

Preserving Black culture



Francis Black, Texarkana

James Singleton Black, 83 years old

Zek Brown, Ft. Worth

Portraits of African American Ex-Slaves in the Late 1930s[[Source](https://www.vintag.es/2018/04/30s-ex-slaves.html)]

Course outline

Date	Topic
February 1	Introduction
February 8	The WPA guide to Massachusetts and related publications Contemporary tours in central and western Massachusetts
February 15	Preserving Black culture
February 22	Politics and the Federal Writers' Project
March 1	The Legacy of the Federal Writers' Project

Course materials are available on <https://queenlake.com/wise/wise-spring-2022/federal-writers-project/>

See also: [Bibliography](#)



Federal Writers' Project - 3

A quick recap of where we've been

- ▶ The Federal Writers' Project produced more than 1000 publications, including guidebooks for the 48 states, Alaska, and Puerto Rico
- ▶ We sampled a couple of tours from the Massachusetts guide as well as viewing other publications and records from the project.
 - The tours for the Massachusetts guide are listed on [page xv](#).
 - We saw a contemporary view of Tours 8A, Williamsburg to Hinsdale, and 23A, Barre to Willimantic (sic).



Federal Writers' Project - 3

*Schlepping
Around Martha's Vineyard*



by Thomas Dresser

Schlepping Around Martha's Vineyard is a tour guide that invites a visitor to explore sites from the Gay Head Cliffs to the shores of State Beach. Take a hike from Middle Road through to Waukegan's Rock. Enjoy a stroll through the streets of Edgartown. Explore the wonders of Blackwater Pond, Menemsha Hills, Peaked Hill and Cedar Tree Neck.

Schlepping Around Martha's Vineyard is brimming with useful information and educational material about the island of Martha's Vineyard.

Perfect for family vacations. Ideal for day trippers. And a bit of info for locals as well.



Whether a first-time visitor or the seasoned tourist, *Schlepping Around Martha's Vineyard* offers a multitude of opportunity for sitting off on your own adventure to explore what makes the Vineyard such a magical place to visit, to tour, to live.



Essay by Herb Foster on FWP for Martha's Vineyard



Federal Writers' Project - 3

A note of thanks to Tom Dresser



The Voices of Americans Born in Slavery

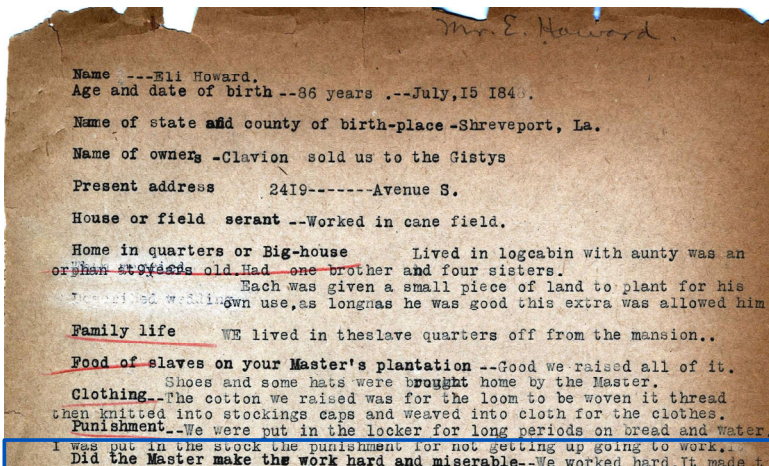


Nightline: Jan. 12, 1999

Federal Writers' Project - 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3Fk9pqybCA&t=151s>

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/voices-remembering-slavery/about-this-collection/>



Mr. E. Howard.

Name ---Eli Howard.
 Age and date of birth --36 years ---July, 15 1848.
 Name of state and county of birth-place -Shreveport, La.
 Name of owners -Clavion sold us to the Gistys
 Present address 2419-----Avenue S.
 House or field serant --Worked in cane field.
 Home in quarters or Big-house Lived in logcabin with aunty was an orphan ~~at 10 years old~~ Had one brother and four sisters.
 Each was given a small piece of land to plant for his own use, as long as he was good this extra was allowed him.
 Family life WE lived in the slave quarters off from the mansion..
 Food of slaves on your Master's plantation --Good we raised all of it. Shoes and some hats were brought home by the Master.
 Clothing--The cotton we raised was for the loom to be woven it thread then knitted into stockings caps and weaved into cloth for the clothes.
 Punishment--We were put in the locker for long periods on bread and water. I was put in the stock the punishment for not getting up going to work..
 Did the Master make the work hard and miserable--We worked hard. It made t

John B. Cade, Sr., Dean of Southern University, a formerly Black institution, students collected narratives between 1929 and 1935

Black students collecting slave narratives

Federal Writers' Project - 3

John B. Cade's Project to Document the Stories of the Formerly Enslaved

<https://daily.jstor.org/john-b-cades-project-to-document-the-stories-of-the-formerly-enslaved/>

original manuscripts compiled by John Brother Cade and his students at Southern University.



- ▶ Started in 1934, before the FWP was formed, under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration.
- ▶ The idea came from Lawrence Reddick, a Black professor of history at Kentucky State Industrial College
- ▶ By the time that the project was transferred to the FWP, it had workers in 18 states.
- ▶ Later, Reddick, biographer of Martin Luther King, Jr., was fired from his post at Alabama State College for alleged (and unproved) membership in the Communist Party.

The beginnings of the slave narrative project



Federal Writers' Project - 3

Magnione, p. 257

<https://www.splcenter.org/news/2019/01/15/crusader-without-violence-qa-martin-luther-king-jr-biography-ahead-its-time>

A bit more about Reddick, FERA, and FWP in **Coming Through** - Voices of a South Carolina Gullah Community from WPA Oral Histories

In 1934 Lawrence D. Reddick proposed to Harry L. Hopkins, director of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, a Negro project "to study the needs and collect the testimony of ex-slaves" in the Ohio River Valley and the lower South. In 1936 the work thus begun was continued and extended under

the Works Progress Administration by white and Negro
workers of the Federal
Writers' Project in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida,
Georgia,
Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland,
Mississippi, Missouri, North
Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee,
Texas, and Virginia. – Lay My Burden Down, by B.A.
Botkin



- ▶ Folklore editor for the Federal Writers' Project
- ▶ See [Benjamin Botkin's Legacy-in-the-Making](#)
- ▶ Also Living Lore: B. A. Botkin, Folklore, and the State

"Our many folk cultures are not behind us at all but right under us. Below the surface of the dominant pattern are the popular life and fantasy of our cultural minorities and other nondominant groups—nondominant but not recessive, not static but dynamic and transitional, on their way up."

Benjamin A. Botkin



Federal Writers' Project - 3

Living Lore: B. A. Botkin, Folklore, and the State



- Researcher of Southern and Southwestern folklore
- Graduate of University of Texas – Austin.
- Additional education at Harvard
- Honorary Consultant and Curator of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress
- Adviser of folklore collection for the Federal Writers' Project

John Lomax



Federal Writers' Project - 3

The speech of the ex-slave should be recorded: the stories should not be told in the language of the interviewer. Words should not be put into dialect where this did not change the pronunciation. He gave a list of dialect forms that should *not* be used, and he stressed that the flavor of Negro speech should be preserved and that the dialect used should not make the stories difficult to read

John Lomax recommendations for transcribing speed



Weevils in the wheat : interviews with Virginia ex-slaves

Federal Writers' Project - 3

Lawrence Gellert 1939
POPULAR NEGRO IDIOMS - NORTH & SOUTH

Offay	white person of either sex	Twister	Key
Miss Annie	white woman	Slammer	Door
Pink		Alarm clock	One who snores
Mr. Eddie	white man	Irish money	flattery
Arnchy	snobbish	On a wet ticket	broke
Dinge	Negro	Iron man	
Jigg		Lamb's tongue	
Spade		Rock	Money
Shine		Jew flag	
Spagony (spagone)		Saw buck	
Jig chaser	White who prefers Negro company	Double son	
Monk		In the rough	shabby
Monkey chaser	West Indian Negro	Louse trap	Comb
Bull Dyker	Lesbian	C.P.T.	Colored people's time - hours late
Fagety	Male Homo	Jive	
	Two things in Harlem I don't understand Bull Dyken woman And a fagety man	Joree jawin jabberwack	Pointless talk

Popular negro idioms --North & South

Lawrence Gellert, 1939 [\[Source\]](#)

Federal Writers' Project - 3

Title Popular negro idioms --North & South **Call**
Number JWW MSS 40 **Creator** Gellert, Lawrence,
1898-1979 **Published/Created Date** 1939 **Collection**
Title Federal Writers' Project Negro Group papers

1900003

"De war ends and in de few months old massa sot he slaves free. He give my pappy some money and he starts out for heself. He goes to Milligan and rents land and raises he fam'ly. Old Massa never goes back to Richmond. De Yanks gits what he left so dey no use gwine back dere. He lives in Franklin till 1914. It ain't like Old Virginny, but dey's plenty wild game and hawks and he raises a bale of cotton to de acre, so he have money once more.


"Dey's folks comin' to Texas all de time from de old states. It am de new world and dey likes it. Dey has de Juneteenth cel'brations after 'while, and de white folks gives us beeves and hawks to barbecue, so Texas am de good place to stay.

Page One

Jun

Gus Johnson, age 90, Beaumont, Texas

Federal Writers' Project - 3



Only three of the narratives mention Juneteenth

All from Texas: Josh Miles, age 78, from Virginia. In 1862, his owner moved the family and slaves to Texas. See 163

Federal Writers' Project, and Works Project Administration (Wpa). *Texas Slave Narratives - Parts 1 & 2: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*. Works Progress Administration, 1938.

V. H. Frank - 1834-35
 Mr. Frank Bell
 1834-35
 Standing at 7th & Pa. Ave - seeing his son (Prof. Henry)
 Falls Church - Vienna - John - Fallows - 3 children
 Mary 150 servants -
 grandfather picked up roadkill on foot -
 "Hope you never have to go through -"
 Died at 18 - before war.
 Company came in - children sit quiet
 Starlin Bell - belonged to same owner all his life
 Father - Frank Bell
 Mother - Harriet Bell

Manuscript (Pencil copy, Lewis Papers)



FWP worker Faith Morris

Faith Lewis – Interview notes



Federal Writers' Project - 3

-49- 146-

FEDERAL WRITERS PROJECT
American Guide (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Martin Richardson
 Field Worker
 9 Pages
 1494 Words

Slave Interview
 Eatonville, Florida


ARNOLD GRAGSTON

(Verbatim interview with Arnold Gragston, 97-year-old ex-slave whose early life was spent helping slaves to freedom across the Ohio River, while he, himself, remained in bondage. As he puts it, he guesses he could be called a 'conductor' on the underground railway, only we didn't call it that then, I don't know as we called it anything -- we just knew there was a lot of slaves always a-wantin' to get free, and I had to help 'em.")

"Most of the slaves didn't know when they was born, but I did. You see, I was born on a Christmas mornin' -- it was in 1840; I was a full grown man when I finally got my freedom."

"Before I got it, though, I helped a lot of others get theirs. Lawd only knows how many; might have been as much as two-three hundred. It was 'way more than a hundred, I know."

Arnold Gragston – Underground Railroad conductor


Federal Writers' Project - 3

<https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/030/030.pdf>. P. 149
 Born in Kentucky, settled later in Florida

"Sometimes someone would come 'long and try to get us to run up North and be free. We used to laugh at that. There wasn't no reason to run up North. All we had to do was to walk, but walk South, and we'd be free as soon as we crossed the Rio Grande. In Mexico you could be free. They didn't care what color you was, black, white, yellow or blue. Hundreds of slaves did go to Mexico and got on all right. We would hear about 'em and how they was goin' to be Mexicans. They brought up their children to speak only Mexican.

Underground Railroad to Mexico

Felix Haywood, San Antonio



Federal Writers' Project - 3

I done heard more 'bout conjure in Oklahoma than I ever heerd in South Carolina. All dat stuff is in Louisiana. I didn't heah nothing 'bout

I used to hear 'em talking 'bout Ku Klux Klan coming to the well to get water. They'd draw up a bucket of water and pour the water in they false stomachs. They false stomachs was tied on 'em with a big leather buckle. They'd jest pour de water in there to scare 'em and say, "This is the first drink of water I've had since I left Hell." They'd say all sech things to scare the cullud folks.

silver and money and jewelry, and Mamma sho' whipped me about it too. She was no fool 'bout slavery. Slavery sho' didn't he'p us none to my belief.

The Ku Klux Klan



Federal Writers' Project - 3

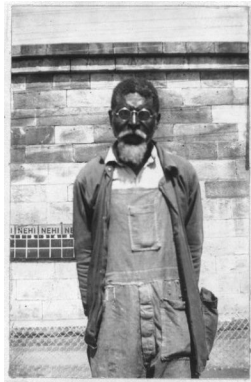
Archives of slave narratives

- ▶ Most of the interviews are kept at the [Library of Congress](#)
- ▶ Some states maintain their own archives:
 - Louisiana – See Tanner, Lynette Ater. *Chained to the Land: Voices from Cotton and Cane Plantations*. Blair, 2014. and New Orleans city guide
 - Virginia – See <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/virginia-slave-narratives/>
 - Mississippi - <https://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/federal/436>



Federal Writers' Project - 3

1. See *Long Past Slavery : Representing Race in the Federal Writers' Project*, Catherine A. Stewart
2. Blacks often used indirect speech with white interviewers to obscure potentially dangerous topics.
3. Older Blacks were in the custom of telling happier stories and sometimes hid more gruesome aspects of life in slavery.
4. Interviewers were sometimes mistaken as government workers who were there to offer help

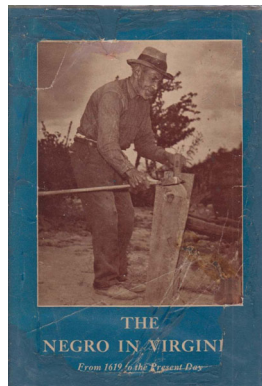


Noah Lewis discovered that his great-great-grandfather William Sykes was interviewed for the Federal Writers' Project ([Atlantic](#), March 2021)



Federal Writers' Project - 3

C



THE "NEGRO IN VIRGINIA" IS A RICH MINE OF HISTORY interspersed with a vein of folklore. It opens with an account of the twenty transplanted Africans who were landed at Jamestown in 1619 and closes with a roster of mid-nineteenth-century black Virginians who had won national distinction. Each of its numerous, briskly paced chapters devotes itself to a single aspect of black life in bygone days, with the thin chronological line of the opening half of the book almost disappearing for the post-Civil War period.

Negro in Virginia, 1940



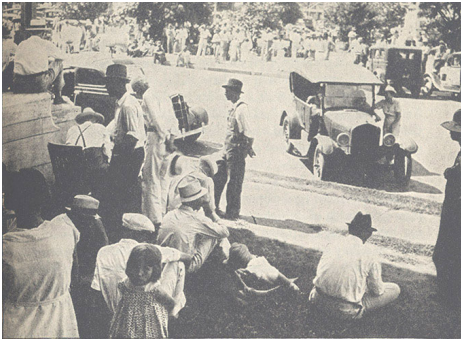
Federal Writers' Project - 3

<https://archive.org/details/negroinvirginia0000virg>

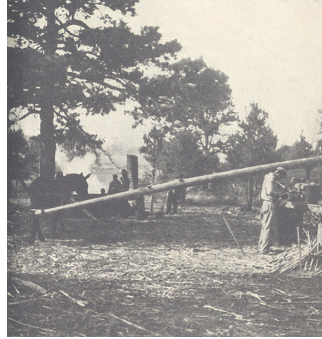
Foreword by Benjamin Quarles, History professor, Morgan State College

Eudora Welty photography, Mississippi Guide

"Gathering for a Political Rally"



"A One-Mule-Power Cane Press"



Federal Writers' Project - 3



Bob Lemmons, Carrizo Springs, Texas



Dorothea Lange, Photographer

Federal Writers' Project - 3

Bob Lemmons, Carrizo Springs, Texas. Born a slave about 1850, south of San Antonio, Texas. Came to Carrizo Springs during Civil War with white men seeking new range for their cattle. In 1865, with his master was one of the first settlers. He knew Billy the Kid, King Fisher, and other noted bad men of the border (digital file from original neg.)

"I's refugeed from Georgia to Andersen County 'fore the war. I see Abe Linceln onct when he come through, but didn't none of knew whe he was. I heared the president wanted 'em to work the young niggers till they was twenty-one but to free the growed slaves. They say he give 'em thirty days to 'siderate it. The white felks said they'd wade bleed saddle deep 'fore they'd let us leese. I den't blame 'em in a way, 'cause they paid for us. In 'nether way it was right to free us. We was brought here and no person is sposed to be made a brute.

Jordon Smith, Marshall, Texas



Abraham Lincoln's Secret Visits to Slaves [\[Source\]](#)

Federal Writers' Project - 3



The Harlems



Federal Writers' Project - 3

<https://archive.org/details/newyorkcityguide00federich/page/260/mode/2up>
<https://aaww.org/finntown-esther-wang/>

A white man comes out of the wings, but nobody minds. They have got accustomed to occasional white performers at the Apollo. There was a dancing act 6 in the regular stage show which received deserved applause. The emcee announces the song, "That's Why ——" he omits the next word "Were Born." He is a Negro emcee. He will not use the word "darker" in announcing a song a white man is to sing.

The white man begins to sing, "Someone had to plough the cotton, Someone had to plant the corn, Someone had to work while the white folks played, That's why darkies were born." The Negroes hiss and boo. Instantly the audience is partisan. The whites applaud vigorously. But the greater volume of hisses and boos drown out the applause....

The Negroes are not booing the white man as such. They are booing him for his categorization of them. The song is not new. A few seasons ago they listened to it in silent resentment. Now they have learned to vocalize their bitterness. They cannot bear that a white man, as poor as themselves, should so separate himself from their common fate and sing paternally for a price of their predestined lot to serve....

The show is over. The orchestra strikes up, "I think you're wonderful, I think you're grand." The audience files out. They are quiet and confused and sad. It is twelve on the dot. Six hours of sleep and then back to the Bronx or up and down an elevator shaft. Yessir, Mr. White Man, I work all day while you-all play. It's only fair. That's why darkies were born.

Dorothy West – "Amateur Night in Harlem"



Federal Writers' Project - 3

"Thanks why darkies were born" was a hit for Kate Smith, also recorded by Paul Robeson and Groucho Marx.

WHITE WORKERS ON NEGRO WRITERS PROJECT

WE HAD A VISIT last week from a member of the Federal Writers Project of the WPA, who was in Harlem investigating charges of fraud in an election ten years ago. He happened to be a Hebrew and when we expressed surprise that a white man would be assigned to a Negro project, he explained that there were any number of white writers working on such projects. It was explained to us that the project is being cut from a personnel of over 300 to about 118, which will include the clerical staff. He was unable to give any figures on the percentage of Negroes on the project or how many would remain after the drastic reduction.

It seems to us that this is a clear case of discrimination when white writers are assigned to check on stories about Negroes and the Negroes are fired. The project, which has done some valuable research work in publishing the New York Guide Book series, has from the beginning given Negroes assignments only as they affect their own people, and for that reason it seems unfair to give such assignments to whites when there are Negro newspaper men available and willing to accept this work.

An immediate investigation should be made of the proportion of Negroes dropped from the several "white collar" projects of the WPA and if it is found that a larger percentage of Negroes are being fired than other racial groups, protest meetings and pressure should be brought to bear on the government to call a halt to this nefarious practice.

The New York Age (New York, New York) · Sat, Sep 9, 1939



Federal Writers' Project - 3



The State (Columbia, South Carolina)



Federal Writers' Project - 3



- ▶ Writer, anthropologist, and filmmaker
- ▶ Barnard and Columbia
- ▶ Folklorist and contributor to the Florida Writers' Project
- ▶ Recorded stories and songs as well as performing

Zora Neale Hurston (1891 – 1960)



Federal Writers' Project - 3

<https://www.floridamemory.com/learn/classroom/learning-units/zora-neale-hurston/>




Zora Neale Hurston returned to her “native village” of Eatonville, Florida to record the oral histories, sermons and songs, dating back to the time of slavery, which she remembered hearing as a child.


Nora Neale Hurston talks about collecting stories



Federal Writers' Project - 3

https://archive.org/details/podcast_voices-florida-zora-neale_416195390?tab=about





Interview with Wallace Quarterman, Fort Frederica, St. Simons Island, Georgia, June 1935

AFS t0342B

Interview with Wallace Quarterman, Fort Frederica, St. Simons Island, Georgia, June 1935

[Alan Lomax (?): [brief pause here and scratching throughout recording] All right now!]

Zora Neale Hurston: After they said you can go free, then what did you do? Did you run on off the plantation that day? Did you leave the plantation that day after they told you to go free?

Wallace Quarterman: That day master promised so, to give we forty dollars a month in pay. The [lot (?)] said the boys said they ain't want it. They rather go free you know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Ummm.

Wallace Quarterman: Well, of course, why I have them pay us, you understand? I get along with them you know. He brought out the big pot, you know. [loud thump]

Zora Neale Hurston: Yeah.

Wallace Quarterman: And ah, after they, after this place closed down, sword down they just make them, sword down, and they just lay down their sword, and squash them down. You go in Hawkinsville and you see all the swords down now—

Zora Neale Hurston: [Yeah (?)].


Wallace Quarterman: —in the ground. And after the sword was down the tension, in the South tension. And after the South tension then they play. Yeah. Play they. [he thumbs a washtub base and sings]

Kingdom Coming

One foot one way. One foot the other way. One foot all around. Jumping. Standing. Couldn't cut a figure. And he couldn't go halfway around. Old master run aw-a-a-a-y. And set them darkies free. For you must be think thy kingdom a coming in the hour of jubilee.

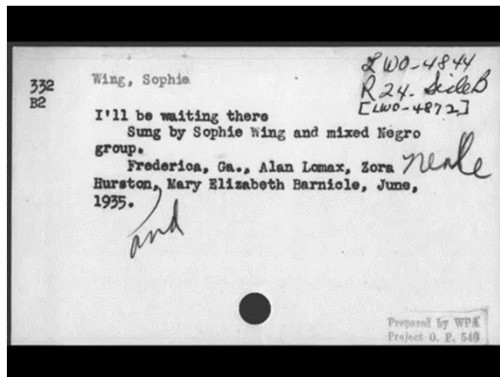
Wallace Quarterman: So we had a big breaking up right there, you know, after it. That's right.

Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston Expedition Collection, 1935



Interview with Wallace Quarterman, Fort Frederica, St. Simons Island, Georgia, June 1935 http://www.loc.gov/item/afc1935001_000098

This was one of the first audio recordings of formerly enslaved people. Wallace Quarterman was 92. There was an earlier recording in 1933 with Quarterman, but the audio quality was not as good as the one produced by Lomax.



Sophie Loman Wing and group: I'll Be Waiting There* Wing, lead vocal (although it has been argued that Zora Neale Hurston is the foremost lead), with mixed group, vocals. Frederica, St. Simons Island, Georgia

I'll be waiting there – Sophie Wing and mixed Negro group



Federal Writers' Project - 3



Woody Guthrie said, "I don't know of a book on my whole shelf that hits me any harder than your Palmetto Country.... If only, and if only, all out library books could say what you did - the jokes and songs and old ballads about voodoo and the hoodoo and the bigly winds down in your neck of the woodvine."

criminal activities of the Ku Klux Klan, taking their secrets to the airwaves through the Super Man Radio Show and testifying in court against the Klan.

Stetson Kennedy



Federal Writers' Project - 3



- ▶ Identified what was missing and/or wrong in the representation of Blacks in the American Guide Series.
- ▶ Using life histories to place Blacks in what was described as "composite America," with different racial and ethnic groups retaining their individual identities while participating in making of an American mosaic.
- ▶ The distinctiveness, however, would not be dissolved in the American "melting pot."
- ▶ Championed American literary realism, to "move the 'streets, the stockyards and the hiring halls into literature'"
- ▶ Proposed an additional 17 books on Negro history in cities and states, along with thematic books, of which only two were produced (*Negro in Virginia* and *Drums and Shadows*).

Sterling A. Brown, FWP Director of Negro Affairs, 1936-40



Federal Writers' Project - 3

Sterling A. Brown - <https://poets.org/poet/sterling-brown>

Poet

Williams College, B.A.

Harvard, M.A.

Taught at Howard

"truth to idiom be paramount and exact truth to pronunciation secondary"

Tidwell, John Edgar. *After Winter: The Art and Life of Sterling A. Brown*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Academic version here: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/assumption-ebooks/reader.action?docID=415064>

See *Negro in Illinois*, Dolinar, p. xiii

Not completed: "The Portrait of the Negro as American"

For example, in the South Carolina project, interviewers had real difficulty recording “gullah” dialect of Blacks living in the coastal regions. This problem was compounded by the tendency of several old story tellers to deceive their interviewers by telling fanciful tales about slavery that stretched the truth. The question as to whether a group of Black interviewers could have interpreted and presented the ex-slaves more authentically is, at this point, academic, for the director of the Project in South Carolina, Miss Mable Montgomery, refused to hire Blacks as interviewers, believing that whites were more “discriminating.”

- ▶ The New England guides were written before Brown became national editor. As a result, Black communities went unnoticed, with only passing references to Phyllis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, and Crispus Attucks.
- ▶ Southern guides ignored Black communities and rejected photos of Black subjects and homes.

Sterling A. Brown : Building the Black aesthetic tradition



Federal Writers' Project - 3

A picturesque group, these Negroes are a happy people, primitive, indolent, unmoral, philosophical and deeply religious. For all their seventy odd years of freedom, they have never really learned to stand alone. Without the white man to furnish part time employment, to lend them money and give them advice, it is doubtful if they could exist.

South Carolina State Director Mable Montgomery



Federal Writers' Project - 3

Montgomery, Mable. National Archives, RG 69 \VPA, Box 201, Folder "Beaufort, S.C." Typescript "Original Beaufort Article."

Cited in Recasting Negro Life History: Sterling A. Brown and the Federal Writer's Project, John Edgard Tidwell, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26434434>

Many studies have been made of the customs of these isolated St. Helena Negroes, of purer African blood and tradition than any other Negro group in America. Very few outsiders have settled here, and there has been no intermixture with whites. The area has depended entirely upon natural excess of births over deaths for its increase. The Negroes speak a queer jargon, practically unintelligible to strangers. Called 'Gullah,' it is an intermingling of simplified English, archaic English, and a few African expressions. Characteristic of the speech is the use of 'he' for he, she, or it; 'um' for it, her, him, or them; nouns and adjectives as verbs, as 'pleasuring' oneself. The island folk are also noted for their music, particularly spirituals. Contrary to popular belief, these are generally sung in unison. The spirituals are constantly changing, and now show many traces of contact with white people. Superstitions still have a vital part in the folkways of these Negroes—with belief in healing rites, conjures, and ghostly visitation.

South Carolina - A Guide to the Palmetto State



Federal Writers' Project - 3

Pictured quote, p. 336

Several references to Gullah in the guide, "Certain ethnologists, recalling the preponderance of Bantu and Angola tribesmen, assert that the Gullah dialect of South Atlantic Negroes is derived from the Angola tongue." p.45

Immediately following the World War, there was increasing racial bitterness due to the influx of both white and Negro laborers seeking employment in the oil fields. After months of unrest and threats of vigilante activity, a minor incident on June 1, 1921, developed into a serious race riot. Armed


300

TULSA 209

conflict between whites and Negroes spread to several sections of the city. Vigilantes invaded the Greenwood (Negro) district and laid it waste by fire. It was estimated that more than thirty-six persons were killed in the various clashes. After a night of terror and two days of martial law the whites organized a systematic rehabilitation program for the devastated Negro section and gave generous aid to the Negroes left homeless by the fire. Nationwide publicity of the most lurid sort naturally followed the tragedy. whites and Negroes joined in an effort to live down the incident by working for a better mutual understanding.

And they all lived happily every after

Oklahoma guide on the Tulsa Race Massacre



Clint Smith's 'How the Word is Passed' explores how slavery is remembered in contemporary America

Federal Writers' Project - 3

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/05/27/arts/clint-smiths-how-word-is-passed-explores-how-slavery-is-remembered-contemporary-america/>

her freedom as a reward for faithful or unusual services. If there was any of the so-called "Underground Railway" method used to get slaves out of the state, as was the case in many counties, there are no current stories or legends relative to such to be heard in the county today. It is thought that the slaves of Casey County were so well cared for and so faithful and loyal to their masters that very few of them cared to leave and go to non-slavery states in the North. So there was little, if any, call for any secret methods to provide for their escape. Even after they were given their freedom, many slaves refused to leave their masters and spent the remainder of their lives in the service and as charges of their former owners. The present generation of course knows nothing of slavery, and even the older people know only what was told them by the forebears, and no especially interesting stories or legends are current in the county today relative to slaves, or the customs of the old slavery days before the War between the States.

Casey C



Federal Writers' Project - 3

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Baseball

No mention of Negro League baseball

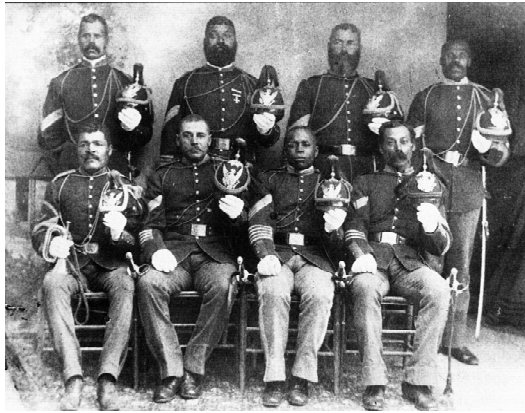


Federal Writers' Project - 3

Although many of the slave narratives mentioned playing baseball, in the guides, slave narratives, or American Life Histories. Minor league teams in Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio at the time that the Texas guide was written

The Kansas City Monarchs were the longest-running franchise in the history of the Negro leagues. Nothing about them in the Kansas guide.

New York Black Yankees or Royal Giants, Memphis Red Sox



No mention of the 9th Cavalry (“Buffalo Soldiers”),
organized in Greenville, Louisiana in 1866



Federal Writers' Project - 3

<https://daily.jstor.org/buffalo-soldiers-and-the-bicycle-corps/>

**Nicodemus, Kan., an All
Negro Town, to Celebrate
Emancipation Proclamation**

Left on this road is the past a few farmhouses and dunes to NICODEMUS, the only all-Negro community. Nicodemus, sole survivor (see *HISTORY*), is not or stone huts that contain a stove and an iron bed. electric lights and the near employed by Negro farm supplies or for conference their meager share of the aside for the annual Emancipation


Topeka, July 28 (AP)—Nicodemus, Kan., one of three towns in the United States exclusively for Negroes, will have Jerry Driscoll, director of the Kansas Emergency Relief committee, as a speaker for its celebration of the emancipation proclamation. Driscoll said today he has accepted an invitation to take part in the Saturday afternoon program of the 3-day celebration which will start Friday, July 30. Once a town of 800, Nicodemus now has dwindled to only 50. Driscoll said he understood the other two towns or settlements inhabited exclusively by Negroes are Bolay, Okla., and Lovejoy, Ill.

unincorporated town and led by the "Exodusters" sty street before wooden oden chairs and a table, Only the churches have miles away. The residents, stockton or Hill City for their white bankers. From winter use, a tithe is set

The Emporia Gazette
EMPORIA, KANSAS
Wednesday, July 28,
1937

See also PBS
Newshour - [How a
Kansas town became
one of the nation's
first majority-Black
farming communities](#)

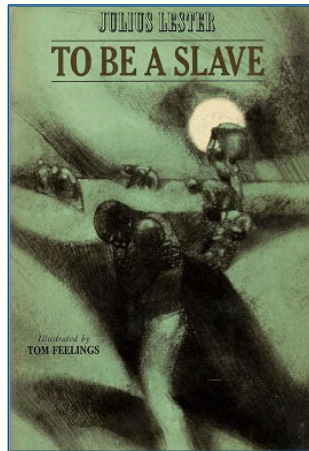
Nicodemus, Kansas



Federal Writers' Project - 3

P 329, Kansas Guide

The Oklahoma guide doesn't mention Bolay, nor the Illinois guide Lovejoy.

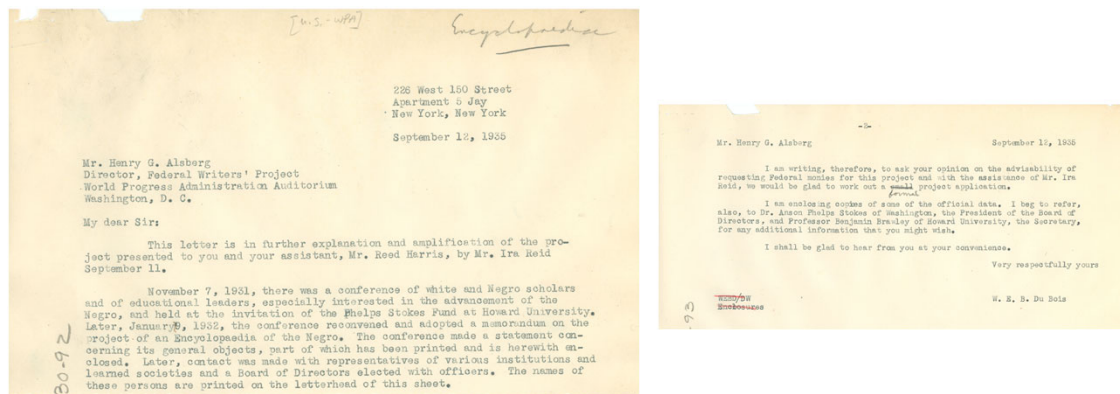


Lester, Julius, and Tom Feelings. 1968. *To be a slave*



Julius Lester [obituary](#) – *New York Times*, January 19, 2018

Federal Writers' Project - 3



W.E.B. DuBois sought funding for an "Encyclopedia of the Negro" project. He didn't receive it.



Federal Writers' Project - 3

Addressed to Henry G. Alsberg; introducing the "Encyclopedia of the Negro" project, describing its aims, foundations, and formats, discussing the possibility of the Works Progress Administration's involvement therein, and seeking his opinion "on the advisability of requesting Federal monies for this project."

<https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b076-i285>

The University of Massachusetts – Amherst holds the W.E.B. DuBois papers. Among the papers are several letters regarding the Federal Writers' Project. See

<https://credo.library.umass.edu/search?q=federal+writers+project&fq=FacetCollectionID%3A%22mums312%22&search=>

Good idea, but no joy

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/w-e-b-dubois-and-making-encyclopedia-africana-1909-1963/>

Are the slave narratives authoritative?

- ▶ The respondents were children at the time of emancipation and so may be reliable only as sources about childhood.
- ▶ The few former slaves who were adults (or nearly adults) at the time of emancipation were so old at the time of the interviews that their memories were questionable.
- ▶ The states of residence of the interviewees did not correspond to the geographical distribution of slaves during the antebellum period.
- ▶ The project interviewed only about 2 percent of the former slaves who were still alive in the 1930s. Are the 2,200 narratives too small a sample?
- ▶ Most of the former slaves were interviewed by white WPA workers.



Federal Writers' Project - 3

Using the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives to Study the Impact of the Great Depression:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/30040012>

What is significant is not whether the reports are exact representations of what happened but that in the 1930s they are part of an effort to reclaim history—not simply to revise it but also to define America anew. The former slaves enter into a dialogue and become the elders of a community that in the 1930s needs to see itself as benign and full of promise. Deeming the narratives folkloric or literary actually places them more firmly within an historical and even social scientific frame, affirming that the larger world - the present - aspires to be ideologically far removed from the world recounted in the narratives.

Lynda Hill, "Ex-Slave Narratives: The WPA Federal Writers' Project Reappraised"



Federal Writers' Project - 3

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40179473>

"Dey sold my sister Lucy and my brother Fred in slavery time, an' I have never seen 'em in my life. Mother would cry when she was tellin' me 'bout it. She never seen 'em anymore. I jes' couldn't bear to hear her tell it widout cryin'. Dey were carried to Richmond, an' sold by old marster whendey were chillun.

"We tried to get some news of brother and sister. Mother kept 'quiring 'bout 'em as long as she lived and I have hoped dat I could hear from 'em. Dey are dead long ago I recons, and I guess dare aint no use ever expectin' to see 'em. Slavery wus bad and Mr. Lincoln did a good thing when he freed de niggers. I caint express my love for Roosevelt. He has saved so many lives. I think he has saved mine. I want to see him face to face. I purely love him and I feel I could do better to see him and tell him so face to face.

Lizzie Baker, age 72. interviewed in Raleigh, North Carolina



Federal Writers' Project - 3

AID GIVEN IN WAR ON ADVERTISING

(Continued from Page One)

"Therefore, Communists believe that to sabotage and destroy advertising and, through its destruction, to undermine and help destroy the capitalist system of free enterprise is a revolutionary tactic worthy of a great deal of attention."

Herewith, in summary, are the findings made in a special report which the Dies Committee has just issued dealing with Communist activity in the "consumer" movement:

1—That Communists are using the movement for two immediate purposes:

First—As one of the numerous "transmission belts" by which Communism is "conveyed" to and propagated among the non-Communist "masses"; and

dominant but disguised influence over the entire "consumer" movement.

3—That certain Federal officials have co-operated with Communists in the undertaking, and that Federal employees and Federal funds have been used to this end.

2-That this tactic is carried on by "Trojan horse" methods in three ways:

First-By Communist "penetration" of existing "consumer" organizations, so as to influence their policies and actions;

Second—By establishing new organizations controlled from the beginning by avowed Communists and

Publicity Given Organizations by Agriculture Department

Beate that to sabotage and destroy advertising, and through its help destroy the capitalist system. A free country needs a revolutionary tactic worthy of a great deal of attention. The Special Committee on Un-American Activities is not a law enforcement agency. It is a clearing house of evidence which shows that a great part of the current popular and official attack upon advertising is the distillation of a number of facts proven in the field of con-

• the only remedy which consumer organizations should accept," says publications of the "Consumers' Transnational Union," such as Consumers Union, make it clear that some of the current Government procedure against advertising is unwarranted. Existing media have been investigated and are being aided by those consumer organizations which are under the control of the Communists.

The Nation—Dated Oct. 10, 1950.

