11-2-2017

Spreading the Word Poster

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**Spreading the Word:**

Expanding Access to African-American Religious Archival Collections of the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library

The Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library received a generous grant in 2015 from the National Endowment for the to broaden access to under-represented humanities collections through a project entitled, Spreading the Word: Expanding Access to African-American Religious Archival Collections of the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The Library’s Archival Research and Digital Services Department collaborated to organize, describe, and digitize fourteen collections of rare materials that document African American religion spanning from the 1930s to the 2000s. These unique collections comprise varied formats, including correspondence, sermons and speeches, research files, photographs, and audio and video recordings, which document theologians and scholars, as well as Christian and Islamic ideologies.

James H. Costen

Dr. James H. Costen was Presbyterian minister and educator, and served as president of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) from 1983 to 1999. He had his first Bachelor of Divinity degree from the Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary – the only historically Black theological seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). This seminary dates back to 1887 and the founding of Freedman's College of North Carolina a school created specifically to educate newly freed slaves. The college was chartered in 1863 under the name of the Biddle University (now known as Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary). Costen’s first of three in 1972, Costen’s correspondence tell the story of an active theologian and educator and administrator with the papers providing rich resources in the study of African American religion and education in the South.

Interdenominational Theological Center Photographs

Chartered in 1958 through the mutual efforts of four interdenominational seminaries. Morehouse School of Religion, Gammon Theological Seminary, Turner Theological Seminary, and Phillips School of Theology. These seminaries came together to form one school of theology in cooperation as an ecumenical cluster and were later joined by two additional schools, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, and Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary. This collection of 1,275 photographs document the visual history of the school and its seminaries, spanning from the 1880s to the 1970s. The extent of the photographs capture all aspects of the school: buildings and grounds; courses and former locations, presidents, faculty, convocations, and student life.

C. Eric Lincoln

Dr. C. Eric Lincoln was known as a distinguished scholar, writer and lecturer on the sociology of Black religion, race and ethnic relations in the United States, as well as an authority on the Nation of Islam and African American Muslims. This collection is a significant resource for studying African American religious groups and the scholastic work created around it. Part of the collection are 180 audio and video recordings Lincoln accumulated over the years – one of a kind recordings of Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan and Ben Chavis, some of which were collected as a result of his research into the Black Muslims and the Wilmington Ten case in North Carolina.

C. Eric Lincoln Lecture Series

Clark College initiated the C. Eric Lincoln Lecture Series in 1982, featuring notable public figures in the fields of religion and sociology. The annual event is held the last Saturday of October in the auditorium, and is co-sponsored by the Clark University Department of Religion and Philosophy. The collection contains programs, correspondence, and transcripts related to the series. Audio and video recordings of lectures feature prominent scholars on African American religious studies including Iqiyah Grant, Henry Love Whelchel, Gardner C. Taylor and John Hope Franklin.

Project Snapshot:

- 14 Collections
- 1475 Linear feet of materials
- 5,078 Photographs
- 4,224 Works posted
- 1,146 Audio and video tapes
- 10170 Downloads
- 108 Countries reached
- 72 audio reel-to-reel and cassette tapes provide insight to fellow’s thoughts, sermons, speeches, and interviews – one featuring a man’s perspective of Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois.

Levi and Jewell Torell

Husband and wife, Levi and Jewell Torell, were long-time Baptist workers. Levi Torell, a Morehouse graduate, was pastor of the First Bryan Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia, and the Zion Hill Baptist Church in Atlanta. He was the president of the General Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia from 1959 to 1971, and vice president of the NBCUSA from 1969 to 1971. Jewell Torell, an Atlanta University Normal School graduate, served the largest predominantly African American denominations in the United States, both locally and nationally in multiple capacities, such as Chair of the Registration Committee of the Women’s Convention Auxiliary of the NBCUSA, and president of the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Baptist Association.

Society for the Study of Black Religion

The Society for the Study of Black Religion is an organization devoted to scholarly inquiry about the Black religious experience, particularly from a Christian standpoint.” Founded in 1972 in New York City, this professional society is largely composed of people engaged in academic teaching and research about Black religion. Audio and video tapes feature prominent scholars and educators such as C. Eric Lincoln, Igor Morin, Jeanne Jones, Paul Murray, James Cone, and others. Speeches and presentations cover a broad range of topics such as liberation theology, African American religion and culture, Black feminism, religious “cults,” and religion in the Caribbean and Africa.