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RALPH J. BUNCHE ORAL HISTORIES COLLECTION ON THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT



The Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection from the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center is a unique resource for the study of the era of the American civil rights movement. Included here are transcriptions of close to 700 interviews with those who made history in the struggles for voting rights, against discrimination in housing, for the desegregation of the schools, to expose racism in hiring, in defiance of police brutality, and to address poverty in the African American communities.

Date Range: 1967-1973 (covers the 1950s through early 1970s)

Content: 27,002 images

Source Library: Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D. C.

Detailed Description:

Source finding aid: [Ralph Bunche Oral Histories](#)

The Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection from the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, Washington, D. C., is a unique resource for the study of the era of the civil rights movement in the United States. Included here are transcriptions of close to 700 interviews with those who made history in the struggles for voting rights, against discrimination in housing, for the desegregation of the schools, to expose racism in hiring, in defiance of police brutality, and to address poverty in the African American communities. Originally envisioned by the late United Nations Secretary Ralph J. Bunche, the body of interviews was first known as the Civil Rights Documentation Project and has been critical to African American scholarship about this period since the first interviews became public in the late 1970's. The alphabetical guide to the names of those interviewed reveals the astounding range of the project. The elite and most respected national figures in the civil rights movement, the founders of numerous Black Power organizations, scholars who developed African American studies as a discipline, educators, lawyers, church leaders, and grassroots organizers from both the rural South and the urban North are all present. They share their diverse views on the anatomy of pivotal struggles, tell stories about their personal political trajectories, and, as a whole, offer insight into the reality of movement life.

A serendipitous selection of the hundreds of voices recorded here include the scholars John Hope Franklin and Rayford Logan, the cultural critic C.L.R. James and the Memorial Bookstore owner Louis Michaux, the organizers James Meredith and Fannie Lou Hammer, the first African American mayor of Atlanta and the communist labor leader William L. Patterson. Not unimportant is the grouping of interviews given the name "Anonymous." The latter include the telling of the experiences of Black high school student strikes and prison rebellions against intolerable conditions. Found as well is commentary on the killing of antiwar students at Jackson State College in 1970; the epic battle for community control of the schools in Ocean-Hill Brownsville, New York City in 1968; politics in the era of Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes; race relations in the U.S. army in Vietnam; the historic Memphis sanitation strike of 1968; the 1963 March on Washington; Malcolm X, and the coordination of the Poor People's Campaign. Organizations represented by the interviewees include the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Congress on Racial Equality, the Freedom Now Party, the National Urban League, the Republic of New Africa, the Black Panther Party, the National Welfare Rights Organization, Organization of Afro-American Unity, the Greenwood Movement, and hundreds of local groups and campaigns. In short, the collection of interviews published here illuminates the struggle for civil rights and African American political power in depth and breadth, both politically and geographically.