

NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR - "NEGRO WEEK"  
RECORDS

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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**NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR "NEGRO WEEK" (July 23-28, 1940). RECORDS, April-October, 1940.  
1 box.**

### History

The theme of the 1940 World's Fair, held in New York, was "The American Common." This concept was patterned after the custom of New England towns where commons were established to provide an arena for townspeople to meet, discuss and decide questions of local government. The "American Common" program for the World's Fair was designed to present the contributions to American culture of Racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

The week of July 23-28, 1940 was designated as "Negro Week." It was directed by T. Arnold Hill, with Geraldine Dismond as chairman of the program. The goal of "Negro Week" was to create a living picture of the American Negro and the black contribution to the cultural development of the United States. The uniqueness of "Negro Week" can be understood through the excitement and enthusiasm that inspired famous black people to give of their free time willingly, or in a few cases, with only token compensation.

"Negro Week" consisted of festivals, exhibitions, song and dance recitals, choral and symphonic music, concerts, religious services, guest speakers and a children's program. Noted events during the week included a dramatic sketch of the "Life of Booker T. Washington" performed by the Rose McClendon Players and performances by the Karamu Dancers, Eubie Blake, W. C. Handy, James P. Johnson, Cecil Mack and Philippa Schuyler.

A number of other noted people, such as Dean Dixon, W. E. B. DuBois, Juanita Hall, Fiorello La Guardia, Lawrence D. Reddick and Frank Wilson, participated in the events of the week. Others who lent their names to the National Committee included Marian Anderson, Mary McLeod Bethune, George Washington Carver, Roland Hayes, Mordecai W. Johnson, Alain Locke, Hattie McDaniel, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., A. Philip Randolph, George Schuyler, Robert C. Weaver and Richard Wright.

### Scope and Content

The World's Fair "Negro Week" records (April-October, 1940) document the overall planning of the week as well as the preparation for the specific activities which took place. The collection consists of correspondence, press releases, speeches, programs, pass and address lists, financial records and material related to the slide exhibition and the Hall of Fame. With the exception of the speeches, which are in alphabetical order, each file is arranged in a chronological sequence.

**Correspondence** has been divided into files of incoming and outgoing letters. Incoming letters are largely responses to

requests by the committee to participate in the program. Outgoing letters were written mostly by T. Arnold Hill and Geraldine Dismond. These letters are comprised of invitations to participate in the program or to be on the National Committee or requests for suggestions or information.

**Press Releases** announce the week's events, exhibitions and guest speakers, with specific releases for each night's outstanding performance. **Speeches** by Elmer Carter, W. E. B. DuBois and Lawrence D. Reddick relate to various aspects of black contributions to American culture. A slide exhibition featuring rare books and famous people was shown. The National Committee also compiled a Hall of Fame listing some of the outstanding black men and women in American life and history. Materials concerning the slide exhibition and Hall of Fame consist of an instruction sheet for the slide exhibition and a list of individuals with biographical sketches for the Hall of Fame. Other records documenting the planning for the various activities and events include the program, pass and address lists and routine business arrangements in the form of financial records.

### Provenance

It was suggested in a June 1940 Committee meeting that everything written about the "Negro Week" should go to the Schomburg Collection. T. Arnold Hill and Harvey W. Anderson, the Director of the American Common, readily agreed. Consequently, Sammie Heil, secretary to Hill assumed the responsibility for preserving the records, which shortly afterward became the property of the growing Schomburg Collection.

SCM77-68.

**Container List**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
1		Correspondence
		Incoming
	1	April-June, 1940
	2	July-October, 1940
		Outgoing
	3	April-July, 1940
	4	July- August, 1940
	5	Press Releases, 1940
	6	Speeches, July, 1940
	7	Exhibition, Slide Presentation, July, 1940
	8	Hall of Fame, June, 1940
	9	Programs, July, 1940
	10	Pass and Address List, June-July, 1940
	11	Financial Records, May-July, 1940