

# PRESERVING OUR HISTORY

## What to do With Your Freedom Movement Papers

Version 1.0

*From the SNCC Legacy Project and Civil Rights Movement Veterans Website  
([www.sccclegacyproject.org](http://www.sccclegacyproject.org) and [www.crmvet.org](http://www.crmvet.org))*

We are a part of American history, and our personal and family papers can be the key to unlocking new perspectives on a more inclusive narrative of that history. Stored in our file cabinets, attics, and basements are materials documenting the Civil Rights movement. And also for many of us a lifetime of social activism beyond the Freedom Movement.

Institutional archives & repositories preserve materials that tell the story of the Civil Rights Movement — what happened, who did what, why decisions were made, what you did and how you felt about it. Our documents need to be placed with someone who can preserve and protect them for posterity, and make them available to scholars and students for decades to come. Repositories definitely want materials related to the Civil Rights Movement and other social & economic justice endeavors:

- Correspondence
- Diaries and journals
- Memoranda & reports
- Documents and records
- Articles (and drafts) written by you
- Pamphlets, newsletters, & movement newspapers
- Meeting minutes
- Oral history & interview transcripts
- Pins, posters & bumper stickers
- Poems, plays, stories & songs
- Photographs of people or events
- Audio, film & video recordings
- Scrapbooks

Note, however, widely-available published materials such as books, and clippings from major newspapers & magazines are of lesser interest to them.

Most archives accept donations as small as a single item and as large as dozens of file cabinets. Material need not be organized. Nor need it be related to a famous person or event. Generally, however, archivists are more interested in a coherent body of material rather than fragmentary individual items.

### HOW TO DONATE YOUR PAPERS

1. **Gather it together.** Look through your materials to refresh your memory. You don't need to individually itemize, or reorganize them. Nor do you need to cull them (and, in fact, some archives prefer that you not do so).

2. **Describe your political work.** Write up a short description in general terms of the political work your materials cover. When, and where, and with whom, you worked, and what you did. For example,

“Freedom Summer volunteer, Mississippi 1964. Berkeley SDS 1964-1967.”

or

“Worked with SNCC and the Albany Movement in Southwest Georgia from 1962-1963 on desegregation and voter-registration campaigns. Helped organize the March on Washington. Worked with SNCC, COFO, and the MFDP in Holmes County MS during 1964. Participated in the Montgomery AL voting rights protests of March 1965. Chicago Open Housing movement 1966. Various anti-draft anti-war activities 1967-1972. Organizer for District 1199 in NYC 1973-1980.”

3. **Describe your materials.** Write up a short summary description of the materials you are thinking of donating. You don't need to itemize each item or folder or box, but do include the following summary-type information:

- Indicate the general size of your collection: “Six file drawers” or “Two xerox paper cartons” or “Five file folders.”
- The rough dates that your materials span: “1962-1980” or “the mid- sixties.”
- Mention any formats other than paper that your collection includes such as photos, audio recordings, films, posters, scrapbooks, pins, and so on.
- List any associations with organizations or famous people or events that are well-covered in your collection. For example, “Three folders of meeting minutes from the Lowndes County Freedom Organization,” or “An inch of letters from Jim Forman to field secretaries, starting in 1962,” or “The day-by-day diary I kept while teaching at the Palmer’s Crossing Freedom School in 1964,” or “Snapshots I took during the Bogalusa protests of 1965.”

4. **Reach out to archives.** Contact one or more of the archives listed in the “Archives & Repositories” section of this kit to see if they are interested in acquiring your collection. A simple phone call, email, or letter should be enough to get the ball rolling. If a repository is interested, they’ll want to see the descriptions you prepared in steps 2 and 3. Someone from the archive may, or may not, want to come look at your materials.

5. **Donor Agreement.** When you find a good match, sign a Donor Agreement with an interested archive (see “Questions to Think About and Points to Negotiate” below). The Donor Agreement will most likely include a “Deed of Gift” in which you legally give your materials to the archive with whatever restrictions or conditions you want to make. There are two basic approaches:

- **Timely Transfer.** If you are ready to donate your papers either immediately or within no more than a year then negotiate and sign a Donor Agreement and coordinate transfer of the collection to the archive. If you have a large collection, the archive should provide assistance in packing and shipping, and also pay the costs.
- **Delayed Transfer.** If you are not yet ready to transfer your collection, but you would like to determine where it will go in the future and under what conditions, negotiate the terms and sign a Letter of Intent with the repository so that the archive

understands your wishes. Add a clause to your will referring to the Letter of Intent and instructing your estate executor what to do. If you later decide to transfer the papers during your lifetime, you can proceed to do so. In the meantime, your intentions have been recorded. If you later change your mind, it's a simple matter to revoke the Letter of Intent and make different arrangements. (Note that if you delay transfer for a long period you are responsible for preserving the material. If it's seriously damaged by fire, flood, mildew, etc, the archive may no longer want it when the time comes.)

6. **Chill.** Relax with a cold drink, satisfied that you've preserved your documents for those who come after us.

## QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND POINTS TO NEGOTIATE

As a donor, you have the right to be comfortable with all the language and terms agreed upon between you and the archive. The Donor Agreement must be signed by both you and the repository. Note that each archive will have its own unique language and terms, so the points below are general guidelines and concepts that you'll have to adapt to the specific institution. When negotiating a Donor Agreement with an archive, here are some points to consider:

- **Adequate Facilities & Resources.** Determine if the archive has adequate facilities to preserve and protect documents over the long term, and the staff and funding to organize them and make them available to the public. (The institutions listed under "Archives & Repositories" below meet these requirements.)
- **Public Access.** From a Freedom Movement point of view, we want to ensure that the public has free access to materials donated to an archive. There are different levels of access ranging from the highest level which is posting digital copies on the internet, to the lowest acceptable (minimum) level which would be that students, scholars, and the general public can make an appointment to view/read the materials at the repository at no charge or fee to them. The Donor Agreement you sign with the archive should specify what level of public access they guarantee. Some clarification questions you might want to ask:
  - Is the repository open to the general public at no charge, or is it limited to in some way?
  - Do researchers need to present any credentials other than a photo ID? (Repositories require a photo ID for security reasons, but requiring additional credentials puts some limits on who can use the collection.)
  - What hours is the repository open? (Some places are open many days and hours, some only a few per week.)
  - Does the repository have research scholarships that would help fund travel for people wishing to use its Civil Rights collections? (Scholarships help to open access to researchers who have fewer resources.)
  - Has the repository digitized any of its Civil Rights collections? (See below.)
- **Digitization.** The archive will probably want you to grant them permission to digitize some or all of the material so that they can make it publicly available on the internet, or

available on computers at their facility. Except in rare or unusual cases, there is no reason not to grant them digitization permission. If you've decided to retain copyright to some or all of your materials as discussed below, granting digitization permission does not weaken your copyrights. However, you might want to stipulate that access to digital versions of your material be granted to the public for free. You might want to go even further and see if the repository will agree that no login-ID or password be required.

- **Restrictions.** The flip side of public access are restrictions that you might want to place on access or use of some of your materials. For most Freedom Movement material there's no real reason to restrict who can read or use them, but there might be some sensitive items in your collection. For example, a letter to or from you might include matters or language you might not want made publicly available until everyone mentioned by name has passed on. From the perspective of telling our story and preserving our history it's best not to impose any restrictions, but if you feel some restriction is needed on some of your material, you need to spell it out in the Donor Agreement or Letter of Intent.
- **Commercial Use.** The assumption is that the archive will use your materials for non-commercial educational purposes. But if your collection includes material that might have some commercial value, such as vivid photographs or a dramatic story written by you, you might want to retain your copyrights for those specific items as discussed below.
- **Copyright.** While you probably don't own the copyrights to organizational documents in your collection, you do own copyrights to correspondence and similar materials that you wrote yourself. You can donate both the documents and their copyrights to the archive, or you can donate just the pieces of paper while holding on to the copyrights. In most cases there's little reason to retain copyrights. Possible exceptions might be for things like photographs, diaries, journals, poems, and so on, that you or your heirs might want to publish someday.

If you want to retain your copyrights for some or all of your material, consider the following options:

- Retain your copyrights during your lifetime but agree to transfer them to the repository upon your death. You'll have to grant them a temporary license (permission) to use materials copyrighted by you. You'll need to work out the details of the license with the archive.
  - Retain your copyrights permanently for you and your heirs, and grant the archive a permanent license to use your materials for non-commercial, educational purposes and possibly display them on the internet. You'll need to work out the details of the license with the archive.
  - Agree with the archive on some sort of "Creative Commons" license that allows them to do what they need and you to do what you want. See [us.creativecommons.org](https://creativecommons.org) for more information.
- **Timeline.** When comparing different repositories, you might want to ask how long it will take them to make your materials available to the public.
  - **Discards.** What will become of items in your collection that the archive does not want to keep once they start going through it piece by piece? For example, duplicates of material

they already have? Discards can be returned to you, or given to some other institution, or something else that you both agree to in the Donor Agreement or Letter of Intent.

- **Transfer Date.** As a general rule, archives want to take possession of donated materials right away. However, in some cases you can stipulate in the agreement that you will retain possession until a certain date in the future, or until after your death. If you want to hold on to your materials until after your death, it's probably best to sign a Letter of Intent rather than a Donor Agreement as discussed above in "How to Donate Your Papers," and you'll have to make sure you have a clause in your will instructing your estate executor what to do (see "Instructing Your Heirs" below).
- **Tax Deductions.** Most archives are non-profit organizations so you may be able to claim your donation of valuable papers as a tax deduction. By law, the archive is not allowed to advise you on this or make a financial appraisal of your material for tax purposes. If you have a large and valuable collection, consult your accountant or a tax attorney. Archival appraisers are available in most major metropolitan areas, or you might want to contact an appraiser who specializes in social movement archives such as Bolerium Books or Lorne Bair Rare Books (see "Selling Your Papers" below).

## ARCHIVES & REPOSITORIES

Preserving, protecting, and making available historic documents requires a large, climate-controlled, weather and fire-safe storage facility, professional archivists, staff to accommodate scholars and authors, and adequate and reliable funding for the foreseeable future. Of central importance for us is recognition of and respect for the historic mission and importance of the Freedom Movement. Very few institutions have the necessary financial resources, facilities, and commitment to meet these requirements. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find any HCBUs with the physical and financial resources needed for long-term document archiving.

Below are some archives and repositories you might want to consider for your papers.

### 1. **John Hope Franklin Research Center, Duke University, Durham, NC.**

"The John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African-American History and Culture at Duke University (FRC) is working in partnership with the SNCC Legacy Project to preserve and provide access to historic materials documenting activism during the Civil Rights Era, and continued participation in freedom fighting movements to the present day.

"The fight for equality from unexpected people that defines the legacy of the Freedom Movement is still not fully told. Students, scholars, and the next generation of activists are searching for historical records to study and understand the work of individuals and organizations of the Civil Rights Era. Additionally there is growing interest in using relevant documents and sources to connect the strategies and ideas from that period to freedom struggles of Africa and the United States beyond the 1960s. Named for the eminent historian and former Duke professor Dr. John Hope Franklin, the FRC, preserves, and promotes the use of published and unpublished primary sources for the exploration, understanding, and advancement of scholarship of the history and culture of Africa and people of the African Diaspora in the Americas."

Contact: John B. Gartrell, Director, Franklin Research Center  
Email: franklin-collection@duke.edu  
Phone: 919-660-5922  
Web: [library.duke.edu/rubenstein/franklin/](http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/franklin/)  
Box 90185,  
Durham NC 27708

## 2. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

“The Wisconsin Historical Society’s Archives preserves one of the premier archival collections documenting the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, with special emphasis on the Movement in Mississippi. We seek original, primary source materials documenting the Civil Rights Movement and the involvement of individual activists and volunteers. For half a century, every serious researcher on the Movement has consulted the Society’s manuscripts. This means that your collection will be in a place where it will be both noticed and used.”

Contact: Jonathan Nelson  
Email: jonathanr.nelson@wisconsinhistory.org  
Phone: 608-264-6447  
Web: [wihist.org/1nw3u8y](http://wihist.org/1nw3u8y)  
816 State Street  
Madison, WI 53706

## 3. McCain Library & Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi

“The McCain Library and Archives preserves and makes accessible for public research over 100 collections (and growing) related to the Civil Rights Movement — especially related to Mississippi (see Civil Rights Resources at [tinyurl.com/ny38eju](http://tinyurl.com/ny38eju) and also our Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive at [digilib.usm.edu/crmda.php](http://digilib.usm.edu/crmda.php)). We give Civil Rights collections a very high priority for preservation, cataloging, and researcher access and the subject is a major focus of our collections. We primarily (but not exclusively) focus on archival material -- manuscripts, photographs, other visual items, and selected printed/published material that is in some way related to Mississippi. We do not ordinarily accept large three dimensional artifacts that are more suitable for a professionally managed museum.”

Contact: Steve Haller, Curator of Historical Manuscripts and Archives  
Email: Stephen.haller@usm.edu  
Phone: 601-261-4117  
Web: [lib.usm.edu/spcol/about.html](http://lib.usm.edu/spcol/about.html) (see right-hand links list)  
118 College Dr. #5148  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406

## 4. Amistad Research Center, Tulane Univ.

“Amistad is primarily an archival repository and research facility, so taking care of historic collections is among our highest priorities. Our collection focus is closely related to the history and mission of the Civil Rights Movement, and our access policy is compatible with those goals. The Amistad Research Center is the nation’s oldest, largest,

and arguably most comprehensive independent archive specializing in the history of African Americans and other ethnic minorities. Personal papers of Civil Rights Movement activists have long been one of the Center's strengths as well as one of our current collection emphases. We are not just interested in the collections of Civil Rights Movement leaders or top-down interpretations of this history; in fact, several of our strongest civil rights-related collections are those of the Movement's "foot soldiers. The key criteria for what we collect are materials of "enduring value" — what we collect is primarily guided by past and anticipated researchers' interests. Maintaining a professional, climate-controlled environment is also an expensive task, and we do not collect bulky, three-dimensional objects such as plaques and awards."

Contact: Lee Hampton, Executive Director  
Email: [arc@tulane.edu](mailto:arc@tulane.edu)  
Phone: 504-862-3222  
Web: [www.amistadresearchcenter.org/](http://www.amistadresearchcenter.org/)  
6823 St. Charles Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70118

**5. Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), Washington, DC.**

"The NMAAHC (currently under construction) will be a major repository of objects, documents and photographs illustrating the centrality of African American history and culture to the American experience. It will draw visitors and scholars from around the world and will make research materials available onsite and through the web. We look for materials that represent national events, trends, stories and personalities. We avoid collecting materials that come with restrictions of any type, and all donations are irrevocable. Offers requesting that the collection be accepted as a whole and kept intact are commonly rejected. In general, the museum does not accept material on loan except for specific items it requests for a temporary exhibition. Due to the volume of offers made to the Smithsonian, we request that individuals submit the online form: [www.nmaahc.si.edu/Collections/Acquisitions/](http://www.nmaahc.si.edu/Collections/Acquisitions/)."

Contact: Cori Howard  
Email: [howardcl@si.edu](mailto:howardcl@si.edu)  
Phone: 202-633-0255  
Web: [nmaahc.si.edu/](http://nmaahc.si.edu/)  
MRC 509, PO Box 37012  
Washington, DC 20013-7012

**6. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY.**

"The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is recognized as one of the leading institutions focusing exclusively on African-American, African Diaspora, and African experiences. Our mission is to collect, preserve and make available for research purposes rare, unique and primary materials which document the history and culture of peoples of African descent throughout the world. The Civil Rights Movement is one of the Center's priority acquisition areas and all divisions of the Schomburg collect materials on civil rights. We are interested in a variety of documents — photographs, letters, flyers, organizational records, audio-visual materials, scrapbooks, pamphlets, diaries, journals,

financial records, etc. Note that materials are not accepted “on deposit” or “long-term loan”. Unless particularly significant, we do not accept photocopies of articles, newspaper clippings, or duplicates from collections at other repositories.”

Contact: Steven G. Fullwood, Assistant Curator

Email: [stevenfullwood@nypl.org](mailto:stevenfullwood@nypl.org)

Phone: (212) 491-2226

Web: [www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg](http://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg)

515 Malcolm X Boulevard, 2nd Fl.

New York, NY 10037

## 7. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

“The Library of Congress is generally acknowledged as a leading repository for the study of the twentieth century civil rights movement. The Library’s resources include the original records of the NAACP, National Urban League, as well as the personal papers on many prominent activists. Of particular interest, are the papers of James Forman which were donated in 2007. The Library will acquire the personal papers of nationally eminent Americans whose activities have significantly influenced the history, law, and culture of the United States. The Library will also acquire the papers of individuals who are not nationally eminent if these papers constitute source material of substantial importance. The Library defines “papers” in the broadest sense to include correspondence, diaries or journals, subject files, speeches and writings, photographs, scrapbooks, audio and video recordings, and printed matter. *See* Donation of Books and Other Materials at [loc.gov/acq/donatex.html](http://loc.gov/acq/donatex.html) for additional information.”

Contact: Adrienne Cannon,

Email: [can@loc.gov](mailto:can@loc.gov)

Phone: (202) 707-5383

Web: [www.loc.gov/rr/mss/](http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/)

## 8. Stanford Library Special Collections

“Stanford’s Special Collections & University Archives actively collects materials documenting civil rights. Notable collections include Bob Fitch Photograph Archive and the KZSU Project South Interviews. Unlike other repositories, we focus on access — our collections, wherever possible, are prominently featured online and actively used in classes, exhibits and dozens of related research/creative projects. Our collections are open to the public. We acquire materials either by gift or by purchasing items with endowed funds and donations from alumni and friends of the university. We collect regardless of format, focusing on unique or original materials. We do not collect copies or materials already present in our collections. We tend not to collect objects/three-dimensional items.”

Contact: Roberto Trujillo

Email: [trujillo@stanford.edu](mailto:trujillo@stanford.edu)

Phone: (650) 387-6816

Web: [library.stanford.edu/subjects/manuscripts-and-archives](http://library.stanford.edu/subjects/manuscripts-and-archives)

Green Library, 557 Escondido Mall

Stanford, CA 94305-6064



## 9. Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory Univ. Atlanta GA.

“Emory University's Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL) is dedicated to preserving the history of African Americans. One of our considerable strengths is in the area of Civil Rights and Post Civil Rights Movements. MARBL houses the archives of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Veterans of Hope (VOH), as well as the papers of Vincent Harding, Doris Derby and Connie Curry. We are generally interested in the personal papers, organizational archives, photographs, oral histories, home movies, books, manuscripts and ephemera related to the activities of the men, women and children in the Freedom Movement.”

Contact: Pellom McDaniels III, Faculty Curator and Assistant Professor

Email: [pellom.mcdaniels.iii@emory.edu](mailto:pellom.mcdaniels.iii@emory.edu)

Phone: (404) 727-6276

Web: [guides.main.library.emory.edu/content.php?pid=85786&sid=638256](http://guides.main.library.emory.edu/content.php?pid=85786&sid=638256)

540 Asbury Circle

Atlanta, GA 30322

See [www.crmvet.org/docs/papers.html](http://www.crmvet.org/docs/papers.html) for an extensive state-by-state list of additional archives and repositories that currently hold Freedom Movement collections (note though that many of them do not have the resources to guarantee long-term protection and access).

## INSTRUCTING YOUR HEIRS

If you've signed a Letter of Intent or Donor Agreement with an archive that allows you to retain possession of some or all of your materials until your death, you need to include a clause in your will instructing your executors on what they need to do.

If you haven't made any provisions for your archives, you should at least include a clause in your will instructing your executors on what you want them to do with your historic documents.

## SELLING YOUR PAPERS

If you have a large and significant collection of documents, photos, letters, etc, or some rare and valuable items, you can look into selling some or all of them rather than donating. But from the perspective of preserving our history and making it freely available to students and scholars in the future, selling material presents some very problematic issues. From a political point of view, the worst case is putting your items up for auction and having them sold to a private collector who will restrict access or deny it altogether. Legitimate archives and repositories committed to public access prefer to acquire materials for free by donation, but in some rare or unusual cases they may pay for document collections.

As a general rule, archives don't want copies of published books and journals that can already be found in libraries or online, but if you have rare or hard to find books or publications — a signed first edition of Zinn's *New Abolitionists*, for example, or a complete set of *Freedomways*, or an autographed copy of the “We Charge Genocide” petition — you might want to look into selling them commercially through rare book channels.

If you do want to try selling your documents or books, rather than using an auction house where you have little or no control over who ends up with your items or what they do with them, consider contacting a reputable dealer/broker who can provide the following services:

- If you have a significant collection of papers & manuscripts that you wish to sell, they can broker the sale to an institution who will ensure public access. As a general rule, the broker would be involved in setting the price, writing the description, and making the offer to the institution. The broker would be paid a percent of the sale price, to be negotiated with you, upon the sale and receipt of payment.
- They may be willing to buy individual items or entire collections themselves which they then resell online or through their store. Of course, once they buy an item from you, you have no control over who they sell it to.
- Broker/dealers appraise large or significant collections. You pay them for this on an hourly-rate or flat-fee basis. Such appraisals can be used for tax-deduction purposes if you donate your collection to a non-profit institution.

Two such broker/dealers who operate nation-wide are:

1. Bolerium Books.

“Bolerium Books specializes in materials related to the history of social movements, including the struggles for Black and Chicano equality, the Gay liberation movement, Feminism, and Asian-American activism. We have brokered sales for Civil Rights veterans in the past to major academic institutions for considerable sums. We may also be interested in buying for resale pamphlets, leaflets, posters, buttons, manuscripts/letters and some books. We currently have 30,000 such items in stock.”

Bolerium Books  
2141 Mission St. #300  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
415-863-6353 or 800-326-6353  
[www.bolerium.com/](http://www.bolerium.com/)  
reds@bolerium.com

2. Lorne Bair Rare Books

“Lorne Bair Rare Books has specialized in the literature, art, and history of American social movements since 1996. We’ve always maintained a significant inventory of materials relating to the civil rights and free speech struggles of the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies. We have handled collections on consignment; brokered collections directly on behalf of clients; and purchased material outright. We are especially interested in finding good homes for the personal archives of individuals involved in these movements. We are also qualified appraisers in the areas of African-American History, social movements, and radical history.”

Lorne Bair Rare Books  
661 Millwood Avenue Suite 206  
Winchester, VA 22601  
(540) 665-0855

[www.lornebair.com/](http://www.lornebair.com/)  
info@lornebair.com

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