

# Joe C. Brown Papers

JWJ MSS 376



Michael L. Forstrom

September 2022

P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

---

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Collection Overview .....                | 3  |
| Requesting Instructions .....            | 3  |
| Administrative Information .....         | 4  |
| Immediate Source of Acquisition .....    | 4  |
| Conditions Governing Access .....        | 4  |
| Conditions Governing Use .....           | 4  |
| Preferred Citation .....                 | 4  |
| Joseph Clifton Brown (1908-1993) .....   | 4  |
| Scope and Contents .....                 | 5  |
| Arrangement .....                        | 5  |
| Collection Contents .....                | 6  |
| Series I: Writings, 1942-1982 .....      | 6  |
| Series II: Other Papers, 1933-1993 ..... | 9  |
| Selected Search Terms .....              | 11 |

---

## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** JWJ MSS 376

**CREATOR:** Brown, Joe C., 1908-1993

**TITLE:** Joe C. Brown papers

**DATES:** 1933-1993

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 4.88 linear feet (7 boxes + 1 broadside)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers contain drafts, artwork, correspondence, photographs, and other materials documenting the life of Joe C. Brown. Correspondents include: South African poet and activist Dennis Brutus, Horace R. Cayton, publisher Dudley Randall, musician Phil Cohran, James W. Ivy, editor of *The Crisis* magazine, Beatrice M. Murphy, Harry Mark Petrakis, Constance Webb, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Operation Breadbasket. There is also one autograph manuscript draft of an outgoing letter to "Dick" (Richard Wright) and one typewritten carbon of an outgoing letter to Thurgood Marshall.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.brownjoe>

---

## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.brownjoe>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

- b. box
- f. folder

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from William Reese Co. (Swann sale 2598, New York, 2022 March 24, lot 306) on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund, 2022.

---

### Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

---

### Conditions Governing Use

The Joe C. Brown papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

---

### Preferred Citation

Joe C. Brown Papers. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

---

## Joseph Clifton Brown (1908-1993)

Joseph Clifton Brown was an author, educator, civil rights activist, and artist. Born and raised in Mississippi, he attended Jim Hill, Smith Robinson, and Lanier public schools, and later, Jackson College, Alcorn State University (formerly Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College), and Rust College.

Brown worked on the first black newspaper published in Jackson, *The Criterion* and, during the late 1930s, taught in the public schools of Lafayette County, Mississippi. During this time he also helped organize the first Black Boy Scout program in the area and served as a national news reporter for the Associated Negro Press. In 1948, he and his wife Rubye L. Threlkeld relocated to Chicago, where he worked for the Chicago Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, the Illinois Department of Labor, from which he retired in 1976, and the DuSable Black History Museum and Education Center (formerly DuSable Museum of African American History). In the 1960s and 1970s he remained active in education and civil rights with Operation Breadbasket, Christ United Methodist Church and Grace-Calvary United Methodist Church.

Brown maintained a long friendship with the author Richard Wright, whom he met at Smith Robinson. Wright's letters to Brown were published by the Kent State University Libraries, under the title *Letters to Joe C. Brown*, in 1968. While working in Oxford, Brown also got to know the author William Faulkner.

Brown's first published works, "A Blackamoor's prayer" and "Holy jive," appeared in *Poets of America, 1941* (New York: Avon, 1942). Other published work includes the following: the poem, "Ghetto manchild," put out by Broadside Press in 1966; the poems "But not like yesterday" and "The Dream (ode to Dr. Martin Luther King)," published by Broadside Press in 1968; and the poems "Signs of sleep" and "Rustic love," which appeared in *Ebony rhythm: an anthology of contemporary Negro verse*, edited by Beatrice Murphy (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968).

Biographical information taken from materials in the collection.

---

## Scope and Contents

The papers contain drafts, artwork, correspondence, photographs, and other materials documenting the life of Joe C. Brown. Correspondents include: South African poet and activist Dennis Brutus, Horace R. Cayton, publisher Dudley Randall, musician Phil Cohran, James W. Ivy, editor of *The Crisis* magazine, Beatrice M. Murphy, Harry Mark Petrakis, Constance Webb, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Operation Breadbasket. There is also one autograph manuscript draft of an outgoing letter to "Dick" (Richard Wright) and one typewritten carbon of an outgoing letter to Thurgood Marshall.

---

## Arrangement

Organized into two series: I. Writings, 1942-1982. II Other Papers, 1933-1993.

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Writings, 1942–1982

1.46 linear feet (4 boxes)

Writings consist chiefly of poetry, fiction, and essays by Brown written over the three decades from the early 1940s through early 1970s. There are drafts and printed versions for Brown's published poems, including "But not like yesterday" (1968) and "Ghetto manchild" (1966), as well as drafts of other works, such as the aphorisms and anecdotes written under the title, "Homeboys says". Large files can also be found for manuscript fragments ("Miscellaneous") and unidentified works.

Brown wrote of his relationship with William Faulkner in an essay entitled, "The Faulkner I met in the Red Hills." There are drafts of both this essay and of the poem, "Bud been messin 'round," which incorporates edits suggested by Faulkner. A portion of Brown's memoir of Richard Wright can be found amongst materials relating to Wright in Series II. Other Papers.

Arranged alphabetically by title or supplied heading.

|                |   |                     |
|----------------|---|---------------------|
| b. 1, f. 1     | "As the globe turns," drafts typescript, corrected and annotated  | undated             |
| b. 1, f. 2     | "A Black love note," poem, drafts, typescript, corrected, and typescript carbon, corrected and annotated            | undated             |
| b. 1, f. 3     | "Bud been messin round," poem, drafts, typescript, annotated, and typescript carbon                                 | circa 1945, undated |
| b. 1, f. 4-7   | "But not like yesterday," poem, drafts and printed versions<br>Includes "The Dream (ode to Dr. Martin Luther King)" | 1965-1969, undated  |
| b. 1, f. 8     | "Carmelite," poem, draft, corrected, and printed version (photocopies)  | circa 1952, 1970    |
| b. 1, f. 9     | "The City," poem, drafts, typescript carbon, corrected, and typescript, corrected                                   | undated             |
| b. 1, f. 10    | "Contentment," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected and photocopy   | undated             |
| b. 1, f. 11    | "The Creeper," drafts, autograph manuscript and typescript, and printed versions                                    | undated             |
| b. 1, f. 12-13 | "Dark moods," proms, drafts, typescript carbon and typescript and printed versions (photocopy)                      | undated             |
| b. 1, f. 14    | "Deep are the roots they tell us to forget," draft (incomplete), typescript (photocopy), corrected                  | undated             |
| b. 1, f. 15    | "Don't know," poem, drafts<br>One sheet includes other poems  | 1942, undated       |
| b. 1, f. 16    | "The Faulkner I met in the Red Hills," drafts, autograph manuscript, typescript, and typescript carbon, corrected   | undated             |
| b. 1, f. 17    | "For black liberation," poem, drafts, autograph manuscript and typescript, corrected (photocopy)                    | circa 1970 June 15  |
| b. 1, f. 18    | "Ghetto manchild," poem, draft, typescript, corrected, and printed version (6 copies)                               | 1966, undated       |
| b. 1, f. 19    | "Gimme a drink," poem, drafts, typescript and typescript carbon   | undated             |

|                |   |                             |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| b. 1, f. 20    | "The Good samaritan," draft, typescript, corrected  | undated                     |
| b. 1, f. 21    | "Heritage," poem, drafts, typescript carbon, corrected, and typescript  | undated                     |
| b. 1, f. 22    | "Holy jive," poem, drafts, typescript and typescript carbon<br>One sheet includes "Gimme a drink"                   | undated                     |
| b. 1, f. 23-25 | "Homeboy says," draft pages, autograph manuscript and typescript, corrected   | undated                     |
| b. 2, f. 26    | "Homeboy says," draft pages, typescript   | circa 1944-1970             |
| b. 6, f. 86    | "Homeboy says," draft pages   | undated                     |
| b. 2, f. 27    | "Honkey baby," drafts, typescript, corrected, and typescript (photocopy),<br>corrected                              | circa 1970 April<br>20      |
| b. 2, f. 28    | "The House on Parkway," play, draft, typescript carbon  | undated                     |
| b. 2, f. 29    | "How to get the news," drafts, typescript (photocopy)   | 1972, undated               |
| b. 2, f. 30    | "I'm sick and tired, Slick Jordon..." drafts, autograph manuscript, typescript, and<br>typescript carbon, corrected | undated                     |
| b. 2, f. 31    | "Inspirit," poem, drafts, typescript and typescript carbon  | undated                     |
| b. 2, f. 32    | "The Laughing cry," poem, drafts, typescript  | undated                     |
| b. 2, f. 33-35 | "The Laughing cry," prose, drafts, autograph manuscript, typescript, and<br>typescript carbon, corrected            | undated                     |
| b. 2, f. 36    | "Me a negro," poem, drafts, typescript, printed version, and printed version<br>(photocopies)                       | 1944, undated               |
| b. 2, f. 37-40 | Miscellaneous notes and draft pages, autograph manuscript and typescript,<br>corrected                              | undated                     |
| b. 6, f. 87    | Miscellaneous notes and draft pages, autograph manuscript, corrected  | undated                     |
| b. 3, f. 41    | "Mr. Piano," poem, drafts, typescript and typescript carbon, corrected  | undated                     |
| b. 3, f. 42    | "Plain stuff," draft, typescript carbon (4 copies)  | undated                     |
| b. 3, f. 43    | Poems, drafts, autograph manuscript and typescript, corrected<br>Contains single drafts of poems                    | circa 1949-1969,<br>undated |
| b. 3, f. 44    | "Settlement at the commissary," drafts, typescript, corrected, and typescript<br>carbon, corrected                  | undated                     |
| b. 3, f. 45    | "Slim Moten's apt." draft, typescript, corrected  | undated                     |
| b. 3, f. 46    | "Strike town," poem, drafts, typescript carbon, corrected, and typescript   | 19[6?]9, undated            |
| b. 3, f. 47    | "Strong black coffee," drafts, typescript carbon, corrected   | 1948, undated               |
| b. 3, f. 48    | "The Sun do move," draft, typescript carbon   | undated                     |

|                |  |                 |
|----------------|--|-----------------|
| b. 3, f. 49    | "They learn nothing and they forget nothing," play, drafts, typescript carbon and typescript (photocopies)<br>Includes ticket stub from a 1986 event | 1969, undated   |
| b. 6, f. 88    | "They learn nothing and they forget nothing," play, draft pages, typescript and typescript carbon  | undated         |
| b. 3, f. 50    | "Treasure hunt," poem, printed versions and photocopies  | 1952, [1970?]   |
| b. 3, f. 51    | "A Voice from Miss.," draft, typescript, corrected and annotated   | undated         |
| b. 3, f. 52-53 | "Voices out of the night," drafts, typescript, and publicity   | undated         |
| b. 3, f. 54    | "Witch rider," poem, drafts, typescript and typescript carbon, corrected<br>One sheet includes "Don't know"  | undated         |
| b. 6, f. 89    | "Yes! Somebody cares," draft, autograph manuscript (2 copies)  | undated         |
| b. 3, f. 55    | "Youth in tribute to father," draft, typescript, corrected   | [1973?]         |
| b. 3, f. 56    | Other writings, drafts, autograph manuscript and typescript, corrected   | undated         |
| b. 3, f. 57-58 | Unidentified   | undated         |
| b. 4, f. 59-60 | Unidentified   | undated         |
| b. 4, f. 61    | Writings of others   | circa 1963-1982 |



**Series II: Other Papers, 1933–1993***3.42 linear feet (3 boxes + 1 broadside)*

Other papers includes artwork, biographical material, clippings, correspondence, documents, photographs, printed ephemera, and scrapbook pages.

The series features circa 65 pieces of artwork by Brown dating from the early 1970s through early 1980s and circa 40 pieces of correspondence, including both incoming letters to Brown and drafts and copies of outgoing letters to others. Generally, letters document Brown's literary activity and activism, as well as his connections to cultural figures and institutions in the Chicago area during the 1960s and 1970s. There are letters from Richard Wright's biographer, Contance Webb, the editor Horace R. Cayton, poet and publisher Dudley Randall, also founder of the Broadside Press, James W. Ivy of the NAACP, Harry Mark Petrakis, musician Philip T. Cohran, Kent State University, regarding Richard Wright's letters to Brown, and a representative of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Operation Breadbasket. There is what appears to be a third-party letter, dating from 1976, from South African poet and activist Dennis Brutus.

Arranged alphabetically by material type.

|                  |   |                       |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|
| b. 5, f. 62      | Artwork   | 1976-1978,<br>undated |
| b. 6, f. 90-91   | Artwork   | 1977-1983,<br>undated |
| b. 7, f. 92-93   | Artwork   | 1971-1979,<br>undated |
| b. 5, f. 63      | Biographical information  | 1976-1993,<br>undated |
| b. 5, f. 64      | Certificates and legal records  | circa 1974-1982       |
| b. 5, f. 65      | Christ United Methodist Church school teaching aids                   | 1975                  |
| b. 5, f. 66      | Clippings   | 1959-1970,<br>undated |
| b. 8 (Broadside) | Clippings   | 1963-1970             |
| b. 5, f. 67      | Correspondence  | 1938-1976,<br>undated |
| b. 5, f. 68      | Coursework syllabus   | 1968 September        |
| b. 5, f. 69      | D'Puc Credit Union form completed in manuscript                       | 1948 April 2          |
| b. 5, f. 70      | Empty folders   | 1962, undated         |
| b. 7, f. 94      | Empty folders   | 1970, undated         |
| b. 5, f. 71      | Examination book  | 1941 July 9           |
| b. 5, f. 72      | Financial records   | [1965?]-1975          |
| b. 5, f. 73      | List of "Problems"  | undated               |
| b. 5, f. 74      | Material relating to the history of Christianity and the black church | undated               |

|                |   |                             |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| b. 5, f. 75    | Material relating to Richard Wright<br>Includes drafts of writings about Wright                   | circa 1966-1982,<br>undated |
| b. 5, f. 76    | Notebook  | 1941, undated               |
| b. 5, f. 77    | "Our wedding day" booklet   | 1941 October 17             |
| b. 5, f. 78    | Photographic negative   | undated                     |
| b. 5, f. 79    | Photographs   | 1965, undated               |
| b. 5, f. 80-81 | Printed ephemera and publicity  | 1939-1980,<br>undated       |
| b. 5, f. 82    | "Proposed new radio show and air wave clubs"  | undated                     |
| b. 7, f. 95    | Scrapbook pages<br>Contains letters, manuscripts, clippings, and printed ephemera                 | 1933-1940,<br>undated       |
| b. 5, f. 83    | "A Suggested plan of organization. Topic schedule and projects 1963-64, Negro History Roundtable" | 1963 June                   |
| b. 5, f. 84    | "Survey workbook for community analysis"  | undated                     |
| b. 5, f. 85    | Other papers  | undated                     |

---

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

African American authors -- 20th Century --  
Archives  
African American poets  
American literature -- 20th Century  
Poets, American -- 20th Century -- Archives

### **Genres / Formats**

Photographic prints

### **Occupations**

Authors

### **Names**

Brown, Joe C., 1908-1993  
Brutus, Dennis, 1924-2009  
Cayton, Horace R. (Horace Roscoe), 1903-1970  
Cohran, Phil, 1927-2017  
Faulkner, William, 1897-1962  
Ivy, James W., 1901-1974  
Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993  
Murphy, Beatrice M., 1908-1992  
Petrakis, Harry Mark  
Randall, Dudley, 1914-2000  
Webb, Constance  
Wright, Richard, 1908-1960

### **Corporate Body**

Broadside Press