



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division

Guide to the

James Baldwin audio collection

1960-1999

Sc MIRS Baldwin 2017-03

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Summary

Creator: Baldwin, James, 1924-1987

Title: James Baldwin audio collection

Date: 1960-1999

Size: 35 audio_recordings

Source: Purchase, Estate of James Baldwin, January 2017.

Revision History: Item titles, scope and content notes, and extent notes updated to facilitate public access by Ornella U. Baganizi.

Abstract: James Baldwin (1924-1987) was an African American novelist, essayist, intellectual, and activist, renowned as one of the world's most influential voices of the twentieth century. The James Baldwin audio collection consists of thirty-five audio recordings of mostly interviews and speeches given by Baldwin from the 1960s to 1980s.

Preferred citation: James Baldwin audio collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Collection inventoried by Stacey Doyle Ference. Collection processed and described by Ornella U. Baganizi, archivist; and Shola Lynch, curator. Finding aid published in 2024.

Separated Materials:

See the Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division for the James Baldwin papers 1936-1992, Sc MG 936.

See the Photographs and Prints Division for the photographs.

Related Materials:

James Baldwin - Price of the Ticket audio and moving image collection, Sc MIRS James 1998.

See the Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division for related collections on James Baldwin.

Creator History

James Baldwin (1924-1987) was an African American novelist, essayist, intellectual, and activist, renowned as one of the world's most influential voices of the twentieth century. His works include novels, essays, plays, poems, and speeches on race, class, masculinity, sexuality, justice, and love, among other themes. Baldwin was born on August 2, 1924 at Harlem Hospital in Harlem, New York City, where he grew up. He attended two schools in Harlem, Public School 24 (PS 24), now known as Harlem Renaissance High School, and Frederick Douglass Junior High School (JHS). Years later in 1963, he received the Alumnus of the Year award from Frederick Douglass JHS. The recording of the event is available in the collection.

From a young age Baldwin was a regular patron of the New York Public Library. The 135th Street Branch Library, which grew into today's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, was his home library. He has said, "I went to the 135th Street Library at least three or four times a week, and I read everything there, I mean every single book in that library. In some blind and instinctive way, I knew that what was happening in those books was also happening all around me. And I was trying to make a connection between the books and the life I saw, and the life I lived."

In the course of his groundbreaking career, Baldwin's writing and activism propelled him to international prominence. He was the recipient of Guggenheim (1954) and Ford Foundation (1958) fellowships and the George Polk Award for journalism (1963), and he was accepted into the Legion of Honour (1986), France's most prestigious order of merit. Baldwin died of stomach cancer in 1987 at his home in the south of France. His novels and essays continue to be widely read.

Scope and Content Note

The James Baldwin audio collection consists of thirty-five audio recordings. Some of the collection's original formats are audio cassettes and contain two or more parts, one for each side of the cassette. Two items contain one part that appears unrelated to the collection, this is indicated in the items' descriptions. Some of Baldwin's works discussed include the novels *Another Country* (1962), *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), and *Just Above My Head* (1979). He also mentions the play *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964), and the essay collections *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), *The Fire Next Time* (1963), and *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985).

Key Terms

Subjects

African American authors -- Interviews
African American dramatists
African American gay men
American literature -- African American authors
American poetry -- African American authors

Geographic Names

Atlanta (Ga.) -- Social conditions
Birmingham (Ala.)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Speeches

Names

Baldwin, James, 1924-1987

Container List

SERIES I: SPEECHES 1963-1964 (17 audio_recordings)

Seventeen audio recordings of speeches given by Baldwin from 1963 to 1964 arranged chronologically, and by speech. Item titles are derived from the names of the speeches or their location.

California Masonic Memorial Temple

Baldwin speaks on his hopes and plans for changing the modern world at the California Masonic Memorial Temple in San Francisco, California.

431163 Part 1 of 2 1963 May 7 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

431164 Part 2 of 2 1963 May 7 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

Free and Brave

Baldwin talks about American history from the Negro point of view while on a speaking tour following the publication of his book *The Fire Next Time*. Recorded at Second Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California on May 10. Likely broadcast on KPFK, Southern California on May 16.

431165 Part 1 of 2 1963 May 10 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

431166 Part 2 of 2 1963 May 10 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

Followed by questions and answers.

431161 The Image of the Negro in American Literature 1963 May (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

v01f02: Baldwin gives a convocation address at Sacramento State College (now California State University, Sacramento). He discusses *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), amongst other books. v01f01: An unidentified person gives a lecture on psychiatry. Recording does not include Baldwin and appears unrelated to other items in the collection.

431178 100 Years of Freedom 1963 May (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

Baldwin speaks on the fight for Black civil rights since the Emancipation Proclamation at the University of California, Berkeley.

431167 Alumnus of the Year Award 1963 June 20 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

Baldwin receives the fourth annual Alumnus of the Year Award from Frederick Douglass Junior High School (JHS) 139. The school was located at 140 West 140th Street, New York, New York. v01f01: The principal presents ceremony guests. Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Presentation of the award and a speech by Baldwin. Part 2 of 2.

Church of Master

Baldwin talks about what it means to be American, the Negro situation in America, demoralization, and more. Recorded at the Church of the Master, most likely the Harlem church located at 360 West 122nd Street and Morningside Avenue. Followed by questions and answers.

431174 Speech circa 1963 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

Exact year of the recording unknown, dated June 21st.

431168 Questions and answers 1963 September 9-13 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))

This recording only includes the questions and answers portion of the speech Baldwin delivered at the Church of the Master. Likely broadcast on WRVR-FM (Riverside Radio), New York, New York. Date corresponds to broadcast dates.

SERIES I: SPEECHES (cont.)

National Day of Mourning for the Children of Birmingham

Recording of the rally held at Foley Square in New York City known as the National Day of Mourning for the Children of Birmingham. The gathering was in response to the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, where four Black children were killed in a bombing carried out by members of the Ku Klux Klan and two more children were shot and killed in racist attacks the same day. The event was sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Manhattan branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Negro American Labor Council, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

- 431180 **Part 1 of 4** 1963 September 22 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
Recording begins with singing of "We Shall Overcome," and other freedom songs. The first speaker is Reverend Richard A. Hildebrand, president of the New York branch of the NAACP and pastor of Bethel AME Church. Following is Theodor Bikel, Austrian-American activist, actor, and folk singer.
- 431181 **Part 2 of 4** 1963 September 22 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
Remarks by an unidentified member of the American Jewish Congress; Norman Thomas (1884-1968), socialist party leader and Presbyterian minister and political activist; Charles Sherrod (1937-2022), SNCC member, minister, and civil rights activist; Len Chandler (1953-2023), American folk singer, songwriter, and civil rights activist sings; and remarks by Blyden Jackson (1910-2000), Harlem CORE organizer, academic, essayist, and activist. Jackson serves as the emcee for the remainder of the program.
- 431182 **Part 3 of 4** 1963 September 22 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
Remarks by Thomas Kilgore Jr. (1913-1998), clergyman, community leader, and human rights activist; performance by Odetta (1930-2008), American singer often referred to as "The Voice of the Civil Rights Movement;" and remarks by James Peck (1914-1993), an American activist.
- 431183 **Part 4 of 4** 1963 September 22 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
Remarks by Ruby Dee (1922-2014), American actress, poet, playwright, screenwriter, journalist, and civil rights activist. After her, Baldwin delivers a speech and talks about what he calls the American revolution.
- 431175 **A Talk to Teachers** 1963 October 16 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
Recording of the fourth session of a course for New York City teachers entitled "The Negro, his role in the life and culture of the United States." Baldwin delivers this speech before a group of educators to address epistemic violence faced by Black children even before they enter the classroom. Followed by questions and answers.
- The Cultural Implications of the Negro Revolt**
Baldwin delivers a speech at Harvard University. Likely broadcast on WBGH, Boston, Massachusetts. Date indicates the date the speech was delivered.
- 431171 **Part 1 of 2** 1964 January 18 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
- 431172 **Part 2 of 2** 1964 January 18 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
Includes questions and answers, but the questions are not audible.
- 431179 **Questions of answers** 1964 January 18 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
This recording includes questions and answers with Baldwin and the questions have been reiterated for clarity. Likely broadcast on WRVR-FM, New York, New York.

SERIES II: INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH JAMES BALDWIN 1960-1984 (9 audio_recordings)

Nine audio recordings of interviews and discussions with Baldwin from 1960 to 1984 arranged chronologically.

- 431186 **The Black Muslims in America 1960** (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
Panel discussion featuring Baldwin, C. Eric Lincoln, George Schuyler, and Malcom X. Panel host is Eric F. Goldman (1916-1989), an American historian. They discuss Black Muslims and African Americans, and make reference to Lincoln's book *Black Muslims*. Lincoln (1924-2000) was an American scholar and Schuyler (1895-1977) was an American writer, journalist, and social commentator. The discussion also touches on topics such as integration and the shifting mood of Negroes in America. v01f01: Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Part 2 of 2.
- 431176 **Interview by students 1960s October 23** (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
v01f01: Professor Andrew Hacker delivers a lecture at Cornell Univeristy. Recording does not include Baldwin and appears unrelated to other items in the collection. v01f02: Baldwin interviewed by a group of people, possibly students. He talks about the situation in the North versus the South in the US, living in Paris and coming back, and his book *Notes of a Native Son*.
- 431195 **Interview by Studs Terkel 1961 July 15** (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
Studs Terkel interviews Baldwin. Terkel (1912-2008) was an American writer, historian, actor, and broadcaster. They discuss Baldwin's book *Nobody Knows My Name*, his work towards change in the civil rights movement, and his love of blues singer Bessie Smith.
- 431162 **A conversation with James Baldwin 1963 May 7** (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
American radio documentarian and broadcaster Elsa Knight Thompson and John Leonard speak with Baldwin about politics and literature. Among other things, Baldwin discusses what comes after Birmingham in the civil rights movement and why critics attacked his novel *Another Country*. Broadcast on KPFA, Berkeley, California.
- 431169 **Perspectives: Negro and the American Promise 1963 May 29** (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
The last conversation of a three-part series called "Perspectives: Negro and the American Promise," where psychologist Dr. Kenneth Clark interviewed prominent Black civil rights leaders. Clark interviews Baldwin shortly after his meeting with US Attorney General Robert Kennedy on May 24, 1964, regarding the state of civil rights in the US.
- 431170 **Interview by Barry Gray 1964 April 26** (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
American radio personality Barry Gray (1916-1996) interviews Baldwin about his play *Blues for Mister Charlie*. Broadcast on WMCA, New York, New York.
- 431173 **Interview with Maya Angelou and James Baldwin 1974 June 5** (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
American memoirist, poet, and civil rights activist Maya Angelou (1928-2014) and Baldwin interviewed by an unidentified person for Panorama TV. Angelou and Baldwin talk about their books *Gather Together in My Name* (1974) and *If Beale Street Could Talk*. They also speak about their relationship, amongst other things.
- 431191 **Interview by Kay Bonetti 1984 April** (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
Kay Bonetti interviews Baldwin for the American Audio Prose Library as part of the American Prose Series in Boston, Massachusetts. Bonetti is the founder and director of the American Audio Prose Library, a collection of interviews of and readings by American prose writers. Baldwin talks about his stand on many racial and aesthetic issues discussed in his essays, including the role of the artist in Western culture. He reads two scenes from his book *Just Above My Head*.

SERIES III: INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS BY JAMES BADLWIN 1972-
circa 1991 (7 audio_recordings)

Seven audio recordings likely created by Baldwin for a book and screenplay. They are arranged chronologically. Five audio recordings relate to his book-length essay *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, which covers the Atlanta Child Murders and examines race relations in Atlanta. The Atlanta Child Murders were a series of murders committed in Atlanta, Georgia, between July 1979 and May 1981 of approximately twenty-nine African Americans, mostly boys, children, teens, and young adults. The recordings are mainly of interviews by Baldwin with people involved in the trial of the suspected serial killer, Wayne B. Williams, and people living in Atlanta. Baldwin had ventured to Atlanta as a literary reporter on assignment by *Playboy* magazine.

Two audio recordings are of a script meeting for the film *The Inheritance*, which Baldwin was set to direct for the production company Kelly-Jordan Enterprises. Kelly-Jordan Enterprises were specialists in the production and distribution of Black-oriented motion pictures. The film was never made because the production company went bankrupt, and in 1973 Baldwin sued to retain the rights.

The Inheritance script meeting

Baldwin discusses the script to the film *The Inheritance* with a group of unidentified people. The plot of the film follows Brigid Bryant, a biracial dancer to be played by Diana Sands, who travels from Birmingham to Berlin to confront her white German father, whom she has never met, and to claim her inheritance. In the script, Brigid's German family assumes her quest is materialistic, but Baldwin examines larger questions of identity, complicity, and memory, charting a multigenerational family saga that weaves together scenes from America and Germany.

- 431184 Part 1 of 2 1972 September 5 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
Recording starts while meeting is in progress.
- 431185 Part 2 of 2 1972 September 5 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
- Atlanta Child Murders
- 431193 Interview: Richard Long circa 1981-1991 (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
Baldwin speaks with Dr. Richard Long about the history of Atlanta and the Atlanta Child Murders. v01f01: Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Part 2 of 2.
- 431187 Interview: Lynn Whatley 1982 May 6 (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
Baldwin speaks with Lynn Whatley. Whatley was Wayne B. Williams's local defense attorney. Williams was the suspected serial killer serving life imprisonment for the 1981 killings of two men in Atlanta. Although he was never tried for additional murders, he was also the suspected murderer for at least twenty-four of the twenty-nine Atlanta child murders. William has maintained his innocence and some believe he was wrongfully convicted. v01f01: Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Part 2 of 2.
- 431188 Interview: Maynard H. Jackson Jr. and Ahmed Saber 1982 May 7 (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
v01f01: Baldwin speaks with Maynard H. Jackson Jr. Jackson (1928-2003) was an American attorney and politician who served as the fifty-fourth mayor of Atlanta from 1974 to 1982, and again from 1990 to 1994. He was the first Black mayor of Atlanta. They discuss the Atlanta Child Murders and the trial. Near the end of the recording Baldwin speaks with Ahmed Saber who moved to Atlanta in 1974. They also discuss the case and race relations in Atlanta. Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Conversation with Saber continues. Part 2 of 2.

SERIES III: INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS BY JAMES BADLWIN (cont.)

Atlanta Child Murders (cont.)

- 431189 Interview: Tony Axam circa 1982 May 9 (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
Baldwin speaks with Tony Axam about the trial. Axam was one of Williams's lawyers, but he was fired. Mary Welcome, a former city solicitor, was the first lawyer on Williams's defense team. Initially she chose Axam to complement her skills. However, Williams fired Axam and Welcome replaced him with Alvin Binder, a white lawyer from Mississippi. v01f01: Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Part 2 of 2.
- 431194 News broadcasts and discussion circa 1982 (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
v01f01: News broadcast recordings covering the Atlanta Child Murders trial and verdict. Baldwin appears on the second half of the recording having a discussion with several people about the trial. Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Baldwin appears at the beginning of the recording. Followed by more news broadcasts featuring Homer and Faye Williams, Wayne B. Williams's parents. Part 2 of 2.

SERIES IV: COLLECTED 1968-1999 (3 audio_recordings)

Three audio recordings likely collected by Baldwin or the estate of James Baldwin, arranged chronologically.

- 431177 Heartbeat 1968 (1 audio_recording sound recording (quarter-inch open-reel audio))
Heartbeat (1968) by Jimmie & Vella. Jimmie & Vella were an American soul duo, siblings, producers and singer-songwriters. The sequence of songs differs from that on the album.
1. Such A Mystery
2. Hey Boy Over There
3. Tomorrow
4. Yes or No
5. People Make the World
6. Well
7. You Should be Ashamed
8. Picking a Flower or Two
9. Night in White Satin
10. Love Brothers Love
11. Mr. Hope
12. Love is Everywhere
- 431190 I Heard it Through the Grapevine soundtrack 1982 June (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
Original release date of the film is March 3, 1982. v01f01: Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Part 2 of 2.
- 431192 Democracy Now!: James Baldwin Tribute 1999 August 2 (1 audio_recording sound recording (compact cassette))
Seventy-fifth birthday tribute for Baldwin. American broadcast journalist and author Amy Goodman is the host. *Democracy Now!* is an independent news program that features international journalists, grassroots leaders, independent analysts, and ordinary people directly affected by world events and US policy. v01f01: Includes excerpts from a debate between James Baldwin and Malcom X on the nature of racial problems in America and possible solutions. This debate took place on April 25, 1961. Part 1 of 2. v01f02: Includes a speech Baldwin made on September 25, 1965. In the speech Baldwin calls for an open dialogue on race, morality, and economics. Part 2 of 2.