corporation in 1932 enabled the New York Public Library to retain Mr. Schomburg as curator, a position he held, with certain interruptions, until his death.

In 1939 Lawrence D. Reddick succeeded Schomburg. Since that time accounts of the collection have appeared regularly in the yearly reports of the New York Public Library. Meanwhile, the holdings of the collection have been expanded and the directions of its future development outlined. The search for rarities continues; "old" items still get more than a third of the annual book budget. New books dealing with the subject of the Negro and books by Negro authors are added to the division as soon as published. The collection of manuscripts and letters has been enriched by subsequent contributions. The correspondence between Paul Laurence Dunbar and his agent, Paul R. Reynolds, donated by the son of the latter, was such a gift. Several African collections have come in. These include the Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection from the

Congo, gathered by Dr. Alain LeRoy Locke; the Nigerian Collection from West Africa, donated by Mrs. Florence Bruce; and the African masks and fetishes placed on exhibit by Mary Hoyt Wiborg. From other patrons of art, as well as artists, have come various single pieces to be added to the collection. There are in the division at least two thousand etchings, lithographs, engravings, and water colors by Negro artists and of Negro subjects. A spectacular new acquisition is the Eric de Kolb Collection of African arms, containing representative war weapons from all over that continent.

The collection has many autographed letters and inscribed volumes. A number of Negro newspapers and magazines of America, as well as some from the West Indies and Africa, are to be found in its files. The projected "Calendar of the Manuscripts in the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature" will be a large volume. The division also owns a micro-filmed version of the most nearly complete existing file of Frederick Douglass' newspaper.

By reason of its location in the heart of Harlem the Division of Negro History, Literature, and Prints has been associated with a number of related activities. One of these was an experiment in adult education, because "the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch Library was recognized throughout the city library system as one that had successfully attempted to make itself a part of its community." Another has been an annual "Honor Roll of Race Relations," the result of an extensive poll of scholars and leaders conducted by the division. Still another has been a series of forums and book evenings which have at one time or another included such speakers as Franz Boas, Percy Stickney Grant,

James Weldon Johnson, Alexander Goldenweiser, May Lamberton Becker, Heywood Broun, W. E. B. DuBois, Carl Van Doren, John W. Vandercook, Christopher Morley, Richard Wright, and scores of others. The division has been visited by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and praised by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, who, on the occasion of the cornerstone ceremony, October 28, 1941, made it the object of some of his most ringing eloquence. "We give you the key to the temple of knowledge," said the Mayor. "Come in and use it."

In 1935 a Citizens' Committee of the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch Library was formed for the purpose of obtaining more adequate quarters for the steadily expanding work of the library in general and of the division in particular. Twenty prominent Negroes supported the library's request for funds, and in 1940 the Board of Estimate and Apportionment appropriated the final sum and Louis Allen Abramson was named as architect for a new building. For a year, during construction, the division was housed at the Harlem Branch on One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Street. The new quarters into which it moved at the end of that period included the entire top floor of the newest and finest branch library building in New York. Subsequently it adopted officially the name by which it was best known: The Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature.

The collection can now offer its users ample room in which to carry on their investigations. That this was needed is indicated by the steadily increasing number of patrons and the mounting number of books whose authors make due acknowledgment of the collection's value to them.

Like all other collections of its kind,

the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature has come to the point where it must define the field of its future growth and expansion. Dr. Reddick has set these forth in a recent interview. The collection will continue to add to its resources all new publications that fit into the categories already established. It will consider any title which concerns the Negro in the United States within its scope. Outside the United States it will seek to be exhaustive in the Negro in Latin America, with special reference to the Caribbean, and in Africa in the twentieth century. The collection will take a positive interest in race relations at home and abroad.

Obviously, Schomburg's principles are still the basis for the expansion of the collection which he founded. Dr. Reddick's proposals in no way conflict with Schomburg's own forward glance. "The . . . most fascinating of all of the attempts to open up the closed Negro past," the latter once said, "[is] the important study of African cultural origins and sources. The bigotry of civilization . . . must be corrected at its source. Fundamentally, it has come about from that depreciation of Africa which has sprung up from ignorance of her true rôle and position in human history." The recognition which African sculpture, for example, had received, first in France and Germany, then gradually in the United States, seemed to him to be highly significant.

The treasure of treasures in the Schomburg Collection is, of course, the volume of Juan Latino's poems. Edward Laroque Tinker, columnist for the *New York Times Book Review*, is authority for the statement that this is one of the rarest books in the world. In the Schomburg Collection, however, the Juan Latino is both a treasure and a symbol. It

suggests both the past which the collection has sought to rediscover and the kind of future toward which it strives.

A LIBRARY OF NEGRO AUTHORS: THE  
ARTHUR B. SPINGARN COLLECTION

The Arthur B. Spingarn library is the only collection of its kind which limits itself to Negro authorship. All the others have focused their interest upon Negro life or history as a subject. The collection which has evolved from this principle of selection has more in common with the Schomburg Collection (with its accent on achievement) than with any of the others examined in connection with this study.

The result is not surprising. Arthur Schomburg started his collection for the purpose of correcting historical misrepresentations which embarrassed him as a Negro. Arthur B. Spingarn, a white man actively interested in the welfare of Negroes, started out to "assemble a small representative group of books that I could show to doubting friends who questioned the intellectual capacity of the Negro." He intended to offer these few specimen books to his own acquaintances who asked, "If the Negro has the capabilities you insist he has, why hasn't he published books to prove it?"

That this plan would gradually extend itself into an endeavor to collect *all* books written by Negroes certainly did not occur to him at that time. Yet this is its present scope and ambition. While the goal has not been achieved, it has undoubtedly been approached. This means that, barring a few score rare items that have eluded the collector, all books by authors known to have been Negroes have found a place on his shelves. Mr. Spingarn admits the obvious possibility that many foreign-language books which

would fall within the area he has selected may have escaped him.

The extension of his first modest endeavor to its present scope he attributes to a human instinct which he has described as the "mania for completeness." Thus, the endeavor to collect "something" the Negro had written became the really large task of acquiring "everything" the Negro had written.

The method by which he proceeded was not unconventional. He began with his own reading and experience. The first step was to acquire as large a list of Negro names as possible to carry in his memory for reference purposes. Whenever these basic names were encountered, they would be recognized. With this equipment he turned to the available check lists, to *Who's Who's*, to American Negro and African college catalogs, to histories, church records, biographies, autobiographies, proceedings of Negro conventions, transactions of lodges, anti-slavery literature, and Negro periodicals.

Abbé Grégoire's book of Negroes of achievement (Paris, 1808) offered a good point of departure. The names included in this volume were followed through the catalogs of the great American libraries, the British Museum, and the Bibliothèque Nationale. An anthology called *Les Cenelles*, published in New Orleans in 1845, became even more useful. Written in French by free men of color, *Les Cenelles* was the earliest collection of poetry by Negro poets in the United States. Its contributors, pursued singly, turned out to be surprisingly good material.

One of them, for example, was Victor Séjour. Spingarn's discovery of this author, one of the most popular dramatists of his period in France, is typical of the general results of his search. French encyclopedias like the *Nouveau Larousse*

*illustré* and the *Larousse du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* generally assume that Séjour was a Parisian and carelessly state that he was born in the French capital. Nothing is said of his Negro blood, for from their point of view, as in most countries other than the United States, and perhaps Great Britain, this has generally been regarded as an immaterial literary consideration. It has meaning for this collection, however, and Spingarn made it his business to establish the point.

When Séjour's name was found among the colored poets of New Orleans in *Les Cenelles*, Spingarn went to work on his bibliography. A diligent quest, here and in Europe, eventually yielded copies of nearly all the dramatist's twenty-two published plays. Later investigation by scholars whose attention had been drawn to Séjour's origin brought out the fact that he had been born in 1817 in the heart of the old French quarter of New Orleans. His white father, a native of Saint-Domingue (colonial Haiti), and his free colored mother were not married at the time, but later this omission was corrected. Séjour's baptism was recorded in St. Louis Cathedral.

The free colored caste numbered nearly twenty thousand in New Orleans at the time *Les Cenelles* was published. Many of its members were well-to-do, and a surprising number of them were sent to Paris to be educated. Many, like Victor Séjour, remained abroad to escape the restrictions imposed upon their group in New Orleans—though these were, in the main, far less severe than elsewhere in the southern states. Against this background the story of Séjour was easily understood. Moreover, it was a clue to other writers from the same background.

This type of historical and bibliographical detective work was essential to the principle of selection which Spingarn

had adopted. His sources were severely limited. Check lists on the so-called "Negro problem" seldom differentiated white and colored authors, being concerned as they were with the Negro as a subject, not as a point of view or as a voice. A few specialized histories were found to have bibliographies appended, but most of these were too sketchy to be helpful to a man who had undertaken to collect "everything the Negro had written." Even Monroe N. Work's extensive *Bibliography of the Negro* was so far from complete that Spingarn presently found that he had approximately a thousand books and pamphlets not listed in the volume.

None of this is meant to imply that conventional tools were of no help at all. Vernon Loggins' *The Negro Author*, restricted to American authors writing before 1900, was useful within those limits. Specialized check lists of poetry were found; also catalogs of exhibitions. More often, however, Spingarn appears to have relied on his own enterprise. He examined all the existing collections he could find, public and private. He wrote letters to editors and scholars in the United States, in Africa, in the West Indies, and in Central and South America. He made contacts with American consuls in a variety of places. And he hobnobbed with others who were working the same field, exchanging books, stories, and ideas with these kindred spirits. The current output he endeavored to follow through the usual book supplements and trade publications. This presented no special problem.

In the whole world of books, however, the question, "Who is a Negro?" is not an easy one. Neither Walter F. White (*The Fire in the Flint, Flight, Rope and Faggot*) nor Charles W. Chesnutt (*The Conjure Woman, The House behind the*

*Cedars*, etc.) nor Jean Toomer (*Cane*) would be considered a "Negro" any place other than in the United States or perhaps Great Britain. Yet they live and write as Negroes here. Alexandre Dumas, father and son, and Alexander Pushkin would be classified as Negroes in the United States, though they neither lived nor wrote under such a label. Others, like Audubon and Browning, must be put in a doubtful category.

Spingarn broadened the base of his selection to include any author who would be classified as a Negro in the United States. This, it need scarcely be added, gave him ample scope. It meant, for example, a wide swath for his blade in Brazil, Cuba, and most of Latin America and the Caribbean area. It meant, to put it in quite another way, the inclusion of more than two thousand authors before 1937. Even then the coverage was by no means complete, and since that date it has been steadily expanded.

While foreign publications covered some of the most interesting areas in the field which Spingarn had chosen for himself, they also offered some of the most annoying problems. As has been indicated, Negro authorship is a concept which lacks meaning in many foreign countries. Here and there, however, Spingarn managed to stumble upon the kind of help he needed. The *Bibliografía de autores de la raza de color de Cuba* by Trelles (1927), while neither exhaustive nor completely accurate according to the United States definition of "color," was nevertheless such a help. It listed something over a hundred Cuban writers of Negro blood. Similar assistance was found in an exhibit of books at the Club Atenas in Havana, where seven hundred works by colored Haitians were displayed. To these Spingarn was able to add a bibliography gleaned from the

hundred-and-fifty-year-old work by Abbé Grégoire and from the titles mentioned in Duraciné Vaval's history of Haitian literature and in the anthologies of Louis Morpeau. Then in 1941 Ulrick Duvivier published his useful *Bibliographie générale et méthodique d'Haïti* in two large volumes at Port-au-Prince. This was a start, but it added up to an unimpressive total when considered against the complete output of colored authors in languages other than English. For the rest, Spingarn worked unassisted.

How well he has succeeded can be judged by a sampling of some of his rarities. He has, to begin with, acquired works by all but one or two of the Negro authors mentioned by Grégoire. He has assembled nearly all the items recorded by Loggins. And, within the areas which these men sought to cover, he has found many titles missed by them. Typical of his acquisitions are the following:

1. Juan Latino's *Ad Catholicum pariter et invictissimum Philippum* (Granada, 1573).

2. J. E. J. Capitein's *Dissertation on Slavery* in Latin and in Dutch, published in Leyden in 1742 and his *Sermons* published in Dutch the same year; the former is interesting not only because it is an early, perhaps the first, dissertation of a native African presented to a European University but because of its content; it is a *defense* of slavery.

3. Some fifteen addresses and petitions by Julien Raymond and other colored residents of St. Domingo addressed to the National Assembly of France during the French Revolution.

4. Some *Royal Almanacs* published by the Court of King Christophe between 1816 and 1820.

5. Probably the only copy of Phillis Wheatley's *Poems* uncut in the original wrappers. The first and American editions, which are rarer than the English edition. Also, some of her verses in broadside pamphlet form published prior and subsequent to her volume of 1773.

6. Two original pamphlets by Jupiter Hammon.

7. The first and later editions of the works of Ignatius Sancho, Gustavus Vassa, and Ottobah Cugoano.

8. Original pamphlets by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Benjamin Banneker, Daniel Coker, Paul Cuffe, Abraham Johnstone, Hosea Easton, Lemuel Haynes, John Marrant, Henry Sipkins, Prince Saunders, William Whipper, Martin Delany, Henry Highland Garnett, Nathaniel Paul, Benjamin Hughes, James W. C. Pennington, David Ruggles, Robert Purvis, James McCune Smith, Frederick Douglass, Robert Elliott, P. B. S. Pinchback, Blanche K. Bruce, and F. L. Cardozo.

9. *The Constitution and By-Laws of the Brotherly Union Society* (1833).

10. *The African Methodist Hymn Book*, edited by Bishop Morris Brown (1833).

11. The first four editions of Walker's *Appeal* (two of them called "2d ed.").

12. *Proceedings* and *Minutes* of about twenty-five early Negro conventions, beginning with 1831.

13. A file of Frederick Douglass' paper, from the first number in 1851 to 1856, not complete.

14. A collection of several hundred slave narratives and autobiographies.

15. *Les Cenelles*, edited by Armand Lanusse in New Orleans (1845); the first anthology of Negro poetry in the United States.

16. Joseph C. Holly's *Freedom's Offerings* (1853); one of only two known copies.

17. The earliest extant known volume of Albery A. Whitman, believed to be unique.

18. A collection of over four hundred volumes of poetry and about an equal number of fiction titles published by colored authors.

19. Several hundred volumes on church history and Negro Masonry.

20. A representative group of works by native Africans and a number of works by natives of the British and French Colonies, Haiti, South and Central America, and Cuba.

21. A collection of upward of two thousand musical compositions by Negroes.

22. Most of the books and many of the pamphlets issued since 1900.

The Spingarn library, while still housed in the collector's home, is available to bona fide scholars, subject to a single stipulation: that they first exhaust the resources of such public institutions as are accessible to them. The books are arranged in six divisions: American, African, French, West Indian, Portuguese and Brazilian, and Dutch and

other languages. The African section is broken down into native dialects, English, French, Arabic, and Portuguese. One subdivision of the French section is devoted to Haitian authors. In the same way the writers who used the Portuguese language are divided geographically.

The American section has been subdivided even further. Here the headings include: (1) church history and theology; (2) slave narratives, biographies, autobiographies; (3) rarities; (4) history; (5) education; (6) proceedings and reports of conventions; (7) sociology; (8) law; (9) medicine; (10) fraternal organizations; (11) notable individuals: W. E. B. DuBois, Frederick Douglass, William Welles Brown, James Weldon Johnson, etc.; (12) poetry; (13) drama; (14) fiction.

These groupings, with the thousands of titles involved, are not to be taken as evidence that the Negro has thrived unduly under his disabilities in America. Spingarn is careful to note that

we have in the United States no Negro poet who can be compared with the Russian Pushkin, the Cuban Placido, the Haytian Durand; no novelist who can be compared with the Frenchman Dumas, or the Brazilian Machado de Assis; no dramatist who can be compared to the Frenchman Dumas fils; and no historian who can be compared in importance (to take but one illustration) to the African author of the *Tarikh-es-Soudan*.

#### SLAVERY AS A THEME: THE HENRY P. SLAUGHTER LIBRARY

If the Henry P. Slaughter library were recataloged, it could be made to fit neatly into a radial system of classification. In such a scheme the hub would consist of materials on Negro slavery in the United States. The spokes would represent such related subjects as Africa, abolition, freedmen, reconstruction, ancestry of the slaves, descendants of the slaves, etc.

This pattern is, of course, accidental from a librarian's point of view, but, like all accidents, it had its causes. In the case of the Slaughter collection the causes were mainly personal.

Henry P. Slaughter, a Negro and the son of former slaves, traces his book-collecting to impulses awakened in childhood. He recalls a day when, as a school-boy in Louisville, Kentucky, he came home puzzled by the question of how the slaves got the news that they were free. To his surprise his parents were unable to enlighten him. Indeed, he was obliged to wait until he learned to venture beyond conventional textbooks to find his answer.

The question seems insignificant in retrospect, but it was enough to awaken the boy's curiosity about a subject which, by its very nature, was close to his own people—his own family. Slavery could be remembered vividly in those days.

The boy's interest was further spurred when, a year or two later, he carried home a copy of Smith's *School History of Kentucky*. His mother happened to open the textbook during the course of the evening. In a few moments she found herself on familiar ground. The subject was slavery, and the area was one she knew from personal observation. Her interest mounted. Then, quite suddenly, she closed the book with a bang.

"It's not true," she announced. With that, she commenced to set the record to rights for the benefit of her son. The next day she sternly refused to allow the boy to return to school. It was her opinion that he was being maliciously misinformed concerning a vital, though delicate, subject, and she proposed to end it.

Fortunately for the youngster, her wrath was tempered in time, and Henry P. Slaughter returned to complete the school curriculum available to him in

Louisville. But the "damage" had been done. Another natural-born collector's fate had been sealed. Moreover, his field of interest had been staked out for him.

Young Slaughter went to Washington, D.C., just before the turn of the century. He found employment in the Government Printing Office. Here, on the limited income of a civil service employee, he began to gather books on the subject of his greatest curiosity. A few years later his bookish interests earned him the editorship of the Negro *Odd Fellows Journal*. He continued in this capacity twenty-seven years. By increasing his income he was able to intensify his collecting. Subsequent Wall Street investments further extended his capacity to collect. Under these conditions the present library in his Washington home began to take shape—a library which, in its area, has been called "fabulous" by Carl Van Vechten and described as "a very wonderful lot of material" by Charles E. Tuttle. Perhaps "fabulous," if it can be applied with meaning to any library collection, is the right word, for it has been more talked about than described in print, and some of the accounts have been on the marvelous side—witness the article by J. A. Rogers in the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In any case, the legends surrounding the collection and its collector do have genuine story value. The one about the first of Slaughter's wives, a woman who couldn't survive his book-collecting zeal, is typical.

This wife, according to Slaughter's own anecdote, presently found herself in a double quandary. Because her husband put all his financial resources into his library, he was habitually clad in frayed raiment. Because he was without a suitable hat, he was frequently unable to accompany her to social gatherings. The

situation reached a climax one day when Mrs. Slaughter offered to advance her husband the price of a new hat on condition that he attend a dinner with her. He could repay the loan at his own convenience. Slaughter was touched by this proposal. He promptly consented and straightway started toward the haberdashery. It was his misfortune, however, to pass a bookstore. To make matters worse, a clearance sale was in progress. Boldly displayed in the window was a five-volume set of books essential to the Slaughter collection. The little man entered the store shyly. By every means known to him he tried to persuade the clerk to put the books aside for him. This the bookseller was unwilling to do for several reasons, but he was inclined to make a special offer of the volumes to Slaughter on the condition that the latter take them away immediately. The special offer, as fate would have it, was exactly the amount the wife had advanced for the hat.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that the purchase was made on the spot—with dramatic domestic results. Slaughter vainly attempted to save the situation by having the books packed in a hatbox, but the ruse didn't work. His wife was wise to his ways.

There are many more stories, but this one is perhaps sufficient to indicate that Slaughter's quaint and unusual library has not been collected in a vacuum. The books themselves fill a medium-sized house—a house purchased by Henry P. Slaughter specifically for this purpose. Of course, he happens to live in it too, but he has reserved little enough space for this purpose and has virtually sold himself into slavery to his housekeeper in return for her tolerance of the unorthodox arrangements.

The following items, selected at ran-

dom, are perhaps representative of the character of the collection:

1. Approximately a thousand volumes on Africa.
2. Nearly five hundred on Abraham Lincoln.
3. More than one hundred and fifty slave narratives.
4. Sections devoted to books on Haiti, Negro fraternal orders, Negro churches, Negro soldiers, Negro music, and kindred topics.
5. A large collection of personal letters and autographs, including items from Abraham Lincoln, the members of Lincoln's cabinet, the leading Union generals in the Civil War, members of Congress, and abolitionists like Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Gerrit Smith, Horace Greeley, John Brown, and Wendell Phillips.
6. Letters of English abolitionists like William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and James Montgomery and of the prominent Haitian revolutionaries, including Toussaint L'Ouverture, Henri Christophe, Jean Jacques Dessalines, and Jean Pierre Boyer.
7. An assortment of autographs and manuscripts.
8. Numerous prints and photographs.
9. Files of various newspapers, including the *New York Age*, the *Odd Fellows Journal*, the *Louisville Defender*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, etc.
10. Files of such magazines as *African Repository*, *Anglo-African*, *Colored American*, *Opportunity*, *Crisis*, etc.
11. Approximately five hundred autographed books by Negro authors.
12. A large collection of poetry of similar authorship.

Slaughter's treasures include most of the known editions of Phillis Wheatley's poems and also those of Jupiter Hammon. He owns three of the rare Benjamin Banneker *Almanacs*—two for 1792 (Baltimore) and one of the 1793 issue (Philadelphia). He has complete sets in first editions of such writers as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Albin W. Tourgee, and Paul Laurence Dunbar—not to mention a sheaf of letters by Dunbar.

A catalog of the collection was made

by workers of the Work Projects Administration at the instance of librarians at Howard University and perhaps at the Library of Congress, but Slaughter is not enthusiastic over the results. He has certain reservations about "school-book" librarianship. Pending their gravitation to a public institution, however (after years of reluctance Slaughter is now open-minded on the question of a sale), his own arrangement of the books seems fairly adequate. He has lists of most of his holdings. The rest he remembers!

THE MOORLAND FOUNDATION  
HOWARD UNIVERSITY

The Moorland Foundation, the Library of Negro Life and History, was created by the board of trustees of Howard University, Washington, D.C., in 1914. The action of the trustees followed by a few months an action of another sort by one of their number. Earlier in the same year Rev. Jesse E. Moorland, a resident of New York City, an official of the Y.M.C.A., and a member of the Howard board since 1907, gave the university his private library. Included were more than three thousand items relating to the Negro, among them books, pamphlets, engravings, portraits, manuscripts, curios, pictures, and many envelopes of clippings. In the Howard Library Rev. Moorland's gift was combined with an older collection of anti-slavery literature, the gift of Lewis Tappan in 1873, and together they formed one of the important collections of such materials in the country.

Since 1914 other scattered collections have gravitated to the Moorland Foundation. The resources, too, have been expanded by year-to-year purchases. Funds have been available, thanks to a variety of circumstances which worked

to Howard's advantage, and they have been used energetically by an active and alert director, Mrs. Dorothy B. Porter. The result is a well-organized reference library, strategically located in the nation's capital, available for serious research, and housed in the new \$1,106,000 Founder's Library at Howard.

The distinguishing feature of this collection, as compared to the others described herein, is its relation to the curriculum of the university. Built originally around the two private collections mentioned above, the Moorland Foundation nevertheless reflects even more strongly another influence. Its growth and expansion have been, in the opinion of its director, basically conditioned by Howard courses in the various aspects of Negro life, literature, and history. The largest of the Negro institutions of higher learning, Howard has had many such courses and not a few others in which the Negro background of its students has tended to slant the teaching. Inevitably the library was affected.

The results of such a principle of selection are perhaps no more unusual than the principle itself. The Moorland Foundation, like the collections at Fisk, Atlanta, and other colored schools, includes everything about the Negro which promises to fit into the educational program of the institution. These materials, viewed as a spectrum, might show rarities like Hiob Ludolf's *A New History of Ethiopia* (London, 1682) and the pamphlet *An African's Anti-slavery Views* (1789) at one end and at the other the titles of "Howardiana," including the writings of Howard faculty members, material about the university, and the university's own publications. In between there would be a number of distinct shades, but where one ended and the other began would be hard to determine.

Perhaps this tendency toward fusion explains the arrangement of a "Catalogue of Books in the Moorland Foundation." This mimeographed publication, also a product of the Work Projects Administration, is broken down not by subject but by the publication dates of the titles listed. An odd side-view results. It is discovered, for example, that of the five hundred pages of annotated items ninety-four are devoted to titles printed between 1682 and 1849. The period between 1850 and 1899 is represented by listings which fill twenty-three pages. Nineteen pages are devoted to unpublished Howard University Master's theses. Some uncataloged pamphlets were also selected for inclusion.

By the spring of 1943 Mrs. Porter estimated that the catalog listings represented less than one-third of the collection's current holdings. New gifts, plus purchases in excess of \$10,000 worth of books in the four-year interval, had brought their number of cataloged items to about 16,500.

The influence of the Moorland Room has been considerable. Its director has written frequently about the collection and the special problems of librarianship which have grown out of it. Her Master's thesis (Columbia, 1932) was on "Afro-American Writing before 1835." Since that time Mrs. Porter has contributed to the *American Scholar* and frequently to the *Journal of Negro Education*.

A credit, too, goes to the Moorland Room for Naomi J. Rushing's "Cataloging and Care of Negro Collections," another Columbia Master's thesis. Miss Rushing is still on the staff of the Howard Library.

#### OBERLIN'S ANTISLAVERY PROPAGANDA

The antislavery materials in the library of Oberlin College are a part of the

history of the school. Oberlin, it should be remembered, is the school for which John Brown once solicited funds. Its campus was at one time the scene of a heated argument between Stephen Foster, the song-writer, and those who favored compromise and gradualism in the solution of the slavery problem. Founded in 1833 by John J. Shipherd, an avowed abolitionist, and Philo P. Stewart, it touched the controversial issue lightly at first, but two years later Oberlin's president and founder made history by persuading the trustees to permit Negroes to enter the school. The same year the Oberlin Antislavery Society was founded. The views expressed at this time were moderate, but a few months later a group of firebrands invaded the college. They were led by Theodore D. Weld, and all were former students of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, seceding from the latter institution because of their unbending stand on the slavery issue. Weld and his colleagues thoroughly converted Oberlin College and community to the abolitionist doctrine. Thereafter the place continued to be the center of underground railroad and anti-slavery activity.

With this background the library, inevitably, came into possession of a first-rate stock of the literature of protest issued by the advocates of emancipation during the years of their campaign. In 1932 Geraldine Hopkins Hubbard, preparing a Master of Arts thesis at Oberlin College, counted some seventeen hundred separate items dealing with slavery. This collection, she discovered, could be traced to the original Oberlin Collegiate Institute Library.

The institution passed through a severe financial crisis in 1839-40. Hoping to collect enough money to save the situation, William Dawes and Rev. John

Keep, agents of the college, went to England and made an appeal on the basis of the school's affiliation with the antislavery movement. The British responded, and the representatives of Oberlin acquired, in addition to the needed finances, about six thousand volumes for their library. Among these were many antislavery pamphlets and books, mostly from the British point of view. An indication of their success is the fact that the two-year period of 1822-24 is now represented in the collection by no less than twenty-eight British titles. These include a first edition of Elizabeth Heyrick's *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition* and items by Thomas Cooper, James Cropper, William Wilberforce, and many others. The copy of Buxton's *The African Slave Trade* which the school's agents brought back is inscribed "To the Deputation from the Oberlin Institution from their and its Friend and Servant, George Thompson, London, May 13, 1839." In a copy of J. J. Gurney's *A Winter in the West Indies* they brought home this inscription: "To John Keep, from his friend Geo. Sturge in pleasing remembrance of his visit to England, 1839-40." Not less valuable, though lacking an inscription, was the copy of Granville Sharp's *A Tract on the Law of Nature and Principles of Action in Man* (1777).

A number of years later, in connection with the opening of the Spear Library building in 1885, a campaign to enlarge the "Historical Collection on Slavery" was undertaken by a faculty committee composed of the Reverend Henry Matson, the librarian, Professor James Monroe, and Professor William Goodell Frost. Three times this committee issued the following appeal: "We have a very valuable collection and desire to make it complete. We desire to secure a copy of every book, pamphlet, report, speech,

tract, newspaper, or private letter bearing upon the subject."

Among those who responded with contributions from their private libraries were Professor John Morgan, Theodore J. Keep, Mrs. Sarah L. Dickinson, Reverend George Clark, and Reverend William W. Patton. Also acquired through the same appeal was the more important gift, through heirs, of the collection of William Goodell. As a front-line abolitionist, active in both the Liberty party and the "Liberty Leaguers," Goodell had assembled materials representing every phase of the movement from the time of its beginning in the United States. His gift, moreover, included his own antislavery works, among them the rare files of the newspapers he edited. Then there were autographed presentation copies which Goodell had received from his colleagues in the movement. Albert Barnes's *An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery* was such a volume, as were also La Roy Sunderland's *The Testimony of God against Slavery*, Lucius C. Matlack's *The History of the American Slavery and Methodism*, Foss and Mathews' *Facts for the Baptist Church*, and a first edition of *The Unconstitutionality of Slavery* by Lysander Spooner. And with the Goodell collection came a variety of manuscripts relating to the same subject. Most important of these is the "Declaration of Sentiments of the American Anti-slavery Society" in the handwriting of William Lloyd Garrison.

In the years that have followed, the collection at Oberlin has acquired, by one means or another, an interesting assortment of rarities. Typical of these, perhaps, are the following:

1. Several volumes of *The Liberty Bell*, two of which are autographed by Maria Weston

Chapman and another to S. Margaret Fuller, "with the regards of Oliver Johnson."

2. A copy of W. W. Brown's *Clotel*, autographed by the author.

3. *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* by Thomas Clarkson, inscribed to "Wm. W. Patton, from Joseph Sturge per Lewis Tappan."

4. Files of the *Anti-slavery Examiner*, *Anti-slavery Tracts*, *The Liberty Bell*, and *Liberty Minstrel*, not all complete.

Oberlin has also a good collection of the children's literature of the antislavery movement, a most interesting phase of the campaign.

#### OTHER COLLECTIONS

There are several other important collections of Negroana in the United States. Lacking any easy or convenient method of locating these or of evaluating them from a distance, this reporter employed a device which may not be without a certain quaintness. Knowing that the Charles E. Tuttle Company of Rutland, Vermont, had long made a specialty of the material in which these collections were interested and having seen the undated Tuttle Catalogue No. 113, *Books by and about the Negro and Slavery*, he struck upon the idea of tracing collections of Negro lore through the sales records of this company. The plan may be said to have worked, for it had the interest and co-operation of Mr. Charles E. Tuttle himself, and he had kept detailed notes of his company's transactions. From his cards it was not only possible to determine who was buying in the field and how much but also who had what among the rarer items. Inferences could also be drawn with respect to which collections were static and which growing.

While the more detailed descriptions in the foregoing sections are based in considerable part on personal observa-

tions and interviews with their directors, the following are mainly drawn from evidence and clues provided by the Tuttle files.

*Duke-North Carolina.*—The combined Negro collections of these two university libraries may be larger than any single collection described in the foregoing pages. Certainly, the Tuttle Company's sales to Duke, for its Flowers Collection of books about the South, would indicate this. Something of the nature and scope of the collections may be surmised from a few available facts. It is known, for example, that the division of the field has given folklore, sociology, and literature, as these pertain to the Negro, to North Carolina and assigned history, the Negro in the Caribbean, etc., to Duke. Even this division of area seems explainable. Guy B. Johnson, a member of the North Carolina faculty, has for years been a leading authority on the Negro, with a great knowledge of folklore and genuine enthusiasm for the material. His volume of "John Henry" songs is one bit of evidence. Howard W. Odum, sociologist in the same institution, made his reputation with books like *Rainbow round My Shoulder* and *Wings on My Feet*, imaginative treatments of Negro materials, and his sociological studies have never been far removed from the mores of those early books. Then there is Paul Green, the dramatist, who despite commercial success on Broadway has maintained his connection with the university at Chapel Hill. Paul Green's plays are predominantly Negro plays, from *The No 'Count Boy* to his Pulitzer Prize winning *In Abraham's Bosom* and his dramatization of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. The university community which includes all three of these unusual southern scholars surprises no one by owning what they have reason to feel is

a "right smart" collection of library materials dealing with the ways of black folks.

*Cornell and others.*—Like Oberlin, Cornell owns a large body of underground railroad lore and antislavery propaganda. Indeed, its collection is even better known in library circles and is said to be larger than the one at Oberlin. The history behind these resources is perhaps not entirely unlike the background of the Oberlin materials. It is known, for example, that the Gerrit Smith papers and effects went to Cornell and that the community around Utica was as strategically located for underground-railroad passengers as was central Ohio. Furthermore, the abolitionist sentiment was just as strong in Upper New York State. In fact, it would not be too great a mistake to say that for a number of years, while Frederick Douglass was editing his paper in Rochester, the center of gravity of the antislavery campaign shifted to that part of the United States. However that may be, Cornell, with its Samuel Joseph May Collection, is admittedly strong in slavery and antislavery materials.

Indications are that the collection is static, however. The Tuttle Company showed no sales to them and had no records reading "Cornell wants . . .," as was the case with most of the others. Wisconsin, Johns Hopkins, and Pennsylvania, all reputed to have extensive slavery and antislavery collections, were likewise relatively unrepresented on sales or want cards. Michigan, on the other hand, with no reputation for unusual holdings in this field, was buying antislavery items actively and increasingly within a limited area.

*Harvard.*—The interesting thing about Harvard was that, while it probably had as much Negro material as any library

in the country and while it was adding to its stock as actively as any, it had not thrown these materials together to form any sort of special collection. In its case—lacking any special motivation—this seemed a sensible way of handling the subject. There was both rhyme and reason behind collections like the Schomburg in New York, the James Weldon Johnson at Yale—indeed, behind all of those visited; but, wanting these purposes, it would be idle to invent them.

Two aspects of Harvard's holdings in this field, apart from its obvious volume, seem worth pointing out. First is the tendency to include slavery in the library of the School of Business. If this implies (I'm not sure it does) that Harvard regards the moral and sentimental and propaganda angles of the slavery controversy as of less importance than the business considerations, then librarianship at Harvard has taken a positive step which is interesting in its connotations.

A second point concerning Harvard's Negro materials was also derived from the Tuttle Company's records. T. Franklin Currier appeared to be the individual who represented the library in this field, and T. Franklin Currier is the scholar responsible for the definitive Whittier bibliography. Whittier, being the poet of the antislavery movement, would seem, then, to be the point of contact between the present library staff at Harvard and these Negro materials.

*Brown.*—The files of the Tuttle Company showed Brown University Library to be in the market for all Negro music and poetry. This special acquisitiveness could, in turn, be traced to S. Foster Damon, the individual in charge of Brown's Harris Collection of American Poetry. Mr. Damon had not only let it be understood that he was to have a

chance at all materials in this field but had frequently been a visitor at the Tuttle establishment and had inspected the cards in the "Negro" cases.

Further research revealed S. Foster Damon as the author of a monograph entitled *The Negro in Early American Songsters*, first read before the American Library Association and including a mention of "Backside Albany" (1812), one of the first of the genre. This paper seemed to throw a certain light on one aspect of his zeal as a curator.

*Swarthmore.*—Through the efforts of Henry J. Cadbury, whose specialty is the Society of Friends and books and collections which concern Quakers, Swarthmore College appears to have acquired a good stock of material from the Tuttle Negro list. The connection is accidental but obvious. Most historical works relating to the Friends are likely to be concerned with the Negro and slavery in some measure.

*Emory.*—The testimony of William C. Haygood, a former member of the Emory Library staff, had led me to expect references to their Negro collection in the Tuttle cards. None was discovered. The inference to be drawn is that the books with which they have surrounded the literary effects of Joel Chandler Harris, author of the "Uncle Remus" stories, are mainly "in-print" items. It may be further inferred that the Emory University Library has been more concerned with providing a background for their treasure than with reflecting the Negro scene in a broad context.

*Fisk.*—One of the foremost Negro collections is located at Fisk University. Fisk, founded in 1869, became a leading Negro institution of learning as a result of the triumphal world tour of its original "Jubilee Singers" in 1871. When Tuskegee Institute was established, based on

the vocational idea of Booker T. Washington, Fisk accepted responsibility for leadership in liberal education for Negroes.

The Fisk Negro collection is, therefore, a long-established one. Indeed, the moment of its creation cannot be fixed, though a certain genesis can be discovered. Determined efforts to build an important collection in this field began in the late 1920's. It was considered in the plans for the new library building, which provided a special room and other facilities for handling these materials. A year or two later Arthur A. Schomburg, not yet employed by the New York Public Library, was secured as curator for the department. During his years at Fisk he laid a basis for a collection not unlike the one he had assembled privately, the philosophy of which has already been discussed.

Later, the library of Willis D. Weatherford, then connected with the Y.M.C.-A. College at Nashville, was purchased. This acquisition gave Fisk a Negro collection of impressive size. Subsequent purchases, plus exchanges of many duplicates found among the Weatherford books and among gifts, have given it a continuous growth. For several years S. E. Grinstead served the collection as curator.

Two publications, important to this report, have stemmed from this collection. One is Mr. Grinstead's bibliography of books by or about the Negro; the other, Frances L. Yocom's subject classification of books in this area, published by the H. W. Wilson Company.

*Other college and university libraries.*—Major and minor Negro collections are also located at such institutions as Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, Virginia Union, Morgan College, Tuskegee Institute, Dillard University,

and others. The ones at Atlanta and at Hampton are of major size, and the one at Dillard appears to be growing rapidly. Mr. Tuttle considered its development most promising from a dealer's point of view. Other circumstances confirm this. Dillard University sponsored extensive studies in the history of Negroes in Louisiana under the Work Projects Administration. Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration of Virginia prepared a "Classified Catalogue of the Negro Collection in the Collis P. Huntington Library of Hampton Institute" in 1940. This work, a thick mimeographed volume, lists 5,075 annotated items, of which 820 deal with the Negro in Africa, the Caribbean area, and Latin America, and the rest with the Negro in the United States.

*Other public libraries.*—Depending solely on the Tuttle files as a barometer, one would conclude that the Boston Athenaeum, the Cleveland Public, to a lesser extent the Birmingham Public, and, in a different category, the Newberry in Chicago were the most active public libraries in the Negro field, barring, of course, the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street Branch in New York City. This, however, is not a complete picture, for it says nothing about popular collections of the kind that have been established in the Hall Branch of the Chicago Public, in the Vernon Branch of the Los Angeles system, and perhaps in many others. None of these would have occasion to do extensive business with a firm like the Tuttle Company, and their occasional purchases provided a basis for no enlightening assumptions. Also neglected by this reckoning are the public libraries of Brooklyn, Burlington, Houston, Providence, etc., all of which have at one time or another reported considerable resources in the field.

That the Newberry Library and the Boston Athenaeum have important strength in this general area could be deduced from the titles of their purchases—often rare pamphlets and other items generally associated with the more exhaustive collections.

*Library of Congress.*—At the time of the Paris Exposition in 1903, Dan Murray, a Negro and one of the assistants in the Library of Congress, was asked to prepare an exhibit of Negro books and related materials. The exhibition turned out to be so impressive by current standards that the collection was kept together when it was returned to Washington, and continuous additions were made to it during the remainder of Murray's life. Since the death of Dan Murray it has been known as the Murray Collection. Naturally, thanks to strategic advantages, its acquisitions have been impressive.

A good example of the type of material which seems to flow to that collection has just been announced: the complete letters and papers of Booker T. Washington, including a wide correspondence with many of the great historical figures of the past generation relating to the activities of Tuskegee and the whole scope of Negro development in the United States.

As the repository for all books copyrighted in the United States since July,

1898, the Library of Congress collection is, of course, complete within that period. It is by no means limited to the United States or to the years since 1898, however.

*Frederick Douglass Memorial.*—One of the most interesting and valuable collections of Negroana in America is one of the smallest. It consists entirely of the writings of Frederick Douglass and is housed in the Memorial Home at Anacostia, D.C. Douglass' stature as a Negro leader, before and after the Civil War, is constantly rising. Obscured for a time by the more conciliatory Booker T. Washington, he looms up with the developments of recent history. This new evaluation has drawn sharp attention to his life and works. *A Calendar of the Writings of Frederick Douglass in the Memorial Home at Anacostia, D.C.* was prepared by the District of Columbia Historical Records Survey, Division of Professional and Service Projects of the W.P.A. It is annotated and indexed, contains 310 entries, and has a section of "Documentary References" in addition to a Foreword by the Negro historian, Carter G. Woodson, and a Preface by H. B. Dillard, supervisor of the District of Columbia Historical Records Survey.

This small memorial collection, housed in a shrine, is perhaps a synthesis of all the others—their final meaning.

# NEWS AND GOSSIP OF THE RIALTO

## FELLOWSHIPS

LAST summer Edward Gross had a nice schedule of events lined up for himself. But Edward Gross hasn't been represented on Broadway by anything other than "Chicken Every Sunday," an old bird that moved on to Chicago not so long ago. It's as simple as 1 and 1, however. Mr. Gross' schedule just never got going.

Now he has a whole new schedule and hopes things will be different. Having acquired "St. Louis Woman," a play with music and about Negroes by Arno Bontemps, librarian of Fiske University, and Countee Cullen, he is plugging hard for a spring showing. By the end of the week he will be heading westward, thinking up ways and means to convince Lena Horne that the title role is hers. Should Miss Horne agree to portray the shady lady who fall in love with a gambler, Lemuel Ayres of MGM would get the director's post. A Horne turn-down would set Mr. Gross on Katherine Dunham's path.

It will cost about \$75,000 to put the show on, which, reflects Mr. Gross, is a lot of money for one of its type. It should be noted, incidentally, that "St. Louis Woman," like "Anna Lucasta," is not just a conventional picture of Negro life. What happens in it happens to other people too, he reports.

Other Gross ventures and how they fare may be described thus: (1) "Be Good, Sweet Maid" is having casting trouble; (2) Philip Yordan, author of "Anna Lucasta," has finished a new play; (3) two Hollywood scenarists (shrouded in secrecy) are adapting Miriam Young's "Mother Wore Tights" for the fall; (4) also for the fall, the adaptation of "Ridin' the Rainbow: Father's Life in Tucson," by Rosemary Taylor, who composed "Chicken."

Now that "Sing Out, Sweet Land!" seems firmly entrenched on Columbus Circle, it seems permissible to remember that at first, before the triumph here, all was not well with the "salute to American folk and popular music."

Way back in rehearsal days it was an open secret that the Guild was calling in all sorts of diagnosticians to prescribe nostrums for the ailing "Sing Out." Then in Boston, where the show got its initial public airing, the reception was not too happy. The wags backstage decided to brighten the gloom and did so in keeping with the "salute." To the tune of "De Camptown Races" (sung in the show) they sang:

"We're gonna run all night,  
We're gonna run all day,  
We'll run three weeks for the  
movie money,  
Then we'll run away."

Noting the hosannas accorded "Life With Father," "I Remember Mama" and "The Late George Apley," Arthur Hopkins, writing in this month's Theatre Arts Magazine on "New Theatre Freedoms," spots a trend. Says Mr. Hopkins: "Plays of the future will be more concerned with character than event. This is in line with other art forms as well as with scientific research which is seeking the essence of being rather than dwelling on details of its manifestations. . . . Certainly there is a greater and richer variety of expression in character revelation than in the altered application of long-used situations. Someone took the trouble to enumerate the basic situations available to the dramatist. I doubt if anyone would attempt to catalogue the number of character facets that are employable." This, points out the trend spotter, is "perhaps a major new freedom in the theatre."

A sign of the times: The Theatre Guild has picked up some 20,000 additional subscribers here and in the hinterlands and now has a total membership of approximately 90,000. The financial prospects are so pleasant the Guild expects to get \$135,000 per play per tour from subscription audiences.

Some time toward the end of this week Milton Berle will be anxiously wielding one of those envelope-openers in search of the

first draft of the Robert Wright-George Forrest score and lyrics for "Spring in Brazil." That would be the musical he is supposed to produce in association with Lee Shubert. Meanwhile, Philip Rapp, author of the book, is reported toiling on a repair job. Milton, incidentally, is rather optimistic. He thinks rehearsals can start in mid-March and that everything should be in order for April on Broadway.

Another play with music reported making progress is "God's Front Porch," which Ketti Frings and Harry Horner are adapting from Miss Frings' novel of the same name. It seems the contemplated style for "God's Front Porch" is to be similar to the way the English ballad singers used to present the current events of their time, making them palatable to their audience. The ballad approach, Producer Sol Lesser is told, gives a wide range of simplicity to the production "and it makes use of a rather frank and homespun way of music." The music, it's said, is not just "syrup" poured over a play like "background music." The only hitch at the moment is: there isn't a composer.

Anthony Parella, who will be listed as co-producer of "They Live in Brooklyn," provided, of course, "They Live in Brooklyn" gets across the bridge, is talking about a repertory theatre. Nothing pretentious, nothing arty, but Mr. Parella says it's a start. He will operate in a small intimate house on Forty-eighth Street under the banner of the American Group Theatre.

They say the wailing at the Morosco last Saturday, when both the afternoon and evening performances of "The Voice of the Turtle" were scratched, was something to hear. One couple had purchased tickets last September and come 400 miles for the show. And holders of balcony seats who have waited months will now have to wait until June. Producer Alfred de Liagre Jr., says "It's gone from farce to deep tragedy."

pm 7/1/45

# in terms erstand

In fact, the government, by passing the Family Allowances Act last year, moved into the CCF camp. This bill, which comes into effect next month, is the most comprehensive of its kind anywhere in the world. It provides cash allowances for all children under 16, at an estimated cost of \$200,000,000. (Canada's total prewar budget was about equal to that of the City of New York, some \$700,000,000 a year.)

Those are some of the points that Mr. Coldwell deals with in 12 lucid chapters, which form not so much an historical narrative of the party's growth as a series of discussions of its principles and objectives. They give a clear, complete picture of what the CCF is, how it began, how far it has come and where it hopes to get to.

But *Left Turn, Canada* far transcends, in importance and interest, any mere recital of the struggles and victories of a Canadian political party. Mr. Coldwell is fast becoming an international figure, and he writes for an international audience. The problems he discusses are world-wide, not local or regional. Furthermore, he is

a political thinker of a very high order, and he writes in warm, human terms.

Liberals—with a small *l* anywhere, but particularly in the U. S. A.—will find these 12 talks, essays or preachments most profitable reading. The CCF is Canadian, but it is also the first indigenous social-democratic party to develop in North America and in its experience, achievements and failures are to be found many of the blueprints for the third party that will inevitably develop in this country.

Americans—all Americans—should find *Left Turn, Canada* interesting for another reason. It furnishes, quite unintentionally, I believe, one of the most illuminating pen pictures of Canada ever written.

For some unplumbed reason, Americans in general know surprisingly little about their nearest and dearest neighbor. This may be due to indifference or neighborly politeness or the inadequate coverage of Canada by our newspapers and magazines. The fact remains—we are better informed about China, Greece, Italy or France.

### **Vast, vague, simple?**

When we do bother to think about Canada at all, we think of it as a vast, vague, simple country, predominantly and intensely British. Mr. Coldwell's book should dispel such delusions. In it you will find Canada revealed objectively for what it is—one of the most complex countries on the face of the earth, a land with regional, racial and economic problems that make most of ours seem inconsequential. For many of these problems, Canadians have themselves to blame, but we share enough responsibility for them to concern any American who believes in world-wide reciprocal trade agreements.

If there is one thing wrong with *Left Turn, Canada*, it is the unlucky timing of its publication. Thanks to the meagre and over-simplified reports of the recent Canadian elections, the impression is general south of the border that the CCF suffered disastrous set-backs in the Ontario and the Dominion contests.

### **It lost, but it gained, too**

This is far from true. While the CCF was badly beaten in Ontario, it improved its strength in the Prairie Provinces and polled 16 per cent of the popular vote in the Dominion as a whole. It did not win enough seats to oust the Conservatives as His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. But it established itself as Canada's third major party in a contest which was based largely on Mr. King's handling of the conscription issue and which revealed little or nothing of social and economic trends.

Any measurement of the CCF's strength on the basis of the recent elections must also take into account the extent to which the party has driven its two rivals towards the left in recent years. Although the Liberal and Progressive-Conservative parties are both devoted to free enterprise, they are much less reactionary than certain elements in the two great parties here. The Liberals will probably extend into peacetime at least some of the socialistic planning and controls which have enabled Canada to make such a proud showing in the war.

To do otherwise will be to invite the CCF to power.

## **The Negro's flight north and a plea for action**

THEY SEEK A CITY, by Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy (Doubleday, Doran, \$2.75).

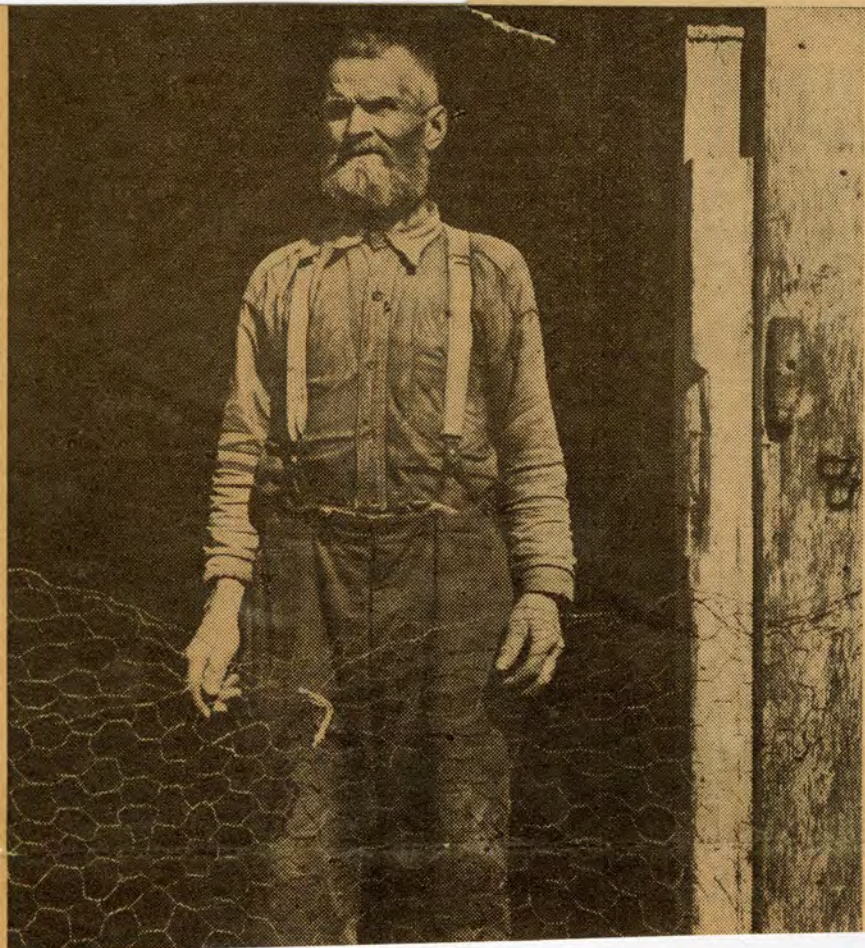
By Owen Dodson

THE authors of *They Seek a City* tell many stories that have a double theme—the flight of black men from fear to freedom, the flight of black men from fear to so great a disillusion that they became more afraid than they were.

Only after you have read the last line of the book do you see the picture whole.

Continued on next page

m15



What emerges from the acid is a kind of last stand in the black minority's struggle to escape a life in a South spiked with lynchings and Jim Crow, poll tax, sharecropping and subtle terrors. In spite of the violence that ran—and still runs—up and down the roads and through the cities, the migrants move, filled always with the kind of faith and hope that adds meaning and flesh and shelter to the poverty of opportunity which Negroes ironically enjoy in our democracy.

This book could be divided into the truth and consequences of three types of migration: the migrations accomplished principally through the Underground Railroad in the days of slavery, the atypical, personal migrations that were more spiritual than physical, and the great northward and westward migrations that occurred during World Wars I and II.

**Those who got a head start**

The Underground Railroad, one of the most fascinating and courageous chapters in American history, was responsible for the escape of many Negroes who got a head start on those to be freed later. Moreover, these riders on the invisible trains to freedom in the North and in Canada represent the first settlement of a large number of Negroes above the Mason-Dixon line.

Well-known conductors move through these pages with sharp and gratifying effectiveness—figures like Harriet Tubman, the Moses of her people, who started hundreds through the wilderness of danger to freedom, and Frederick Douglass, the Abolitionist, together with lesser-known men like William Still and Allan Pinkerton (who became Abraham Lincoln's bodyguard) and John Jones, the friend and helper of John Brown.

Perhaps the chapters that make the freshest reading are those that include stories of the second migration—of black men and women who contributed to the cultural pattern of America, men and women who fled North, but had within them a restless Ariel spirit that cried out for more than shelter and daily bread, that cried out for inner freedom and peace.

Among them were Paul Laurence Dunbar, who died at 36 from the disease of being hermetically sealed in prejudice but who left a body of poetry that is significant today, and Robert S. Abbot, the founder of the *Chicago Defender*, the militant Negro weekly.

**Fantastic but zealous**

Among them also are Scott Joplin, the "king of ragtime, who provided mood music for the great migrations of Negroes from the South at the turn of the century," and Jelly-Roll Morton from New Orleans, who played the piano "to exert power," and the little-known Buddy Bolden, who would put his golden trumpet through a hole in a fence and play sweetly, nostalgically "calling his children home" in spirit when they were lonely in the northern Winter.

There were thousands, too, who joined movements like the Back-to-Africa Movement or the Moorish-American Science Temple. These had fantastic but zealous leaders, like Marcus Garvey and Noble Drew Ali, who offered pride of race and

dignity to "beloved and scattered black millions," but failed and died while their dreams withered to defeat.

In the third migration were millions of Negroes, "sick to get out of the South," who left to work at war jobs in the North during World War I. And now, in our time, millions more have left and keep on coming, seeking freedom and tolerance.

In the chapters headed ironically *Detroit: Arsenal of Democracy* and *With Brotherly Love*, Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy give a brilliant analytical exposition of the origins and meanings of the recent Detroit riots and the transportation disturbances in Philadelphia and the resulting plans for organized racial understanding through committees like the American Council on Race Relations.

There are a hundred novels, and just as many plays, lying fallow in these pages. Much of the material is extraneous to the main stream of the book, but it is never dull. Although their source material is authentic and exhaustive, the authors have presented their study in human rather than statistical terms. And, despite the fact that they are dealing with one of the most serious problems in America, their book is not lacking in humor. Writing with restraint and often with eloquence, they have dug into a soil that is fertile with folklore and poetry.

The book closes with a question which is also a warning: Where will the new frontiers be if the North becomes a more subtle South where the patterns of segregation are less organized but just as potent? Now the problem must be faced. Now, before riots and disillusion come again to make black and white millions neurotic and America weak.



Jelly-Roll Morton (1885-1941), jazz pianist (see *They Seek a City*, page 15)

**RECOMMENDED by Roger**

**GENERAL**

**UP FRONT**, by Bill Mauldin (Holt, \$3). A selection of S/Sgt. Mauldin's war cartoons. With a 30,000-word commentary by the artist.

**CITY DEVELOPMENTS STUDIES IN DISINTEGRATION AND RENEWAL**, by Lewis Mumford (Harcourt, Brace, \$2). Stimulating essays on town planning.

**SAFEGUARDING CIVIL LIBERTY TODAY** (Cornell University Press, \$2). Lectures by Carl Becker, Max Lerner.



FELLOWSHIPS

# 'See Play First,' Bontemps Warns Hasty Critics

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—(Special)—“St. Louis Woman,” the forthcoming stage vehicle for Lena Horne’s Broadway appearance this Fall, is causing more confusion than the Japanese surrender—especially in the Negro press, of which a large portion feels that the Arna Bontemps-Countee Cullen script will “low-<sup>er</sup>” colored people.

Arna Bontemps, one of America’s best Negro writers, who created the original novel from which the play was adapted, told The Courier this week that most of the play’s critics are jumping the gun and should see the play first. “Those who go out of their way to condemn it in advance of production should take into consideration the whole body of my writing and of Countee Cullen’s and then ask themselves whether or not either of us is the kind of a writer who would wilfully write a play in which Lena Horne, the star, or the people she represents, is held up to ridicule.”

## COLORFUL ERA

Mr. Bontemps continued: “If sympathetically and intelligently staged and directed, ‘St. Louis Woman’ should do no more to low-rate the Negro people than a blues song does. Of course, the play deals with a fast crowd of people in a colorful city during the

era of the box-back coat. But that setting is history, not fiction. I don’t see why anyone should be ashamed of the period and the people who gave the world ragtime music and the other musical forms that have followed in its wake.

“My novel attempted to catch the mood and color of the city in which this great creative impulse first found expression. The play which Countee Cullen and I have written, together, based on a portion of that novel, tries to do the same thing in another medium. I believe theatre audiences will find the work sincere and dignified.

“Since ‘St. Louis Woman’ has not gone into rehearsal and cannot be fairly judged by rough, unfinished scripts, I ask those who debate the issue to read, ‘Black Thunder, They Seek a City,’ and to remember that the same writer is at work on the assignment, and that the same viewpoint motivates the writing.” Mr. Bontemps concluded. The author has spoken.

## 'St. Louis Woman Would Add To Lena's Prestige,' Critic Says

HOLLYWOOD—Contending that the late Evelyn Preer won undying renown with her characterization of Sadie Thompson in “Rain”; that Vivian Leigh was an outstanding success as Scarlet O’Hara in “Gone With the Wind,” and that Academy Award Winner Bette Davis successfully portrayed Della in “Of Human Bondage,” Paul McGee, crack Occidental News Service feature writer, denounced criticism directed against Lena Horne’s contemplated role in the Broadway stage production, “St. Louis Woman.”

“Good actors and actresses are judged by their ability to portray characters whether good or bad,” McGee, pointed out.

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UNIVERSITY

Chicago Daily News

10-17-45

FELLOWSHIPS

## 'We Have Tomorrow' Hails Successful Young Negroes

WE HAVE TOMORROW. By Arna Bontemps. (Houghton Mifflin.  
\$2.00.)

REVIEWED BY THELMA TAYLOR WILLIAMS.

I WONDER why a little book that is a definite contribution to an important phase of present day living slips onto the bookshelves without any advance notices as has "We Have Tomorrow." Intended primarily for the teen-age reader, this book is timely for all ages. Its principal thesis is that given the opportunity Negroes can succeed in fields which for a long time seemed closed to their race. Arna Bontemps has chosen 12 young Negroes who have succeeded in such fields.

There is Mildred Blount, the milliner, whose talents are employed exclusively by John Frederics Co. In another field is Sylvestre C. Watkins, the editor of Wilcox-Follett's "Guide to Good Reading." He will be remembered as the editor of the best anthology of Negro literature of the last decade.

\* \* \*

"WE HAVE TOMORROW" is what librarians term collective biography and as such it should be most monotonous. However, here each short, concise and alive biography merely whets the appetite for the next sub-

ject. The captions are appealing in their unique way. "They Called Him a Ham" tells quietly of Algernon P. Henry the maritime radio ace; "Strangers and Friends" tells of Horace Cayton, the sociologist of Chicago, whose book, "Black Metropolis" is awaited. "The Star's Return" tells of Jimmy LuValle, a chemist with the Eastman Kodak Co.

\* \* \*

ALL IN ALL this book of some 130 pages answers firmly but interestingly the question, can Negroes succeed in all fields?

Marian Palfi provides the striking photographs.

The title of the book comes from Langston Hughes' poem, "Youth," which begins, "We have tomorrow . . . bright before us."

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## BONTEMP LECTURES TO SKYLOFTERS

*Chgo. Rec 5/15/46*  
Arna Bontemp, librarian of Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., and author of the current Broadway Musical "St. Louis Woman," was guest and lecturer to the Skyloft Players. In a most unique manner of frankness the celebrated writer related to the actors the step-by-step process of adapting the musical hit from his own novel "God Sends Sunday" to its actual run on New York's Broadway. Incidental planning with big time producers was most interesting to this group of South Side amateurs.

Most enthusiastically received he left this expression for thought for future playwrights, "If we don't use our own folk material some others will. We can keep the sting on it, and help keep the distortions away. Write!

The Steering Committee for the annual Tea and Financial Drive for Parkway Community House were guests of the Theater Group for the evening.

By popular request the players performed a special cutting of their recent hit "Personal Appearance" as entertainment for their guest. Lauded applause signified true appreciation for their artistic efforts.

## "St. Louis Woman" Songs *N.Y. AGE 4/30/46* On Capital Records

Eleven songs from "St. Louis Woman," the new musical hit presented by Edward Gross at the Martin Beck Theatre, have been recorded under the supervision of Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer, who wrote the music and lyrics respectively, and they will be ready for release by Capitol Records in album form early in June. With a full orchestral accompaniment directed by Léon Leonardi, the songs were sung by the principal and choral group exactly as they are in the production.

They include Pearl Bailey's two show-stopping numbers, "Legalize My Name" and "A Woman's Prerogative"; "I'll Augie Is a Natural Man," as sung by Robert Pope; "Cakewalk Your Lady" by the company; "True Love" and "Sleep Peaceful" with solos by June Hawkins; "Ridin' On The Moon," with Harold Nicholas; three of Ruby Hill's songs, "Any Place I Hang My Hat Is Home," "Lullaby" and her duet with Harold Nicholas, "Come Rain Or Come Shine," as well as "Leavin' Time" which is sung by the choral group.

# 'St. Louis Woman' no more after 113 hectic showings

NEW YORK—"St. Louis Woman" ended its hectic and lavish career at the Martin Beck theatre here July 6, after going through 113 performances.

The "Woman" had reportedly been losing more and more money for its backers, Edward Gross, Arthur Freed, and Sam Katz, the latter two M-G-M executives. In its last week, it grossed only \$14,000.

Of the net profits, \$7,000 went to singer Muriel Rahn, who never appeared in the show. Miss Rahn had been scheduled to open in the title role Mar. 30, but, because of temperamental differences with SLW actors Rex Ingram and Harold Nicholas, was re-replaced by Ruby Hill. Her contract provided for \$650 a week until June 1, and \$750 from June 1 until July 6, which, coincidentally, turned out to be the show's farewell date.

"Woman", adapted for Broadway by Arna Bontemps and the late Countee Cullen from a Bontemps novel, became a subject for hot debate when it was learned that Lena Horne was being considered for the starring role. Miss Horne turned the part down, partly because of public pressure, and newcomer Ruby Hill was groomed as a substitute.

During SLW tryouts, Lemuel Ayers, scenery and costume designer, resigned as director, and Anthony Tudor walked out of the choreographer spot, to be replaced by Reuben Mamoulian and Charles Walters, respectively. Then came the Rahn-Ingram-Nicholas fracas, which Miss Rahn took before Actors Equity. She later settled for a written apology from the two men. By that time, "Woman" had opened and received snubs from some of New York's top drama critics.

# FELLOWSHIPS

March 12, 1948

Dear Stevens: Arna Bontemps, whose writings you probably know and who is now Librarian of Fisk University, has a proposal that seems to me might interest you and warrant a grant from your Division. He is entitled to a sabbatical next year, beginning July 1, 1949. The sabbatical provides full salary for a half year or half salary for a full year. He would like to take the full year to do a job which seems to me important, if he can get supplementary financing, somewhere around \$3,000, to enable him to do it. He wants to do a volume on Negro leadership covering the three successive eras and figures: Frederick Douglass, Booker Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Bontemps has done interesting writing in various fields, including some excellent children's books and some significant serious studies. I believe that this proposal is well worthwhile and I am sure he could do it well.

If this seems to you the kind of thing that would fall within your Division, I will suggest that he send a formal outline of his proposal to you.

Very truly yours,

EDWIN R. EMBREE

ERE:NL

Mr. David H. Stevens, Director  
Division of Humanities  
Rockefeller Foundation  
49 West 49th Street  
New York 20, New York

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# FELLOWSHIPS

JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

551 FIFTH AVENUE • NEW YORK 17 • N. Y.

March 16, 1948


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Dr. Edwin R. Embree  
Julius Rosenwald Fund  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago 15, Illinois

Dear Embree:

I thank you for your letter of March 12 about Mr. Arna Bontemps. We shall give him opportunity to present himself for 1949-50.

Sincerely yours,

  
Henry Allen Moe

M:d

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FELLOWSHIPS

March 30, 1948

Dear Mr. Stevens:      Your letter of March 25  
                                         concerning assistance for  
(Arna Bontemps' project has arrived while Mr.  
Embree is out of the country for an absence of  
several weeks. I am sure he will understand the  
position of your Division and will appreciate  
the suggestions you have made regarding possible  
avenues of assistance for Mr. Bontemps.

Very truly yours,

*ncl*

Secretary to Mr. Embree

NL

Mr. David H. Stevens, Director  
The Humanities Division  
The Rockefeller Foundation  
49 West 49th Street  
New York 20, New York

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# VIEWS <sup>and</sup> REVIEWS

by GEORGES SCHUYLER

*Pitt Courier 5/13/37*  
(This column represents the personal opinion of Mr. Schuyler and in no way reflects the editorial opinion of The Pittsburgh Courier.—The Editor.)

Arna Bontemps is one of the very small number of Negro novelists that writes well. In "Black Thunder," a novel of Negro insurrection in pre-Civil War Virginia, he began the exploration of Negro revolutionary source material for literary purposes. He now continues it with "Drums at Dusk," a novel of the beginning of the Haitian slave revolt which adds much to his literary stature. It is written with the delicacy and poetic flavor, the sure knowledge, genteel scorn and dry humor for which Mr. Bontemps has become known. His descriptions are done with the deft adequacy of the skilled etcher, whether he is picturing the Haitian jungle at dawn, the sordid life of Cap Francais or the gay life at the Breda plantation house.

\* \* \*

But for all that, Mr. Bontemps gives the reader the feel of the times and the impression of authenticity, his characterizations often leave something to be desired. Many of them are mere names. Perhaps this may be due to the fact that this is not a long novel, and yet it is crowded with incident which possibly precludes adequate depiction of character in many instances.

This is not to say that the novel does not possess high readability. It certainly does. He has presented a sincere and sympathetic picture of Haitian life and conditions on the eve of the slave uprising, and shown the conflicting forces and personalities at work. His Toussaint is a lovable, homely, canny character, but by no means Homeric, albeit it may be a truer characterization than others to which we are more accustomed.

One thing I like about Mr. Bontemps is that he does not wallow in propaganda. He is first of all a novelist, and only incidentally a Negro. He does not shout his sympathies from the housetops, but there is never any doubt where they lie. I should say that they are human rather than racial. All in all, he has again done a fine piece of work, and I commend it to our aspiring story tellers as an example to follow. (The MacMillan Co., 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y. \$2.50.)

\* \* \*

Novels like those of Arna Bontemps, Zora Hurston, Jessie Fauset, Walter White, Langston Hughes, etc., seem to me to be just the sort of material Negro moving picture producers should be looking for. Any of them could be adapted to the screen and inexpensively produced.

There are said to be about 600 outlets for "race" pictures, and there might be even more for a first class Negro picture produced with sympathy and skill. I can see no reason why such pictures should not be at once popular, educational and profitable. It is not unlikely that a large number of our schools and colleges might rent films of solid historical merit to aid in the study of Negro history. There is certainly a wealth of material at hand, ranging from the days of colonial America to the present. Personally I am sick of so-called "race" pictures that actually malign and traduce Negroes, although acted and directed by Negroes. It is time for us to leave behind the clown and underworld type of movies. If our producers can present bad pictures, as they have been doing, they can also produce good ones.

\* \* \*

It should not be difficult to do for Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Phyllis Wheatley, Colonel Young, the Liberian pioneers and other great Negro

historical characters, what white producers have done for the great white characters of American history. After all, we have also had our grand characters, our pioneers, our founders and champions whose contributions have been equally important and significant. I imagine that audiences would applaud films showing Negro pioneer life in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas as readily as those depicting the doings of white founders. It is largely a matter of skill in presentation. The story of Booker T. Washington would certainly get as enthusiastic reception as did the story of Dr. Carver, from whites as well as Negroes. Even the South might like it—the white South—if it were not too chauvinistic.

\* \* \*

The Negro writer has an opportunity to do as much to break down racial hatred and misunderstanding as anyone else, perhaps more than most people. Many more people will read a story before they will a history.

Our novelists would be more numerous and more skillful, I am sure, if they had more outlets for their work. As things are at present, only the most skillful can hope to get in the big magazines that pay liberally for stories. But a novelist gains skill with practice and publication. It is immensely helpful to a writer to have his work published, even if the payment for it is small.

Unfortunately there are few such outlets today for the aspiring Negro writer who is ambitious to depict the past and present life of his people. Neither our newspapers nor our magazines offer much of an outlet and our few magazines offer even less. This is partially due to the lack of demand on the part of the public that reads Negro newspapers and magazines, and partially due to a feeling on the part of many editors that *belles lettres* are not important.

A writer who has had the experience of seeing his work in print in a Negro newspaper or magazine is quite likely to have it published later by publications of general circulation.

\* \* \*

It seems to me that too many of our writers have neglected the adventure, mystery and detective magazines. Well-written stories with Negro subordinate characters and a sympathetic racial slant would be accepted if submitted. Too many of our writers are too largely interested in getting over a message of racial significance rather than writing a first-rate story. Even the biggest slick-paper magazines have carried stories with sympathetically depicted Negro characters. But naturally they had to be of general interest to be accepted. There is not nearly as much anti-Negro bias in editorial offices as many aspiring Negro writers imagine. Numbers of stories by Negroes have been turned down largely because they were poorly written or were too realistic for general consumption. One must make an effort to cater to the market, but this does not necessarily call for clowning.

\* \* \*

Most good writers, it is true, stem from the middle and upper classes with some background of culture, money and leisure. We have not had much of a background of either. The struggle to merely live has been so great that when we attained security we were more than willing to rest on our laurels. Then, too, many of

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our experiences have been so painful that we would rather forget about them than to chronicle them. Under the circumstances, we haven't been able to cultivate much of the detachment essential to the production of first-class literary work.

As time goes on, however, I feel confident that more and more competent Negro writers will emerge. In the meantime those who have the urge and ambition to write should receive more encouragement than they do, from publications catering to their people, and from producers of motion pictures about Negro life. No people is truly cultured until it has a literature. Writers like Arna Bontemps have shown what the possibilities are.

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Fisk University Library

Nashville 8, Tennessee

ARNA BONTEMPS, LIBRARIAN

March 30, 1948


## FELLOWSHIPS

Mr. Edwin R. Embree  
The Julius Rosenwald Fund  
4901 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Edwin,

Thank you very much for initiating the business  
with Moe. Of course I'll need you again, I'm  
sure. Meanwhile,

Best,



Arna Bontemps

AB/rdj

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