

The Legacy of the Federal Writers' Project



American Guide Week – November 10-16, 1941, coincided with the publication of the last guide, Oklahoma

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/>

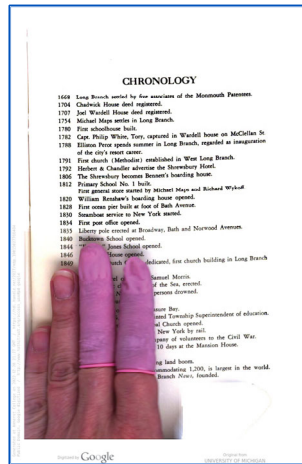
See also: [Bibliography](#)



Where we've been

- Guides for 48 states, Alaska, and Puerto Rico.
- More than 1,000 publications
- Tours of Massachusetts
- More than 2,000 interviews with formerly enslaved people
- Profiles of Black communities and culture
- Communism and anti-Communism in the 1930s





Entertaining a nation; the career of Long Branch



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I'm a loyal Democrat. No one has worked harder for necessary federal relief than I. And I'm equally strong for aiding Art—if and when it can be done. But I doubt very much if this Federal Writers' Project is aiding anyone except a lot of lazy and self-indulgent smarties, who won't discipline themselves to meet regulation routine and demands.

Syndicated columnist Elsie Robinson, *The Wichita Beacon*, March 25, 1938



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<https://www.newspapers.com/image/719222493/>

“It is the profuse disorder of nature and life, the dadaist jumble of the daily newspaper.”

– Reviewer of the guidebooks’ editorial style

The enduring lessons of a New Deal writers project



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https://www.cjr.org/special_report/new-deal-journalism-federal-writers-project.php

The Project assigned writers to mindless trivialities. In its fantasy of One America, it promoted the belief that the mere assembling of American data could be the equivalent of a great collective creation.

– Harold Rosenberg, *New Yorker*, January 20, 1973
Review of *The Dream and the Deal*

Was the Writers' Project telling a story that needed to be told?



FWP-S 7

AFTER three centuries of adventurous seeking, the American continent has been explored and settled, and the last frontier is gone. The lusty and profane extremes of it still live nebulously in the gaudy imbecilities of newsstand pulp magazines and in cheap novels, wherein to appease the hunger of human beings for drama and spectacle, heroines distressingly invulnerable are fought over by villains and heroes and restored to their rich properties of mine or cattle ranch; and the villain, if left unslain, passes out of the story sulking darkly; and the hero, without cracking a smile, stands up with the heroine clinging to his breast and addresses the reader with platitudes that would slay any ordinary man.

The quality of writing was very high.

The production record of the Writers' Project suggests that cultural diversity was neither a guaranteed nor a self-evident quantity for editors and writers at federal, state, or local levels.

Christine Bold , *The WPA Guides: Mapping America*

Social Consensus

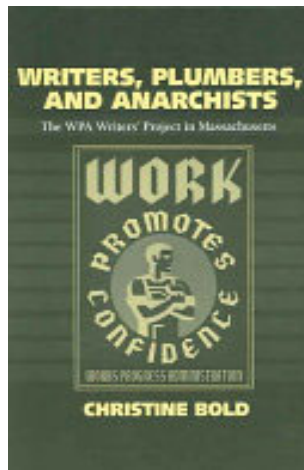


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Bold - WPA Guides

This book has read the guidebooks otherwise, arguing that the American Guide Series is not only harbinger but facilitator of contemporary culture, including the increased homogeneity lamented by the guidebooks' champions in recent years. Kenneth Bindas makes the case that the Federal Music Project, among other New Deal agencies, laid the foundation for post-World War II social consensus (116).

Christine Bold , *The WPA Guides: Mapping America*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1999.



“Living history” and the full context of the past



FWP-S 10

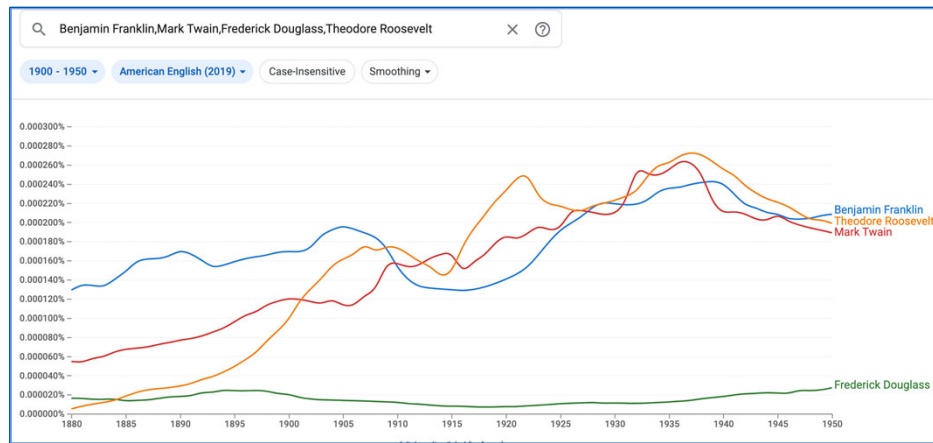
Many of the guides tell or imply stories of the “good, old days” while omitting a broader description of the life as it was lived.

Lowell “mill girls” without talking about the housing conditions

Lawrence Mill strike of 1912, Bread and Roses strike -

<https://www.breadandrosesheritage.org/strike>

p. 252 in Massachusetts guide.



“Usable Past” - The guides and related publications focused on reclaiming old truths. As a result, history and biographies became popular.



This short-lived project created the largest collection of ex-slave narratives about the institution of slavery in the United States and is still considered one of “the most enduring and noteworthy achievements of the WPA.” It was also an endeavor that from start to finish was riven with conflict and complexity. Competing visions of the past and conflicting views on black identity and black citizenship offered different prisms for interpreting the remembrances of former slaves.

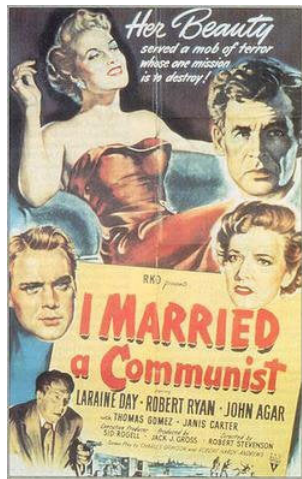
Stewart, Catherine A. *Long Past Slavery*

The Writers’ Project and Slave Narratives



FWP-S 12

Stewart, Catherine A. *Long Past Slavery: Representing Race in the Federal Writers’ Project*. UNC Press Books, 2016.



Did the anti-Communist politicians act out of conviction or expediency?

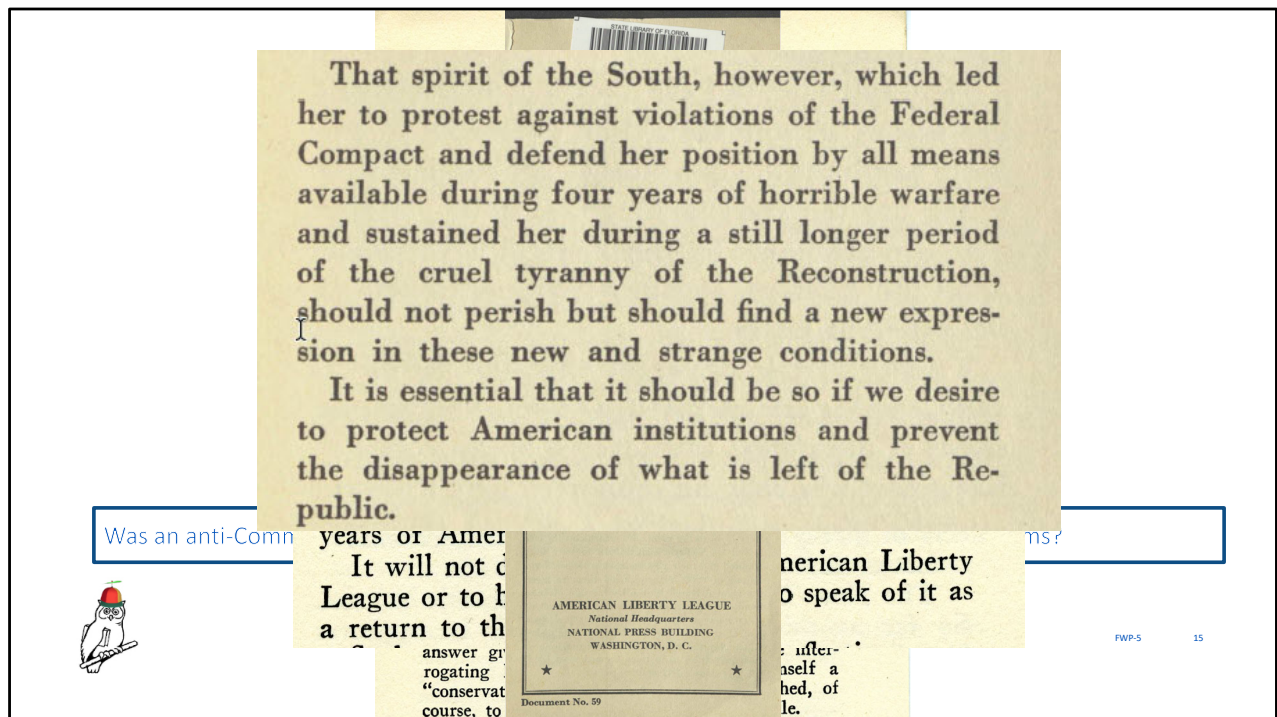




House Un-American Activities hearings, 1947



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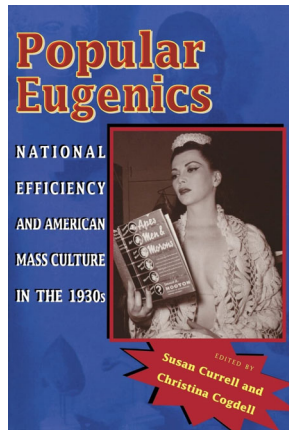


"American Liberty League: A Statement of Its Principles and Purposes"

https://exploreuk.uky.edu/catalog/xt7wwp9t2q46_3#page/1/mode/1up

The Spirit Of Americanism

<https://archive.org/details/SpiritOfAmericanism/page/n3/mode/2up>



- ▶ Stephen Fender's article on the rhetoric of eugenics in the Southern life histories shows how difficult it was, even for progressive thinkers in the 1930s, to keep separate the influences of environment from claims about the influence of heredity that were promoted by eugenics activists in the 1910s and 1920s.
- ▶ He found that the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) in the South, particularly work of William Couch, was the FWP southern life histories program.
- ▶ Fender finds that Couch chose as his models for the "life histories" two works – Human Factors in Colton Culture by Rupert Vance (1929) and Hollow Folk by Mandel Sherman and Thomas Henry' (1933) – heavily reflected the methods and assumptions of earlier family studies made or used by the Eugenics Record Office.

Eugenics and the Federal Writers' Project





1919 National Geographic map titled 'The races of Europe'



Via [Reddit](#). Click map for full-sized image



Issues in portrayal of slavery



The Planter's Prospect: Privilege and Slavery in Plantation Paintings -

Federal Writers' Project - 3

See controversy over Vlach's exhibition at Library of Congress

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1995/12/21/issue.html>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1995/12/20/library-of-congress-scraps-plantation-life-exhibit/997eb8ef-cc91-4aa9-b056-2505c92aa763/>

<https://www.scribd.com/read/418599382/Slavery-and-Public-History-The-Tough-Stuff-of-American-Memory#>

THE NEGRO!

**America to Learn About
Race's Contribution From
Books of Federal Writers'
Project.**

WASHINGTON, Mar. 16.—In addition to publishing the State and local volumes of the American Guide series, the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration has in process twelve books which give an excellent account of the Negro in the American scene.

Negro workers on the Writers' Project in various States, as well as in the national office, have aided in getting out these books. The total number of members of the race now working on the Federal Writers' Project is about 150. They serve as editors, assistant editors, research workers, consultants and typists. The project is giving employment to writers who otherwise would have little or no chance to use their training and ability.

Some of the country's best known writers are connected with the Federal Writers' Project. Among these are Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright and Claude McKay. To other writers the project

has given an opportunity to develop ability which will serve them well in the future.

The books of the WPA Writers' Project nearing completion are "A History of the Negro in Virginia," "The Social and Economic Survey of Negroes in Little Rock, Arkansas"; "Negroes in New York," "History of the Negro," "The Florida Negro," "Negroes in Philadelphia," "History of the Negroes in Oklahoma" and the "History of the Negroes in Louisiana."

The Pittsburgh Courier Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 18, 1939



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"In town I made good money and when the day's work was done, I had nothing to worry about. But when you get out of a job, I don't know what then. When you are sick you are up against it. Expenses still go on. In the country on the farm, if something happens to keep you from working for a day or two, everything goes on pretty much as usual; crops continue to grow. Besides in the country it is healthier; there is better air, fresher water, fresher food."

C. F. Gerber, Barton County, Kansis



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Charles M. Donigan, "C. F. Gerber, Farmer," interview with C. F. Gerber, Barton County, Kansas, farmer, Sheffield, Alabama, 16 January 1939, FWP:UMI, 132-133.

Harlem

- ▶ Richard Wright chronicled the history of Blacks in New York
 - Slave rebellion in 1710 and 1741, leading to counter-protests.
 - During the latter, as rumors spread of fires and planned murders, Every Black seen on the street was arrested.
 - “Of 154 Negroes cast into prison, 13 were burned at the stake, 18 hanged, and 71 transported to the West Indies”
- ▶ Fugitive slave laws and anti-abolitionism led to both formerly-enslaved and free Blacks being sent back south.
- ▶ Later, as southern migration increased the Black population, from two percent to five percent in 25 years.
- ▶ Housing become difficult to find. Many spent half their income on rent. Church bought properties and rented apartments.



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will not even allow themselves to be designated as Abyssinians, because it is Arabic for slave. Yet because of this propaganda against the Ethiopians, many Afro-Americans refused to identify themselves with the Help Ethiopia movement.

Garvey struck out in his magazine, *The Blackman*, and bluntly denounced the emperor as a coward and a traitor to desert his people and run away from his country. Garvey said the emperor was proud of being the descendant of Solomon than the ruler of a black land, that he had played a "white" game all during his reign and trusted white advisors only, and that they had betrayed him in his hour of need. Garvey wrote: "Haile Selassie is the ruler of a country where black men are chained and flogged. . . . He proved the incompetence of the Negro for political authority. . . . The emperor's usefulness is at an end. He will go down in history as a great coward who ran away from his country."

But Garvey's denunciation did not swing his people. To the emotional issues of the American Negro church the Ethiopia of today is the wonderful Ethiopia of the Bible. In a religious sense it is far more real to them than the West African lands, from which it is assumed that most of the ancestors of Afro-Americans came. They were happy that the emperor had escaped alive. As an ex-rupee he remained a symbol of authority over the Negro state of their imagination.

Ex-Empress Haile Selassie wisely sent his personal emissary, the native Ethiopian, Dr. Malaku Bayen,* to represent him in Harlem. In Dr. Bayen's charming presence Afro-Americans could be convinced that Ethiopians are not white or Mongolians, but authentic native Africans, even if, like thousands of educated Afro-Americans, they reject the word "Negro."

When Dr. Malaku Bayen arrived here in 1936, Harlem gave him a grand welcome. On the day of his arrival with his Afro-American wife, Dorothy, and their young son, he attempted to establish temporary residence in a modest downtown hotel (there is not one decent family hotel in Harlem) but owing

* Recently deceased.



Photo by H. and M. Smith

Types of Harlem Women.

In 1930, 327,706 Negroes were residents of New York, the largest

single concentration of Negro population anywhere in the world....

In 1935 it was found that as many as 3,871 Negroes lived in a single city block, and that many families were paying half or more of their incomes for shelter.

Harlem (cont.)





Another man done gone,
Another man done gone,
From the county farm,
Another man done gone.
I didn't know his name,
I didn't know his name,
I didn't know his name.
He had a long chain on,
He had a long chain on,
He had a long chain on,
He had a long chain on.

He killed another man,
He killed another man,
He killed another man,
He killed another man.
I don't know where he's gone,
I don't know where he's gone,
I don't know where he's gone,
I don't know where he's gone.
I'm going to walk your log,
I'm going to walk your log,
I'm going to walk your log,
I'm going to walk your log.

Vera Hall – “Another Man Done Gone”



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Ruby Pickens Tartt, Chair of Livingston, Alabama unit of the FWP
Recordings of Vera Hall, “Another Man Done Gone,” and Dock Reed, “Love Comes Twinkling Down”
Shared lyrics with Alan and Ruby Lomax, who recorded Hall for the Library of Congress

By Lewis B. Bryan
SEP 10 1936

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Group XVI
Negro Group
Charles B. Cumberbatch
Assignment Editor.

"THE NEGRO IN OPERA".

There is a very small number of Negroes who represent their Race in Opera. However, they are few, yet they have acclaimed credit to the highest degree in this field of art.

The most prominent and outstanding Negroes in Opera are: Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, Julius Bledsoe, Miss Marian Anderson and Miss Catherina Jarboro.

Federal Writers' Project Negro Group papers



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<https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10563283>

1000 Words
RADIO ARTISTS OF NEW YORK
Brief Outline of the Negro Field

FEDERAL WRITER'S PROJECT # 1
April 27, 1938

By FLOYD G. SNELSON

The New York radio field has the most brilliant assortments of Negro artists to be found in the world. It is composed of the most accomplished artists in music, song, drama, art, dance and diversified entertainment.

The following artists have been heard over the air waves simultaneously during the past year: The Southernaires, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Claude Hopkins, Andy Kirk, Fletcher Henderson, Chick Webb, Stuff Smith, The vagabonds, Maxine Sullivan, Cleo Brown, Ethel Waters, Clarence Muse, John Kirby, Stephin Fetchit, Three Keys, Charioteers, Alberta Hunter, Ink Spots, Erskine Hawkins, Mrs Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller.

[Legendary Radio Broadcasts – Fats Waller and Cab Calloway](https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/federal-writers-project-negro-group-papers-1927-1940)

<https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/federal-writers-project-negro-group-papers-1927-1940>

RADIO (MILLS BROTHERS)

WALTER R. LEACH---5

Bernie Mulligan, radio editor of the Los Angeles Examiner, obtained from one of his local theatres ~~lost of~~ box-office figures for the past two years, showing how radio attractions appearing as stage acts drew patrons through the turnstiles. The report showed that the Mills Brothers, were about the biggest attraction the theatre knew. Here is the list of figures for the various weeks:

*Mills Brothers.....	\$36,000
Bing Crosby.....	25,000
Guy Lombardo.....	19,000
Duke Ellington.....	19,000
Ben Bernie.....	17,800
Abe Lyman.....	17,000
Al Pearce.....	17,000
Anson Weeks.....	16,000
Eate Smith.....	14,500
Ted Fio-Rito.....	13,000*

These were the ten leading attractions, and behind the ten were strung out other acts, mostly local in nature, with none exceeding \$10,000 for the week.

Mills Brothers



Contribution of negro to radio broadcasting, Mills Brothers

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<https://youtu.be/npwjIBLYkQ0>

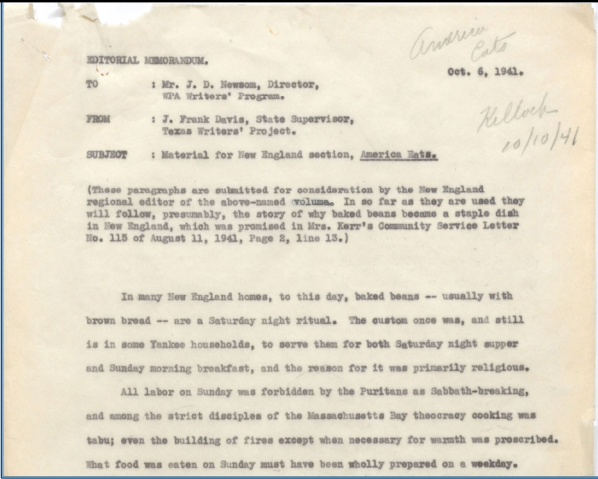
NEW RADIO QUIZ

A unique radio program, a city I. Q. (Information Quiz) contest, the only one of its kind, will be put on the air by the Federal Writers' Project in New York weekly on Thursdays at 1:45 p. m. over the municipal station, WNYC, at the World's Fair Studios.

Called "The Quiz of the Town," this authoritative, informative and entertaining program, originated and prepared by a member of the staff, Leon Kempner, is based on the vast material gathered by the project workers through extensive research in preparation of the NEW YORK CITY GUIDE, NEW YORK PANORAMA, and various other published or forthcoming books about the city.

The Stoutonia, Menomonie, Wisconsin, Sept. 22, 1939





America Eats

Editorial Memorandum on New England Cuisine [\[Source\]](#)



MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

America Eats is not a cookbook.

Descriptions of dishes in the body of the book may mention the chief ingredients (squirrel meat and chicken or pork in Brunswick stew, for example) but should not give recipes or such details as the ordinary seasonings and the quantity of each ingredient. (Quantities of ingredients are, of course, noted in the few recipes to be placed in the appendix.)

Primarily, the meals and dishes described should be "American" in tradition. While the Middle West section may include an account of a lutefisk supper, since that group meal, brought in more than half a century ago by Scandinavian settlers, has been widely adopted by the general population of the northern Middle West, it will not contain an account of a Chinese christening party. Also, the essays and detailed descriptions should not give much emphasis to the food and customs of unusual or isolated groups.

Editors should keep in mind that group meals are social affairs and that the writing should exhibit the gusto suitable to the material. If the ritual of a meal includes a certain line of jokes, these should be noted in the stories and articles.

Writing Guidelines for *America Eats*





These are the blue-plate specials that streamlined steaks and the laborer's lunch pail passed down an endless boarding house table, from a brave dressed in buckskin to a blue-turbaned voyager, from a coonskinned Yankee to a drawling steamboat man, from a Negro fish vendor to an Irish section hand. Many foods from many nations, yet one food, one nation. Many lands, one land.

The Grand



a Eats

Archive

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<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/10/22/498869968/the-grand-unfinished-task-of-chronicling-how-america-eats>
<http://www.kitchensisters.org/fugitivewaves/episode-19/>

<div data-bbox="261 753 547 810" data-label="Text"> <p>Nelson Algren in</p> </div> <div data-bbox="246 827 310 919" data-label="Image"> </div>	<div data-bbox="760 289 1018 363" data-label="Text"> <p>FORM D Extra Comment CHICAGO FOLKLORE</p> </div> <div data-bbox="584 378 859 501" data-label="Text"> <p>STATE Illinois NAME OF WORKER Nelson Algren ADDRESS 3838 Victoria Avenue DATE April 13, 1989 SUBJECT Industrial Folklore of Chicago NAME OF INFORMANT Davey Day</p> </div> <div data-bbox="639 514 1016 924" data-label="Text"> <p>" Reason I lost to Armstrong was I couldn't see him no more. I was real han'icapped. Wuan't for not bein' able to see him I could have gone twenty rounds 'cause I got determination, I got that old confidence. " I never got a cut eye in my life, but in that twelfth round I was prayin' 's'd alice that eye wide open on me then I'd a been able to see through it, I might of gone on to win even, but I couldn't see at all, that's the reason the ref called it. "It swollen up tight as a drumstick on me." " Yab, his eye was out up awright too - they looked at it in the eighth and I guess if that was a white guy they would of stopped it on a tko and give it to me. But you know how it is with a bur^hhead, - they'd let him get killed in there 'cause that's how it is. He didn't have no lip left when he was through fightin' Ambers, but he got the duke just the same. You think they'd would of let a white guy go on in that shape? Say, you know how many stitches they took in that lip Ambers give him? - fourteen, that's how many. Armstrong told me hisself, he swallowed so much blood he was sick for two days afterg.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="1102 753 1388 810" data-label="Text"> <p></p> </div> <div data-bbox="1268 875 1370 890" data-label="Page-Footer"> <p>FWP-5 31</p> </div>
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[Industrial Folklore of Chicago]

Dear Dick,

I really hadn't planned on writing you about *Native Son*, because I'd assumed it was just one more good book in America. . . . But I'm honestly hit so hard I have to get it off my chest. . . . I don't feel any need to tell you how well-thought out or how well-sustained it is and all that, you'll hear all that all over. . . . What does get me is it's such a threat. I mean a personal threat. At first I felt it was just a challenge, but it's more. You've done a very, very smart thing: I don't think any white person could read it without being either frightened or angry at the end. My own reaction happened to be anger more than anything else. I mean when someone's threatened out of a clear sky, he starts getting sore.

Literary Cubs, Canceling Out Each Other's Reticence



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American Scholar - March 1, 2009

From its inception in 1935, the WPA's Federal Writers' Project (FWP) was expected to influence the course of American literature.

Sara Rutkowski, Ph.D. dissertation



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https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/615/

The Literary Legacy of the Federal Writers' Project by Sara Rutkowski

The Literary Legacy of The Federal Writers' Project:

https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1614&context=gc_etds

(Dissertation. Book by the same name is also available.)

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Literary Legacies of the Federal Writers' Project



One black reviewer in the Boston Chronicle of 1 July 1939 wrote: "Through the Federal Writers' Project folk history and lore of the race has been saved for posterity where in another few years we would have lost forever our hope of knowing the true contributions of our people."

These stories matter



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The WPA Guides: Mapping America

By [Christine Bold](#)

p. 120

THE WHITES INVADS HARLEM

by

Levi C. Hubert

A few years ago, in the late 1920's, Alain Leroy Locke, a professor at Howard University, and the only American Negro to get a Rhodes' scholarship at Oxford, came to Harlem to gather material for the now famous Harlem Number of the Survey Graphic and was hailed as the discoverer of artistic Harlem.

The Whites who read that issue of the Survey Graphic became aware that in Harlem, the largest Negro city in the world, there existed a group interested in the fine arts, creative literature, and classical music. So, well-meaning, vapid whites from downtown New York came by bus, subway, or in limousines, to see for themselves these Negroes who wrote poetry and fiction and painted pictures.

Of course, said these pilgrims, it couldn't approach the creative results of whites, but as a novelty, well, it didn't need standards. The very fact that these blacks had the temerity to produce so-called Art, and not its quality, made the whole fantastic movement so alluring. The idea being similar to the applause given a dancing dog. There is no question of comparing the dog to humans; it needn't do it well...merely to dance at all is quite enough.


So they came to see, and to listen, and to marvel; and to ask, as an extra favor, that some spirituals be sung.

Over cups of tea, Park Avenue and Central Park West went into raptures over these geniuses, later dragging rare specimens of the genus Homo Africanus downtown for exhibition before their friends.

[The Whit



Genesis



INVISIBLE MAN
by Ralph Ellison
PROLOGUE

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook ^{like} ~~such as~~ those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor one of your Hollywood movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids -- I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, you see, simply because people refuse to ^{see} ~~recognize~~ me. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves. Then too, you're constantly being bumped ^{against} by those of poor vision. Or again, you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds. Say, a figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy. It's when you feel like this that, out of resentment, you begin to bump people back. And, let me confess, you feel that way most of the time. You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and swear ^{you} to make them recognize you. And, it's alas, seldom successful.

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Ralph Ellison interview with Leo Gurley:

<http://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh2.21020203>

<https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2017/06/ralph-ellison-invisible-folklorist/>

By 1939 it was estimated that 335 cities had claimed to be "the crossroads of America." A reporter for Pathfinder investigating such matters discovered that one city had credited itself with 67 "firsts" and "bests" and also that Middle Western prairie towns had "a curious fondness for beginning their story, 'Bottsville, like Rome, was built on seven hills.' "

Mangione retrospective – NYT, May 18, 1969




By HUGH W. FILLARD

When Richard Wright created Bigger Thomas and sent him stumbling forth, all black and every-evil-headed, to murder blond May Dalton and to stand thereafter, bold and arrogant, claiming his manhood, black writing emerged forever from the smothering shadow of Western literature. "Native Son" possesses a single virtue that transcended every race or style or ideology which could be held against it: the novel turned upside-down the value syndrome that for centuries had locked black people in a cycle of impotence. Bigger, the bad black nigger, overcame himself in a cocoon of niggerness and spat in the face of those who had labeled, degraded and mocked him. In murdering May Dalton and stuffing her dismembered body into the furnace, the fictional antiheroine black boy from the slums of Chicago was performing an act of creation in 1940 which, more than 20 years later, the Martinique-born intellectual hero of the Black Revolution in America, Frantz Fanon, would call upon black militants to emulate: "... will to be a nigger, not just a nigger like all other niggers but a real nigger, a Negro, not just the sort of nigger the white man wants."

In his analysis of Richard Wright's themes, accomplishments and failures, "The Example of Richard Wright," Dan McCall, who teaches at Cornell, correctly focuses on Wright's first novel, "Native Son," and on the meaning and the reasons of the tortured Bigger Thomas.

To be on the side of Richard Wright is to be on the side of life," Mr. McCall believes. "It is only when we contend with the death of around percent until that victory. For in the vision of Richard Wright, 'America' was not the name of a country; it was the name of a moral sickness." And if the nation, the whole society, is sick, then it must follow that the path to mental health must lead away from the pre-

He told the black man's story



The Example of Richard Wright

By Dan McCall
207 pp. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World. \$3.95.

lence" of language or crime, lack of control, or inadequacy of reserve, de- tachment and distance as if the most inhuman kind of violence is not in- volved in the white critic's dictum which says, in effect, "Fashion your response like ours or else we will refuse to validate it."

Mr. McCall traces the old Ralph Ellison-trying-horse feud over the re- lationship of the black experience to the creation of literary art, and he commits heresy against the Literary Establishment in supporting Bigger as the white critic's argument that nar- rative should be an involvement in every black writer's literary world. While the original assignments ap- parently have rested their cases, each having succeeded in inflicting perma- nent wounds, aspects of the feud re- main very much alive. On the one hand, black writers are restoring the effrontery of white critics in perma- nently the right to sit in judgment on the quality of black life, and on the character of the literary expression which grows organically out of that life experience. There is, in fact, a movement about within the black lit- erary community to end forever the white critic's hegemony over black writing.

On the other hand, the writ- ers in the Black Consciousness move- ment are rejecting even those black writers and critics who seek to im- pose upon black literature "universal" standards of judgment, for "universal" in the American critical context is synonymous with "white." What the "universal"-oriented black critics are guilty of, of course, is shutting out of their own past Bigger expe- rience their directly qualified surro- gates into the outer edges of the American "mainstream." To the gen- eral black degree has already been everything if his brutalization has been more subtle, there is he not been damaged there—it is a word, superior to his superior teacher's. He is de- fending his surrender. That is simpler and after than insisting that all liter- ature need not speak in the tones and

Co-incidentally, in the same issue of the *Times*

The example of Richard Wright, by Dan McCall



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"Fundamentally, his approach to all social problems is still through the individual," Bellow wrote. "He thinks of what happens to a woman in a cotton mill instead of generalizing about the conditions of cotton mill workers. He has begun to treat radical ideologies with more kindness but that has, alas, not been accompanied by anything like analysis."

Saul Bellow, writing about Sherwood Anderson



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Sara Rutkowski
Malcolm Cowley – personalism
Ralph Ellison
Nelson Algren
Saul Bellow



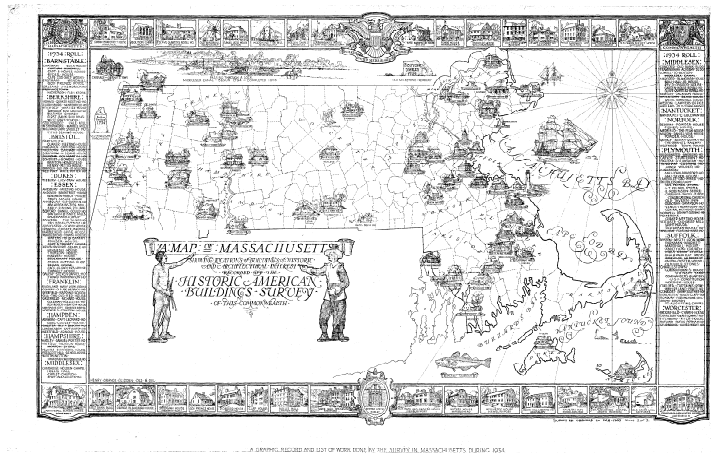
WPA writers in 1930s Oklahoma City: Joe Paskavan, Louis L'Amour, and Jim Thompson.



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Jim Thompson – [Soul of a Writer](#)

<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2009/novemberdecember/feature/soul-writer>



WPA Historical Records Survey



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Massachusetts Historical Map, Boston, Suffolk County, MA Drawings from Survey HABS MA-1303



Farmer woman with homemade jelly near Northampton, Massachusetts



Nebraska History

*Interesting Findings Written Up By
Federal Writers Project, WPA*

Post Office, Chewing Gum And The Marriage Rate

Although the activities included in the once popular kissing game called "Post Office" are undoubtedly as well liked as ever, the game itself is no longer known. Research workers of the Federal Writers' Project, WPA, have found, related in Nebraska newspaper, incidents of a kind which probably had much to do with the game's decline.

A Beatrice young man, for instance, claimed that he was enticed into a game of Post Office one evening in 1894, with the result that he went about for several days afterwards with his lips so sore he could hardly talk or eat. This would seem to be legitimate cause for complaint, since nearly everyone likes to talk and few care to go without eating. Even worse, however, was the sad case of the young fellow whose carefully tended mustache was his greatest pride. He, too, got into a kissing party one night, and after a thrilling session found his mustache so full of chewing gum that he had to cut it off.

The Gothenburg Times Gothenburg, Nebraska May 18, 1939



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The Federal Writers' Project and the Roots of Oral History Practice



FWP-S 45

<https://oralhistoryreview.org/oral-history-projects/new-deal-writers/>



Studs Terkel: "Labor Day's coming up!"



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<https://youtu.be/UoEDYqSiHYA>

She didn't know the songs: <https://youtu.be/NotwPkngRSk>

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H.R.3054 - 21st Century Federal Writers' Project Act
117th Congress (2021-2022) | [Get alerts](#)

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Sponsor: [Rep. Lieu, Ted \[D-CA-33\]](#) (Introduced 05/07/2021)

Committees: House - Education and Labor; House Administration

Latest Action: House - 05/07/2021 Referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned. ([All Actions](#))

Tracker: **Introduced** > Passed House > Passed Senate > To President > Became Law

Could/Should there be a new Writers' Project?

Legislation now in House Committee. No hearings planned



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05/07/2021 Referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration

See also:

[Occupy the American Historical Association: Demand a WPA Federal Writers' Project](#)

Jesse Lemisch

Importance of training new historians



A complete set of the Guides is available for \$5000



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