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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Civil rights collection

1962-1969

Sc MG 95

Processed by Barbara Matte.

Summary

Creator: Clarke, Catherine, 1929-1981

Title: Civil rights collection

Date: 1962-1969

Source: Gift of John Clarke, 1981. SCM82-2

Abstract: The Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection consists primarily of mimeographed and printed material documenting projects administered by various organizations whose objective was to establish racial equality in the South, primarily through school desegregation and voter registration. The collection is an accumulation of material and notes which Clarke gathered while working for several civil rights organizations and researching film projects about poverty and racism during the 1960's. There are press releases, leaflets and other printed matter which had been distributed to and by civil rights workers, as well as newspaper and magazine clippings, and Clarke's notes.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Civil rights collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Barbara Matte; Machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

Creator History

Catherine "Kit" Clarke, born in Philadelphia on August 31, 1929, was a documentary filmmaker, whose work emphasized civil rights, poverty and the anti-war protests of the 1960's and 1970's. She graduated from Radcliffe College in 1954 with an A.B in Modern European History and later took a course in television production techniques at Boston College. Clarke worked as a researcher for CBS Public Affairs (1959-60) and as an editorial associate for NBC News (1960-61). In 1961, she became Director of Research at NBC News - Special Projects for *Bell and Howell 'Close-Up'* and went on to become an Assistant Producer for the series. In 1964, she was the associate producer for *The World's Girls* and

Saga Western Man: 1964 for ABC. Clarke began her association with the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project as a volunteer for the National Council of Churches Hattiesburg Project. That summer, she taught remedial classes for two weeks. By January 1965, Clarke's increasing commitment to the Civil Rights Movement led her to resign her network position to do freelance work. From January to March of that year, Clarke wrote a film treatment, *A Christian Response to Racial Tension*, for the Lutheran Film Associates. During the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965, she worked as the assistant public relations and press officer for the mobile marching unit. Presumably, her position during the March led to her managing press relations and doing reporting and researching for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) from May to August of that year. Clarke also worked as a traveling reporter for the SCLC, Summer Community Organization and Political Education Project (SCOPE) in Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama, during this time. In 1965, Clarke did research for a projected film on the black child for the United Church of Christ. At some point, she met Jack Willis, who in 1964 had produced *The Streets of Greenwood*, a twenty minute documentary. She joined him as associate producer for *Lay My Burden Down*, a sixty minute documentary for NET Journal about conditions in the South one year after the Selma to Montgomery March. The documentary was broadcast in New York City on November 21, 1966. Clarke and Willis also worked together to produce *Appalachia: Rich Land, Poor People* for NET Journal in 1968. Also, in 1968, she was a paid staff member of the SCLC and worked as film coordinator and radio reporter with the Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C. Catherine Clarke was nominated for an Academy Award in 1971 as producer of the short feature, *Sticky My Fingers, Fleet My Feet*. Her independent work documented much of the anti-war activism of the early 1970's and she produced a film on Saigon's political prisoners towards the end of the Vietnam War. Catherine Clarke died of cancer on December 6, 1981. div class="bioghist">

The Selma to Montgomery March (March 21-25, 1965)

Despite the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Southern Blacks continued to face blatant discrimination when attempting to register to vote with local officials, as the legislation had not provided for the assignment of federal registrars. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) chose Selma, Alabama as the focal point for a series of protests to draw attention to continued discriminatory practices. The protests began to yield results in Selma, but the SCLC requiring more than a local solution planned a march from Selma to the state capitol in Montgomery to expand their operations toward a national objective. Violent confrontations by local authorities culminated in a national outcry and an order of federal protection for a group of marchers traveling from Selma to Montgomery along Highway 80 in Alabama. The public support generated by these events aided the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Summer Community Organization and Political Education Program (SCOPE)

Anticipating the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Bill, the SCLC formed the Summer Community Organization and Political Education Program. The purpose of the organization was to expand the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project throughout the South. Hundreds of Northern volunteers were enlisted to work with the SCLC field staff in voter education programs and take advantage of the presence of Federal registrars provided by the Bill.

Poor People's Campaign - Resurrection City

In 1968, the SCLC planned a campaign of civil disobedience to draw attention to the nationwide problem of poverty. The Poor People's Campaign was organized and Resurrection City was established in Washington D.C. between May and July of that year. Thousands of poor people from all over the country set up tents on the Mall between the Capitol Building and the Washington Monument as an ongoing protest against poverty and racism in the nation.

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Scope and Content Note

The Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection, 1936, 1962, 1966-1969, is an accumulation of material and notes which Clarke collected while working for various civil rights organizations and researching film projects about poverty and racism during the 1960's. The bulk of the material covers the years from 1964-1968. Divided into ten series: THE MISSISSIPPI SUMMER PROJECT--COUNCIL OF FEDERATED ORGANIZATIONS; ALABAMA; GEORGIA; CHURCH AND CIVIL RIGHTS; EDUCATION; FARM WORKERS/RURAL POVERTY; THE STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE; THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL; THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE; AND CATHERINE CLARKE, the collection consists primarily of mimeographed and printed matter (press releases, leaflets, etc.) distributed to and by Civil Rights workers, as well as newspaper and magazine clippings, and Clarke's handwritten and typed notes. The bulk of the collection documents projects run by various organizations working to establish racial equality in the South, primarily through school desegregation and voter registration. Many of the groups acted both independently and in conjunction with other organizations, in one state or in several simultaneously. The role of the church in the Civil Rights Movement is well documented in this collection, not only in the CHURCH AND CIVIL RIGHTS SERIES, but throughout the collection. For example, there is church-related material in the Koinonia Communities *Cotton Patch* interpretations of the scriptures (see ALABAMA), Harcourt Klinefelter's paper on the church's role in Civil Rights (see SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE) and in Catherine Clarke's notes for a projected film for the Lutheran Film Associates (see CATHERINE CLARKE). There is also considerable information about the relationship between the media and the Civil Rights Movement. In addition to Clarke's notes, there are transcripts of discussions at the TV and Film Center at Resurrection City (see SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE). Because of the overlapping subject matter, the researcher should be aware that subjects such as education, voter registration, violence and racial tension, farm laborers, and poverty are documented throughout the collection. In addition, the specific civil rights organizations are often referenced in series other than those devoted to the particular group.

Arrangement: Papers divided into ten series: I The Mississippi Summer Project--Council of Federated Organizations; II Alabama; III Georgia; IV Church and Civil Rights; V Education; VI Farm Workers/Rural Poverty; VII Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; VIII Southern Regional Council; IX Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and X Catherine Clarke

Key Terms

Subjects

African American civil rights workers
African American college students -- Political activity
African Americans -- Civil rights
African Americans -- Suffrage
Civil rights -- Southern States
Civil rights movements -- United States
Political parties -- Mississippi
Poor People's Campaign
Race relations -- Religious aspects
Selma-Montgomery Rights March, 1965

Geographic Names

Alabama -- Social conditions
Mississippi -- Social conditions
Selma (Ala.) -- Social conditions
Southern States -- Social conditions
United States -- History -- 1961-1969

Occupations

Civil rights workers

Names

Clarke, Catherine, 1929-1981

Council of Federated Organizations (U.S.)

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.)

Container List

Mississippi Summer Project-Council Of Federated Organizations 1962), 1964-1965

The *MISSISSIPPI SUMMER PROJECT--COUNCIL OF FEDERATED ORGANIZATIONS* series contains printed flyers, mimeographed handouts, press releases, memos and reports describing the summer project, the freedom schools, voter registration programs, community centers, the Medical Committee for Human Rights, Free Southern Theater, and the White Community Project. Included are two mimeographed publications from the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO): *The General Condition of the Mississippi Negro* and *What is COFO?* In addition, there is a security handbook for summer volunteers and a typewritten running summary of incidents, June 16-August 26, and other material documenting the often violent confrontations experienced by Southern blacks and civil rights workers. There is also considerable material from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and their participation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City.

- b. 1 f. 1 General Material 1964-1965
- b. 1 f. 2 Freedom Schools 1964
- b. 1 f. 3 Voter Registration 1964
- b. 1 f. 4 Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party 1962), 1964-1965
- b. 1 f. 5 Confrontations, Violence, Arrests 1964
- b. 1 f. 6 Newspaper Clippings 1964-1965

Alabama 1965-1966

The *ALABAMA* series documents the Selma to Montgomery March, which took place March 23-25, 1965, with material from the SCLC March on Montgomery Committee, maps of both cities, and notices of two events commemorating the March one year later. Included in this series are tourist brochures from Selma and a copy of the staff study by the Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace, June 1964, which linked the National Council of Churches (N.C.C.) with "...direct involvement in the often violent and always lawless social demonstrations" and to the Communist Party. Also included is a copy of *The Story of Selma or 'The Other Side of the Coin,'* a collection of newspaper clippings with added commentary calling for law and order and segregation, which was distributed by the Selma and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce after the Selma to Montgomery March. In addition, there is a collection of campaign material concerning the May 3 Alabama primary in 1966, including sample ballots for various counties, statements by renters who were evicted from their homes after registering to vote in the primary, and a copy of *U.S. vs. Executive Committee of the Democratic Party of Dallas County, Alabama, et al.,* contesting the Democratic Party's official count in the election.

- b. 1 f. 7 Selma To Montgomery March 1965-1966
- b. 1 f. 8 State And Local Publications 1965
- b. 1 f. 9 Primary Election May 3, 1966

Georgia 1965-1969

The *GEORGIA* series contains information most likely gathered by Kit Clarke while she was working for SCOPE in Atlanta and Americus in the summer of 1965. Along with her handwritten interview notes and two notebooks from Americus, there is documentation of the considerable violence and racial tension in Southwest Georgia at that time, including two copies of the privately printed *Voice of Americus and Southwest, Georgia* and a flyer produced by the Georgia Council on Human Relations, *Albany Georgia, Police State?* There is also a collection of items from the Koinonia Farm Community in Americus, including Clarence Jordan's *Cotton Patch* interpretations of the scriptures which were made to relate to current events.

- b. 1 f. 10 Albany, Georgia 1965
- b. 1 f. 11 Americus, Georgia Summer 1965
- b. 1 f. 12 Koinonia Farm, Americus, Ga. 1965-1967

Church And Civil Rights 1963-1969

The *CHURCH AND CIVIL RIGHTS* series is divided into four sub-series: The Delta Ministry, The Philadelphia Sister City Project, the Selma Inter-Religious Project, and Newspaper and Magazine Clippings, 1964.

Delta Ministry 1963-1966

The Delta Ministry sub-series contains press releases and publications by and about this project sponsored by the National Council of Churches of Mississippi. There is information concerning the takeover of the abandoned Greenville, Mississippi Air Force Base by poor blacks, evicted farmworkers who had been living in tents during sub-freezing temperatures. The takeover was sponsored jointly by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Delta Ministry. There are press releases, a chronology of events, and a copy of a special issue of *Delta Ministry Reports* regarding the incident. The Delta Ministry material also describes the conditions of the Mississippi farm workers and the lack of response from the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. Included is a copy of an article from the January, 1936 *Sharecropper's Voice* describing a tent colony set up for evicted sharecroppers -- thirty years before the Greenville A.F.B. takeover. In addition, there is an article written by Dr. Gerald Rosenfield, *What Happened to the Mississippi Child Development Group?* a precursor to the HEADSTART program in Mississippi. This is the first of three articles; the other two are not in this collection.

- b. 2 f. 1 Delta Ministry Reports 1964-1966
- b. 2 f. 2 Press Releases, Handouts (1936), 1966
- b. 2 f. 3 Greenville Air Force Base 1966
- b. 2 f. 4 Philadelphia Sister City Project 1966

The Philadelphia Sister City Project sub-series consists of one folder of material describing the project, and includes a copy of a sermon given by Reverend Rudolf C. Gelsey of the Universalist Church of the Restoration in Philadelphia, Pa. on February 9, 1966, entitled *Philadelphia, Mississippi - A Sister-City Revisited*.

Selma Inter-Religious Project 1966-1969

The Selma Inter-Religious Project (S.I.P) sub-series consists of newsletters, press releases, notes and correspondence. The newsletters contain many references to the Southwest Alabama Farmers Cooperative Association (SWAFCA). There is also material about the Rural Life Workshop, held in December 1966, which was designed to give the participants an appreciation of what it was to be black in the changing rural sections of Alabama; and the Freedom Quilting Bee, sponsored by the S.I.P. to provide a way for local women to augment their family incomes. Included is a collection of Clarke's notes for both a possible radio program about the Freedom Quilting Bee Groundbreaking Ceremonies and a possible film about S.I.P.'s work.

- b. 2 f. 5 Newsletters 1966-1969
- b. 2 f. 6 Rural Life Workshop December, 1966
- b. 2 f. 7 Notes, Correspondence And Proposals For Film 1967
- b. 2 f. 8 Freedom Quilting Bee 1968-1969
- b. 2 f. 9 Freedom Quilting Bee--Notes For Radio Program 1969
- b. 2 f. 10 Newspaper And Magazine Clippings 1964

Education 1966-1967

The *EDUCATION* series consists of information about school desegregation in general, with a quantity of material from the School Desegregation Task Force of the American Friends Service Committee and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, as well as material from Alabama, including Catherine Clarke's interview notes which were probably collected in 1965 when she was working for SCOPE. There is also a report on school desegregation by the Greater Atlanta Council on Human Relations Committee and items concerning the efforts of Miles College, a black school in Alabama, to obtain accreditation and library books. In addition, there are miscellaneous notes about education in Clarke's hand, and a report of an investigation by the National Education Association, *Wilcox County, Alabama, a study in social economic and educational bankruptcy*, which details with illustrations and charts the educational situation in Alabama in 1966-67.

- b. 2 f. 11 School Desegregation Ca. 1966
- b. 2 f. 12 Miles College, Alabama 1966-1967
- b. 2 f. 13 General Material 1967

Farm Laborers/Rural Poverty 1963), 1965-1968

The *FARM LABORERS/RURAL POVERTY* series contains flyers, leaflets, and typewritten material relating to the problems resulting from racial discrimination against farm workers. A good deal of the material is from the National Sharecroppers Fund (NSF) and the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, including a report to the Board of Directors of the NSF, *The Condition of Farm Workers in 1963*. There is considerable information from various sources, including the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, specifically about poverty conditions in Mississippi. There are two items concerning organized labor's relation to the problem; a letter outlining the AFL-CIO's plan for a labor training program for minority workers in the Deep South, and a copy of the minutes of the Columbia University Seminar on Labor, Manpower Policy and the South, from 1965-66. Also in this series is material about SWAFCA, including printed flyers, a copy of the Jan./Feb. 1969 issue of *The Southern Cooperator* and an announcement of a press conference to be held on June 12, 1968 to present the demands of the Poor People's Campaign to the Department of Agriculture. Additional information about SWAFCA can be found in the Selma Inter-Religious Project Newsletters.

- b. 2 f. 15 National Sharecroppers Fund/National Advisory Committee On Farm Labor 1963), 1965-1966
- b. 2 f. 16 Organizing Labor In The South 1965-1966
- b. 2 f. 17 Mississippi Poverty 1963), 1966
- b. 2 f. 18 Southwest Alabama Farmers Cooperative Association 1967-1968

Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee 1963-1967

The *STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SNCC)* series includes press releases, statements, letters, reprints of published material distributed by SNCC, and clippings. The series is divided into two categories -- general material about the organization from 1963 to 1967 and specific material about the Atlanta Project, 1966-1967. The general material begins with the Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964 and to some extent traces the growing radicalization within the organization over the years. Also included are references to support from outside the organization, as well as typewritten copies of statements by John Lewis in 1965 and H. Rap Brown in 1967. In addition, there is a copy of the August 1964, *Student Voice* with the headline story referring to the murders of three civil rights workers (James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner) and a story about the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The Atlanta Project is described by two press releases and a copy of *The Nitty Gritty*, with stories about Julian Bond, the Greenville A.F.B. and Markham Street, Atlanta. There are two affidavits citing racial incidents in Atlanta and a notebook in Catherine Clarke's hand, marked "Atlanta."

- b. 2 f. 19 General 1963-1967
- b. 2 f. 20 Atlanta Project 1966-1967

Southern Regional Council

The *SOUTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL (SRC)* series consists of press releases and typed proposals, an unofficial survey of southern black voter registration and some typed notes by Catherine Clarke which refer to the Voter Education Project. There is also a copy of *Mississippi*, the October 1962 issue of *The New South*, published by the SRC.

b. 3 f. 1 Voter Education Project 1962-1966

Southern Christian Leadership Conference 1964-1968

The *SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (SCLC)* series contains general information about the organization and a considerable amount of material documenting the Poor People's Campaign. There are mimeographed sheets and a workbook from the SCLC Citizenship Training Program describing the program and the training of the teachers. There is a large volume of material from Clarke's work with SCOPE in 1965, largely lists of counties, volunteers, and staff, with references to county staff evaluations and to confrontations. In addition to an incomplete Report to the Board of Directors, April 1966, there is a great deal of general material about the SCLC, spanning the years 1964 to 1967. In addition, there is a copy of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s statement to the press on August 20, 1965 concerning the Watts riots, notes from the Chicago staff retreat meetings during the SCLC's 1966 campaign there and an eight page booklet, *Does Martin Luther King, Jr. have the right? the qualifications? the duty? to speak out on Peace?* There are also two documents, a sermon and a paper by Harcourt Klinefelter, a staff member at Resurrection City. The sermon was given the Sunday after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. The paper is entitled, *How Churches Can Help in Civil Rights, A Manual for Ministers*. Material from the Poor People's Campaign makes up a large portion of this series. There is almost daily documentation of events at Resurrection City, dating from April 17, 1968 to July 19, 1968, with a large amount of undated matter. Included is a copy of Jesse Jackson's speech given on May 23, a staff roster, programs for the Poor People's University, copies of speeches, press releases and notes in Catherine Clarke's hand. There is also a collection of typed material and notes about the proposed TV and Film Center at Resurrection City and notes of discussions about how to utilize the media for the purposes of the campaign. A set of typed transcripts of meetings held at the Poor People's Embassy in July can also be found here. Finally, there are three folders which detail the Poor People's demands to government agencies, the agencies' responses, and the Campaign's answers to the responses.

b. 3 f. 2 Citizenship Training 1964-1965

b. 3 f. 3 Summer Community Organization And Polital Education, (Scope) Summer 1965

b. 3 f. 4 Report To The Board Of Directors 1966

b. 3 f. 5 General Material 1964-1969

Poor People's Campaign--Resurrection City 1968

b. 3 f. 6 General Material

b. 3 f. 7 Tv And Film Center

b. 3 f. 8 Transcripts From Poor People's Embassy

b. 3 f. 9 Statement Of Demands To Government Agencies

b. 3 f. 10 Responses To Government Agencies

b. 3 f. 11 Answers To Responses

b. 3 f. 12 Newspaper Clippings

Catherine Clarke 1964-1967

The *CATHERINE CLARKE* series is composed of miscellaneous material collected by her, general notes and correspondence, and research material for a number of film projects, particularly for *Lay My Burden Down*, and *Appalachia: Rich Land, Poor People*. A copy of the transcript of *Lay My Burden Down* is included in this series.

b. 4 Notes And Correspondence

b. 4 f. 1 General 1964-1965

Catherine Clarke (cont.)
Notes And Correspondence (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 2 Film Proposals: Correspondence And Research Material 1964-1965
Lay My Burden Down
- b. 4 f. 3 Research Material And Notes 1965-1966
- b. 4 f. 4 Transcript 1966
Appalachia: Rich Land, Poor People
- b. 4 f. 5 Notes And Correspondence 1967-1968
- b. 4 f. 6 Clippings, Research Material 1967-1968
- b. 4 f. 7 Miscellaneous Collected Material
- b. 4 f. 8 Miscellaneous Civil Rights Newspaper Clippings 1964-1965
- b. 4 f. 9 Miscellaneous Civil Rights Magazine Clippings 1964-1965