

PAPERS OF THE NAACP

**Part 2, 1919-1939:
Personal Correspondence of
Selected NAACP Officials**

A Guide to

**PAPERS OF THE NAACP
Part 2, 1919-1939:
Personal Correspondence of
Selected NAACP Officials**

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NAACP Papers, Part II, Personal Correspondence of Selected NAACP Officials

The Personal Correspondence of Selected NAACP Officials is a selection made by Library of Congress archivists of Association materials deposited at the Library. It does not include the complete personal correspondence of any of the officials but only that which was left in NAACP office files. In theory, the materials are not directly related to the officers' official duties at the Association, but that line of demarcation is not always rigid. Much of the correspondence, for example, is among the officials themselves with ample commentary on Association policies and goals. These instances include writings on the legislative (particularly Federal antilynching legislation), branch organization, and administrative issues with which the NAACP grappled prior to 1939. Likewise, much of the correspondence of Association attorneys offered here refers to NAACP legal redress activities and pending litigation.

Nevertheless, the general pattern running throughout this selection is correspondence between Association officials and their friends and relatives, with other civil rights and reformist organizations, with publishers, editors, and literary correspondents, with journalists and academicians, and, in the case of attorneys Thurgood Marshall and Charles Houston, with clients, fellow professionals, and professional associations (such as the National Bar Association and the Lawyer's Guild). The selections also contain responses to speaking invitations, to requests for employment at the Association or help with employment elsewhere (particularly in the depression years), and to random inquiries from the public and from Association members. In some cases, there are also personal financial records, expense accounts, appointment books, along with rough drafts of articles, speeches, and book reviews.

The office diaries are, like the Personal Correspondence, a collection of what was left in Association files and not necessarily a complete record. They are most complete for 1919 and 1920, break off entirely after 1921, with only the diary of Walter White—then the Association's Executive Secretary—appearing again in the late 1930s. Unlike the correspondence, however, the diaries are not only those of NAACP officers but of a number of lower-level office workers as well. They thus provide insights into the activities of the Association's National Office from the lower to the upper levels.

Charles H. Houston was the Association's first paid, full-time Special Counsel at the National level. His tenure at that position spanned 1934-1939. The selections presented here include: correspondence with former law students and faculty colleagues of Howard University Law School, with his father and law partner, William Houston, with the National Bar Association, the Lawyer's Guild, and other legal-oriented associations such as the American Civil Liberties Union. There is also a fair amount of correspondence with other practicing civil rights attorneys, including many black attorneys working along those lines.

Juanita Jackson was Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary between 1937 and 1938. The focus of her correspondence contained here is with religious, missionary, and social work organizations, including the American Friends Service Committee, the National Training School for Women and Girls, the National Council of Methodist Youth, and others—including many individual social workers. There are also records of her speaking and social engagements.

James Weldon Johnson was the National Field Secretary (1916-20), Acting Secretary (1920), and ultimately Secretary (1920-30). Almost all of the selection offered here which does not pertain to social engagements is literary correspondence with publishers, aspiring poets, and literary groups.

Thurgood Marshall was an attorney for the Baltimore Branch of the NAACP in the early 1930s, moved to the National Office as Assistant Special Counsel to Charles Houston in 1937, and succeeded Houston as Special Counsel in 1939. Much of his personal correspondence focuses on his private practice in Baltimore, civil rights litigation through the Baltimore Branch, and communication as a Branch attorney with the National Office. Large parts of this selection also deal with Marshall's efforts in support of Federal antilynching legislation in the mid 1930s. There are also separate file groupings containing his correspondence with Charles Houston, with the National Bar Association (and as a Bar Association official), and with clients in individual court cases. Of considerable significance are Marshall's personal records of major civil rights litigation he undertook in regard to the Baltimore County Public Schools and University of Maryland. (It must be noted, however, that these are not the complete official Association records on these cases which is contained in Legal Files I-D-45 [Baltimore Co. Public School Case] and I-D-93-94 [University of Maryland Case], which University Publications of America plans to publish as part of its legal redress supplements.)

E. Frederick Morrow was National Branch Coordinator from 1938-44. Much of the correspondence here concerns Morrow's home state, New Jersey, where topics of the letters involve grammar school segregation, textbook selection, discrimination in civil service appointments, and the functioning of the New Jersey state NAACP. There is also a considerable amount of correspondence with national-level officers and on the national goals and policies of the Association. Also included are drafts of newspaper articles and speeches, travel schedules, and a travel log for 1939.

Mary White Ovington was Secretary (1911-12), Acting Secretary (1916), Acting Chairman of the Board (1917-18), Chairman of the Board (1919-1932), and Treasurer (1933-47). Much of the selection pertains to literary correspondence and efforts to promote Ovington's book, *Portraits in Color*. There is also a broad range of correspondence with journalists, academicians, reform organizations such as the YMCA, missionary societies, social work organizations, and philanthropic foundations, particularly the Rosenwald Fund. Beginning in 1932 the correspondence with Walter White and other NAACP officers regarding Association operations becomes sizable.

William Pickens was Field Secretary (1920-1938) and Director of Branches (1939-41). Much of the correspondence is with academicians and with Negro fraternal and civil rights organizations of which Pickens was a member. There is some literary correspondence, particularly as regards the promotion of Pickens's book, *American Aesop*. Much also refers to speaking and social engagements.

Walter F. White was Assistant Secretary (1918-29), Acting Secretary (1929-30), and Secretary (1931-35). A vast amount of the selection for the 1920s is in the nature of literary correspondence, much of it dealing with "Harlem Renaissance" activities, attempts to promote White's books, *Fire in the Flint* and *Rope and Faggot*, and communications with renowned authors such as Rebecca West, Sinclair Lewis, and many others. There is also a large amount of correspondence between White and such "Harlem Renaissance" figures as Paul and Essie Robeson, Roland Hayes, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes which continues through the 1930s, after much of the other literary correspondence trails off. Also extending from the 1920s through the 1930s is White's voluminous correspondence with book publishers and editors and with editors of popular periodicals (such as *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and *The American Mercury*).

After 1930, the material tends to be more political and to focus more on Association activities. A list of major topics would include the Scottsboro case, the Crawford extradition case, the internal Association controversy over W.E.B. Du Bois's voluntary segregation theories, and above all, efforts to enact Federal antilynching legislation. Still other valuable correspondence covers possible political activity in the campaign of Al Smith, reports on racial abuses during the Arkansas flood and Levee construction project, and efforts to expand job opportunities for depression-stricken blacks through federal and state civil service. Also significant among the 1930s correspondence are White's communications with philanthropic foundations—including the Rosenwald, the Russell Sage, the Guggenheim, and others—and his efforts to secure support from such sources for black artists such as Langston Hughes.

Other significant clusters of material would include records of social and speaking engagements, correspondence with other Association officials, particularly Joel and Arthur Spingarn, rough drafts of magazine articles and book reviews, and a few annual office diaries (for 1932, 1933, and 1934).

Roy Wilkins was Assistant Secretary (1932-51), Acting Secretary (1951-54), and Secretary (1955-78). He also served as editor of the Association's official organ, *The Crisis* (1935-55). Much of the Correspondence collected here is between Wilkins and fellow journalists. There is also some editorial-related correspondence regarding *The Crisis*.

Office Diaries: As distinct from the "personal" nature of the correspondence files, the Office Diaries reflect the *official* activities of Association employees during the years they cover. The diaries were kept by lower-level office workers as well as by the Association officers during the early 1920s. This is not necessarily a complete collection of office diaries but only those which were left in the NAACP collection deposited at the Library of Congress. There are two diaries for Walter White in 1938; apparently each was the record of the work of a separate secretary working under Mr. White that year. Other office diaries for Walter White during the 1930s can be found in his personal correspondence files.

In order to maintain uniformity in scholarly reference of these materials, UPA strictly follows the Library of Congress filing system. File Boxes and file designations are noted in the user's guide.

Finally, because the original materials were of most uneven quality, there may be some documents which are more legible to the naked eye in the original at the Library of Congress. UPA efforts to improve upon the darkness of some extremely light materials has, on some reels, compromised the clarity of the frame counter, and in a few rarer cases compromised the clarity of extremely dark or inky materials. Usually, however, these technical compromises can be corrected through the use of a more modern, precisely focused microform reader. Every technical effort has been made to produce the most legible copy possible.

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- 0372 Houston, Charles Hamilton, September 1935.
- 0396 Houston, Charles Hamilton, October-November 1935.
- 0424 Houston, Charles Hamilton, January-February 1936.
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- 0598 Houston, Charles Hamilton, October-December 1936.
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- 0002 Houston, Charles Hamilton, October-November 1937.
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- 0571 Johnson, James Weldon, May-August 1927.
- 0597 Johnson, James Weldon, September-December 1927.
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- 0208 Marshall, Thurgood, September-December 1936.*
- 0230 Marshall, Thurgood, 1938-1939.
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- 0306 Marshall, Thurgood, Antilynching Bill, 1936.
- 0419 Marshall, Thurgood, Baltimore County Public School Case, January 1934-December 1935.**

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- 0002 Marshall, Thurgood, National Bar Association, 1937 and undated.
- 0046 Marshall, Thurgood, Olive Jones Case, 1936.
- 0078 Marshall, Thurgood, Rice Perkins Case, 1936.
- 0099 Marshall, Thurgood, University of Maryland Case, February 1933-December 1934.
- 0117 Marshall, Thurgood, University of Maryland Case, January-April 1935.
- 0142 Marshall, Thurgood, University of Maryland Case, May-June 1935.
- 0173 Marshall, Thurgood, University of Maryland Case, July-September 1935.
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- 0246 Marshall, Thurgood, Virtus Lucas Case, 1936.

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- 0322 Marshall, Thurgood, Legal Documents, Baltimore County Public School Case, 1936 Reports.
- 0394 Marshall, Thurgood, Legal Documents, Baltimore County Public School Case, 1936.
- 0641 Marshall, Thurgood, Legal Documents, University of Maryland Case, 1936.

*Files inadvertently filmed out of sequence.

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- 0039 Marshall, Thurgood, National Bar Association Convention, 1937.
- 0090 Marshall, Thurgood, National Bar Association Cashbook, 1936-1937.
- 0155 Marshall, Thurgood, National Bar Association, Committee Reports and Resolutions, 1937.
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- 0195 Law School Notes.
- 0289 Marshall, Thurgood, University of Maryland Case, Clippings, 1934-1936.
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0395 White, Walter, November 15-24, 1926.
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- 0174 White, Walter, May 9-31, 1932.
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- 0404 White, Walter, September 6-21, 1932.
- 0444 White, Walter, September 15-October 7, 1932.
- 0470 White, Walter, October 8-26, 1932.
- 0503 White, Walter, October 28-November 10, 1932.
- 0535 White, Walter, November 11-16, 1932.
- 0574 White, Walter, November 16-December 5, 1932.
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- 0643 White, Walter, December 20-30, 1932.
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- 0125 White, Walter, May 15-June 22, 1933.
- 0161 White, Walter, June 23-July 14, 1933.
- 0194 White, Walter, July 18-August 30, 1933.
- 0225 White, Walter, September 5-26, 1933.
- 0260 White, Walter, September 26-October 13, 1933.
- 0281 White, Walter, October 9-26, 1933.
- 0311 White, Walter, October 24-November 2, 1933.
- 0348 White, Walter, November 7-16, 1933.
- 0372 White, Walter, November 21-December 11, 1933.
- 0402 White, Walter, December 11-27, 1933.

- 0447 White, Walter, January 2-February 1, 1934.
- 0470 White, Walter, February 6-March 8, 1934.

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- 0505 White, Walter, March 9-31, 1934.
- 0541 White, Walter, April 2-30, 1934.
- 0567 White, Walter, May 1-23, 1934.
- 0602 White, Walter, May 24-June 4, 1934.
- 0621 White, Walter, June 6-14, 1934.
- 0653 White, Walter, June 14-July 13, 1934.
- 0686 White, Walter, July 14-August 1, 1934.
- 0715 White, Walter, August 1-24, 1934.

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L.C. File Box I-C-105 cont.

- 0002 White, Walter, August 25-September 19, 1934.
- 0033 White, Walter, September 20-27, 1934.
- 0067 White, Walter, September 28-October 9, 1934.
- 1160 White, Walter, October 11-19, 1934.
- 0138 White, Walter, October 21-November 15, 1934.
- 0172 White, Walter, November 15-30, 1934.

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- 0216 White, Walter, December 5-14, 1934.
- 0242 White, Walter, December 15-29, 1934.
- 0275 White, Walter, January 2-26, 1935.
- 0322 White, Walter, February 4-28, 1935.
- 0358 White, Walter, March 1-18, 1935.
- 0392 White, Walter, March 21-April 15, 1935.
- 0432 White, Walter, April 17-May 11, 1935.
- 0470 White, Walter, May 13-June 6, 1935.
- 0505 White, Walter, June 9-19, 1935.

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- 0540 White, Walter, June 21-August 14, 1935.
- 0587 White, Walter, August 16-September 6, 1935.
- 0613 White, Walter, September 9-19, 1935.
- 0637 White, Walter, September 20-27, 1935.
- 0679 White, Walter, September 29-October 14, 1935.
- 0708 White, Walter, October 15-November 15, 1935.

Reel 18

L.C. File Box I-C-107 cont.

- 0002 White, Walter, November 16-25, 1935.
- 0018 White, Walter, November 26-December 9, 1935.
- 0052 White, Walter, December 12-31, 1935; May 1939.
- 0100 White, Walter, January 2-February 7, 1936.
- 0147 White, Walter, February 13-March 4, 1936.
- 0177 White, Walter, March 6-April 7, 1936.
- 0215 White, Walter, April 1-May 12, 1936.
- 0258 White, Walter, May 16-July 5, 1936.

- 0314 White, Walter, July 19-August 29, 1936.
- 0351 White, Walter, September 8-23, 1936.

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- 0384 White, Walter, September 24-October 14, 1936.
- 0417 White, Walter, October 15-November 12, 1936.
- 0456 White, Walter, November 12-30, 1936.
- 0480 White, Walter, December 5-10, 1936.
- 0501 White, Walter, December 11-30, 1936.
- 0523 White, Walter, January 18-February 27, 1937.
- 0584 White, Walter, March 1-April 6, 1937.
- 0634 White, Walter, June 2-14, 1937.
- 0652 White, Walter, January 2-October 15, 1937.

Reel 19

L.C. File Box I-C-108 cont.

- 0002 White, Walter, October 20-November 10, 1937.
- 0049 White, Walter, November 15-December 30, 1937.

L.C. File Box I-C-109

- 0105 White, Walter, January 3-April 5, 1938.
- 0193 White, Walter, April 6-May 18, 1938.
- 0231 White, Walter, May 19-June 14, 1938.
- 0278 White, Walter, June 15-July 10, 1938.
- 0308 White, Walter, July 11-September 30, 1938.
- 0367 White, Walter, October 1-November 22, 1938.
- 0434 White, Walter, November 23-December 17, 1938.
- 0489 White, Walter, December 18-31, 1938.

L.C. File Box I-C-110

- 0502 Wilkins, Roy,* 1931-1932.
- 0517 Wilkins, Roy,* 1933-1935.
- 0539 Wilkins, Roy,* 1936.
- 0556 Wilkins, Roy,* 1937.
- 0594 Wilkins, Roy,* 1938-1939.
- 0629 White, Walter, January 10-February 21, 1939.
- 0686 White, Walter, March 2-17, 1939.

Reel 20

L.C. File Box I-C-110 cont.

- 0002 White, Walter, April-May 1939.
- 0039 White, Walter, June 1939.
- 0063 White, Walter, July-August 1939.
- 0090 White, Walter, September-October 1939.
- 0111 White, Walter, November-December 1939.
- 0153 White, Walter, Undated.

*Filmed out of sequence.

L.C. File Box I-C-111

- 0229 Heyward, M.E., Office Diaries, 1920.
- 0234 Bagnal, R.W., Office Diaries, 1921.
- 0237 Hunton, A.W., Office Diaries, 1921.
- 0240 Johnson, J.W., Office Diaries, 1919-20.
- 0248 Johnson, J.W., Office Diaries, 1921.
- 0260 Lealtad, C., Office Diaries, 1921.
- 0264 Ovington, Mary White, Office Diaries, 1920-21.
- 0288 Randolph, R., Office Diaries, 1920-21.
- 0306 Seligman, H.J., Office Diaries, 1920-21.
- 0309 Stowe, E.G., Office Diaries, 1919-20.
- 0356 Pickens, William, Office Diaries, 1921.
- 0358 Shillady, J.R., Office Diaries, 1920.
- 0428 White, Walter, * Office Diaries, 1920-21.
- 0442 White, Walter, Office Diaries, 1937.

L.C. File Box I-C-112

- 0534 White, Walter, Office Diaries, 1938.
- 0604 White, Walter, Office Diaries, 1939.
- 0718 White, Walter, Office Diaries, 1938.**

*For other Office Diaries of Walter White, see contents of files beginning at Reel 11: 0431 for 1929-30; Reel 15: 0535 for 1932; Reel 16: 0402 for 1933; and Reel 17: 0172 for 1934.

**Filmed out of sequence. The correspondence logged on this office diary was apparently dictated to a secretary (Richetta Randolph), while the correspondence for 1938 on the diary beginning on frame 0534 was either penned by White himself or dictated to yet another secretary.

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