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Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

# Joe C. Brown Papers

JWJ MSS 376



Michael L. Forstrom

September 2022

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New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
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## 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>

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## 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

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## Administrative Information

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### 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.

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### Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

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### 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.

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### Preferred Citation

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

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## 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.

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## **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 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 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 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), corrected	circa 1970 April 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 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 typescript carbon, corrected	undated
b. 2, f. 36	"Me a negro," poem, drafts, typescript, printed version, and printed version (photocopies)	1944, undated
b. 2, f. 37-40	Miscellaneous notes and draft pages, autograph manuscript and typescript, 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 Contains single drafts of poems	circa 1949-1969, undated
b. 3, f. 44	"Settlement at the commissary," drafts, typescript, corrected, and typescript 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) 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 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, undated
b. 6, f. 90-91	Artwork	1977-1983, undated
b. 7, f. 92-93	Artwork	1971-1979, undated
b. 5, f. 63	Biographical information	1976-1993, 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, undated
b. 8 (Broadside)	Clippings	1963-1970
b. 5, f. 67	Correspondence	1938-1976, 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 Includes drafts of writings about Wright	circa 1966-1982, 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, undated
b. 5, f. 82	"Proposed new radio show and air wave clubs"	undated
b. 7, f. 95	Scrapbook pages Contains letters, manuscripts, clippings, and printed ephemera	1933-1940, 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