Summary

Title: African American migration and southern folkways in New York City Oral History Project

Date: 1992-1993

Size: .6 linear feet

Source: Gift, City Lore, 1995

Abstract: In 1992 and 1993 City Lore coordinated an oral history project focusing on the Northern migration experience and the maintenance of southern folkways within New York City's African-American church community. Fifty men and women who migrated from the South to New York during the post World War II years were interviewed. Topics covered in the interviews include how and why individuals left the South (generally for economic reasons, not blatant racism and violence); their experiences adjusting to life in New York; their retention of Southern cultural practices (food, especially soul food, gospel music, crafts including quilting, worship practices and church activities); the individuals' ongoing connections to the South through regular family visits, homecoming, etc.; and their thoughts on moving back to the South (or for those few who had already moved from New York, they compared their lives in both areas). The informants recount their positive relations with other black families and with white neighbors in the South and school experiences with strict yet caring black teachers. Neighborhood life in Harlem, central Brooklyn and parts of Queens during the 1940's through the early 1960's were recounted, as well as discussions covering life up to the early 1990's during the time of the interviews is included. The New York City interviews were conducted by City Lore Project Director Ray Allen and the Virginia interviews were conducted by Dr. Marilyn White.

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Preferred citation: [Item], African American migration and southern folkways in New York City Oral History Project, Sc MG 405, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Related Materials:
Scope and Content Note

In 1992 and 1993 City Lore coordinated an oral history project focusing on the Northern migration experience and the maintenance of southern folkways within New York City's African-American church community. Fifty men and women who migrated from the South to New York during the post World War II years were interviewed. Topics covered in the interviews include how and why individuals left the South (generally for economic reasons, not blatant racism and violence); their experiences adjusting to life in New York; their retention of Southern cultural practices (food, especially soul food, gospel music, crafts including quilting, worship practices and church activities); the individuals’ ongoing connections to the South through regular family visits, homecoming, etc.; and their thoughts on moving back to the South (or for those few who had already moved from New York, they compared their lives in both areas). The informants recount their positive relations with other black families and with white neighbors in the South and school experiences with strict yet caring black teachers. Neighborhood life in Harlem, central Brooklyn and parts of Queens during the 1940's through the early 1960's were recounted, as well as discussions covering life up to the early 1990's during the time of the interviews is included. The New York City interviews were conducted by City Lore Project Director Ray Allen and the Virginia interviews were conducted by Dr. Marilyn White.

Key Terms

Subjects
African American artisans
African American children
African American churches
African American cooking
African American families
African American neighborhoods
African American parents
African American quiltmakers
African American teachers and the community
African American women
African American youth
African Americans -- Folklore
African Americans -- Migrations -- History -- 20th century
African Americans -- Music
African Americans -- Religion
African Americans -- Social conditions -- 1964-1975
African Americans -- Social conditions -- 1975-
African Americans -- Social conditions -- To 1964
African Americans -- Social life and customs
Folk music -- New York (State) -- New York
Gospel music -- New York (State) -- New York
Migration, Internal -- 20th century
Migration, Internal -- United States -- History -- 20th century
Rural-urban migration -- United States -- History -- 20th century
Interviews
Oral histories

Geographic Names
Southern States -- Economic conditions
United States -- Race relations