



## Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-245560-OMS-20  
“A Range of Experiences: Documenting African American Women's  
History and Achievements”

### Amistad Research Center New Orleans, LA

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$159,184
Amount of cost share:	\$159,184

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:  
<https://www.ims.gov/grants/awarded/mh-245560-oms-20>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2021 Museum Grants for African American History and Culture grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2020 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

### **Project Justification**

The Amistad Research Center (ARC) seeks funding to complete the archival processing (arrangement, description and preservation) of the personal papers of eleven (11) African American women leaders active in a variety of fields, including the arts, social justice activism, labor activism, civic leadership, politics and business. In addition, legacy finding aids for an additional five (5) collections of women's papers will be converted to online versions. The goal of this project is to illustrate the agency of African American women and their contributions and influences through these sixteen prioritized collections.

As Darlene Clark Hine has written, "Too many Black women had been lost to, marginalized within, or excluded from the historical record of the American civilization...we [lack] an understanding of their contributions and the appropriate historical context that shaped their deeds and thoughts."<sup>1</sup> Yet, as Hine emphasized, the history of African American women possesses elements shared by people of all colors and national origins and their history must "reach and speak to a global audience, across divides of race, class, gender, and region."<sup>2</sup>

Tiyi M. Morris, scholar of Black women's history and the U.S. civil rights movement, has commented that scholarship has "begun to fill the void on [Black] women's leadership" in the area of civil rights and other social justice concerns.<sup>3</sup> However, ARC's project is not solely concerned with the area of civil rights, but aims to draw attention to the experiences of African American women who triumphed in multiple endeavors and sought – and continue to seek – to have their voices heard.

Using a model based on Emory University's 2013 project, "Revealing Her Story: Documenting African American Women Intellectuals," ARC builds upon its own recent efforts to expand and increase access to its collections of personal papers of African American women. ARC's own Collection Development Policy<sup>4</sup>, as well as analysis of trends in researcher interest and inquiries into ARC's collections, have guided this focus. In recent years, the Center has organized and created online finding aids for the papers of artists Elizabeth Catlett and Louise Jefferson, writer Sybil Kein, businesswomen Clarie Collins Harvey, activists Fannie Lou Hamer and Ramona Africa, and journalists Evelyn Cunningham and Marguerite Cartwright.<sup>5</sup> Noted recent acquisitions include the papers of writer Alexis De Veaux, artist Senga Nengudi and community activist Sybil Morial.

During the past six years, researchers examining some aspect of African American women's history, whether political, social, artistic, etc., have comprised nearly 30% of researcher inquiries received by ARC, both from those visiting ARC to conduct research or those contacting via distance. The collections cited above have been consulted by over 150 researchers at Amistad

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<sup>1</sup> Darlene Clark Hine (ed.). "Preface to Second Edition" in *Black Women in America*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. xv-xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Tiyi Morris. *Womanpower Unlimited and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Amistad Research Center Collection Development Policy is included as a supporting document.

<sup>5</sup> The Marguerite Cartwright papers are currently being organized under a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and will open in September 2020.

during that time, and materials related to those women have been loaned or digitized for exhibitions held by the Brooklyn Museum of Art (New York), Lenbachhaus (Germany), Museu de Arte de São Paulo (Brazil), the American Institute of Graphic Arts (New York), Institute of Contemporary Arts (Boston) and the California African American Museum (Los Angeles).

ARC's own statistics illuminate a growing interest in African American women's history among academic researchers. We seek to build upon ARC's previous efforts to expand access to primary source collections in this area with the organization and promotion of a new round of women's collections. The targeted collections have themselves been the focus of multiple inquiries for access. Although ARC attempts to provide access to unprocessed collections, such access can, and often is, hindered by lack of organization or detailed finding aids. These collections have been selected, in part, due to previous requests for use by researchers or are newly acquired collections for which high researcher interest is anticipated.

This project aligns with ARC's mission to collect, preserve and provide open access to original materials that reference the social and cultural importance of America's ethnic and racial history, the African Diaspora, human relations and civil rights. As part of its core operating values listed in ARC's 2018-2020 strategic plan, "ARC strives to meet the needs of our users through direct service, online guides and resources, or through our partnerships with peer institutions...through excellent, high-quality, innovative approaches to collection development, preservation, and its programs and services."<sup>6</sup> In addition, this project supports the goals of IMLS' Museum Grants for African American History and Culture program by increasing "access to museum and archival collections at African American museums."

The 16 collections summarized below will benefit researchers studying African American women's history by more fully opening collections documenting accomplishments in multiple fields, shedding light on the contributions of key leaders from across the United States during the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries. The archival processing and online finding aids produced during this project will make available material that has been largely inaccessible to scholars and the public thus far. These collections will be of interest to not only academic scholars, but artists, community activists, the media and documentary filmmakers, educators and young students.

Collections to receive full archival processing and online finding aids:<sup>7</sup>

**Celestine Strode Cook** (1924-1985): educator, businesswoman, banking leader and political campaign supporter in Houston, Texas and New Orleans, Louisiana.

**Alexis De Veaux** (1948-): award-winning writer and activist whose work encompasses multiple genres, including fiction, poetry, playwriting, biography and children's literature.

**Jessie Covington Dent** (1904-2001): concert pianist, educator and community leader in Texas and New Orleans, Louisiana; among the first fellowship students to enter the Juilliard Musical Foundation when it was inaugurated in 1924; one of the founders of the Ebony Fashion Fair.

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<sup>6</sup> A summary of ARC's strategic plan is attached to this application.

<sup>7</sup> Fuller biographical descriptions of these women and summaries of collection scopes are included as a supporting document.

**Mildred Katharine Ellis** (1906-2004): pianist, music educator and musicologist; recognized for contributions as a music composer in Washington, D.C., instrumental in reorganizing the D.C. Branch of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc.

**Antoinette Harrell** (1960-): prolific community activist in Louisiana who has become a leading historian of sharecropping and peonage research throughout the Mississippi Delta.

**Elsie Lewis** (1914-?): part of the first coterie of formally-trained black women historians of the 1940s; served as chair of the History Department at Howard University (1964-1969); first African American contributor to the *Journal of Southern History*.

**Sybil Morial** (1932-): educator and community activist in New Orleans; wife of the first African American mayor of the City of New Orleans; served on numerous boards and committees that focus on women's professional advocacy.

**Senga Nengudi** (1943-): visual and installation artist known for her abstract sculptures combining found objects and choreographed performance; named one of the most influential living African American artists by artsy.net in 2019.

**Marian Hamilton Spotts** (1896-1980): teacher, civic leader and federated club woman in Cincinnati, Ohio; graduated from Wilberforce University and later taught there in the school's Teacher College; active on the local and state level of the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs.

**Maida Springer Kemp** (1910-2005): international labor/trade union activist; traveled throughout Africa, assisting with emergence of trade unions through work with the AFL-CIO.

**Dorothy Yepez** (1917-1999): artist, gallery owner and teacher of violin and piano; owner of Dorothy Yepez Galleries for fifteen years in Saranac Lake, New York; also worked in the area of children's theater in New York City during the mid-1960s.

Collections to receive minimal re-organization and online finding aids:

**Annabelle Bernard** (1935-2005): leading opera singer in Europe; earned master of arts degree from the New England Conservatory of Music before studying at the Stuttgart Conservatory of Music; made debut in the role of Verdi's *Aida* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin in 1961.

**Reber Simpkins Cann** (1903-1985): Cincinnati, Ohio social worker and civic leader, and the national secretary and vice president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

**Anne Logan-Pruitt** (1929-): leading educator and college administrator at several universities; first African American female president of the American College Personnel Association; referred to as the "Godmother of Minority Graduate Education."

**Mary M. Richardson** (1898-1989): successful New York modiste with an elite Park Avenue clientele in the mid-1930s; editor of a women's fashion column in the *Louisville Defender*.

**Dorothy Mae Taylor** (1928-2000): authoritative political figure in Louisiana; the first African American woman elected to serve in the Louisiana state House of Representatives and the first woman elected to New Orleans' City Council.

These collections provide a view into African American women's contributions to and accomplishments within multiple fields of interest. They illustrate engagement by these women on the local, national and international levels and provide a global and intergenerational view of African American women's history. The organization of these sixteen collections, the digitization of relevant audiovisual content, the creation of online findings and the creation or enhancement of Wikipedia pages and a blog series will serve to increase access to scholars and

the public and assist the Amistad Research Center in fulfilling its mission as a community-based archival and library repository open to all.

### **Project Work Plan**

This project will begin July 1, 2020 and will end on June 30, 2022. Laura Thomson, ARC's Director of Archives Division, will implement and manage the project. Key staff's time will be devoted to this project on a percentage basis. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any conflict between ongoing responsibilities and those of this project.

Building on ARC's successful implementation of policies and procedures that have assisted archival arrangement and description, increased access to collections, fostered integrated cross-departmental collaboration, and utilized collections for engagement programming, ARC has determined the maturity level of this project as *mainstreaming*. Identified risks include unanticipated preservation needs of specific documents encountered while arranging collections, some collections needing more intensive archival processing rates than initially calculated, and unanticipated preservation needs of audiovisual materials or delays in outside vendor digitization. However, ARC will adjust its schedule of completion based on regular activity review and reporting as necessary in order to reflect needed changes to the work plan. As many of the collections already have preliminary inventories or container lists, ARC staff is confident in their preliminary assessment of the collections in relation to the planning of this project.

This project will entail three phases. Phases I and II will run concurrently during the first and second years, while Phase III will occur during the second year.

#### *Phase I: Archival Processing, Audiovisual Digitization and Legacy Finding Aid Conversion*

Eleven collections of personal papers will undergo full archival arrangement and description according to national standards and ARC's internal policies and procedures for archival processing. This portion will be undertaken by staff of ARC's Archives Division. In addition, five collections of personal papers that have older finding aids (legacy collections) will undergo revised arrangement and enhanced description according to national standards and ARC's internal policies and procedures for archival processing. Work on these five collections will be undertaken by staff of ARC's Research Services Division. Staff of this division are trained to process small archival collections in order to assist the Center expand its online descriptions of its collections and aid researcher requests. Upon completion of each collection, an online finding aid will be entered into ArchivesSpace and a collection-level MARC record will be entered into OCLC's WorldCat and ArchiveGrid, and ARC's local catalog.

#### *Phase II: Wikipedia Page Research, Creation and Enhancement*

While archival finding aids provide an excellent resource for collection discovery, ARC will use this project as a pilot to expand access to its collections through the creation and/or enhancement of Wikipedia pages on each of the women represented in this project. Each Wikipedia page will provide a detailed introduction to the subject with a link to the ARC finding aid and collection description. The goal of this phase is to create additional avenues to draw the general public and students to ARC's collections and resources. Of the sixteen women noted in this project, only five have any form of existing Wikipedia page devoted to them. Existing Wikipedia pages will be revised and enhanced according to information derived from this project.

*Phase III: Exhibition Design, Installation and Posting*

Selections from each of the sixteen collections will be used for the research, design and installation of an exhibition titled “A Range of Experiences: Documenting African American Women’s History and Achievements.” This exhibition will take place in ARC’s exhibition gallery, which is open to the general public and tour groups. Portions of the physical exhibition will be used, as well as links to the created/enhanced Wikipedia pages and blog content created by ARC staff as part of this project, to create an online exhibition to run in conjunction with the physical exhibition. The exhibitions are initially slated for June-October 2022.

ARC’s statements on archival methodologies, digital preservation of moving image and recorded sound formats, and digital collections are attached as supporting documents. These statements provide details of the methodologies and standards utilized by ARC for arrangement, description and preservation of its archival collections, standards for digital preservation of audiovisual materials, and information on digital outreach. The archival processing rates of the collections scheduled under this proposal are based upon the condition of the collections, experience of archivists within ARC’s Archives Unit, and the professional guidelines noted by the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University.

Those collections requiring full processing are estimated to take approximately 20 to 30 hours per linear foot, with additional time for description and creation of the electronic finding aids within the ArchivesSpace collection management system. Each collection will have a collection survey and a processing plan created for implementation of the arrangement, description and preservation of the collections. During the collection survey, preliminary description in the form of scope and content notes and biographical statements will be created for inclusion within the processing plans. These descriptions will be expanded during processing, with completion scheduled for the creation of the electronic finding aids.

The archival processing of legacy collections within this proposal is estimated to take approximately 10 hours per linear foot for arrangement and expanded description, with additional preservation re-housing when required. Each collection scheduled under this project will have a collection survey and finding aid review prior to commencement of processing and data entry work.

ARC’s Audiovisual Preservation and Digital Reformatting Program is closely related to its overall collections management and preservation policies. This program includes the digitization of material for both preservation and access. ARC has in-house facilities to digitize most audio formats from our collections. Currently, obsolete video formats and films are outsourced to a laboratory for transfer work. Details are available in the attached supporting document.

The processing team will not apply the Greene-Meissner model of minimal processing for these collections. Variance in size, complexity and organization will require more detailed levels of preservation, including removal of metal fasteners due to previous and ongoing damage to paper material, Mylar encapsulation of certain individual items, and special housing for some objects. The levels of preservation will be determined on an individual basis by the project director and team. All collection items will be re-housed in appropriate archival boxes and folders.

ARC utilizes the Society of American Archivists standards for arrangement by provenance and original order, and DACS guidelines for description. Since not all of the papers contain established file units throughout, additional arrangement of individual documents and consolidation of the contents into applied file unit structure will be done by the project team. The papers will be described at the series level when called for, with expanded description at the sub-series level to assist researchers in navigating finding aids. The papers will be described at the file unit level to complete the creation of finding aids in ArchivesSpace, with item-level description as required for photographs, scrapbooks and other items. As various collections are completed, their finding aids will be made publically available.

Audiovisual items within the collections will be identified and assessed by the Curator of Moving Image and Sound Recordings for digital preservation reformatting and content analysis. ARC has in-house capabilities for the digital transfer of audiocassettes, ¼” reel-to-reel audiotape, phonographic discs and VHS. All audiovisual material of these formats within the collection will be digitized and descriptions created. There are 13 U-matic videotapes, Beta videotapes and 8- and 16mm film elements within the collections that will be outsourced for digitization to Preserve South. Once digitized, all audiovisual materials will be accessible for research in-house and online via password-protected access on ARC’s SoundCloud and Vimeo accounts for those researchers unable to visit the Center.

ARC has embraced digital initiatives in order to enhance access to its collections and to better serve its global constituency of researchers, students and patrons. Digital exhibitions are increasingly important for those who cannot visit ARC’s reading room and are also important for K-12 teachers in order to facilitate the use of primary source documents in the classroom through online access. ARC digital exhibitions are created through its partnership with the Google Cultural Institute.

The project and collections will be highlighted throughout the year on Amistad’s blog and social media sites. ARC will utilize its social networking websites, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and the ARC blog, to announce the opening of each collection for research. The promotion and impact of this project will reach a multi-layered and expansive audience via promotion through networking with professional organizations, such as the Society of American Archivists, the American Library Association, and the Association of African American Museums. Promotion of this project to scholarly, governmental and general audiences will drive research inquiries to the online finding aids, thus facilitating greater access to the collections.

Creation and enhancement of Wikipedia pages with links to ARC’s finding aids will be piloted during this project as a means of further steering researchers and the general public to ARC’s resources. The opening of the collections will be promoted on H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online and other web-based forums for academic researchers. Additionally, ARC is currently expanding its outreach to K-12 educators and students and assisting with the integration of primary source documents from its collection into both local and national curricula, through its Amistad on the Go! digital educational platform and its partnership with the African Diaspora Consortium. The targeted collections provide important documentation of African American women’s contributions to civil rights and social justice, the arts, civic

leadership and other areas; and strengthen, through accessibility, more inclusive public education endeavors, curriculum development and classroom discussion.

### **Project Results**

At the close of the project, ARC staff will convene to discuss, evaluate and document processes resulting from project implementation. The outcome of this convening is to create and revise effective practices to sustain ARC's current and future processing and access projects.

Project deliverables outlined below seek to increase access to ARC's collections, resulting in increased scholarship on these sixteen women and, more generally, African American women's history. For a more general audience and for educators/students, the online content generated as part of this project will be widely available online for general dissemination and use in educational classrooms. Increased access aims to create scholarly and non-academic books, articles, films, use in public programming by ARC and others, and integration into curricula.

Usage statistics obtained by ARC's Research Services staff during and following the completion of the project will provide data on increased engagement with the targeted collections through monthly reference statistics and analytics derived from online visits. This data will be used for final reporting of this project as well as for future evaluation of use of ARC's collections.

Arrangement of these collections will assist in the preservation of their contents by ensuring proper storage according to archival standards, while providing for greater access for researchers through the creation of online finding aids. As seen with similar archival processing projects, ARC anticipates increased researcher interest and use due to more robust online description and information about these collections. In addition, the digitization of analog moving image and recorded sound formats will assist in the preservation of the content of those materials and make them available for the first time. ARC's existing policies and procedures for archival care and digital preservation will ensure the sustainability of the outcomes of this project.

#### Performance Objectives:

1. Submit complete reports by deadlines outlined by grant award.
2. Acknowledge the Institute of Museum and Library Services in all print and electronic products that result from grant support.
3. Arrange and re-house 202.5 linear feet of sixteen collections outlined in this project.
4. Digitize approximately 136.5 hours of audiovisual materials in the collection.
5. Create finding aids for all sixteen collections in ArchivesSpace and publish on ARC website.
6. Create/enhance collection-level MARC records in OCLC for the collections and add to ARC OPAC, and OCLC's WorldCat and ArchiveGrid.
7. Create/enhance Wikipedia pages for the sixteen women outlined in this project.
8. Create physical exhibition held at ARC based on selections from targeted collections.
9. Create complementary online exhibition and publish on ARC website.
10. Publicize the project products using press releases, social media, blog posts, print publications and on appropriate listservs.

**Grant Year 1 Activities (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)**

Activity	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Archival Processing: De Veaux Papers												
Archival Processing: Harrell Papers												
Archival Processing: Morial Papers												
Archival Processing: Nengudi Papers												
Archival Processing: Yopez Papers												
Legacy Collection Processing/Finding Aids												
Wikipedia Research, Creation/Enhancement												
Social Media/PR/Reporting												
Audiovisual Digitization and Summary												

<p>Archival Processing – Unprocessed Collections</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alexis De Veaux Papers (14.0 linear feet)</li> <li>Antoinette Harrell Papers (15.0 linear feet)</li> <li>Sybil Morial Papers (13.0 linear feet)</li> <li>Senga Nengudi Papers (10.0 linear feet)</li> <li>Dorothy Yopez Papers (36.0 linear feet)</li> </ol>	<p>Archival Processing – Legacy Collections</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jessie Covington Dent (12.0 linear feet)</li> <li>Annabelle Bernard Papers (6.0 linear feet)</li> <li>Reber Simpkins Cann Papers (3.0 linear feet)</li> <li>Mary M. Richardson Papers (2.5 linear feet)</li> <li>Ann Pruitt-Logan Papers (5.0 linear feet)</li> <li>Dorothy Mae Taylor Papers (4.0 linear feet)</li> </ol>
<p>Wikipedia Research, Creation/Enhancement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alexis De Veaux</li> <li>Sybil Morial</li> <li>Antoinette Harrell</li> <li>Senga Nengudi</li> </ol>	<p>Wikipedia Research, Creation/Enhancement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annabelle Bernard</li> <li>Reber Simpkins Cann</li> <li>Mary M. Richardson</li> <li>Ann Pruitt-Logan</li> <li>Dorothy Mae Taylor</li> </ol>
<p>Social Media/PR/Reporting</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporates all collections</li> </ol>	

**Grant Year 2 Activities (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)**

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Archival Processing: Yepez Papers												
Archival Processing: Lewis Papers												
Archival Processing: Cook Papers												
Archival Processing: Springer Kemp Papers												
Archival Processing: Ellis Papers												
Archival Processing: Dent Papers												
Archival Processing: Spotts Papers												
Wikipedia Research, Creation/Enhancement												
Exhibition Design, Installation, and Posting												
Social Media/PR/Reporting												

<p>Archival Processing – Unprocessed Collections</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dorothy Yepez Papers (36.0 linear feet)</li> <li>2. Elsie M. Lewis Papers (30.0 linear feet)</li> <li>3. Celestine S. Cook Papers (16.0 linear feet)</li> <li>4. Mildred Katharine Ellis Papers (11.0 linear feet)</li> <li>5. Jessie Covington Dent Papers (10.0 linear feet)</li> <li>6. Marian Hamilton Spotts Papers (4.0 linear feet)</li> <li>7. Maida Springer Kemp Papers Addendum (4.0 linear feet)</li> </ol>	<p>Wikipedia Research, Creation/Enhancement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Maida Springer Kemp</li> <li>11. Dorothy Yepez</li> <li>12. Mildred Katharine Ellis</li> <li>13. Celestine S. Cook</li> <li>14. Elsie M. Lewis</li> <li>15. Jessie Covington Dent</li> <li>16. Marian Hamilton Spotts</li> </ol>
<p>Exhibition Design, Installation, and Posting</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incorporates all collections</li> </ol>	<p>Social Media/PR/Reporting</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incorporates all collections</li> </ol>