



Charles L. Blockson, collection founder and renowned historian and bibliophile



Letter written by William Still

**The Paul Robeson Collection:** sheet music, photographs, posters, ephemera, memoirs and first edition publications.

**The Oral History Collection:** the Raymond Trent Oral History collection, comprised of thousands of taped proceedings and radio programs on African American history and culture. Other oral history holdings include recordings from the private collections of Charles L. Blockson and the Alpha Boule Society.

**The Rhythm Brown Collection:** photographs and personal papers.

**Dr. John W. Sullivan Collection:** correspondence, brochures, pamphlets and certificates.

**The Philadelphia (Alpha) Chapter Boule Society Papers:** programs, social registers and private correspondence from the first African American fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi.

**The Slave Narratives Collection:** narratives by Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho, Prince Lee Boo, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass and Nancy Prince.

**The Prints and Photographs Collection:** prints and Black film posters, as well as photographs and prints of African American civil rights leaders, religious leaders, artists, entertainers and scholars. This collection also holds rare African and Caribbean maps including the *Mercator Africana* map of 1597 and the *S. Boulton African* map of 1800.

**The John W. Mosley Photograph Collection:** over 500,000 photographs, prints and negatives which provide a visual history of notable Black entertainers, Negro leagues baseball players, Penn Relays, social and political personalities, and the general social life of Pennsylvania.

**The Natalie Hinderas Collection:** photographs, correspondence, diaries and printed materials.

**The William Still Collection:** personal correspondence involving the Underground Railroad conductor William Still and his family.

**Dr. Ruth Wright Hayre Collection of Richard Robert Wright, Jr.:** brochures, programs, reports, broadsides, scrapbooks, photographs and more.

**The Sara R. Isaac Collection of Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Philadelphia:** correspondence, UNIA dues cards, minutes proceedings and a photograph of Ms. Isaac.

### THE CHARLES L. BLOCKSON AFRO-AMERICAN COLLECTION ENDOWMENT

Temple University President Ann Weaver Hart created the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection Endowment in order to preserve and improve accessibility to current holdings, as well as grow the collection. All great university library special collections have substantial endowment income to support and sustain collection growth and to ensure that materials are available for the current and future generations of scholars. Endowment income leverages institutional resources to ensure this special collection remains truly world-class.

**Preservation:** Preservation needs range from treating negatives to housing materials. Endowment funds will help purchase crucial preservation supplies.

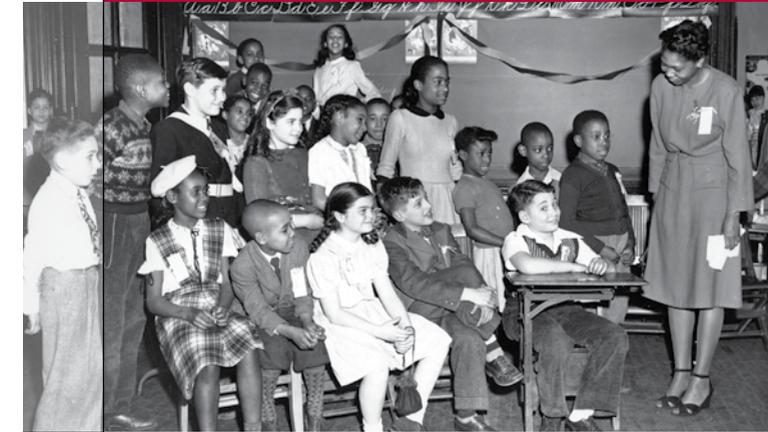
**Access and Digitization:** Endowment funds will ensure that manuscript and book collections are processed and cataloged using contemporary standards, making them easy to find and access. Special collections will be digitized and available for broader use.

**Acquisitions:** Endowment income will enable purchases of book, manuscript and photograph holdings.

### LOCATION AND HOURS

Sullivan Hall, 1st Floor  
1330 Polett Walk  
Philadelphia, PA 19122  
Monday through Friday, 9:00AM to 5:00PM  
Phone: 215-204-6632  
Fax: 215-204-5197  
<http://library.temple.edu/collections/blockson/>

## Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection



A GUIDE TO THE CHARLES L. BLOCKSON AFRO-AMERICAN COLLECTION OF TEMPLE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



Ethiopian prayer book in Geez

### TEMPLE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Temple University Libraries serve more than 37,000 students, faculty and researchers on the Main, Center City and Health Sciences campuses in Philadelphia as well as the Ambler, Ft. Washington and Harrisburg campuses. Collections include more than 3.2 million volumes and 500,000 e-books; 10 million images; 60,000 current serial subscriptions and extensive collections of microforms, maps and audiovisual and graphic materials as well as growing media holdings. Rare and special collections focus on specific research interests within the university and support Temple's commitment and responsibilities as an urban educational institution. The Libraries also subscribe to over 450 electronic databases on which faculty, students and scholars conduct over 3.5 million searches annually.

### ABOUT THE CHARLES L. BLOCKSON AFRO-AMERICAN COLLECTION

The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection is one of the nation's leading research facilities for the study of the history and culture of people of African descent. Its mission is to collect, preserve and disseminate the histories of people of African descent, Africa and its diaspora. The collection holds materials with a special emphasis on the experiences of African Americans in Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley region. The collection provides materials, public programs and services for research scholars in fields such as history, American studies, Africana studies and many regional/area disciplines. The collection is used by a wide spectrum of researchers ranging from high school students to well-established scholars.

The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection is located in Sullivan Hall on the Main Campus of Temple University. The space was renovated in 2007 to enhance the display, preservation and access of the collection, and to provide for its consistent growth. The collection holds over 500,000 items, in all formats. Materials date from 1581 and most titles are in English. However, some are in languages of regions and nations with sizeable Black populations, including Africa and various parts of the Caribbean and South America.

### HISTORY OF THE CHARLES L. BLOCKSON AFRO-AMERICAN COLLECTION

The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection was donated to Temple University in 1984. A group of educators and librarians from Temple University led by Dr. Lawrence D. Reddick of the History Department visited renowned historian, author and bibliophile, Charles L. Blockson. They understood the uniqueness of his collection and its importance to the university, where materials related to the Black experience were limited. Charles L. Blockson chose Temple University to house his collection because of the university's diverse student body and its location in the heart of the African American community in North Philadelphia. Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley region were home to the largest free Black population prior to the Civil War. Mr. Blockson's extensive knowledge of the city, and his own ancestral connections with the Underground Railroad, make the collection particularly rich and unique.



A selection of rare books from the collection

### MAJOR COLLECTIONS

Rare books, prints, photographs, slave narratives, manuscripts, letters, sheet music, foreign language publications and ephemera comprise the impressive special collections component of the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection. The collection's rare books section is particularly strong in its first editions, as well as its holdings in African, African American and African Caribbean publications dating back to the sixteenth century.

Rare works include: books by Alexandri Sardi (1557); Corippus's *Africani Grammatici* (1581); *The Life and Times of Ioannis Leonis Africannus* (1632); William Wells Brown's *Clotel* (1853); and David Walker's *Appeal* (1829). In addition, the collection boasts first editions of works by Phillis Wheatley, W.E.B. DuBois, Johannes Capitein, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, George Washington Williams, Carter G. Woodson and others. There is also an extensive African Bibles collection.

The primary source materials of the manuscripts component include sheet music, the principal papers of Samuel Holmes, Dr. R.R. Wright, Natalie Hinderas and Dr. Ruth Wright Hayre, as well as personal papers of William Still.

Left: Historical newspapers and rare books from the collection

Cover: Unidentified teacher with her students, circa 1940s  
Photo by John W. Mosley

### THE CHARLES L. BLOCKSON AFRO-AMERICAN COLLECTION

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