

RICHARD B. MOORE

PAPERS

The New York Public Library

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
515 Malcolm X Boulevard
New York, New York, 10037

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164 boxes (5.5 lin. ft.)

Biography

Born in Barbados in 1893, Richard B. Moore was a civil rights advocate, a communist organizer and a champion of Caribbean and African self-determination who migrated to New York City in 1909 and played an influential role in Harlem independent politics and social life for more than fifty years. His involvement began as early as 1915 with various self-improvement and cooperative efforts, including the Harlem Pioneer Cooperative Society and the Associated Colored Employees of America, a job opportunity organization. In 1919, he joined the African Blood Brotherhood, a secret organization of some 3,000 black members nationally which emphasized self-defense, race pride and self-determination for black people, including in the United States. He quickly established himself as one of Harlem's great soapbox orators and a strong community organizer.

Moore, Cyril Briggs, founder of the African Blood Brotherhood, and fellow member Grace Campbell were among the first blacks to join the Communist Party (CP) in the early 1920s. They came to the Party mainly because of the Comintern's (Third Communist International) strong commitment to racial and national movements against imperialism, and with the hope of transforming the mainly white CP into a fighting force against segregation. Moore became the editor of The Negro Champion, the organ of the American Negro Labor Congress, a CP front for labor and progressive black organizations. He also helped organize the Harlem Educational Forum, along with Hubert Harrison, W.A. Domingo and Rev. Ethelred Brown.

In 1928, Moore and Campbell launched the Harlem Tenants League which organized building committees throughout Harlem and held regular demonstrations at the Board of Aldermen demanding lower rents and better living conditions. That same year, the sixth congress of the Comintern adopted a resolution instructing the U.S. CP to "consider the struggle on behalf of the Negro masses ... as one of its major tasks." The League became the Party's chief organizing tool and its greatest recruiting source among blacks. Rent strikes were organized in more than twenty buildings. Street rallies held by the Harlem District attracted hundreds and often, thousands of sympathizers, in spite of severe police repression and arrests.

Moore had been appointed New England organizer in 1935 for the

International Labor Defense (ILD), another party organization. He later gained national prominence as a leading ILD spokesman on behalf of the nine young black men, known as the Scottboro Boys, who were falsely charged with raping two white women. In the early 1930s, he spearheaded black communist efforts to gain employment for blacks on the bus lines operating in Harlem and on the 125th Street commercial strip.

But with the rise of fascism in Europe and the Comintern's adoption of a united front policy toward the United States and the main European colonial powers, the CP downgraded its support work on behalf of anti-imperialist and anti-discrimination struggles. Moore was subsequently criticized for "petty-bourgeois nationalism," presumably for his persistence in keeping black issues on the front burner, and was removed from the League of Struggle for Negro Rights which he had helped launch in 1930. He was expelled from the Party in 1939.

An outstanding pan-Africanist intellectual, Moore addressed international congresses on Africa in the 1920s, drafted resolutions calling for an end to colonial rule on that continent, and helped organize mass protests and relief efforts after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. He also played a leading role in several Caribbean advocacy groups and launched the West Indies Defense Committee in 1937, in support of striking workers throughout the British Caribbean. At the founding conference of the United Nations in 1945, Moore campaigned on behalf of the West Indies National Council and the Provisional Council of Dominated Nations for the complete freedom of subjugated peoples in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. An advocate of federation and independence for the British Caribbean territories, he was the author of various appeals and statements on those subjects, and was the principal organizer of several Caribbean-American organizations in the 1950s and 1960s, including the American Committee for West Indian Federation and the United Caribbean American Council.

The self-educated Moore had a life-long commitment to African history and studied at various times under the historian, William Leo Hansberry, and anthropologist Louis Leakey. In partnership with Angelo Herndon, he launched Pathway Press in 1940, which published a memorial edition of The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass. He lectured broadly on African and Afro-American history and politics, and developed curriculum outlines for the New York City Board of Education's in-service teachers training program and for local school boards in Uniondale, Rockland County and Long Island. A passionate bibliophile, he developed a library, now housed in Barbados, of some 15,000 books and published sources on the black experience worldwide.

Moore was also the founder of the nationalist Afro-American Institute and ran a bookstore, the Frederick Douglass Book Center, in Harlem for over thirty years. His best known publications are The Name Negro, Its Origin and Evil Use (1960) and Caribs, Cannibals and Human Relations (1972). His articles and essays were published in The Emancipator, Daily Worker, The Negro Champion, New York Amsterdam News, Freedomways, Negro Digest and several Caribbean publications. Richard B. Moore died in Barbados in 1978.

Scope and Content

The Richard B. Moore Papers document Moore's activities as a Communist organizer in the 1930s, his publishing efforts and advocacy for Caribbean independence and federation in the 1940s and 1950s, and his activities as a Pan-Africanist intellectual, lecturer and book distributor in the 1960s and 1970s. The Collection is divided into the following series: Personal Papers, Correspondence, Barbados, Organizations, Writings and Notes, and Printed Matter.

Personal Papers, 1902-1978 (0.4 lin.ft.)

The Personal series is mainly biographical and includes some printed matter related to his membership in Communist front organizations in the 1920s and 1930s. Printed matter and several documents drafted by Moore on West Indian federation are also located here.

General Correspondence, 1967-1978 (0.2 lin. ft.)

The General Correspondence is relatively sparse and confined to the last ten years of Moore's life. The greater part of this correspondence is related to his later publications or comes from historians and doctoral students seeking recollections of his earlier days as a radical. Occasional correspondents include historians John Henrik Clarke, Mark Naison and Theodore Kornweibel, a graduate student, Earl Ofari, and an assistant to Harry Haywood, the author of Black Bolshevik. Also included is a two page letter from Harold Cruse criticizing Moore for his "arrogance" and his "obsession with the argument over 'The Name Negro'."

Barbados, 1961-1975 (0.4 lin. ft.)

Correspondents in the Barbados series include his long time friend Reginald Pierrepont, Bishop Reginald Barrow of the African Orthodox Church of New York, Prime-Minister Errol Barrow, and Winter Crawford, Deputy Prime-Minister and manager of the San Remo Hotel. The series documents his visits and lecture tours in Barbados and the transfer of his library to the Centre for Multi-Racial Studies at the University of the West Indies in Cave Hill,

Barbados. The correspondence and printed matter in the series also relate to the celebration of independence and to post independence politics in Barbados.

Organizations, 1926-1975 (1.6 lin. ft.)

The following organizations have substantive files in this series: the International Labor Defense, Pathway Press, the West Indies National Council, the Frederick Douglass Book Center and the Afro-American Institute. The ILD files document Moore's public speaking and organizational efforts as a Communist Party official in the legal defense of the "Scottboro Boys." Included are two letters from Olin Montgomery, brother of one of the defendants, and a handwritten letter from Daisy Bates, one of the two women allegedly raped who later joined in the legal defense of the accused. The files for Pathway Press and the Frederick Douglass Book Center relate mainly to Moore's financial difficulties as an independent publisher and book distributor. The files of the West Indies National Council document Moore's campaign, as official representative of that organization at the 1945 United Nations Conference on Independent Organizations in San Francisco, in favor of self-government for the non-independent territories of the Caribbean. Additional information on the U.N. Conference can be found in the printed matter series.

The 1937 sit-down strike in Trinidad and the ensuing violent clashes between black workers and British colonial forces throughout the region are documented in the file Other Caribbean Organizations and Activities.

Writings, 1940-1973 (1.6 lin. ft.)

Divided into three subseries: Speaking Engagements, Articles and Essays, and Reading and Lecture Notes. Moore's writings and speeches in the 1930s and 1940s are largely unrepresented, with the exception of some publicity materials in the Speaking Engagement files. Articles and Essays are arranged alphabetically and consist of the following: book reviews, poems, manuscripts and typescripts of articles, radio broadcasts, letters to the editor, his articles on Barbados, correspondence and other materials relating to his participation in the "Black Heritage" television project produced in 1968 by Columbia University and CBS-TV, correspondence and petitions on various issues including the campaign to preserve Frederick Douglass's home, and an essay written for the book Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa, edited by John H. Clarke. The Reading and Lecture Notes subseries consist of research notes and outlines of speeches and articles.

Printed Matter (0.8 lin. ft)

Newsletters, newspaper clippings and some oversized materials collected by Moore on various subjects, including the Jim Crow

system and lynching in the United States, the founding conference of United Nations in 1945, Ghana, and Barbados politics.

Provenance

Gift of Joyce Moore Turner
SCM 89-57; SCM 93-40; SCM 98-57

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1994

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
1		PERSONAL PAPERS
	1	Biographical
	2	Invitations
	3	Honorarium Birthday
	4	1943
	5	1945
	6	Seventy-Seventh Birthday, 1963
	7	1970, 1973
	8	Condolences on Moore's Death, 1978
	9	Awards and Tributes
	10	The Communist Party Years
	11	Communist Party - Printed Matter
	12	West Indian Federation
2		CORRESPONDENCE
	1	Miscellaneous, 1967-1978
	2	Freedomways
	3	John Henrik Clarke
	4	Reginald Pierrepoinde
3		BARBADOS
	1	Correspondence
	2	Prime Minister Errol W. Barrow
	3	Barbados Independence, 1966
	4	Barbados Tour
	5	Acquisition of Moore's Library
	6	Centre For Multi-Racial Studies
	7	Printed Matter
	8	Clippings, 1977
4		ORGANIZATIONS
	1	African Blood Brotherhood Afro-American Institute
	2	Correspondence
	3	Minutes
	4	Financial
	5	Membership
	6	Programs
	7	African Heritage Studies Association
	8	American Committee For W.I. Federation
	9	The Association for the Study of Afro- American Life and History
	10	ASALH - Area Council
5	1	Committee to Present Truth on Name "Negro"

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	2	Committee to Act Against the McCarran Act, 1952
	3	Douglass Cultural Club Douglass Book Center
	4	Correspondence
	5	Bank Statements
	6	Bill, Orders, Lists
	7	Bills - Paid and Unpaid
	8	Moore's Gallery
	9	Account Books
	10	Harlem Tenants League
6		International Labor Defense
	1	1937-1938
	2	Scottsboro Case Scottsboro Case
	3	Printed Matter
	4	Clippings
	5	Course Materials
	6	Course Materials - Boston
	7	National Negro Congress
7		Pathway Press
	1-2	Correspondence
	3-4	Financial
	5	Pathway Publishers, 1960-1974
	6	Provisional World Council of Dominated Nations, 1945
	7	Caribbean Organizations and Activities
	8	United Caribbean American Council
8	1-2	West Indies National Council
	3	Other Organizations
		WRITINGS
9		Lectures and Speaking Engagements
	1-4	Speaking Engagements
	5	Board of Education District 29, 6, 13
	6	Immaculate Conception Seminary Course
	7	Rockville Center Schools
10	1	Uniondale Public Schools Articles and Essays

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
	2	Prime Minister Grantley Adams's Speech at the United Nations
	3	African Before the Coming of the Europeans
	4	Afro-American Awareness
	5	Barbados Uprising and the Boston Massacre
	6	Afro-Americans and Third Party Movements
	7	Afro-Americans and Radical Politics
	8	Anatomy of Slavery as an American Institution
	9	Appeal to Save the Frederick Douglass Home
	10	Barbados Press Articles and Letters
	11	Bicentennial Reflections
	12	Black Heritage Series, 1969 Book Reviews
	13	From Africa to the United States and Then... by Kenneth G. Goode
	14	Stolen Legacy, by George James
	15	White African, by L.S.B. Leakey
	16	World of Africa, by W.E.B. DuBois
	17	Caribs, Cannibals and Human Relations
	18	Caribs..., a Study in Stereotyping
	19	Caribs, etc.
	20	On Carib Cannibalism
11	1	Criticism Is Not Anti-Semitism
	2	Crummell, Alexander
	3	Cycles of Civilization by T.A. Marryshow -Introduction
	4	Angela Davis Program
	5	Frederick Douglass and Haiti - Introduction
	6	Early Empires in the Sudan
	7	Early Man in Africa: the Origin of Man
	8	Early History Recovered at Olduvai
	9	The Exiles' Anthem
	10	Fascism, the Negro's Most Deadly Enemy
	11	Federation Without Independence
	12	For Lorraine Hansberry
	13	Garvey Lecture
	14	Guyana Independence
11	15	Image of the Afro-American in Literature
	16	Independent Caribbean Nationhood - Achieved or Set Back?

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	17	Tribute to Herman LeGall
	18	Letters to the Editor
	19	The Name "Negro" - Its Origin and Evil Use
	20	A Name of Human Dignity
	21	Names of Dignity and Freedom
	22	A New Look at African History
	23	No New Africa
	24	A Note on Nationalism
	25	Note on Racism in History
	26	Open Letter to Max Lerner
	27	Opposition and Criticism, (an article for the book on Marcus Garvey edited by J.H. Clarke)
	28	Pan-African Information Service
	29	Passing of Churchill and Empire
	30	Petitions to United Nations re S.W. Africa
	31	The Political Crisis and The Negro People
	32	Prelude to Progress and Freedom
	33	Reaction to Riots Against Racism
	34	Redefining African Historical Periods
	35	Related Thoughts On Image and Independence
	36	Charles Lenox Remond
	37	Reply to Bayard Rustin
	38	The Second Independence Anniversary
	39	Significance of African History
	40	Some Contributions of Barbadians Abroad
12	1	Some Writings by and about Caribbeans
	2	Statement to British Embassy
	3	Stolen Legacy Again
	4	Tanzania Representative Farewell Program
	5	To Set the Record Straight
	6	West Indies Federate for Nationhood
	7	Miscellaneous Writings
	8	References - Africa
	9	Lecture Outlines
12	10	Related Materials
		Reading and Lecture Notes
	11	African Precedents to Hebrew-Christian Religion

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	12	Barbados Lectures
	13	False Notions about Africa
	14	Frederick Douglass and Emigration
	15	Frederick Douglass - Bibliographic Essay, Notes)
	16	Harlem and the Impact of Africa
	17	Lecture Notes
	18	Lecture Notes - Uniondale High School
	19	Lecture Notes - Curriculum
	20	Black Gods
13	1	Notes
	2	Reading Notes
	3	Lecture Notes - African History
	4	Was Christmas Developed in Africa?
	5	African and Afro-American Historical Writing
	6	Human Rights and the Afro-American Experience
	7	Notes - Caribs and Cannibalism
	8	Lecture Notes
	9	Manuscripts and Fragments
		PRINTED MATTER
	10	Articles by Moore
	11	United Nations Conference, 1945
14	1	United Nations Conference, 1945
	2	Jim Crow
	3	Clippings - Africa, the Congo
	4	Harlem - New York Post
	5	Harlem Riot, 1935
	6	West Indies
	7	Lynching
	8-9	American Society for African Culture
15	1-2	Barbados
	3	Ghana
16		Oversized Materials