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RICHARD PARRISH

PAPERS

1950-1975

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

PREFACE

This inventory is one of several prepared as a part of the archival preservation program at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a division of The Research Libraries of The New York Public Library.

The Schomburg archival preservation program involves the organization and preservation of primary source material held by the Center and of significance to the study of the black experience. It furthermore includes the preparation of detailed inventories of these records, making the information contained therein accessible as well as available to scholars.

The necessary staff and supplies for this program were made available through a combination of funds and services provided by the Research Libraries, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the State of New York.

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PARRISH, RICHARD (1914-). PAPERS, 1950-1975.
3 1/2 boxes. Available on 3 reels microfilm.

Biography

Richard Parrish, teacher and labor leader, devoted much of his life to civil rights activities. As a New York City teacher, Parrish belonged to both the local and national teachers unions, holding office and working for civil rights within the unions and the educational system. Parrish also became an officer in black labor organizations, such as the National Afro-American Labor Council and the Negro Labor Committee. These groups strived to end discrimination in the labor movement and co-operated with other civil rights organizations to promote social and political as well as economic equality in the United States.

Joining the New York City school system in 1947, Parrish became a member and officer of the New York Teachers Guild and the subsequent local union, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT).

He served as vice president and assistant treasurer of the UFT and was a member of the executive board from the union's inception in 1960 until 1970. In addition, Parrish became a vice president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the national teachers union.

At the 1965 AFT convention, Parrish successfully concluded the fight for the ouster of segregated AFT locals. In 1963, Parrish led a contingent of teachers and students to Prince Edward County, Virginia where the local school board had closed the public schools rather than integrate. In 1964, the AFT expanded this Freedom School concept to include the Deep South. Parrish served as chairman of the union's Civil Rights Committee and acted as liaison between the schools and the national office. Parrish also chaired the AFT's 1966 conference on "Racism in Education." During the New York City teachers' strike of 1968, Parrish formed the UFT Black Caucus. In 1970, the AFT Black Caucus was established with Parrish serving as its chairman from 1970 to 1973.

Other teachers' organizations of which Parrish was an officer include the Community Teachers Association (CTA), and the United Black Caucus of Teachers. Parrish was a founder and president of the CTA from 1956 to 1965. He also chaired the United Black Caucus of Teachers in the early 1970's.

Parrish was also active in black labor organizations. He served as treasurer of the National Afro-American Labor Council (NALC) from 1960 to 1974 when he became president. A 1970 conference of labor and civil rights groups, sponsored by the NALC, led to the creation of the United Black Coalition for Jobs in the Construction Industry. Parrish co-chaired the conference and the organization which grew out of the conference. He was a member of the Negro Labor Committee (NLC) and held the office of co-ordinator. He also headed the NLC committee that managed the

Frank R. Crosswaith scholarship award program. Parrish was a member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and served on the advisory board of the JFK Library for Minorities.

In addition to his activities in civil rights and labor groups and work as a teacher, Parrish ran unsuccessfully for State Comptroller in 1949 and the New York City Council in 1963 on the Socialist Party ticket.

Parrish was born August 9, 1914 in Wildwood, New Jersey and moved with his parents, Cora Elizabeth Flowers Parrish and Leslie Franklin Parrish, to New York City the following year. Graduating from high school during the Depression, Parrish worked as a clerk in the Navy Department and became active in labor organizations. Returning to school, he graduated from the City College of New York in 1947 with a degree in economics. Parrish taught in the New York City school system from 1947 until his retirement in 1976. He now lives in Teaneck, New Jersey with his wife, Beatrice Ellegor Parrish, a fellow school teacher whom he married in 1943.

Organization Histories

National Afro-American Labor Council

In 1959, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, cited the AFL-CIO leadership's failure to lend full support to civil rights efforts within the organization. A year later, a convention of seventy-five black trade union leaders, headed by Randolph, founded the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) to operate within the labor movement as a political pressure group. Randolph served as president of the organization from 1960 until 1966 when Cleveland Robinson succeeded him. Robinson was a founder and president of the Distributive Workers of America, member of the N.Y.C. Commission on Human Rights, member and director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and administrative chairman of the 1963 March on Washington. In 1974, Parrish, treasurer of the organization since its inception, became president of the NALC. Other officers of the NALC included L. Joseph Overton, secretary (1960-1970), Oliver Montgomery, secretary since 1970, and Joseph R. Brown, treasurer since 1974.

The NALC co-sponsored the 1963 March on Washington with the SCLC, Congress of Racial Equality and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The organization continues to co-operate with other civil rights groups. In addition, the NALC has held several economic conferences in Washington, D.C. to lobby for economic and social programs. The NALC and its local chapters also act on specific grievances of black union members against both unions and industries. The organization's name was changed to the National Afro-American Labor Council in 1968.

American Federation of Teachers

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is the national teachers union affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The union's civil rights activities included the establishment of Freedom Schools in the Deep South in 1964 and the sponsorship of a 1966 conference entitled "Racism in Education." Dissatisfaction with some of the policies of the union led to a walk-out by 500 delegates at the AFT's 1970 convention and the subsequent creation of the AFT Black Caucus. In 1971, the United Action Caucus was formed and members of the Black Caucus were urged to join. Both groups desired greater democracy in the union as well as the American educational system, and took stands on economic, social and political issues.

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the New York City local of the AFT, was established in 1960 when the New York Teachers Guild and the Committee for Action Through Unity merged. In 1963, a UFT-sponsored contingent of teachers and students established the first Freedom School in Prince Edward County, Virginia. The unity of black and white members of the union, however, was disrupted by the community control issue and the 1968 teachers strike in New York City. The UFT Black Caucus, founded at this time, attempted to begin a dialogue between the two groups and to encourage greater black participation and responsibility within the union.

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) was formed when the AFL-CIO's leadership declared its neutrality in the 1972 presidential election. Although black caucuses existed in many unions, for the first time these groups co-ordinated their efforts in order to register voters and solicit support for Senator George McGovern. This organization, based in Washington, D.C. and representing as many as forty-five unions, continues to take positions on social, economic and political issues.

Community Teachers Association

The Community Teachers Association (CTA), affiliated with the Federation of Negro Civil Service Organizations, was a local black teachers group dedicated to improving educational standards in neighborhood schools. Founded in 1956 and originally known as the Negro Teachers Association, the CTA helped win an open enrollment policy for victims of segregated schools and initiated a tutorial program under Haryou-Act in 1964.

JFK Library for Minorities

The JFK Library for Minorities was formed in 1970 in Brooklyn as an educational corporation to collect and provide information about American history and government to minority groups.

National Education Association

The National Education Association (NEA) is a professional

organization representing over a million teachers. Although the national organization is not affiliated with any union, in the 1960's and 1970's, some NEA locals merged with AFT locals. The first state-level merger occurred in New York in 1972.

Negro Labor Committee

The Negro Labor Committee (NLC) was founded in 1935 by Frank R. Crosswaith at a conference of trade unionists. This organization, with Crosswaith as its long-term chairman, consisted of member unions which selected delegates to the NLC's assembly. The NLC encouraged blacks to join the labor movement and promoted equality of responsibility and benefits for all union members. With its headquarters at the Harlem Labor Center, the NLC was a focal point for community and non-partisan political activities in Harlem. In the 1960's the organization, headed by Robert Russell, sponsored the Riverside Park housing project in West Harlem.

United Black Caucus of Teachers

The United Black Caucus of Teachers was founded in 1970 as a local teachers' organization, not affiliated with any labor groups or political party. The organization aimed to become a political force working to prevent discrimination and to improve the educational system for the black community.

United Black Coalition for Jobs in the Construction Industry

The United Black Coalition for Jobs in the Construction Industry was an outgrowth of a 1970 NALC-sponsored conference of forty labor and civil rights organizations. The group worked for the enforcement of and compliance with equal opportunity laws in the building trades.

Scope and Content

The Richard Parrish Papers, 1950-1975, consist of correspondence, transcripts of speeches, minutes and convention proceedings, photographs, articles, newspaper clippings and other printed material describing the activities of labor and civil rights organizations of which Parrish was an officer or member, primarily the National Afro-American Labor Council. In addition, information about Parrish's teaching career is included. The collection is organized into three major series: **PERSONAL PAPERS**, **NATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN LABOR COUNCIL**, and **OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**.

PERSONAL PAPERS, 1950-1975, contains a limited amount of incoming personal correspondence, an article about Parrish and another by him, newspaper clippings concerning civil rights and labor issues, including specific information about the National Afro-American Labor Council and the United Federation of Teachers, and printed material and correspondence relating to Parrish's teaching career. Information within the folders is arranged

chronologically. A 1950 letter from Constance Baker Motley to the N.Y. Teachers Guild on the Sweatt and McLaurin cases is included in the personal correspondence.

NATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN LABOR COUNCIL (NALC), 1960-1975, records have been divided into material on the national organization, 1960-1974, and files on individual chapters, 1962-1975.

National organization records include correspondence, the NALC constitution, executive board minutes, material on annual conventions and conferences, and mailing lists. The correspondence, arranged chronologically, contains many letters to and from Cleveland Robinson, president of the NALC. Folders for particular conventions and conferences include main addresses by Randolph and Robinson, 1964, 1967, resolutions, 1965, 1968, transcripts of the proceedings, 1968, 1972, and newspaper clippings, 1968. Financial information on the 1965, 1967 and 1968 conventions and the 1971 and 1972 economic conferences has been placed at the end of each folder. A notebook with financial data for the 1965 and 1968 conventions is located in the 1968 Convention file.

The Chapter File provides some information about the chapters' membership and activities. Information for the Baltimore and Chicago chapters is limited to one and two items respectively. The New York City Brewery Cases folder describes the N.Y. local's efforts to end discrimination in the hiring and promotion practices of the brewery industry and union. The Westchester County file shows the NALC's involvement in improving the hiring practices at the Con Ed/Wedco Corporation Indian Point construction project.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, 1957, 1963-1975 includes substantial information about the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), 1963-1975, and its New York City local, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). Files for the AFT Black Caucus, AFT locals, the United Action Caucus, civil rights and printed material point out the issues besetting the union during the 1963-1975 period.

The AFT Black Caucus file contains information about the group's support of Angela Davis as well as a history of the organization written by Parrish. The UFT folder contains documents concerning the 1968 teachers strike and one newspaper clipping about the Prince Edward County, Virginia Freedom School of 1963. The Civil Rights folder includes material relating to Freedom Schools in the Deep South, the "Racism in Education" conference of 1966, and the union's civil rights committee. Information within each folder is arranged chronologically.

Material in the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists folder, 1972-1974, describes the organization's founding and purpose, its

support of McGovern for President, and its opposition to the nomination of Peter J. Brennan, President of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater N.Y., as Secretary of Labor. Documents include newspaper clippings, press releases, and articles.

The Community Teachers Association file, 1957, 1963-1966, contains material about its after-school tutorial program in 1964.

The JFK Library for Minorities folder, 1970-1973, describes the purpose of the organization and lists its 1973 officers and board members.

The National Education Association (NEA), 1973, records are limited to documents opposing the merger of NEA affiliates with AFT locals, and the constitution of the NEA's Official Black Caucus.

The Negro Labor Committee (NLC) file, 1968-1973, contains material about the Riverside Park housing project and the 1973 Frank R. Crosswaith scholarship award program. A brief biographical sketch of Crosswaith, but no correspondence or information relating to his tenure as chairman of the NLC, is included.

The United Black Caucus of Teachers folder, 1970-1971, 1973, includes statements of some of the positions taken by the organization.

The United Black Coalition for Jobs in the Construction Industry folder, 1968-1972, contains material about the Con Ed/Wedco Corporation's Indian Point construction project as well as membership lists. A speech by Cleveland Robinson during the 1968 Poor People's Campaign, and a transcript of testimony by Jesse Jackson, director of Operation Breadbasket, before the U.S. Department of Labor in 1969 are also included.

The Photographs, 1964, c. 1968, 1969, 1971, n.d., which include pictures of the Freedom Schools, the Riverside Park project of the NLC, Parrish and several unidentified individuals, were not microfilmed and have been transferred to the Photographs and Print Division.

Provenance

Gift by Richard Parrish, 1976.
SCM77-22.

C. Swank/S. Sharlin
3 April 1978

Complementary and Related Collections:

Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), Frank R. Crosswaith Papers, Negro Labor Committee Records, and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists at the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Book Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Container List**Box Folder Reel**

			PERSONAL PAPERS
1	1	1	Personal Correspondence, 1950, 1968, 1971-1973
	2		Professional File, 1951, 1965-1975
	3		Articles, 1966, 1969
	4		Printed Material, 1952, 1954, 1961, 1968-1972
	5		Newspaper Clippings, 1956, 1960-1975
			NATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN LABOR COUNCIL
			National Organization File
			Correspondence
	6		1964-1966
	7		1967
	8		1968
	9		1969
	10		1970
	11		1971
	12		1972, 1974
	13		Constitution, 1960-1961, 1970
			Executive Board Minutes
	14		1964-1966
2	1		1967-1968, 1970-1972
			Conventions and Conferences
	2		1961-1964
	3		1965 Convention, 1965, Apr.-Oct.
	4		1966 Convention, 1966, May, July
	5	2	1967 Convention, 1967, Apr.- 1968, Jan.
			1968 Convention
	6		Correspondence and Financial Records, 1967, June-1969, Jan.
	7		Newspaper Clippings, 1968, Mar.- June
	8		1970 Convention, 1970, June-1971, Mar.
			1972 Convention
	9		Correspondence and Programs, 1972, June, Nov.-Dec.
	10		Opening and Afternoon Session Transcripts, 1972, Nov. 18
	11		Evening and Morning Session Transcripts, 1972, Nov. 18-19
3	1		1971 Spring Economic Conference,

1971, May-1972, Jan.

Container List

Box Folder Reel

3	2	2	1972 Jobs/Now Rally, 1972, Apr.- May
	3		Mailing Lists, 1964, 1967-1968, 1970
			Chapter File
	4		Baltimore, 1969
	5		Chicago, 1967, 1969
	6		Cleveland, 1966-1970
	7		Gary and Lake County, Indiana, 1967-1968
			New York City
	8		Correspondence and Membership Lists, 1962-1975
	9		Brewery Cases, 1956, 1963-1973
10		3	Philadelphia, 1967, 1969, n.d.
11			Pittsburgh, 1966-1967, 1971-1972
12			St. Louis, 1968, 1972
13			Westchester County, NY, 1968-1971
14			Youngstown, 1966-1971

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

			American Federation of Teachers
15			AFT Black Caucus, 1966, 1970-1973, n.d.
16			AFT Locals, 1967, 1970-1973
17			United Action Caucus, 1971-1972
18			United Federation of Teachers, 1963, 1968-1974, n.d.
19			Civil Rights File, 1964-1973
20			Printed Material, 1964-1973
4	1		Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, 1972-1974
	2		Community Teachers Association, 1957, 1963-1966
	3		JFK Library for Minorities, 1970-1973
	4		National Education Association, 1973
	5		Negro Labor Committee, 1968-1973
	6		United Black Caucus of Teachers, 1970- 1971, 1973
	7		United Black Coalition for Jobs in the Construction Industry, 1968-1972