# African American Studies Research Guide: Online Primary Sources

**Primary Sources**

Primary sources are documents that were recorded or written down at the time an event occurred. Primary sources can include diaries, letters, speeches, photographs, newspaper articles, government documents, and much more. For more information, see [What are Primary Sources](#).

To find primary sources held at the MSU Libraries, perform a keyword search in the library catalog with the terms `african americans` and one of the following subject keyword(s): `archives`, `archival resources`, `correspondence`, `diaries`, `manuscripts`, `notebooks`, `sketchbooks`, etc.; `personal narratives`; `personnel records`; `records and correspondence`; and `sources`. The last option -- `sources` will probably be the most productive.

**Primary Sources Online Exhibit**

Primary Sources Online Exhibit - Introduces the many types of primary sources used by researchers, with examples from Special Collections. Courtesy of Ruth Ann Jones and Lesley Brown.

**FBI Files on Microfilm**

Check the microfilm tab for some of our microfilm holdings located on 2 West.
FBI Records Are Also Available Electronically

To find electronic FBI records, do a subject search in the MSU Library online catalog using the subject United States Federal Bureau Of Investigation Archives

Examples of files on notable African American or related topics include:

- Atlanta Child Murders
- Bayard Rustin (FBI Vault)
- Benjamin Hooks (FBI Vault)
- Betty Shabazz (FBI Vault)
- Billie Holiday
- Black Panther Party
- Charles “Sonny” Liston
- Coretta Scott King (FBI Vault)
- E. B. (William) Du Bois (FBI Vault)
- Elijah Muhammad
- Emmett Till (FBI Vault)
- Fannie Lou Hamer (FBI Vault)
- Fred Hampton (FBI Vault)
- Freedom Riders (FBI Vault)
- Gangster Disciples
- Jackie Robinson (FBI Vault)
- James Farmer (FBI Vault)
- Ku Klux Klan (FBI Vault)
- Louis Allen (FBI Vault)
- Malcolm X
- Marian Anderson (FBI Vault)
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Medgar Evers
- MIBURN (Mississippi Burning)
- Moorish Temple (FBI Vault)
- NAACP (FBI Vault)
- Nation of Islam
- Paul and Eslanda Robeson
- Richard Nathaniel Wright (FBI Vault)
- Sixteenth Street Church Bombing (FBI Vault)
- Stokely Carmichael (FBI Vault)
- Thurgood Marshall (FBI Vault)

Check out the FBI Civil Rights Vault online.
From the MSU Special Collections Library

An Introduction to the Black Panthers available online in the American Radicalism Collection in the MSU Special Collections Library.

For more Black Panther items, visit the Black Panther Digital Collection of the MSU Libraries.

Eight Who Lie in the Death House available online in the American Radicalism Collection in the MSU Special Collections Library.

For more online resources, visit the Scottsboro Boys Digital Collection of the MSU Libraries.

Pittsburgh Gazette Advertisement for the Sale of Slaves and the Capture and Return of Runaway Slaves, 1786

For more information about slavery in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area, visit the Free at Last? Slavery in Pittsburgh in the 18th and 19th Centuries.
Reward for Runaway Slave Named Emily in Ohio, 1853

For more information, visit African American Experience in Ohio, 1850-1920.

For more examples, see Freedom on the Move

Harriet Tubman

An engraving of Harriet Tubman from How Did Women Participate in the Underground Railroad? -- available in Women and Social Movements, 1600-2000
Klan Parade in Lansing, Michigan, 1924

Michigan KKK Parade, Sept. 1, 1924: Look up the Sept. 1 Lansing State Journal on microfilm at the downtown main library, and you will see a notice: "Pages Missing". That day, the Michigan Ku Klux Klan held its biggest Klonvocation; over, drawing an estimated 50,000 people to Lansing to watch 15,000 white-robed Klansmen (and women) from all over the state march down Michigan Avenue. David Votta, local history expert at the downtown library, said the pages were torn from the library’s copy and hundreds of others. He’s never seen the front page, but he guesses that somebody didn’t like a picture of Ingham County Kleagle Lawrence H. Nichols getting a new Reo sedan — perhaps minions of R. E. Olds himself, staving off a P.R. disaster. The next day’s coverage of the parade in the LSJ is shockingly anodyne. “Colorful parade here is seen by thousands,” reads the jumpline.

The parade started at 2 p.m., headed west on Michigan Avenue and took an hour to pass in review “before huge crowds.” Judge Charles J. Orbinson of Indianapolis gave a speech, urging Americans not to let the country become “a dumping ground for other nations.” The other speakers were designated by Klan numbers, not by name. Among the floats was a huge birthday cake honoring the first birthday of the Women’s KKK of Michigan. At the height of the festivities, a small airplane buzzed Michigan Avenue with a big flaming cross. The Klan was particularly active in the Lansing area that year, going so far as to circulate a petition opposing Michigan State College’s football game with (Catholic) Notre Dame.

Source : Lansing City Pulse, May 13, 2009, p.22.

Umbra

Umbra: Search African American History (umbrasearch.org) is a free digital platform and widget that brings together content documenting African American history and culture in order to enable the creation of new works—research projects, scholarship, curricula, art of all kinds—that illuminate parts of our history that have not been enough broadly accessible.

Sample Online Primary Sources, A

1964 Freedom Summer Project : Freedom Summer was an effort by civil rights activists to integrate Mississippi’s segregated political system. Northern volunteers and black Mississippians risked their lives to overturn racist institutions. The Wisconsin Historical Society has one of the richest collections of Civil Rights movement records in the nation, which includes more than 100 manuscript collections documenting the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project of 1964....More than 25,000 pages from the Freedom Summer manuscripts -- enough to fill several file cabinets -- are available online. In them you will find official records of organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); the personal papers of movement leaders and activists such as Amzie Moore, Mary King and Howard Zinn, letters and diaries of northern college students who went South to volunteer for the summer; newsletters produced in Freedom Schools; racist propaganda, newspaper clippings, pamphlets and brochures, magazine articles, telephone call logs, candid snapshots, internal memos, press releases and much more. The digital collection will continue to grow as more manuscripts are added in coming months....We encourage students, teachers, writers, historians, and other researchers to use these materials in any 2014 programs marking the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Freedom Summer Project. Feel free to copy them for classroom activities, term papers, displays or exhibits, dramatic presentations, and other non-profit educational purposes.

A. P. Marshall African American Oral History Archive . This project chronicles the lives and struggles of Black Ypsilantians in their own words. Recorded by historian A.P. Marshall in the 1980s, these interviews span several generations and help to tell the rich and varied story of African-American Ypsilanti. Each discussion illuminates eras of profound social change and offers an intimate look into the social, home and political life of an historic Michigan community.

Adam Francis Plummer Diary : Adam Francis Plummer was born into slavery in 1819 on the Goodwood Plantation of George Calvert, a descendant of the founding governors of the Colony of Maryland, in Upper Marlboro, Prince George’s County, Maryland. This website presents the Diary of Adam Francis Plummer in a digital format with a transcription of the diary, images and descriptions of the other materials in the Plummer-Arnold Family Collection, essays, a glossary of terms, and educational resources for teachers. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum.

African America, Communists, and the National Negro Congress, 1933-1947. An Archives Unbound Collection from Gale Cengage. : The National Negro Congress was established in 1936 to “secure the right of the Negro people to be free from Jim Crowism, segregation, discrimination, lynching, and mob violence” and “to promote the spirit of unity and cooperation between Negro and white people.” It was conceived as a national coalition of church, labor, and civil rights organizations that would coordinate protest action in the face of deteriorating economic conditions for blacks.

African American Biographical Database (AABD) [Alexandria, Va.?] : Chadwyck-Healey, Inc., c1997. Note: only available in the Library of Michigan Genealogical Collection (2 S) : A resource of first resort when you are looking for biographical information, including photographs and illustrations, for African Americans. From the famous to the everyday person, AABD includes profiles and full-text sketches providing both biographical detail and illuminating narratives chronicling the lives of Black Americans. Each text used in the African American Biographical Database has been fully digitized so that in addition to searching for specific biographic sketches, you essentially have direct access to a rich collection of African American reference works, many of which are rare books.

African American Communities showcases a diverse range of primary source material focusing on race relations across social, political, cultural and religious arenas. A vital resource for students, teachers and researchers of African American and American studies. Focusing predominantly on African American communities, this collection contains many important historical documents and primary sources, including newsletters, newspapers, photographs, and oral histories and much more.
African American Experience in Ohio, 1850-1920. This digital collection illuminates specific moments in the history of Ohio’s African-Americans and provides an overview of their experiences during the time period 1850 to 1920 in the words of the people that lived them. The story of the African-American Experience in Ohio 1850-1920 is more diverse and complex than this collection can adequately portray. All we can hope is to provide the researcher with a place to begin. Part of the Library of Congress American Memory Project.

African American Materials in the Special Collections Department of the MSU Libraries. African American materials in Special Collections are rich in a variety of formats, covering several decades and ranging from assorted political and cultural magazines and newspapers, through rare books and popular literature. Over 45 serial titles represent magazines and newspapers from all areas of the United States. Some are political in nature, such as The Black Panther, newspaper of the Black Panther Party. Others are samples of popular magazines not generally retained by by research libraries, like Jet and Sepia. Cataloged collections of over 50 African American related film scripts and over 100 pieces of sheet music support studies of the Black presence in mainstream American popular culture. Special Collections was one of the original depositories for the transcripts of the Black Women Oral History Project, conducted at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, on the History of Women in America. Early works on slavery, the slave trade, and the anti-slavery movement are also present.

African American Newspapers, 1827 - 1998 (Readex). (Series 1 and 2). Provides online access to approximately 270 U.S. newspapers chronicling a century and a half of the African American experience. This unique collection features papers from more than 35 states—including many rare and historically significant 19th century titles. Beginning with Freedom's Journal (NY)—the first African American newspaper published in the United States—the titles in this resource include The Colored Citizen (KS), Arkansas State Press, Rights of All (NY), Wisconsin Afro-American, New York Age, L'Union (LA), Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate (NV), Richmond Planet, Cleveland Gazette, The Appeal (MN) and hundreds of others from every region of the U.S. African American Newspapers, 1827-1998 offers researchers valuable primary sources for such diverse disciplines as cultural, literary and social history; ethnic studies and more. Users can compare and contrast African American views on practically every major theme of the American past. Coverage spans life in the Antebellum South; the spread of abolitionism; growth of the Black church; the Emancipation Proclamation; the Jim Crow Era; the Great Migration to northern cities, the West and Midwest in search of greater opportunity; rise of the N.A.A.C.P.; the Harlem Renaissance; the Civil Rights movement; political and economic empowerment and more. Teachers and students will find firsthand perspectives on notable Americans from Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington to W.E.B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as obituaries, advertisements, editorials and illustrations. Also listed under Newspapers.

African American Periodicals, 1825-1995 (Readex) : features more than 170 wide-ranging periodicals by and about African Americans. Published in 26 states, the publications include academic and political journals, commercial magazines, institutional newsletters, organizations bulletins, annual reports and other genres. These diverse periodicals—which have shaped, and in turn been shaped by, African American culture—will enable new discoveries on lives of African Americans as individuals, as an ethnic group and as Americans. From Slavery to the Modern Era. Like African American Newspapers, 1827-1998, this new collection is based upon James P. Dinky’s monumental African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography (Harvard, 1998). Drawn from matchless holdings of the Wisconsin Historical Society, African American Periodicals ranges over more than 150 years of American life, from slavery during the Antebellum Period to the struggles and triumphs of the modern era. Editorial views from the pages of these periodicals include opinions on the abolitionist movement; “Jim Crow” segregation; African American achievements in literature, music, sports and science; the beginning of the Freedom Movement; the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968; and more....The voices of African American society and culture. Featuring news, commentary, advertisements, literature, drawings and photographs, the titles in this unique resource include African Repository, El Mulato, The Black Warrior, Pennsylvania Freedmen’s Bulletin, Colored Harvest, Voice of the Negro, Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line, The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races, Blue Helmet: A Magazine for the American Negro Soldier of All Wars, Harlem Pointer, Right On!, African World, Black Pride Newsletter and others from every region of the U.S. Beyond offering opinions on issues and events of the day, the rare titles in African American Periodicals capture the voice of African American society and culture. The publications brought together here—many short-lived and not collected by most libraries—brim with surprises and untold stories.

African American Perspectives: Pamphlets from the Daniel A.P. Murray Collection, 1818-1907 : The Daniel A. P. Murray Pamphlet Collection presents a panoramic and eclectic review of African-American history and culture, spanning almost one hundred years from the early nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, with the bulk of the material published between 1875 and 1900. Among the authors represented are Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Benjamin W. Arnett, Alexander Crummel, and Emanuel Love. Courtesy of the Library of Congress American Memory Project.

African American Soldiers in World War I. African American soldiers are often rendered invisible in the traditional historical narrative of United States involvement in World War I. But hundreds of thousands of African Americans fought on the western front to make the world “safe for democracy,” in President Woodrow Wilson’s phrase. These soldiers came from a range of US locations—cities like New York or Washington, DC as well as the countryside of the Carolinas and the Deep South. They were sources of inspiration for many in the African American community, but evoked fear among some white Americans. This primary source set emphasizes the experiences of African American doughboys during the war while also highlighting how they were perceived by white Americans. Use the sources to determine how racism and patriotism shaped the experiences of the African American soldiers. Courtesy of Jamie Lathan and the Digital Public Library of America.

African American Thought and Culture, see Black Thought and Culture

African American Women (Slave Letters and Manuscripts). On-line archival collections featuring scanned pages and texts of the writings of African-American women. Includes the memoirs of Elizabeth Johnson Harris (1867-1942), an 1857 letter from Vilet Lester, a slave on a North Carolina plantation, and several letters from Hannah Valentine and Lethe Jackson, slaves on the estate of David Campbell, a governor of Virginia. Courtesy of...
African American Women Writers of the 19th Century. African American Women Writers of the 19th Century is a digital collection of some 52 published works by 19th-century black women writers. A part of the Digital Schomburg, this collection provides access to the thought, perspectives and creative abilities of black women as captured in books and pamphlets published prior to 1920. A full text database of these 19th and early 20th-century titles, this digital library is keyword-searchable. Each individual title as well as the entire database can be searched to determine what these women had to say about family, religion, slavery or any other subject of interest to the researcher or casual reader. The Schomburg Center is pleased to make this historic resource available to the public. New York Public Library Digital Schomburg.

African Americans and the End of Slavery in Massachusetts [Flash Player]. The Massachusetts Historical Society created a website that chronicles the lives of free and enslaved African Americans in Massachusetts from the “late seventeenth century through the abolition of slavery under the Massachusetts Constitution in the 1870s.” On the right hand side of any page is the menu of the categories into which the online collection is divided. In addition to such topics as “The Domestic Sale of Slaves”, “Revolutionary Participation”, and “The Lives of African Americans in MA After the End of Slavery”, there is a “Bibliography”, a “List of All Featured Documents and Objects”, as well as a “Search Tool” that allows for keyword searching. Each topic contains several paragraphs of introduction to the materials, to help visitors understand the context of the materials. The “List of All Featured Documents and Objects” divides the collection up into “Artifacts and Paintings”, “Printed Items”, “Printed Forms Completed in Manuscript” and “Manuscripts”. Also see the Society’s Images of the Anti-Slavery Movement in Massachusetts.

Afro-Americana Imprints, 1555 - 1922: From the Library Company of Philadelphia (Readex) : Created from the Library Company’s acclaimed Afro-Americana Collection—an accumulation that began with Benjamin Franklin and steadily increased throughout its entire history—this unique online resource will provide researchers with more than 12,000 printed works. These essential books, pamphlets and broadsides, including many lesser-known imprints, hold an unparalleled record of African American history, literature and culture...From African society to the struggle for justice. This collection spans nearly 400 years, from the early 16th to the early 20th century. Critically important subjects covered include the West’s discovery and exploitation of Africa; the rise of slavery in the New World along with the growth and success of abolitionist movements; the development of racial thought and racism; descriptions of African American life—slave and free—throughout the Americas; and slavery and race in fiction and drama. Also featured are printed works of African American individuals and organizations....Fresh scholarship on slavery and African American history. The Afro-Americana Collection began to gain international renown for its size, range and significance in the late 1960s as scholars initiated fresh studies of slavery’s part in the American story. As researchers rediscovered the importance of the long-neglected writings of African Americans, the Library Company’s collection became increasingly vital to new scholarship. Today it serves as a critical resource for scholars and students, and a plethora of new research and teaching opportunities will arise from its digitization.

American Abolitionist Movement. The abolitionist movement espoused the view that slavery was morally wrong, and that the United States should ban slavery and emancipate all enslaved people. Some states had banned slavery during the colonial period or shortly after independence, often due to advocacy by Quakers and other religious people objecting to slavery. However, slavery persisted in parts of the American mid-Atlantic and the entirety of the American South. As the expansion of the US westward created the potential for new states where slavery could be legal, the abolitionist movement took shape, mounting increasing political activism between 1820 and the outbreak of Civil War in 1860. Abolitionists included former slaves such as Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, publishers and writers such as William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe, politicians such as Senator Charles Sumner, and feminists such as Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone, who, at times, saw the causes of women’s rights and the abolition of slavery as related. Ultimately, the goal of the abolitionist movement was partially enacted with President Abraham Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, and fully achieved with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. Courtesy of Kerry Dunne and the Digital Public Library of America.

"American Black Journal". Documenting over thirty years of Detroit history from African American perspectives, this collection of programs by Detroit Public Television includes interviews, round-table discussions, field-produced features and artistic performances featuring African Americans, many of who are among the nation’s most recognized and controversial figures, and provides the visual and audio context of key debates and discussions surrounding African American history, culture, and politics.

American Missionary Association and the Promise of a Multicultural America: 1839-1954. A digital photo archives of more than 5000 photographs of the activities of and related to the American Missionary Association. Photographers working with the American Missionary Association traveled through urban and rural communities within the continental United States of America, as well as across oceans to other lands, and visually recorded the foreign environments and people who lived within them. The photographs document the experiences and lives of various ethnic groups of the world. They provide visual support to the textual documents of the American Missionary Association archives, housed at the Amistad Research Center. Housed at the Tulane University Amistad Research Center.

American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology: From 1936 to 1938, over 2,300 former slaves from across the American South were interviewed by writers and journalists under the aegis of the Works Progress Administration. These former slaves, most born in the last years of the slave regime or during the Civil War, provided first-hand accounts of their experiences on plantations, in cities, and on small farms. Their narratives remain a peerless resource for understanding the lives of America’s four million slaves. What makes the WPA narratives so rich is that they capture the very voices of American slavery, revealing the texture of life as it was experienced and remembered. Each narrative taken alone offers a fragmentary, microcosmic representation of slave life. Read together, they offer a sweeping composite view of slavery in North America, allowing us to explore some of the most compelling themes of nineteenth-century slavery, including labor, resistance and flight, family life, relations with masters, and religious belief. This web site provides an opportunity to read a sample of these narratives, and to see some of the photographs taken at the time of the interviews. Courtesy of the University of Virginia.

American Slavery Collection, 1820-1922. This digital edition of the American Antiquarian Society’s extraordinary holdings of slavery and abolition materials delivers more than 3,500 works published over the course of more than 100 years. The American Slavery Collection addresses every facet of American slavery—one of the most important and controversial topics in U.S. history. These diverse materials, all filmed in full-resolution color, include books, pamphlets, graphic materials, and ephemera; among them are a large number of invaluable Southern imprints.
Antislavery Collection, 1725-1911. The Antislavery Collection contains several hundred printed pamphlets and books pertaining to slavery and antislavery in New England, 1725-1911. The holdings include speeches, sermons, proceedings and other publications of organizations such as the American Anti-Slavery Society and the American Colonization Society, and a small number of pro-slavery tracts. Courtesy of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, W.E.B. DuBois Library, Special Collections and University Archives.

Antislavery Literary Project. Antislavery literature represents the origins of multicultural literature in the United States. It is the first body of American literature produced by writers of diverse racial origins. It encompasses slave narratives, lectures, travel accounts, political tracts, prose fiction, poetry, drama, religious and philosophical literature, compendia, journals, manifestoes and children’s literature. There is a complex and contradictory range of voices, from journalistic reportage to sentimental poetry, from racial paternalism and stereotyping to advocacy of interracial equality, from religious disputation to militant antislavery calls. In its whole, this literature is inseparable from an understanding of democratic development in US society. The goal of the Antislavery Literature Project is to increase public access to a body of literature crucial to understanding African American experience, US and hemispheric histories of slavery, and early human rights philosophies. These multilingual collections contribute to an educational consciousness of the role of many antislavery writers in creating contemporary concepts of freedom. The Antislavery Literature Project was established in 2003 as a collaborative electronic publishing venture in a major but under-studied area of American literature. The Project is based in the Arizona State University’s English department and works in cooperation with the EServer, located at Iowa State University.

Archive of Americana see Evans (Early American Imprints, 1639-1800, and Shaw-Shoemaker (Early American Imprints, 1801-1819).

The Archive of The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Change. This remarkable digital archive was sponsored by JPMorgan Chase & Co., and it contains thousands of documents that tell the story of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The visual interface for the site is most impressive: visitors can scan through the Spotlights area to look through topical collections that include Significant Cities, Vietnam, and Public Opinion. Given the number of items here, this is a perfect way to view a few tidbits at a time. Visitors can also use the drop-down menus to learn about Dr. King’s legacy, events sponsored by the Center, and how to be a part of the Center’s work. Finally, visitors can use the Learn tab to peruse a glossary of nonviolence and also look over a bibliography of relevant books, magazines, and online material.

Archives Unbound, see African America, Communists, and the National Negro Congress, 1933-1947 (Gale)

Archives Unbound, see Black Liberation Army and the Program of Armed Struggle 1970-1983 (Gale).

Archives Unbound, see Black Nationalism and the Revolutionary Action Movement: The Papers of Muhammed Ahmad (Max Stanford) (Gale).

Archives Unbound, see Fannie Lou Hamer: Papers of a Civil Rights Activist (Gale).

Archives Unbound, see Federal Response to Radicalism in the 1960s (1956-1971) (Gale).

Archives Unbound, see Federal Surveillance of African Americans 1920-1984 (Gale).

Archives Unbound, see Grassroots Civil Rights & Social Activism: FBI Files on Benjamin J. Davis, Jr.

Archives Unbound, see Liberation Movement in Africa and African America (Gale).

Archives Unbound, see The Papers of Amiri Baraka, Poet Laureate of the Black Power Movement (Gale).

Archives Unbound, see We Were Prepared for Death, Freedom Riders in the South (Gale)

Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record. These 1,000+ images depict Atlantic slavery. Images are divided into 18 categories, including “Maps”; “Pre-Colonial Africa”; “New World Agriculture and Plantation Labor”; “Music, Dance, and Recreational Activities”; and “Military Activities.” The smallest categories have nine images (“Family Life, Child Care, Schools” and “Emancipation and Post-Slavery Life”) while the largest category has 182 (“Pre-Colonial Africa: Society, Polity, Culture”). The majority of the images are contemporary with the Atlantic slave trade, 17th century through the 19th century, although there are some recent images, such as 20th-century sculptures from Haiti and Barbados. Images include engravings, paintings of events and people, portraits, photographs of slave forts, and photographs of artifacts such as ritual objects and punishment devices. Maps from the period as well as recent maps illustrate such topics as African ethnic groups and the numbers of people involved in the trade over time. A project of The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and The Digital Media Lab at the University of Virginia Library.

Aunt Sally; or, The cross the way to freedom : A narrative of the slave-life and purchase of the mother of Rev. Isaac Williams, of Detroit, Michigan ... Cincinnati, American Reform Tract and Book Society, 1862. 216pp. Available online via the HathiTrust. : Slave life in North Carolina and Alabama.

Sample Online Primary Sources, B

Behind the Veil : Documenting African Americans Life in the Jim Crow South. An ambitious documentary project created by Duke University that seeks to correct historical misrepresentations of African American experiences during the period of legal segregation in the United States. Multiracial research teams of history graduate students from universities across the country collected over 1,200 oral history interviews and copied thousands of precious family photographs and documents in their travels across the South, from Enfield, North Carolina to LeFlore County, Mississippi; from New Iberia, Louisiana, to the Arkansas Delta; and seventeen other regions to compile the foundation of this project. These collected materials are rich resources for understanding self-images, racial pride, and African American achievement during Jim Crow.

Beloved by Toni Morrison. Beloved is a novel inspired by the true story of Margaret Garner, who escaped with her family from slavery in Kentucky to freedom in Ohio in 1856. When US Marshals apprehended the family under the Fugitive Slave Act, Margaret Garner murdered one of her children, a daughter, rather than see her enslaved again. In Morrison’s novel, Sethe, the protagonist, and her daughter Denver are haunted by the ghost of the child Sethe killed. A mysterious young woman appears and calls herself Beloved, the name on the tombstone of Sethe’s dead daughter. Sethe believes the woman is her murdered child and guilt overcomes her as Beloved takes over her life. Beloved received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1987.
Black Abolitionist Archive. From the 1820s to the Civil War, African Americans assumed prominent roles in the transatlantic struggle to abolish slavery. In contrast to the popular belief that the abolitionist crusade was driven by wealthy whites, some 300 black abolitionists were regularly involved in the anti-slavery movement, heightening its credibility and broadening its agenda. The Black Abolitionist Digital Archive is a collection of over 800 speeches by antebellum blacks and approximately 1,000 editorials from the period. These important documents provide a portrait of black involvement in the anti-slavery movement; scans of these documents are provided as images and PDF files. The University of Detroit Mercy Libraries/IDS has enhanced this collection by including readings of some of the works and an immersive site in Second Life as well. To visit the collection’s Second Life space, download the Second Life software and create an account. http://www.secondlife.com

Black Archives of Mid-America at Kansas City. Located in Kansas City, Missouri, this archive is a center for learning and research into the African American experience in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Oklahoma and the Midwest at large. Houses a large collection of manuscripts and artifacts including photographs, personal correspondence, oral histories, and rare books. Artifacts are from the 19th and 20th centuries and depict African American heritage in the Midwest and the World. The web site provides a generous sample from numerous areas.

Black Authors, 1556-1922: Imprints from the Library Company of Philadelphia (Readex), see Afro-Americana imprints, 1532-1922: from the Library Company of Philadelphia.

Black Freedom Struggle in the 20th Century. Organizational Records and Personal Papers, Part 2 (Part of the ProQuest History Vault Collections). This Black Freedom Struggle module is highlighted by the records of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Africa-related papers of Claude Barnett, and the Robert F. Williams Papers. SNCC, formed by student activists in 1960 after the explosion of the sit-in movement, was one of the three most important civil rights organizations of the 1960s, alongside SCLC and the NAACP. CORE was formed in 1941 and organized the pioneering Journey of Reconciliation in the 1940s and the Freedom Rides in the early 1960s; both events are documented in the CORE records in this module. With the addition of SNCC and CORE records, History Vault now includes SNCC, SCLC, CORE, and NAACP records. Rounding out this module are the papers of Chicago Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell, the Chicago chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, and records pertaining to the Mississippi Freedom Summer.

Black Liberation Army and the Program of Armed Struggle, 1970-1983. An Archives Unbound Collection from Gale Cengage. The Black Liberation Army (BLA) was an underground, black nationalist-Marxist militant organization that operated from 1970 to 1981. Composed largely of former Black Panthers (BPP), the organization’s program was one of “armed struggle” and its stated goal was to “take up arms for the liberation and self-determination of black people in the United States.” An icon of black armed struggle, the BLA was a linchpin in understanding the development of the “armed rebellion” phenomenon in the late 1960s through early 1980s. The BLA arose because of the political, social, and economic oppression of felt by African American people in urban areas and from existing conditions in African American communities: poverty, indecent housing, massive unemployment, poor medical care, and inferior education. Sourced from the Federal Bureau of Investigation Library, Black Liberation Army and the Program of Armed Struggle consists of a wide range of materials, including FBI surveillance and informant reports and correspondence from a variety of offices including, New York City, Baltimore, New Haven, San Francisco, Detroit, Miami, Atlanta, Newark, Kansas City, and Cleveland; intercepted correspondence; Justice Department memoranda, correspondence and analyses; newsclippings and articles; and more.

Black Nationalism and the Revolutionary Action Movement: The Papers of Muhammed Ahmad (Max Stanford). An Archives Unbound Collection from Gale Cengage. A wealth of material from Ahmad’s personal archive – letters, speeches, financial records and more – are augmented with FBI files and other primary sources. The collection sheds light on 1960s radicalism, politics and culture, and provides an ideal foundation for coursework in African-American studies, radical studies, post-Colonial studies and social history. Date Range: 1962-1999. Content: 17,210 pages. Source Library: Personal Collection of Dr. Muhammad Ahmad Description - The Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) formed in 1962 among undergraduates at Central State College. RAM engaged in voter registration drives, organized local economic boycotts and held free history classes at its North Philadelphia office. The group soon expanded its efforts, supporting demonstrations in the southern U.S. to end segregation and fighting to eliminate police brutality against the African-American community. Muhammad Ahmad, a protégé of Malcolm X, was instrumental in RAM’s activities. For more information, download a Product Fact Sheet [pdf, 600 KB] This collection provides scholars with unique and insightful documents covering individuals, organizations, issues and events related to the civil rights movement: H. Rap Brown, New York v. Herman Benjamin Ferguson, law enforcement, Nation of Islam, SNCC, reparations and much more.

Black Panther Chronology. A browsable chronology of the militant African American self-defense group formed in Oakland, California, from its origins in 1960 to the present (featuring updates on prominent members Bobby Seale, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, and Huey Newton). Includes audio, video, transcripts of speeches, and a bibliography. (For more information about the Black Panther Party, visit the MSU Libraries Special Collections unit or web page.


New Black Panther Party materials from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2010

The Black Power Movement. The Black Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s was a political and social movement whose advocates believed in racial pride, self-sufficiency, and equality for all people of Black and African descent. Credited with first articulating “Black Power” in 1966, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader Stokely Carmichael represented a generation of black activists who participated in both Civil Rights and the Black Power movements. By the mid 1960s, many of them no longer saw nonviolent protests as a viable means of combatting racism. New organizations, such as the Black Panther Party, the Black Women’s United Front, and the Nation of Islam, developed new cultural, political, and economic programs and grew memberships that reflected this shift. Desegregation was insufficient—only through the deconstruction of white power structures could a space be made for a black political voice to rise to collective black power. Because of these beliefs, the movement is often represented as violent, anti-white, and anti-law enforcement. This primary source set addresses these representations through artifacts from the era.

1988, and in 1993, Morrison received the Nobel Prize in Literature. Dedicated to the estimated “sixty million and more” people who died as a result of the Atlantic slave trade, Beloved combines magical and realistic elements to explore themes of love and justice. Courtesy of Melissa Strong and the Digital Public Library of America.
Black Thought and Culture contains 1,297 sources with 1,098 authors, covering the non-fiction published works of leading African Americans. Particular care has been taken to index this material so that it can be searched more thoroughly than ever before. Where possible the complete published non-fiction works are included, as well as interviews, journal articles, speeches, essays, pamphlets, letters and other fugitive material.

Access available to the MSU community and other subscribers.


Booker T. Washington Collection from Teaching American History by Ashland University.

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938 contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves. These narratives were collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and assembled and microfilmed in 1941 as the seventeen-volume Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves. Courtesy of the Library of Congress American Memory Project.

Boston African Americana Project. A digital collection highlighting portrayals of African Americans and African American life. Much of the collection consists of images, such as political cartoons and portraits, although it also includes scanned manuscripts and pamphlets.

Boston Public Library Anti-Slavery Manuscripts Collection. A collection of correspondence between leading abolitionists in nineteenth-century New England. Gathered by William Lloyd Garrison’s family and others close to the abolitionist movement, this collection was presented to the Boston Public Library in the 1890s.

Brown vs. Board of Education Digital Archive. The archive is divided into four main areas of interest: Supreme Court cases; busing and school integration efforts in northern urban areas; school integration in the Ann Arbor Public School District; and recent resegregation trends in American schools. Courtesy of the University of Michigan.

Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. The report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice draws on a wide array of historical documents, from the records of slaving voyages to personal correspondence to student commencement orations. Working in collaboration with Brown’s Center for Digital Initiatives and the Scholarly Technology Group, the committee was able to create a digital archive of these materials, enabling students and interested members of the public to join it in its exploration of the early history of our university, state, and nation. The collection can be browsed by date, name, or type of document. Many of the documents have been transcribed, as part of an ongoing project. The original documents included in this repository can be found in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, the Rhode Island Historical Society Library, and the Brown University Archives. The committee is pleased to express its gratitude to these institutions for their generous cooperation and support.

Busing & Beyond: School Desegregation in Boston. The story of busing and desegregation in Boston begins much earlier than most people imagine. In 1847, a young black girl named Sarah Roberts sued the city of Boston for having to walk past five schools in order to attend an inferior black-only school in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of the city. The courts found against her in the landmark Roberts v. Boston case, but it turned the tide of public opinion sufficiently to have the state legislature outlaw school assignment by race in 1855. Massachusetts thus became one of the first states with legally mandated school integration, long before the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision. However, the schools of the City of Boston gradually desegregated during the mid 1930s through the early 1970s. The reasons for this are many, but center on the city itself becoming far more racially segregated by neighborhood due to redlining (racially biased mortgage lending), discriminatory homeowners insurance practices, and, most notably, the construction of public housing that was allocated by race in the post-World-War-II era. Community and judicial efforts to push the City of Boston to voluntarily desegregate its schools failed, and in 1974, a federal judge imposed court-ordered desegregation via busing between neighborhoods in the landmark Morgan v. Hennigan decision. The court-ordered busing was implemented during the 1974-1975 school year, and assigned many students to schools in neighborhoods far from where they lived in an effort to racially balance school assignment. There was a hostile backlash by many white residents of Boston, and many city residents of all races had questions about the busing method for implementing desegregation as well as the efficacy of desegregation. The topic remains an issue in Boston, where despite the 1974 decision and continuing efforts to integrate its schools, many schools remain racially imbalanced today. Courtesy of Kerry Dunne and the Digital Public Library of America.
Duluth Lynchings Online Resource. The Duluth Lynchings Online Resource provides an opportunity to remember and learn from this tragic incident.

Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive. Mississippi was a focal point in the struggle for civil rights in America, and Hattiesburg, home of The University of Southern Mississippi, had the largest and most successful Freedom Summer project in 1964. The civil rights materials collected at the University document a local history with truly national significance. The Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive includes a selection of digitized photographs, letters, diaries, and other documents. Oral history transcripts are also available, as well as finding aids for manuscript collections.

Civil Rights Movement Veterans. This website is of, by, and for Veterans of the Southern Freedom Movement during the years 1951-1968. It is where we tell it like it was, the way we lived it. The mass media called it the "Civil Rights Movement," but many of us who were involved in it prefer the term "Freedom Movement" because it was about so much more than just civil rights. Today, from what you see in the mass media and read in textbooks and websites, you would think that the Freedom Movement only existed in a few states of the deep South, — but that is not so. The Freedom Movement lived and fought in every state and every city of America, North, South, East, and West. There were some differences between the Southern and Northern wings of the Movement, but those differences were minor compared to the Movement's essence. North or South, it was the same movement everywhere. However, this web site focuses on the Southern Freedom Movement.

Death or Liberty: Gabriel, Nat Turner, and John Brown Exhibition. Between the Revolution and the Civil War, three dramatic events in Virginia focused America's attention on the problem of slavery. Gabriel's Conspiracy in 1800, Nat Turner's Rebellion in Southampton County in 1831, and John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859 deeply shocked white southerners and provided confirmation for those who argued that slavery was incompatible with American liberty. African American scholar and activist W.E.B. Du Bois once noted that the attitudes of an "imprisoned" group could take three forms: "a feeling of revolt and revenge; an attempt to adjust all thought and action to the will of the greater groups; or, finally, a determined attempt at self-development, self-realization, in spite of envisioning discouragements and prejudice." These attitudes ebbed and flowed with the "spirit of the age." The spirit of revolt exhibited by Gabriel in 1800 and Nat Turner in 1831 convinced John Brown in 1859 that the slaves across the South were ready and willing to emancipate themselves. All they needed, Brown concluded, was the moral and military guidance of an inspired leader. "Death or Liberty" examines these events and the debates about slavery, freedom, and sectional politics that raged in their wake. Finally the exhibition offers an overview of how the public memory of these events has changed. Courtesy of the Library of Virginia. Includes a selection of transcribed and digitized documents.

Detroit '67 Project. The Detroit 1967 Oral and Written History Project collects stories and memories of Metro Detroiters that relate to their lives and experiences before, during, and after the unrest of July 1967. Sponsored by the Detroit Historical Society.

Diary of a Contraband: The Civil War Passage of a Black Sailor. William B. Gould's Civil War diary chronicles his daily life in the United States Navy from September 27, 1862, to his discharge three years later, on September 29, 1865. One of the only known diaries of an African American sailor in the Civil War, this document describes his service and life as a sailor on the U.S.S. Cambridge and later on the U.S.S. Niagara, which took him from the northeastern U.S. to Great Britain, Holland, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal. This site is intended to complement William B. Gould IV's book about his great-grandfather, Diary of a Contraband: The Civil War Passage of a Black Sailor. Here the reader can view the diary itself, and see aspects of it that cannot be replicated in a typescript or book. The reader can also view a photo gallery of images related to the diary, William B. Gould, and his family. The diary consists of two books plus some forty unbound pages that appear to have once been part of another book. All of the extant material is provided here in chronological order. There are only two significant hiatuses, one for the period May-October 1863, when he is hospitalized with the measles, and the other for the late September 1864-early February 1865 period, which appears to be a section that was somehow lost.

Documenting the American South: Primary Resources for the Study of Southern, History, Literature, and Culture. A digital publishing initiative that provides Internet access to texts, images, and audio files related to southern history, literature, and culture. Currently DocSouth includes twelve thematic collections of books, diaries, posters, artifacts, letters, oral history interviews, and songs. Includes many resources on both African Americans and Native Americans in the South. The University Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Documenting the American South, and the texts and materials come primarily from its southern holdings. The UNC University Library is committed to the long-term availability of these collections and their online records.

Documents from Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867. The following are sample documents from the volumes of Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation. Like all the documents in Freedom, they are transcriptions (or, in a few cases, images) of originals housed in the National Archives of the United States. They have been transcribed exactly as written, with no correction of spelling, punctuation, or syntax. Extra space marks the end of sentences that lack terminal punctuation or are punctuated unconventionally. Inferential readings of illegible or mutilated passages appear in brackets and roman type, [like this]; additions and corrections by the editors appear in brackets and italics, [like this]. Omission of material is indicated by a four-dot ellipsis centered on the line. Place and date lines appear at the top of each document, regardless of their placement in the manuscript. Inside addresses are omitted. Salutations and complimentary closings are run into the text of the documents. A full discussion of the editorial method appears in every volume of Freedom. Freedman and Southern Society Project.

Dred Scott Case Collection. In 1846, Dred Scott and his wife Harriet filed suit for their freedom in the St. Louis Circuit Court. This suit began an eleven-year legal fight that ended in the U.S. Supreme Court, which issued a landmark decision declaring that Scott remain a slave. This decision contributed to rising tensions between the free and slave states just before the American Civil War. The records displayed in this exhibit document the Scotts' early struggle to gain their freedom through litigation and are the only extant records of this significant case as it was heard in the St. Louis Circuit Court. The original Dred Scott case file is located in the Office of the St. Louis Circuit Clerk. The Revised Dred Scott Case Collection is now available. The revised collection contains the original and newly discovered records in a full-text, searchable collection including TEI encoded XML transcripts and images. Courtesy of the Washington University Libraries in St. Louis.

Duluth Lynchings Online Resource. The Duluth Lynchings Online Resource provides an opportunity to remember and learn from this tragic incident.
Reconstruction, many southern states quickly enacted laws that limited the voting power of black citizens in order to restore white supremacy. In Amendment proved to be only temporary, however, because many white Americans strongly opposed black political power. Following the end of the majority or near-majority of the population. This expansion of political power also resulted in a dramatic increase in political representation as ending slavery (1865), and Fourteenth Amendment, securing citizenship (1868), as one of the “Reconstruction amendments,” which were passed by or abridged on the basis of race, color, or prior condition of servitude. The Fifteenth Amendment is often grouped with the Thirteenth Amendment,

Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1985. Primary Documents. : Read some of the documents that express various views of the civil rights movement. Courtesy of PBS. Note: The entire film series Eyes on the Prize is available in the MSU Library Digital and Multimedia Center.

Fannie Lou Hamer and the Civil Rights Movement in Rural Mississippi. : Born to sharecroppers in rural Mississippi in 1917, the youngest of twenty children, Fannie Lou Hamer knew well the realities of racism, discrimination, and poverty. She used her knowledge in grassroots activism on behalf of voters’ rights, African Americans, and civil rights. “Sick and tired of being sick and tired,” Hamer provided a voice for oppressed and disenfranchised black majorities in the Deep South in the 1960s through her strength, passion, courage, and faith. Hamer epitomized the persistent struggles and victories of the US civil rights movement. African Americans in the Mississippi Delta, activists in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party, and participants in the Freedom Summer were all influenced by her personality and leadership. This primary source set offers readers a greater understanding of Fannie Lou Hamer. Courtesy of Jamie Lathan, Digital Public Library of America.

Fannie Lou Hamer: Papers of a Civil Rights Activist, Political Activist, and Woman, 1966-1978. : Fannie Lou Hamer was an voting rights activist and civil rights leader. She was instrumental in organizing Mississippi Freedom Summer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and later became the Vice-Chair of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, attending the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in that capacity. Her plain-spoken manner and fervent belief in the Biblical righteousness of her cause gained her a reputation as an electrifying speaker and constant activist of civil rights.


Federal Surveillance of African Americans (1920-1984). An Archives Unbound Collection from Gale Cengage. : Between the early 1920s and early 1980s, the Justice Department and its Federal Bureau of Investigation engaged in widespread investigation of those deemed politically suspect. Prominent among the targets of this sometimes coordinated, sometimes independent surveillance were aliens, members of various protest groups, Socialists, Communists, pacifists, militant labor unionists, ethnic or racial nationalists and outspoken opponents of the policies of the incumbent presidents....Black Americans of all political persuasions were subject to federal scrutiny, harassment and prosecution. The FBI enlisted black "confidential special informants" to infiltrate a variety of organizations. Hundreds of documents in this collection were originated by such operatives. The reports provide a wealth of detail on "Negro" radicals and their organizations that can be found nowhere else....In addition to infiltration, the Bureau contributed to the infringement of First Amendment freedoms by making its agents a constant visible presence at radical rallies and meetings. Militant Socialist A. Philip Randolph was followed from city to city and The Messenger’s office was vandalized by zealous protectors of the nation’s security. A perusal of Bureau case files for this period indicates that black radicalism was one of the major preoccupations and targets of the federal investigatory network.... For more information, download a Product Fact Sheet [pdf, 328 KB]

Fiery Cross (Digital Newspaper Archive). Digitized Indiana Ku Klux Klan newspaper from 1923-25. Courtesy of Indiana University Bloomington.

The Fifteenth Amendment. The Fifteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, ratified on February 3, 1870, says that the right to vote cannot be denied or abridged on the basis of race, color, or prior condition of servitude. The Fifteenth Amendment is often grouped with the Thirteenth Amendment, ending slavery (1865), and Fourteenth Amendment, securing citizenship (1868), as one of the “Reconstruction amendments,” which were passed by the radical Republican-dominated Congress following the Civil War. In effect, the Fifteenth Amendment secured the right to vote for African American men. As many as one million African American men registered to vote throughout the South, where in many districts African Americans constituted the majority or near-majority of the population. This expansion of political power also resulted in a dramatic increase in political representation as African American men were elected to local, state, and federal offices throughout the North and South.... Many of the gains provided by the Fifteenth Amendment proved to be only temporary, however, because many white Americans strongly opposed black political power. Following the end of Reconstruction, many southern states quickly enacted laws that limited the voting power of black citizens in order to restore white supremacy. In Amendment proved to be only temporary, however, because many white Americans strongly opposed black political power. Following the end of Reconstruction, many southern states quickly enacted laws that limited the voting power of black citizens in order to restore white supremacy. In Amendment proved to be only temporary, however, because many white Americans strongly opposed black political power.
systematically collected. We are designing and beginning data collection for a database that will compile all North American slave runaway ads and quantities of individual and collective information about the economic, demographic, social, and cultural history of slavery, but they have never been people tried to escape. Once newspapers were common, enslavers posted “runaway ads” to try to locate these fugitives. Such ads provide significant The Freedmen's Bureau

Fighting for Freedom: Susie King Taylor . The majority of firsthand accounts of life in the colored regiments during the Civil War were written and published by the white officers who led them. Susie King Taylor’s memoir is a rare exception. With the encouragement of a white officer, Taylor published an account of her time with the 33rd Regiment U.S.C.T. This volume is the only Civil War memoir published by an African American woman. Taylor was born a slave on Grest Farm near the coast of Georgia. She spent part of her childhood in Savannah, where she received a clandestine education. In 1862, she gained her freedom by escaping to St. Simons Island, Georgia, then a Union encampment. There she married Edward King, a sergeant in the 1st South Carolina Infantry Volunteers, later named the 33rd Regiment, United States Colored Troops. For approximately three years, Taylor served as cook, nurse, laundress, and teacher for the regiment. Her 1902 memoir, Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd United States Colored Troops, Late 1st S.C. Volunteers, provides a unique window into life in the U.S.C.T. She wrote, “I now present these reminiscences to you, hoping they may prove of some interest, and show how much service and good we can do to each other, and what sacrifices we can make for our liberty and rights.”

The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin . Writer, novelist, and social critic James Baldwin was among the leading voices of the twentieth century on race relations and the African American experience. Baldwin was born in Harlem in 1924 and his experience of poverty, racism, and segregation profoundly influenced his writing. To escape the limitations of American racism and the stigma he faced as a gay man, Baldwin spent much of his adult life living in France, though he always considered himself an American and returned to the US often to advocate for civil rights and social justice.... The Fire Next Time was published in 1963 in the midst of the civil rights and black nationalist movements. The book consists of two essays, “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation” and “Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind.” In The Fire Next Time, Baldwin uses anecdotes from his personal experiences to confront and explore broader themes in American race relations, including the role of religion in black communities, the hypocrisies of American Christianity, the inextricable links between black and white America, the fear of confronting America’s history of hate and white supremacy, and his vision of love—or a sincere quest for mutual understanding and compassion—as crucial to the salvation of the country. Baldwin was already a popular and well-respected writer, but The Fire Next Time launched him to a new level of celebrity. This set explores Baldwin’s upbringing in Harlem as well as the contemporary context of the The Fire Next Time. Samantha Gibson, Digital Public Library of Michigan.

Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln . Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass were both great men who rose from poverty to become advocates for freedom and equality. Although their backgrounds are seemingly different and their meetings brief, their work to end slavery is undeniable. Lincoln, born in 1809 to poor farmers in Kentucky, moved to Illinois, earned a law degree and was elected to state and national-level office. Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland. After Douglass’s escape, he became an ardent abolitionist, publishing his autobiography and a weekly abolitionist newspaper entitled The North Star. These men met three separate times during Lincoln’s presidency to discuss issues such as the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment. When Douglass was turned away from the White House on the day of Lincoln’s Second Inauguration, Lincoln called him back, saying, “There is no man in the country whose opinion I value more than yours.” This source set explores each man’s views and work to end slavery. Courtesy of the Adena Barnett, Albert Robinson, and the Digital Public Library of Michigan.

The Frederick Douglass Papers . The Frederick Douglass Papers at the Library of Congress presents the papers of the nineteenth-century African-American abolitionist who escaped from slavery and then risked his own freedom by becoming an outspoken antislavery lecturer, writer, and publisher. The papers span the years 1841 to 1964, with the bulk of the material from 1862 to 1895. The Speech, Article, and Book File series contains the writings of Douglass and his contemporaries in the abolitionist and early women’s rights movements. The Subject File series reveals Douglass’s interest in diverse subjects such as politics, emancipation, racial prejudice, women’s suffrage, and prison reform. Scrapbooks document Douglass’s role as minister to Haiti and the controversy surrounding his interracial second marriage.

Free at Last? Slavery in Pittsburgh in the 18th and 19th Centuries . Free at Last? takes the visitor on a journey that begins with life as usual in Africa, stops over in the slave castles that lined the West African coast, travels across the gruesome Middle Passage onward to slavery in the Americas, and, as W.E.B. Du Bois characterized it, through a descent into hell....Through the exhibition, the journey brings us to the American colonies, Pennsylvania, and the Pittsburgh region, where the core of the story dates to Pittsburgh’s founding 250 years ago. The Pittsburgh and broader Pennsylvania variety of slavery may not have been as punishing as the Southern version. Nonetheless, it was slavery, in turn accompanied by and followed by discrimination and segregation so seemingly intractable that their vestiges survive today.

The Freedmen's Bureau . The Freedmen’s Bureau (also called the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands) was an agency established at the end of the Civil War to help support freed slaves (or freedmen) in the South. The Bureau was established by President Abraham Lincoln in 1865, but faced substantial challenges by both President Andrew Johnson’s administration and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. This collection of documents, images, and readings from the era give an overview of the work done by the Freedmen’s Bureau and the racial and political struggles the agency faced during the Reconstruction Era. Courtesy of Hillary Brady and the Digital Public Library of America.

Freedom Now : An Archival Project of Tougaloo College and Brown University . This database currently includes about 200 documents in two categories. Student researchers found documents relating to the Mississippi Freedom Movement in the Tougaloo College Archives, and to the Brown-Tougaloo Cooperative Exchange in the Brown University Archives.

Freedom on the Move: A Database of Fugitives from North American Slavery . Throughout the 250-year history of slavery in North America, enslaved people tried to escape. Once newspapers were common, enslavers posted “runaway ads” to try to locate these fugitives. Such ads provide significant quantities of individual and collective information about the economic, demographic, social, and cultural history of slavery, but they have never been systematically collected. We are designing and beginning data collection for a database that will compile all North American slave runaway ads and
From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1822-1909. Presents 396 pamphlets from the Rare Book and Special Collections Division, published from 1822 through 1909, by African-American authors and others who wrote about slavery, African colonization, Emancipation, Reconstruction, and related topics. The materials range from personal accounts and public orations to organizational reports and legislative speeches. Among the authors represented are Frederick Douglass, Kelly Miller, Charles Sumner, Mary Church Terrell, and Booker T. Washington. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, American Memory Project.

Sample Online Primary Sources, G-I

The Geography of Slavery in Virginia. The Geography of Slavery in Virginia is a digital collection of advertisements for runaway and captured slaves and servants in 18th- and 19th-century Virginia newspapers. Building on the rich descriptions of individual slaves and servants in the ads, the project offers a personal, geographical and documentary context for the study of slavery in Virginia, from colonial times to the Civil War. Courtesy of the University of Virginia.

Gilder Lehman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition Online Documents: The Gilder Lehman Center’s online document collection contains over 200 individual items, including speeches, letters, cartoons and graphics, interviews, and articles. This page lists the complete collection.

Goin’ North: Stories From the First Great Migration to Philadelphia: Between 1910 and 1930, the African-American population of Philadelphia skyrocketed, from around 85,000 to nearly 220,000 in the early years of the Great Depression. This massive influx of southern newcomers had a deep and enduring impact on the city. The stories of the individuals—those who left behind in the South and ventured north in search of opportunity and equality, pushed out by the increasingly hostile environment of Jim Crow racism—reveal the true impact of this Great Migration north..... Captured in oral history interviews conducted in the 1980s with aging Philadelphians who participated in and witnessed the Great Migration firsthand, these stories tell of both individual lives and collective experiences adapting to a new home in the “City of Brotherly Love.”. Meet the narrators, hear their stories, and explore the experiences that united those who lived through this journey north..... In 2015, the Goin’ North team recieved the Oral History Project in a Non-Print Format Award from the Oral History Association, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference’s C. Herbert Finch Award. In 2016, the American Historical Association awarded Goin’ North Its Roy Rosenzweig Award for Innovation in Digital History.

Grassroots Civil Rights & Social Activism: FBI Files on Benjamin J. Davis, Jr. (1941-1990): The FBI files on Benjamin J. Davis, Jr. that make up this collection were assembled by Dr. Gerald Horne, author of Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party, and the breadth of issues addressed by these records is astounding. Davis served as a leader in local, district, and national leadership bodies of the Communist Party USA and thus concerned himself with a broad range of organizational, political, and theoretical questions. There is news of grassroots organizing successes and failures, minutes from meetings held on all the levels on which Davis engaged, and reports from member-informers on all the major political and theoretical debates.

The Great Migration. The turn of the twentieth century is often referred to as the nadir of race relations in the United States. Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and other forms of racial violence plagued the southern region of the country. Moreover, the cotton industry was severely affected by the boll weevil, a cotton-eating insect; the weevils’ consumption of cotton crops hurt the southern economy and eliminated many of the agricultural jobs held by African Americans. Consequently, the South became a place of economic and racial turmoil, and African Americans were desperate to find some relief. The promise of jobs in northern factories during World War I provided African Americans an opportunity to escape the harsh realities of the South. Between 1910 and 1930, approximately 1.6 million African Americans left the South to pursue opportunities in the Northern and Midwestern states. This exodus is known as the Great Migration, and was the first phase of an African American migration that would continue until 1970. Courtesy of Lakisha Odlum and the Digital Public Library of America.

The Green Book courtesy of the New York Library Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture. From the Introduction to the 1949 edition: With the introduction of this travel guide in 1936, it has been our idea to give the Negro traveler information that will keep him from running into difficulties, embarrassments and to make his trips more enjoyable. The Jewish press has long published information about places that are restricted and there are numerous publications that give the gentle whites all kinds of information. But during these long years of discrimination, before 1936 other guides have been published for the Negro, some are still published, but the majority have gone out of business for various reasons. In 1936 the Green Book was only a local publication for Metropolitan New York, the response for copies was so great it was turned into a national issue in 1937 to cover the United States. This guide while lacking in many respects was accepted by thousands of travelers. Through the courtesy of the United States Travel Bureau of which Mr. Chas. A. R. McDowell was the collaborator on Negro Affairs, more valuable information was secured. With the two working together, this guide contained the best ideas for the Negro traveler. Year after year it grew until 1941. “PM” one of New York’s great white newspapers found out about it. Wrote an article about the guide and praised it highly. At the present time the guide contains 80 pages and lists numerous business places, including whites which cater to the Negro trade. There are thousands of first class business places that we don’t know about and can’t list, which would be glad to serve the traveler, but it is hard to secure listings of these places since we can’t secure enough agents to send us the information. Each year before we go to press the new information is included in the new edition. When you are traveling please mention the Green Book, in order that they might know how you found their place of business, as they can see that you are strangers. If they haven’t heard about this guide, ask them to get in touch with us so that we might list their place. If this guide has proved useful to you on your trips, let us know. If not, tell us also as we appreciate your criticisms and ideas in the improvement of this guide from which you benefit. There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States. It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication for then we can go wherever we please, and without embarrassment. But until that time comes we shall continue to publish this information for your convenience each year. Also see Gustavo Solis”, “Jim Crow-Era Travel Guides for Black
Sample Online Primary Sources, I-M

I Am A Man : The Memphis Sanitation Worker’s Strike . An online exhibition sponsored by the Wayne State University Reuther Library.

I Have a Dream, Address at March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (August 28, 1963). In his iconic speech at the Lincoln Memorial for the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, King urged America to “make real the promises of democracy.” King synthesized portions of his earlier speeches to capture both the necessity for change and the potential for hope in American society.

Ida B. Wells and Anti-Lynching Activism . Ida B. Wells was a journalist, lecturer, civil rights leader, and the leading activist against lynching during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. “Lynching” refers to an instance when a person or group of people acting outside the law physically punished another person, often resulting in death. During Reconstruction and after, instances of lynching in the US rose dramatically as Southern white communities targeted, threatened, and killed African Americans, often with little or no justification, in an attempt to maintain social, economic, and political power....Ida B. Wells was born in rural Mississippi in the midst of the Civil War. As a young adult, Wells moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where she became a teacher and soon took a stand against Jim Crow segregation. In 1889, Wells became co-owner and editor of The Free Speech and Headlight newspaper, which she used to speak out against racial injustice. When three of her friends were lynched in retribution for their economic success and a mob of white residents destroyed the office of her newspaper, Wells was forced to leave Memphis, but she continued her anti-lynching activism as a writer, journalist, and lecturer....Ida B. Wells was also involved in women’s rights activism, specifically focusing on African American women, and was among the co-founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. She married racial justice activist and lawyer Ferdinand Barnett in 1895 and settled in Chicago, where she became one of the leading members of the Chicago black community and worked on another newspaper, The Conservator. Ida B. Wells-Barnett stepped back from public engagements and travel while she raised her four children, but remained committed to racial justice and ran for Illinois state senator in 1930, though she did not win. The documents and images in this primary source set follow the development of Ida B. Wells’ career as a journalist and activist and also represent the practice of lynching that she dedicated her career to fighting against. A collection by Samanatha Gibson, Digital Public Library of America.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, by Harriet Jacobs (pen name Linda Brent).

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl . In 1861, Harriet Jacobs published Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, an account of her experience of enslavement in Edenton, North Carolina. Jacobs used the pseudonym Linda Brent and changed all of names in the book to protect the identity and safety of her family. Incidents soon became one of the most widely read slave narratives written by a woman. Jacobs used the book to highlight the unique cruelties of slavery experienced by women, including sexual abuse, exploitation, and violence.... As a teenager and young woman, Jacobs was subjected to violent sexual advances by her married enslaver Dr. James Norcom. To prevent her victimization by Norcom, Jacobs sought out a relationship with another white man, Samuel Tredwell Sawyer, with whom she had two children. In order to escape and save her children from a future of enslavement, Jacobs ran away by faking her escape to New York. Meanwhile, she hid in a crawlspace above her grandmother’s shed for seven years, where she could continue to watch from afar as her children grew up (they were eventually sold by Norcom and granted relative freedom by their father). In 1842, Jacobs escaped to the North, where she reunited with her children, became acquainted with abolitionist circles, and eventually wrote her autobiography in her free time outside of her work as a caretaker.... For northern readers and especially women, Jacobs’ book was groundbreaking in its explicit and honest account of the prevalence of sexual relationships forced upon enslaved women by white men, the constant threat of separation among enslaved families, and the pain and fear inherent in raising children who legally belonged to someone else. Courtesy of Samantha Gibson, Digital Public Library of America.

Integrating Ole Miss : A Civil Rights Milestone . JFK Library. In the fall of 1962 the college town of Oxford, Mississippi, erupted in violence. At the center of the controversy stood James Meredith, an African American who was attempting to register at the all-white University of Mississippi, known as “Ole Miss.” Meredith had the support of the federal government, which insisted that Mississippi honor the rights of all its citizens, regardless of race....Mississippi’s refusal led to a showdown between state and federal authorities and the storming of the campus by a segregationist mob. Two people died and dozens were injured. In the end, Ole Miss, the state of Mississippi, and the nation were forever changed....This site lets visitors witness the events firsthand through the actual letters, recorded telephone conversations, and images of those who made history.

Legacy of Slavery in Maryland. This program seeks to preserve and promote the vast universe of experiences that have shaped the lives of Maryland’s African American population. From the day that Mathias de Sousa and Francisca landed in St. Mary’s county aboard the Ark and the Dove in 1634, Black Marylanders have made significant contributions to both the state and nation in the political, economic, agricultural, legal, and domestic arenas. Despite what often seemed like insurmountable odds, Marylanders of Color have adapted, evolved, and prevailed. The Maryland
State Archives' Study of the Legacy of Slavery Staff invites researchers to explore all of these elements and more within its numerous source documents, exhibits and interactive online presentations. Courtesy of the Maryland State Archives.


The NAACP Papers (Proquest). Ordered June 15, 2018. The NAACP Papers collection consists of 6 modules, containing internal memos, legal briefings and detailed activity summaries from national, legal and branch offices throughout the country. With a timeline that runs from 1909 to 1972, the NAACP Papers document the realities of segregation in the early 20th century to the triumphs of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and beyond. With these files, researchers can trace the major concerns of the NAACP from year to year; the major campaigns of the NAACP in areas like education, voting rights, anti-lynching legislation and criminal justice; and the amazing branch network of the organization. The Branch Department files contain detailed files on 34 states and 181 branches and branch activities reports from 571 branches in 48 states plus the District of Columbia. The six NAACP Papers modules are:

1. NAACP Papers – Board of Directors, Annual Conferences, Major Speeches, and National Staff Files (annual conference resolutions and speeches are excellent source for studying the major issues of importance to the NAACP from year to year)
2. NAACP Papers – The NAACP’s Major Campaigns: Education, Voting, Housing, Employment, Armed Forces
3. NAACP Papers: The NAACP’s Major Campaigns—Scottsboro, Anti-Lynching, Criminal Justice, Peonage, Labor, and Segregation And Discrimination Complaints And Responses
4. NAACP Papers: The NAACP’s Major Campaigns—Legal Department Files
5. NAACP Papers: Special Subjects
6. NAACP Papers: Branch Department, Branch Files And Youth Department Files

Nat Turner Project. In the Nat Turner Project digital archive, you can read original documents related to the only large-scale slave revolt ever to occur in the United States. Explore newspaper articles, diary entries, letters, maps, trials transcripts, census records, pamphlets, petitions, and other types of sources created at the time the revolt occurred. The archive also contains later accounts of the revolt, including interviews with former slaves and speeches by the late abolitionist Frederick Douglass. It is a collaboration between the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Virginia, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.
Navigating the Green Book, by Victor Green, from the New York Public Library. This resource provides access to the content of The Green Book, published periodically between 1936 and 1966. Search options are limited to three map features: one for creating a map of a trip, and two for visualizing available data in cluster or “heatmap” views. These displays show the concentration of businesses friendly to African American travelers for just two particular dates, 1947 and 1956 (although covers and the content of the travel guide are viewable for additional years, issued under various titles including The Negro Motorist Green Book or The Negro Traveler’s Green Book: The Guide to Travel and Vacations). The map a trip feature allows users to see what services (e.g., hotels, restaurants, bars, gas stations) were available on trips through those years between larger cities, tracing nearly 800 addresses. While the heatmap is eye-catching, there does not seem to be any extra functionality that would make this color coordination useful to users. Furthermore, multiple links are available on the home page; some of them lead to scanned copies of The Green Book for additional years, while others point to raw text and data files. These features may be informative for web developers but perhaps confusing for general users. These unique documents have value for studying how race relations affected business and travel for African Americans during a defined time in the nation’s history. However, the site’s current organization could be improved, which would help users unlock the educational potential of this content.

Negro League Baseball. Between the end of the Civil War and 1890, some African American baseball players played alongside white players in minor and major leagues. After 1890, Jim Crow segregation dominated the sport until Jackie Robinson integrated major league baseball in 1947. Consequently African Americans formed their own professional baseball leagues commonly and collectively known as Negro League baseball. During its heyday in the 1920s and 30s, the Negro Leagues drew large crowds and fielded over thirty teams throughout the East Coast and Midwest. In this primary source set, students will view original photographs, listen to oral history recordings, and read historical texts to gain a better understanding of of the lives and experiences of Negro League baseball players. Courtesy of Jamie Lathan and the Digital Public Library of America.

New York Historical Society Manuscripts Relating to Slavery. The library of the New-York Historical Society holds among its many resources a substantial collection of manuscript materials documenting American slavery and the slave trade in the Atlantic world. The fourteen collections on this web site are among the most important of these manuscript collections. They consist of diaries, account books, letter books, ships’ logs, indentures, bills of sale, personal papers, and records of institutions. Some of the highlights of these collections include the records of the New York Manumission Society and the African Free School, the diaries and correspondence of English abolitionists Granville Sharp and John Clarkson, the papers of the Boston anti-slavery activist Lysander Spooner, the records of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, the draft of Charles Sumner’s famous speech The Anti-Slavery Enterprise, and an account book kept by the slave trading firm Bolton, Dickens & Co.

North American Slave Narratives. “North American Slave Narratives” collects books and articles that document the individual and collective story of African Americans struggling for freedom and human rights in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. This collection includes all the existing autobiographical narratives of fugitive and former slaves published as broadsides, pamphlets, or books in English up to 1920. Also included are many of the biographies of fugitive and former slaves and some significant fictionalized slave narratives published in English before 1920. Courtesy of the University of North Carolina Documenting the American South digital collection.

The Papers of Amiri Baraka, Poet Laureate of the Black Power Movement. An Archives Unbound Collection from Gale Cengage. This collection of Amiri Baraka materials was made available by Dr. Komoni Woodard. Dr. Woodard collected these documents during his career as an activist in Newark, New Jersey. The collection consists of rare works of poetry, organizational records, print publications, over one hundred articles, poems, plays, and speeches by Baraka, a small amount of personal correspondence, and oral histories. The collection has been arranged into eighteen series. These series are: (1) Black Arts Movement; (2) Black Nationalism; (3) Correspondence; (4) Newark (New Jersey); (5) Congress of African People; (6) National Black Conferences and National Black Assembly; (7) Black Women’s United Front; (8) Student Organization for Black Unity; (9) African Liberation Support Committee; (10) Revolutionary Communist League; (11) African Socialism; (12) Black Marxists; (13) National Black United Front; (14) Miscellaneous Materials, 1978-1988; (15) Serial Publications; (16) Oral Histories; (17) Woodard’s Office Files.

The Poetry of Maya Angelou. Maya Angelou was an author, actor, dancer, poet, producer, director, playwright, professor, and civil rights activist considered one of the most influential voices of her time. She is widely known for her autobiographical works and poetry. Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings was nominated for the National Book Award in 1969 and Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ‘fore I Diiie, published in 1971, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Angelou read her poem “On the Pulse of Morning” at President Clinton’s inauguration ceremony and in 2010, President Barack Obama awarded Angelou the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States. Her autobiographies include stories of her youth, including being raped as a child, and her move to San Francisco, where she became the first black woman cable car conductor; her poetry considers themes of female strength, black beauty, social injustice, and equality for all. This primary source set includes photographs, illustrations, correspondence, interviews, and a sound recording that provides context for thematic elements in the poetry of Maya Angelou as well as her life. Courtesy of Susan Ketcham, Digital Public Library of America.
American Studies.

Race Relations in the U.S. Based at Fisk University from 1943-1970, the Race Relations Department and its annual Institute were set up by the American Missionary Association to investigate problem areas in race relations and develop methods for educating communities and preventing conflict. Documenting three pivotal decades in the fight for civil rights, this resource showcases the speeches, reports, surveys and analyses produced by the Department’s staff and Institute participants, including Charles S. Johnson, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thurgood Marshall. Courtesy of Adam Matthews.

A Raisin in the Sun. Lorraine Hansberry’s groundbreaking play, A Raisin in the Sun (1959), tells the story of the Youngers, three generations of an African American family living together in a small apartment on Chicago’s South Side. Set in the postwar era, the play follows the family’s struggles with poverty and their decision to move to a single-family home in the all-white neighborhood of Clybourne Park. It explores themes of discrimination, assimilation, black pride, gender, and sacrifice; its title is a reference to the Langston Hughes poem, “Harlem” (“A Dream Deferred”). Hansberry based this work on her family’s own experiences with housing discrimination and racially motivated restrictive covenants in Chicago’s Washington Park neighborhood, litigated in the U.S. Supreme Court case, Hansberry v. Lee (1940). When A Raisin in the Sun debuted on Broadway in 1959, it brought the daily struggles of African American life to the overwhelmingly white Broadway audience, while also attracting an unprecedented African American audience. In its own day, the play won the New York Drama Critics’ Circle award for best play of 1959 and was nominated for a number of Tony Awards. It has since become one of the most frequently taught, most enduring works of American drama. This primary source set includes photographs, documents, and news footage that provide context for the challenges characters face in the play. Courtesy of Franky Abbott and the Digital Public Library.

Ralph Ellion Library Documents Library from Teaching American History, courtesy of Ashland University.

Roanoke Island Freedmen’s Colony. During the Civil War, Union-occupied Roanoke Island, which lies between the North Carolina mainland and the barrier islands known as the Outer Banks, became home to thousands of former slaves. Initially these refugees settled near the Union headquarters, creating a community that included churches and a school. In the spring of 1863, this camp evolved into a government-sanctioned colony. Major General John G. Foster, Commander of the 18th Army Corps, ordered Horace James, a Congregational minister from New England who was serving as a chaplain in the Union army, to establish a colony of former slaves on the island. Although the Roanoke Island freedmen’s colony was an experiment of national significance, few people are aware of its history. This site presents an introduction to the colony and the colonial experiment that was conducted there. It also features some primary sources, maps, and projects for student.

Rosa Parks Papers Collection at Library of Congress. The collection, which contains approximately 7,500 manuscripts and 2,500 photographs, is on loan to the Library for 10 years from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. The Library received the materials in late 2014, formally opened them to researchers in the Library’s reading rooms in February 2015 and now has digitized them for optimal access by the public. Parks became an iconic figure in history on Dec. 1, 1955, when she refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Her arrest sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a seminal event in the Civil Rights Movement. Parks died at age 92 in 2005. The collection reveals many details of Parks’ life and personality, from her experiences as a young girl in the segregated South to her difficulties in finding work after the Montgomery Bus Boycott; from her love for her husband to her activism on civil rights issues. Included in the collection are personal correspondence, family photographs, letters from presidents, fragmentary drafts of some of her writings from the time of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, her Presidential Medal of Freedom and Congressional Gold Medal, additional honors and awards, presentation albums, drawings sent to her by schoolchildren and hundreds of greeting cards from individuals thanking her for her impact on civil rights. The vast majority of these items may be viewed online. Other material is available to researchers through the Manuscript and Prints and Photographs reading rooms.

Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection. In 1870, Andrew Dickson White (Cornell’s first president) was instrumental in bringing an extensive collection of slavery and abolitionist materials gathered by his close friend, Reverend Samuel Joseph May, to the Cornell Library. Numbering over 10,000 titles, May’s pamphlets and leaflets document the anti-slavery struggle at the local, regional, and national levels. Much of the May Anti-Slavery Collection was considered ephemeral or fugitive, and today many of these pamphlets are scarce. Sermons, position papers, offprints, local Anti-Slavery Society newsletters, poetry anthologies, freedmen’s testimonies, broadsides, and Anti-Slavery Fair keepsakes all document the social and political implications of the abolitionist movement.

The Sixties: Primary Documents and Personal Narratives, 1960 to 1974 / Alexander Street Press. Featuring tens of thousands of historic documents and primary sources, this powerful searchable online collection provides a vivid window into the key events, people, debates, and movements of 1960s America -- including the Civil Rights era -- capturing the artifacts, written and oral accounts, and historic documents of one of the most pivotal decades in American political and social life.

Slave Biographies: The Atlantic Database Network is an open access repository of information on the identities of enslaved people in the Atlantic World. It includes the names, ethnicities, skills, occupations, and illnesses of individual slaves involved in the Atlantic slave trade. It also connects slaves to family members creating a complex web of social and kinship networks. In this way Slave Biographies reveals much about slave life in the New World and about African slaves’ lives in parts of the Old World...Slave Biographies also provides a platform for researchers of African slavery to contribute, analyze, visualize, utilize, and collaborate on data they have collected. The repository combines multiple, individual datasets in a way that is complimentary and creates a resource for quantitative data analysis and data visualizations about the Atlantic slave trade.


Online: This digital collection documents key aspects of the history of slavery worldwide over six centuries. Topics covered include the African Coast, the Middle Passage, the varieties of slave experience, religion, revolts, abolition, and legislation. The collection also includes case studies from America, the Caribbean, Brazil, and Cuba.

Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive by Gale Cengage. Part I: Debates over Slavery and Abolition, Part II: Slave Trade in the Atlantic World, Part III: The Institution of Slavery, and Part IV: The Age of Emancipation. Slavery and Anti-Slavery includes collections on the transatlantic slave trade, the global movement for the abolition of slavery, the legal, personal, and economic aspects of the slavery system, and the dynamics of conflict. Documenting three pivotal decades in the fight for civil rights, this resource showcases the speeches, reports, surveys and analyses produced by the Department’s staff and Institute participants, including Charles S. Johnson, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thurgood Marshall. Courtesy of Adam Matthews.
SlaveryStories.org. These are tales of American slaves, written in their own words and spoken with their own voices. Includes both written and audio narratives. A new, collaborative digital project started February 3, 2014 by Rob Walsh, Scholastica. At time of posting the written narratives include:

(1) Twelve Years a Slave : Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853 by Solomon Northup

(2) Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl by Harriet Ann Jacobs

(3) Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass Written By Himself. Frederick Douglass

(4) Fifty Years In Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave by Charles Ball


(6) Louisa Picquet, the Octoroon or Inside Views of Southern Domestic Life by Louisa Picquet

(7) The Narrative of Sojourner Truth by Sojourner Truth

(8) Slave Life in Georgia : A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave by John Brown

Slaves and the Courts, 1740-1860. Contains just over a hundred pamphlets and books (published between 1772 and 1889) concerning the difficult and troubling experiences of African and African-American slaves in the American colonies and the United States. The documents, most from the Law Library and the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress, comprise an assortment of trials and cases, reports, arguments, accounts, examinations of cases and decisions, proceedings, journals, a letter, and other works of historical importance. Of the cases presented here, most took place in America and a few in Great Britain. Among the voices heard are those of some of the defendants and plaintiffs themselves as well as those of abolitionists, presidents, politicians, slave owners, fugitive and free territory slaves, lawyers and judges, and justices of the U.S. Supreme Court. Significant names include John Quincy Adams, Roger B. Taney, John C. Calhoun, Salmon P. Chase, Dred Scott, William H. Seward, Prudence Crandall, Theodore Parker, Jonathan Walker, Daniel Drayton, Castner Hanway, Francis Scott Key, William L. Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Denmark Vesey, and John Brown. Slaves and the Courts was made possible by a generous gift from the Citigroup Foundation.

Television News of the Civil Rights Era, 1950-1970. Television News of the Civil Rights Era, 1950-1970, aims to collect, digitize, and present in streaming video format over the World Wide Web television news footage from the period and to make these valuable materials available to scholars, teachers, and students. The current archive contains films from the nightly news from two local television stations in Virginia—WDBJ (CBS) Roanoke and WSLS (NBC) Roanoke. In this initial installment we have digitized over 230 films. This rare footage includes full speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Richard M. Nixon, the governors of the Commonwealth of Virginia, as well as original footage of school desegregation, public meetings, local debates over civil rights matters, and interviews with citizens. Courtesy of the University of Virginia, Virginia Center for Digital History.

Their Eyes Were Watching God. Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937) is the coming-of-age story of Janie Crawford, an African American woman growing up in Eatonville, Florida—one of the first incorporated African American towns in the United States. Hurston wrote the novel during a critical moment for African American writers. The "New Negro Movement" and the Harlem Renaissance presented African American artists with the opportunity to use their art as a way to authentically represent the African American experience. However, scholars such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright often debated about the actual authenticity of these representations as well as the role of the black artist. Many African American artists, including Richard Wright, found Hurston's novel to be problematic. Her emphasis on black folk culture and her representations of African American men were often criticized as being counterproductive to the image of the "New Negro." Despite the criticism Their Eyes Were Watching God received, Hurston's powerful prose and honest depictions of the African American experience have inspired many contemporary readers, and the novel has become an integral part of the American literary canon. Courtesy of Lakisha Odlum and the Digital Public Library of America.

The Transatlantic Slave Trade. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Transatlantic Slave Trade brought twelve million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World as part of a broad exchange of trade goods between England, West Africa, South America, the West Indies, and the United States. While the largest numbers of slaves were sent to South America, particularly Brazil, and the West Indies, smaller numbers arrived in the United States where Americans purchased them for labor. Most often from the west and central portions of the African continent, these enslaved people were kidnapped, forced to endure extreme violence, ripped from family and familiar language and culture, and treated as property. They endured the horrors of the Middle Passage, the journey by ship from West African slave trading ports to the New World during which an estimated two million captives died. Once in the United States, enslaved Africans were sold at auctions across the country, from the rice plantations of the South Carolina coast to the small businesses and farms of the rural Northeast. Both England and the United States outlawed the importation of slaves through slave trading in 1807. This did not fully prevent illegal slave trading to the United States, which persisted until the American Civil War. This primary source set include documents, photographs, artwork, and maps that tell the story of the slave trade and its impact. Courtesy of Franky Abbott and the Digital Public Library of America.

Truman Administration and the Desegregation of the Armed Forces. This collection focuses on President Truman's decision to desegregate the U.S. Armed Forces. It includes 247 documents totaling 1,187 pages, covering the years 1938-1953.

Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture. This website from the University of Virginia presents a vast multimedia archive of primary material, 1830 to 1930, organized around Harriet Beecher Stowe's seminal work. Educators should preview the material, particularly the various representations of race and slavery in the archive, to determine what is appropriate for use in their own classroom discussion.

The Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The Underground Railroad (1850-1860) was an intricate network of people, safe places, and communities that were connected by land, rail, and maritime routes. It was developed by abolitionists and slaves as a means of escaping the harsh conditions in which African Americans were forced to live, and ultimately to assist them in gaining their freedom. Although securing one’s freedom was challenging, many railroad agents managed to flee states in the South and to Canada. For African Americans, however, freedom was a promise that was difficult to achieve.
freedom was challenging, many enslaved persons escaped to free states in the North and to Canada. Free African Americans, however, faced the threat of being returned to a slaveholder as a result of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which required that all escaped enslaved persons be returned, upon capture, to their masters. This primary source set provides teachers and students with resources that reveal the myriad sacrifices enslaved people made in order to gain their freedom, the effects of the Fugitive Slave Law on the lives of free African Americans, and the community that was built among abolitionists and enslaved people. A compilation by Lakisha Odulum, Digital Public Library of America.

Visual Art During the Harlem Renaissance. Coinciding with the Great Migration by African-Americans from the South to Northern cities, the term "Harlem Renaissance" is used to describe the thriving art, music, and literary scene in New York City during the 1920s and 1930s. This set of primary sources highlights the multimedia visual art of this era, which vibrantly celebrates African-American and African history and culture. Additionally, the visual art created by African-American artists of the Harlem Renaissance sometimes offers subtle criticism of the status of African-Americans in the United States at that time. Courtesy of Kerry Dunne and Lakisha Odulum and the Digital Public Library of America.

Voices from the Days of Slavery: Former Slaves Tell Their Stories. As part of the American Memory Project at the Library of Congress, this engaging website offers first-hand audio recollections of the experience of slavery in the American South from 23 African-Americans. The interviews themselves were originally conducted between 1932 and 1975, and contain memories of their lives that include discussions of their feelings on slavery, their families, and on freedom. It is not terribly surprising that very limited biographical information is available about each participant, though the special exhibit that is also available here (titled Faces and Voices From the Presentation), features photographs of some of the interviewees, such as Fountain Hughes, Uncle Bob Ledbetter, and George Johnson. As some of the audio recordings contain a good deal of background noise (and in some cases are incomplete), visitors may also want to follow along by viewing the full-text transcriptions as well. One interview that visitors will want to make sure and listen to is the one with Uncle Billy McCrea conducted in 1940, in which he sings both Blow Cornie Blow and Walk Dooley.

Watsons Go To Birmingham—1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis. The civil rights movement was one of the most powerful social justice movements in the history of the United States; however students and scholars of that movement do not often focus on the negative effects of segregation and racism on children of color before and during the civil-rights era. Christopher Paul Curtis's historical novel The Watsons Go To Birmingham—1963 (1995) is unique because it deals directly with how racism traumatized youth. A beautiful yet tragic coming-of-age story, The Watsons Go To Birmingham—1963, shows how a young boy, Kenny, is traumatized after witnessing the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. At first Kenny is unaware of the severity of the racism in Birmingham, his grandmother's hometown, when his family journeys there to keep his older brother Byron out of trouble. He soon realizes that despite some progress toward equality, many Americans are still resistant to the concept of racial integration. Through the support of his family, Kenny overcomes his trauma and matures into a wise young man. This primary source set provides background information on race relations in Alabama during the 1960s, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing, and civil rights activism in the South. Courtesy of Lakisha Odulum and the Digital Public Library of America.

W. E. B. DuBois Collection from Teaching American History, courtesy of Ashland University. We Were Prepared for Death, Freedom Riders in the South, 1961. An Archives Unbound Collection from Gale Cengage. Freedom Riders were civil rights activists that rode interstate buses into the segregated South to test the United States Supreme Court decision in Boynton v. Virginia. Boynton had outlawed racial segregation in the restaurants and waiting rooms in terminals serving buses that crossed state lines. Five years prior to the Boynton ruling, the Interstate Commerce Commission had issued a ruling in Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company that had explicitly denounced the Plessy v. Ferguson doctrine of separate but equal in interstate bus travel, but the ICC had failed to enforce its own ruling, and thus Jim Crow travel laws remained in force throughout the South. The Freedom Riders set out to challenge this status quo by riding various forms of public transportation in the South to challenge local laws or customs that enforced segregation. The Freedom Riders, and the violent reactions they provoked, bolstered the credibility of the Civil Rights Movement and called national attention to the violent disregard for the law that was used to enforce segregation in the southern United States. Riders were arrested for trespassing, unlawful assembly, and violating state and local Jim Crow laws, along with other alleged offenses.

Who Speaks for the Negro? In 1965, Robert Penn Warren wrote a book, now out of print, entitled Who Speaks for the Negro? To research this publication, he traveled the country and spoke with a variety of people who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement. He spoke with nationally-known figures as well as people working in the trenches of the Movement. The volume contains many of the transcripts from these conversations. The Who Speaks for the Negro? Archive contains digitized versions of the original reel-to-reel recordings, as well as copies of the correspondence, transcripts, and other printed materials related to his research for the provocatively-titled book.

Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000 is a database of almost 3,950 documents and 150,000 pages of additional full-text documents, written by some 2,150 primary authors. It also includes book, film, and website reviews, notes from the archives, and teaching tools. When you search Women and Social Movements, you can discover slave narratives, biographies, records of black women’s employment, experiences of women during the Civil Rights Movement and more.

Women and the Blues. Although the origins of blues music are difficult to trace completely, the blues movement is said to have grown from African American song and culture throughout the South. Women were an influential part of this development with several female blues singers driving the movement throughout the United States. In 1920, Perry Bradford brought Mamie Smith into the spotlight with her performance of “Crazy Blues,” which was the first commercial blues record ever recorded. The influence of Mamie Smith, Bessie Smith, Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, and Ida Cox can still be heard in more contemporary artists like Toni Braxton, Gladys Knight, and others. Courtesy of Melissa Jacobs and the Digital Public Library of America.

Yale Slavery and Abolition Portal. This site is designed to help researchers and students find primary sources related to slavery, abolition, and resistance within the university’s many libraries and galleries. Select a repository from the list across the top to browse by location or use the search function to sort collections by topic. Consult the research and links pages for information about how to find additional source material.
View Libguides Research Papers on Academia.edu for free. The data are divided into 16 Excel spreadsheets, each representing a South African public university with LibGuides. Findings The results show that only 8.1 per cent or 95 of 1,166 LibGuides are co-owned, whereas in 9.4 per cent (109 of 1,166) of LibGuides, the ownership reverts to the host library, as there are no authors indicated. Research limitations/implications This study will lead to a better understanding of the extent of collaboration between librarians in Africa, generally, but specifically in South Africa. In addition, it poses a challenge to library managers to develop strategies that promote and nurture a culture of collaboration between and among librarians to avoid unnecessary duplication. Online Indexes international periodicals in religious and theological studies. Francis (Humanities & Social Sciences). Nancy, France: Institut de l'information scientifique et technique, 1984-. Online Covers 4,200 journals; abstracts for 80 percent of records, subject descriptions are in English and French. Index Islamicus. East Grinstead, West Sussex, UK: Bowker-Saur, 1976 Afrocentric Sources Ben-Jochannan, Yosef, et al. African Origins of the Major World Religions. 2nd ed. Internet Sacred Text Archive: African Religions. Good Collection of Primary Sources. Wabash Center: Religion in Africa. Very In-Depth Collection of Sources on Religion in Africa. Different fields of study may use different types of primary sources. Common examples of a primary source are Sometimes, the same source might be a primary source for one research paper and a secondary source for another. It all depends on the relationship of the source to your research question. For example, if you are researching Franklin Roosevelt's life, the book No ordinary time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The home front in World War II by Doris Kearns Goodwin would be a secondary source. If you were researching the literary style of Ms. Goodwin, it would be a primary source. *From Joyner Library, East Carolina University. Additional examples of primary and secondary sources relating to