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Richetta Randolph Wallace –NAACP Papers  
1906-1971

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## Introduction

The Richetta Randolph Wallace Papers contain material about the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and its prominent leaders as the organization emerged and developed over the first half of the twentieth century. The NAACP addressed inequities in American society through legal and other strategies and became the preeminent interracial civil rights organization of that century. At the time Ms. Randolph became associated with the NAACP (circa 1910), it was just being established and several items in her collection shed light on how the organization began. The collection contains material about critical court proceedings pertaining to the struggle to secure civil rights for African Americans and to eliminate Jim Crow laws and lynching in the United States.

Included among the materials are photos of some of the early leaders of the NAACP, which are now housed in the Brooklyn Historical Society's Photograph Collection. Highlights of the images include: Dr. Louis T. Wright, Chairman of the Board of Directors, NAACP; Arthur B. Spingarn, Vice-President NAACP; James Weldon Johnson, Secretary, NAACP; William Pickens, Field Secretary; Walter White, Secretary, NAACP; Mary White Ovington, Treasurer, Board of Directors, NAACP; and Roy Wilkins, Assistant Secretary, and later Secretary, NAACP. Provenance information for the collection is unknown.

## Biographical Note

**Richetta G. Randolph** (1884 - c. 1971) was born May 12, 1884 in Chesterfield County, Virginia, but attended schools in Plainview, New Jersey. While in her early twenties, she launched a career in office administration after attending Gaffey's Business School in New York City. Her family origins and early life remain obscure, for although correspondence between her and A. Phillip Randolph (1889-1979) presume a relationship as siblings, their biographies differ as to place of origin and early education<sup>1</sup>. In 1914, she married Frank E. Wallace. Mr. Wallace is rarely mentioned in the collection, except for some letters and notes written by him, one of which is presumably a suicide note, written in 1921. Ms. Randolph did not remarry. In 1933, she moved to 251 Decatur Street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York, where she lived up to the 1970s.

In 1905, Ms. Randolph became private secretary to reformer and social worker Mary White Ovington (1865-1951). Seven years later, Ms. Randolph was hired as the first member of the administrative staff for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She later became the NAACP's office manager and was private secretary to NAACP officers James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) and Walter White (1893-1955). She also served as Clerk of the Conference for NAACP annual conferences. In 1945, Ms. Randolph became the Clerk of the Board and Confidential Secretary to the Executive Secretary. She held the latter position for one year until her full retirement from the NAACP in 1946, at which time she continued to work for her church, the historically black Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in Manhattan. She became the Secretary to Dr. O. Clay Maxwell of Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, a position she held for over a decade. Her involvement with Mt. Olivet was multifaceted, for in addition to her secretarial duties, at different points in her life she served on the Board of Trustees, helped to raise funds, represented the church at out-of-town meetings and wrote a play depicting its history.

Randolph kept a scrapbook with material from her anniversary celebration (in 1943)

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<sup>1</sup> Asa Philip Randolph was born in Crescent City, Florida in 1889 and is said to be the first of two sons to Rev. James William Randolph and his wife Elizabeth Robinson Randolph. Reverend Randolph was a Minister in the African Methodist Episcopalian church and a tailor by trade.

commemorating 30 years of service to the NAACP. On this occasion, people who had worked with her or met her at the NAACP sent her cards and monetary gifts. She was knowledgeable of and had close relationships with several members of the NAACP leadership. Chief among them was Mary White Ovington with whom a strong relationship grew after years of working with her independently and then through the NAACP; this relationship continued right up to Ms. Ovington's death in 1951.

#### Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of Randolph's personal and business papers. Her personal papers consist of items such as correspondence, receipts, manuscripts, newspaper clippings and personal ephemera including many brochures and pamphlets as well as a scrapbook and cards. There are biographical materials on James Weldon Johnson, John Lindsay, and Walter White; it also includes materials concerning court cases involving civil rights, lynchings, and murders of African Americans in the United States. The galley proof of James W. Johnson's publication Black Manhattan, which dates back to 1930, is also included.

The bulk of the material addresses issues in African-American history and civil rights, some pertaining to the NAACP, others to her involvement in a historical black church and to her interest in African American literary arts. Among the NAACP items are materials on the Arkansas Case of July 1922 and the Scottsboro Boys Case from 1931. Included is a piece called Mutiny?, a true story of 50 African-American seamen who refused to load ammunition for three weeks after an explosion killed over 300 black seamen at Port Chicago, on the San Francisco Bay, July 17, 1944; and Scottsboro Limited (1932), a little known publication by "Negro Poet Laureate" Langston Hughes (1902 -1967).

In the collection, Randolph maintained separate files of her correspondence with: James Weldon Johnson, John Lindsay, Mary White Ovington, Walter White and others. Her own literary interests and talents are also reflected: Randolph played a role in "The Struggle", a play performed at the Berkeley Theatre on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1911 at Fifth Avenue and 44<sup>th</sup> Street, and also wrote a play (1953) depicting the history of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church entitled "Mt. Olivet: Yesterday and Today". In 1963, at the age of 79, she wrote that she really must retire now "... I am just plain tired."

The collection, originally arranged and described in 1978, was rearranged and described by Tanya Elder, Project Assistant Archivist, in September and October of 1997. The current edition of this finding aid benefited from a thorough survey of the collection completed by Judith A. Burgess in May 2006, at which time the description was expanded, more of the fragile records were protected, and the finding aid was enhanced and digitized.

Many of materials in this collection are extremely fragile and should be handled with care until the collection can be transferred to acid-free paper. Many of the clippings in the collection are brittle and the majority of the correspondence has frayed edges.

The collection has been arranged into three series: I - NAACP, II - Personal Papers, and III - Papers of James Weldon Johnson.

#### *Series I: NAACP, 1914-1971. 0.5 box, .25 linear feet*

This series consists of correspondence, clippings, NAACP publications, and Honorary Dinner programs. Randolph worked for the NAACP until the 1940s, but continued as an active member and advisor well into the 1970s. Correspondence includes letters to and from Arthur Spingarn, Walter White, and Roy Wilkins. Also included are several histories of the NAACP, press releases, pamphlets and publications of the NAACP.

*Series II: Personal Papers of Richetta Randolph Wallace, 1906 -1971. 3 boxes, 1.5 linear feet*

This series includes correspondence, photographs, ephemera, a large collection of pamphlets, clippings, and an extensive amount of information on Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in Manhattan. Individual correspondents include: Mary White Ovington, A. Phillip Randolph, Walter White, and Roy Wilkins.

*Series III: James Weldon Johnson Papers, 1918-1970. 1.5 boxes, .75 linear feet*

Richetta Randolph worked for the NAACP during and after Johnson's tenure as its leader. Randolph helped Johnson conduct research on Black Manhattan, which chronicled the history of Blacks in New York City. There is a full draft, with notes, plus a galley proof of the book, as well as one folder of research conducted by Randolph for Johnson. Johnson was killed in a fatal car accident in 1938, and the collection also contains newspaper clippings about his death, plus letters to and from Carl Van Vechten, who compiled Johnson's papers into a collection currently housed at Yale University. Biographical material, articles, congratulatory letters, and a small collection of materials on Johnson's 1929 trip to Japan are also included.

#### Related Materials

Photographs from the collection have been removed to the Brooklyn Historical Society Image Collection.

Researchers may also be interested in the following collections of materials at other repositories:

James Weldon Johnson Collection. American Literature Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

James Weldon Johnson Papers. Special Collections Department, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

NAACP Records. Library of Congress Manuscript Division Washington, D.C.

Mary White Ovington Papers. American Literature Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

#### Access Terms

Johnson, James Weldon, 1871-1938

Ovington, Mary White, 1865-1951

Randolph, A. Philip (Asa Philip), 1889-

Randolph, Richetta G.

Van Vechten, Carl, 1880-1964

White, Walter Francis, 1893-1955

Mount Olivet Baptist Church (New York, N.Y.)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

African-American Churches—New York (State)—New York

African Americans—History—1877-1964

Civil Rights—United States

Lynching—United States

Clippings  
 Correspondence  
 Ephemera  
 Galley Proofs  
 Pamphlets

Container List

**Series I: NAACP, 1914-1970, Bulk Dates, 1940s**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Clippings	1940s-1970s
	2	Correspondence	1932-1948 and undated
	3	Correspondence, Richetta Randolph to NAACP and vice-versa	1932-1971
	4	Fundraising Materials	1960s
	5	Histories of NAACP and Objectives -“History of the Des Moines Branch”, by S. J. Brown, 1939 -“How the NAACP Began”, by Mary White Ovington, 1914 -“A Memorandum to the Board of Directors of the NAACP-On the Objects and Methods of the Organization”, by W.E.B. DuBois, circa 1914 -“The First Line of Defense: A Summary of 20 years of Civil Rights Struggle for American Negroes”, circa 1931 -“No Larger Ambition: The Story of the Committee of 100”, circa 1946 -“Story of a Gifted Negro”, <i>Baltimore Evening Sun</i> , October 28, 1933 (review of James Weldon Johnson, <i>Along This Way</i> )	1914-circa 1946
	6	Honorary Dinners and Events	1929-1968
	7	“March on Milwaukee” Brochure	1967
	8	Miscellaneous Materials and Ephemera	1928, 1967, and undated
	9	National Urban League Dinner Program	1935
	10	Press Releases	1941-1968
	11	Pamphlets and Publications (1 of 2)	circa 1920-1966 and undated
	12	Pamphlets and Publications (2 of 2)	circa 1914-1968

**Series II: Personal Papers, 1906-1971**

**Subseries a: General Correspondence**

1	A-L		1912-1970 and undated
2	M-Z		1913-1970 and undated

**Subseries b: Individuals: Correspondence, Clippings, & Publications**

1	Carter, Norman (Pianist killed in car crash-see Photo Collection)		1930s
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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
2	2	King, Martin Luther, Jr.	1960s
	3	Lindsay, John	1965
	4	Ovington, Mary White	1931-1951
	5	Powell, Adam Clayton, Sr. and Abyssinian Baptist Church, & John Haynes Holmes	1910-1932 and undated
	6	Randolph, A. Phillip	1940-1959
	7	Waldren, Nathan	1963-1965
	8	White, Walter and Roy Wilkins	1943-1955

***Subseries c: Personal Papers***

1	Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration	1969
2	Clippings (FRAGILE)	1920s-1970s
3	DeSoto Car	1936-1940
4	Ephemera	1907-1955 and undated
5	Manuscripts	1906, 1911 and undated
6	Personal Records, Memberships and Paycheck Stubs	1948-1949, 1970
7	Scrapbook	1914-1949
8	"The Secret Place" Receipts (for the purchase of...)	1964-1971

***Subseries d: Pamphlets***

1	Black Education in America -Racial Inequalities in Education", NAACP, 1938 -"Anti-Negro Propaganda in School Textbooks", 1939 -"The Color Line in Our Public School", by Harlan E. Glazier, ca. 1936	1938-1939, and undated
2	Black University Publications - <i>Fisk Herald</i> , V. 33, No. 1, 1924 - <i>Lincoln University, School of Journalism Bulletin</i> , V. 18, No. 3, 1942 - <i>Spellman Messenger</i> , V. 74, No. 4, 1958	1924-1958
3	"Clarence Darrow in the Case of Matthew Sweet", NAACP	1926
4	Discrimination in World Wars -"It's Our Country, Too: The Negro Demands the Right to be Allowed to Fight for It", by Walter White, 1940 -"Mutiny? The Real Story of How the Navy branded ...", 1945 -"On Clipped Wings: The Story of Jim Crow in the Army Air Corps", by William H. Hastie, 1943	circa 1936-1945

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
2	4	Discrimination in World Wars (cont.) -“Preserve the Olympic Ideal: A Statement of the Case Against Participation in the Olympic Games at Berlin”, ca 1936 -“The War’s Greatest Scandal! The Story of Jim Crow in Uniform”, by Dwight & Nancy Macdonald, ca 1943	circa 1936-1945
3	5	DuBois, W.E.B. (WEBD) -Debate: “Shall the Negro be Encouraged to Seek Cultural Equality?”, 1929 -“Annual Fellowship Dinner”, NAACP, 1966 -“Dinner in Honor of WEBD”, New York, 1924	1924-1966
	6	Johnson, James Weldon -“American Negro Spirituals”, 1926 -“Changing Status of Negro Labor”, 1918 -“Conquest of Haiti”, by Herbert Seligman, 1920 -“Self-Determining Haiti”, 1920	1918-1926
	7	Lynching in the United States -“Can the States Stop Lynching?”, NAACP, ca 1937 -“Federal Law to Curb Lynching”, NAACP, ca 1934 -“Fight Against Lynching”, NAACP, 1919 -“Lynchings and What They Mean”, ca 1931 -“Lynching Goes Underground”, undated -“NAACP vs. U.S. Government: Pippen and Harden, undated -“Memorandum Brief for the Attorney General of the US”, NAACP, 1933 -“Plight of Tuscaloosa”, 1933 -“Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918”, NAACP, 1919	1919; 1930s and undated
	8	Miscellaneous Pamphlets -“Calendars for 200 Years, 1776-1976”, 1941 -“Independence Hall”, Bulletins #3, 4, 5, 1923 -“Program of the First Meeting of the Negro Sanhedrin”, 1924 -“Statement from Governor Hugh M. Dorsey as to the Negro in Georgia”, 1921 -“Story of Woodrow Wilson”, by David Loth, 1944 -“William Penn’s Advice to His Children”, undated -“The World at the Crossroads”, World Citizens Association, 1946	1921-1946 and undated
	9	Nixon, L. A. vs. C.C. Herndon and Charles Porras (a voting rights case)	1926
	10	Outlines for Literature Courses -“Creative Reading: A Course in Current Literature”, 1928 -“Outline for the Study of the Poetry of American Negroes”, by Sterling Brown (ed. by James Weldon Johnson), 1931	1928-1931
	11	Racial Justice in America - “The Arkansas Cases”, NAACP, 1922 -“Black Justice”, American Civil Liberties Union, 1931 -“Black Man and White Ladyship: An Anniversary”, by Nancy Cunard, 1931 -“Business Girl Looks at the Negro World”, by Frances Harriet Williams, Young Women’s Christian Association, 1937 -“Challenge of the Disenfranchised: A Plea for the Enforcement of the 15th	1922-1956

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
3	11	Racial Justice in America (cont.) Amendment", The American Negro Academy, 1924 -"Dabney Enters Heaven", by Mary D. Brite, 1931 -"Legislation on Discrimination in Housing", State of New York, 1956 -"Let's Be Honest About Democracy", NAACP, 1939 -"March on Washington...One Year After", by Albert Parker, 1942 -"Negro Press Hits Back", by Roy Wilkins, 1943 -"Negro Wants Full Equality", by Roy Wilkins, 1944 -"An Open Letter to the City Council of Oberlin and the Respectable Citizens: The Robinson-Freed Case, Was Justice Miscarried", 1927 -"Savage Civilization", by A.R. Schooler, 1926 -"White Hypocrisy and Black Lethargy", by Snow F. Grigsby, 1937 -"Will the Education of the Negro Solve the Race Problem?", by Elsie M. Horsey, 1922	1922-1956
	12	Scottsboro Case -"Scottsboro", by Clarence Darrow, NAACP, 1932 -"The Scottsboro Case", NAACP, 1931 -"Scottsboro Limited", by Langston Hughes, 1932 -"Scottsboro: A Record of a Broken Promise...", ca 1937	1931-circa 1937
	13	Writings, Poems and Narratives - <i>Black Opals: Hail Negro Youth</i> , V. 1, No. 3, June 1928 - <i>Cavalcade of the American Negro</i> , Illinois Writer's Project, 1940 - <i>Double Dealer</i> , V. VII, No. 39, Oct. 1924 -"Montgomery, Alabama Money, Mississippi and Other Places: A Pamphlet in Poetry", by Eve Merriam, 1956 -"Power of Womanhood: A Speech", by Joseph Wellington, 1912 -"Selected Writings of James Hardy Dillard", 1932	1912-1956
<b><i>Subseries e: Church-Related Papers</i></b>			
	1	Anniversary Plays (Mt. Olivet Baptist)	1953
	2	Clippings, Pastor Hayes' Resignation	1933
	3	Correspondence, Mt. Olivet	1923-1943
	4	Dedication Programme and Bylaws	1920-1925
	5	Directory, Mt. Olivet	1952
4	6	Mt. Olivet church meeting notes and announcements of the Baptist Young People's Union	1911-1918
	7	"Mt. Olivet: Yesterday & Today", (a play) by R. Randolph	1953
	8	"Mt. Olivet: Yesterday & Today", typescript and notes	circa 1953
	9	Pamphlets, Mt. Olivet (Includes: "A Race Between Two Straits", by Rev. William Reed, 1912)	1912, 1950s -1970s

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
4	10	Pamphlets, Other Churches -“Church Defender”, by Diana Guerry Turpin, 1927 -“Emotion in Religion”, by William Thomas Amiger, 1917 -“Life Work of the Late Cora D. Shaw in the Church and the Community”, by Bernetta Carter, 1953 -“New England Baptist Sunday School Convention(s)”, Minutes of 14 <sup>th</sup> annual session, Newark, NJ, 1907; Minutes of 18 <sup>th</sup> annual session, Philadelphia, PA, 1911 -“ <i>The Mission</i> ”, publication of the National Baptist Convention, 1966 -“Negro Pulpit Opinion: A Monthly Pamphlet of Preaching”, Three Volumes: <i>The men who let us drink</i> , undated <i>The answer of religion to the question of life</i> , ca 1928 <i>Looking to the hills</i> , undated - <i>The Pulpit: A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching</i> , V. 1, No.1, January 1931 -“Til Shiloh Comes”, by Marguerite and H. Gordon, 1964 -“Vignettes of Persons Memorialized and Honored by Loved Ones Friends, In the Furnishings of Rooms, Areas, Offices and Special Facilities of the National Council of Churches of Christ”, 1961 -“St. Martin’s Church: Book of the Consecration”, 1944 -“The Miracle” (a pantomime) staged by Max Reinhardt, souvenir journal, 1924	1907-1964 and undated
11		<i>The Pilot</i> , (Mt. Olivet Newsletter)	1922-1926
12		Programs, Flyers, and other church material	1924-1965
13		Sermon by Reverend S.L. Johnson, (reported by R. Randolph)	1909
14		“Women’s Day”, Mt. Olivet Baptist (letters, programs, misc.)	1940-1946
<b>Series III: James Weldon Johnson Papers, 1918-1970</b>			
1		Articles by James Weldon Johnson (See also: Series II: Subseries d: Pamphlets: James W. Johnson, Box 2, Folder 16) -“Africa in the World Democracy”, with Horace Meyer Kallen, 1919 -“Changing Status of Negro Labor”, Address, 1918 -“The Larger Success”, from <i>The Southern Worker</i> , (September) 1923 -“Leadership and the Times”, Address to the NAACP, 1937 -“Legal Aspects of the Negro Problem”, with Herbert Seligman, 1928 -“Lynching: America’s National Disgrace”, 1924 -“Race Problem and Peace”, 1924 -“Self-Determining Haiti”, 1920 -“Washington Riots: An NAACP Investigation”, 1919 -“What America Owes the Negro”, <i>Our World</i> , (August) 1923	1918-1928
5	2	Biographical Information	1920s; undated typescripts
	3	<u>Black Manhattan</u> , manuscript, pages 1-121	circa 1930
	4	<u>Black Manhattan</u> , manuscript, pages 122-238	circa 1930
	5	<u>Black Manhattan</u> , Galley Proof	1930s
	6	<u>Black Manhattan</u> , Research	1930s

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
5	7	Clippings	1930-1933
	8	Correspondence to Richetta Randolph	1925-1931 and undated
	9	Death of James Weldon Johnson, Clippings (FRAGILE)	1938
	10	<u>God's Trombones</u> , Congratulatory Letters and Memory Book	1927
	11	Memorial and Correspondence with Carl Van Vechten	1938-1970
	12	Trip to Japan	1929