

**Universal Negro
Improvement
Association Records
1921-1986**



*Guide to the Scholarly Resources
Microfilm Edition*

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Introduction

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was founded in Jamaica in 1914 by Marcus Garvey. Originally signed as a fraternal and philanthropic organization advocating pan-Africanism, based partially on the writings of Booker T. Washington, the UNIA developed into a radical political organization that at one time advocated the repatriation of Blacks to Africa. Garvey came to the United States in 1916 with hopes of expanding the UNIA. By 1925 approximately nine hundred divisions were chartered in the United States, and nearly five hundred more were chartered world wide.

Garvey's philosophy emphasized material and economic success, and to these ends the UNIA established several businesses, including the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company and the Black Star Steamship Company. These enterprises failed, and Garvey was arrested in 1922 on charges of mail fraud in connection with these and other UNIA business ventures. He was imprisoned and, finally, deported to Jamaica. In an effort to salvage the UNIA, Garvey moved its base of operations to London, England, where he ran the organization until his death in 1940.

Following Garvey's death, the UNIA's Parent Body headquarters was moved to New York City, and the organization was managed by the secretary general. At an emergency conference in August 1940, James R. Stewart, commissioner for the state of Ohio, was elected acting president general, succeeding Marcus Garvey in that office. UNIA headquarters was again moved, this time to Cleveland. An international convention held in 1942 reelected Stewart as president general. At the same time a group of UNIA members who were disenchanted with Stewart met in New York and formed the Rehabilitating

Committee, whose goal was to rebuild the organization based on the principles of Marcus Garvey, which the committee believed that Stewart had abrogated. This committee functioned independently of Stewart's organization throughout the 1940s.

In 1949, Stewart took Liberian citizenship and moved the UNIA Parent Body headquarters to Monrovia, West Africa. His departure from the United States prompted the Rehabilitating Committee to elect its own president general. Henceforth, two separate organizations, both calling themselves the Universal Negro Improvement Association, operated in the United States. Stewart continued to govern from Africa, and a new headquarters was established by the Rehabilitating Committee in Philadelphia, presided over by Thomas Harvey, the former UNIA high chancellor.

Stewart ran the UNIA until his death in 1964. The parent body office was then moved from Monrovia to Chicago, where it was run by James A. Bennett (1965-1968) and Vernon Wilson (1968-1975). Upon Wilson's death the president generalship fell to Cleveland Chapter President and Executive Vice President Mason Hargrave, who moved the organization's headquarters back to Cleveland.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association Records, 1921-1986 consist of correspondence, reports, conference and convention proceedings, speeches, minute and ledger books, magazine articles, lessons, printed materials, and miscellany including manuscript pages, stock and membership certificates, petitions, reports, and correspondence. The major portion of the collection dates between 1940 and 1950 and is arranged into six series.

Series I, Parent Body Records, consists of the UNIA constitution and by-laws established ca. 1938, materials from the president general's office including correspondence; stock certificates issued for the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company, the Black Star Lines, and the Negro Factories Corporation; and miscellaneous materials including legal documents pertaining to the controversy over the UNIA headquarters building in Cleveland. **Series I** also contains the records of the secretary general's and chancellor's offices including daily report sheets, correspondence, and notebooks. Monthly reports of local divisions to the Parent Body are arranged alphabetically by state and city. An appendix at the end of this register lists the reporting local divisions. Records from the commissioner's Advisory Council, Executive Council, National Public Relations Committee, the International Organizer's office, and executive secretary's office (encompassing the years 1950 to 1968) consist of correspondence, notebooks, minutes, and miscellany. Conference and convention proceedings (encompassing the years 1938 to 1970) include agenda, minutes, resolutions, and miscellany. Bound ledgers consist of receipt and disbursement records, and membership and dues books.

Series II, *The New Negro World* magazine, is composed of ledger books, correspondence regarding publication, and divisional reports and contributions dating from 1940 to 1953. Much UNIA philosophy can be gleaned from these contributions, which include historical accounts, poems, and essays.

Series III, School of African Philosophy, consists of handwritten copies of nineteen lessons (lessons 14, 15, and 18 are missing) designed by Marcus Garvey to instill in future UNIA leaders the philosophy of the organization. Topics range from universal knowledge, leadership, the aims and objectives of the UNIA, and elocution to God, the

universe, diplomacy, economy, propaganda, and communism. **Series III** also contains miscellaneous undated materials pertaining to the School of African Philosophy.

Series IV, Universal African Legions, contains conference proceedings, a ledger book, and miscellany dating from 1924 to 1957 pertaining to the military branch of the UNIA. Most of the material deals with the Cleveland branch of the Legions.

Series V, Cleveland Division #133, consists of monthly reports, daily report sheets, ledger books, and miscellaneous records covering the years 1919 to 1972. Ledger books contain membership and dues records, minutes of meetings, rent receipts and tenant information for the UNIA building on East 40th Street, and miscellaneous financial records.

Series VI, Printed Materials and Miscellany, contains issues of UNIA publications including *The Black Man*, *The Black Pilot*, *Garvey's Voice*, *The New Negro Voice*, *The New Negro World*, the *UNIA State Herald*, and *Stewart's Voice*. Other black publications in this series include the *Negro History Bulletin*, *Our Book-Goodwill Magazine*, *Headlines*, *African Opinion*, the *National Scene*, and *Oua*. Miscellaneous materials consist of certificates of membership, dues cards, petitions, partial unidentified minutes and reports, essays, and notes.

In addition, there are membership and dues books dating from 1926 to 1955. The arrangement within each series is topical or alphabetical, where applicable, and chronological within each topic.

The materials in this collection provide valuable insight into the operation of a pan-African organization that espoused a radical pro-Black racial philosophy and was beset by legal, philosophical, and economic problems. Saddled with a complicated and conservative organization, the UNIA suffered severe financial setbacks, failed to entice

Universal Negro Improvement Association, 1921-1986

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large numbers of Blacks to membership, and was unable to see the fulfillment of its programs. The collection provides valuable insights into pan-Africanism and the national Garvey movement, as its components relate not only to national administration of the UNIA but also include records of various branches. Records relating to the movement in Cleveland are particularly strong. Government activities, such as publishing and education, are heavily reflected in the collection.

Roll Contents

Series I: Parent Body Records

Roll No.	Folder No.	
1	1	UNIA Constitution and By-Laws, ca. 1938; Articles of Incorporation, 1942
	2	Office of the President General: Marcus Garvey, correspondence, 1932-1940, scattered; Stock certificates issued for the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company, Black Star Lines, the Negro Factories Corporation, and UNIA construction loans, 1921-1924; miscellaneous correspondence, 1933
	3	Office of the President General: James R. Stewart, correspondence, 1939-June 1941
2	4	Office of the President General: James R. Stewart, correspondence, July-December 1941
	5	Office of the President General: James R. Stewart, correspondence, January-May 1942
	6	Office of the President General: James R. Stewart, correspondence, June 1942-1949
	7	Office of the President General: James R. Stewart, correspondence, 1950-1963 and

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Roll Folder

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|---|----|--|
| 2 | 7 | undated; miscellaneous papers, 1939-1944
<i>(cont'd)</i> and undated; James A. Bennett,
correspondence, 1964-1965; Vernon
Wilson, correspondence and miscellany,
1968-1974 |
| 3 | | |
| | 8 | Office of the President General: Mason
Hargrave, correspondence, 1967-1977 |
| | 9 | Office of the President General: Mason
Hargrave, correspondence, 1978-1986 and
undated; miscellaneous personal papers,
1979-1986 and undated; miscellaneous
notes, 1974-1977 and undated |
| | 10 | Office of the President General: Mason
Hargrave, miscellany, 1968-1986 and undated |
| 4 | | |
| | 11 | Office of the President General: Mason
Hargrave, U.N.I.A. Parent Body
controversy: legal papers, correspondence,
and miscellany, 1973-1983 and undated |
| | 12 | Office of the Secretary General: Cash
Book, 1940-1941 |
| | 13 | Office of the Secretary General: Receipt
Book, November 1940-March 1942 |
| | 14 | Office of the Secretary General: Ethel
Collins, correspondence, January-June 1940 |

Roll No.	Folder No.	
4	15	Office of the Secretary General: Ethel Collins, correspondence, July-October 1940
	16	Office of the Secretary General: Ethel Collins, correspondence, November 1940-1942
	17	Office of the Secretary General: Theresa Young, Assistant Secretary General, correspondence, 1941-1943; Christina Lyons, Assistant Secretary General, correspondence, 1942-1947 and undated; S. Robinson, Secretary General, correspondence, 1948, 1952, and undated
	18	Office of the Secretary General: Christina Lyons' Record Book, 1941
5	19	Office of the Secretary General: Daily Report Sheets, October 1940-April 1941, scattered
	20	Office of the Secretary General: Daily Report Sheets, October 1948, January-March 1949
	21	Office of the Secretary General: Daily Report Sheets, April-August 1949
	22	Office of the Secretary General: Daily Report Sheets, October-December 1949, March 1950

Roll Folder

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| 6 | 23 | Office of the Chancellor: Daily Report Book, February-July 1941; Daily Reports, February-March 1941, scattered |
| | 24 | Office of the Chancellor: Daily Reports, April-July 1941, scattered |
| | 25 | Office of the Chancellor: Daily Report Book, 1941 |
| | 26 | Monthly Reports of Local Divisions to Parent Body, alphabetical by state and city: Florida-Indiana, 1940-1948, scattered |
| | 27 | Monthly Reports of Local Divisions to Parent Body, alphabetical by state and city: Louisiana-Missouri, 1939-1942, scattered |
| | 28 | Monthly Reports of Local Divisions to Parent Body, alphabetical by state and city: New Jersey-North Carolina, 1940-1942, scattered |
| | 29 | Monthly Reports of Local Divisions to Parent Body, alphabetical by state and city: Ohio-Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1938-1967, scattered |
| | 30 | Monthly Reports of Local Divisions to Parent Body, alphabetical by state and city: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania-Berkley, Virginia, 1940-1966, scattered |

Roll **Folder**
No. **No.**

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|---|----|---|
| 6 | 31 | Monthly Reports of Local Divisions to Parent Body: Newport News, Norfolk, and Richmond, Virginia, 1940-1944, including miscellaneous minutes from Norfolk, June-November 1940; overseas divisions Aruba, Cuba, Jamaica, and Panama, 1940-1960, scattered; miscellaneous unidentified monthly reports, 1943-1964, scattered; miscellaneous division inventories, 1947, 1950, and undated |
| | 32 | Miscellaneous Parent Body Materials: Commissioner's Advisory Council, miscellany 1940; Executive Council, minutes 1940, 1941, 1948, 1975, scattered; Lillie Mae Gibson, International Organizer, correspondence, 1946-1968 and undated |
| 7 | 33 | Miscellaneous Parent Body Materials: Lillie Mae Gibson, notebooks, 1953-1958 |
| | 34 | Miscellaneous Parent Body Materials: Lillie Mae Gibson, notebooks, 1957-1959 |
| | 35 | Miscellaneous Parent Body Materials: Lillie Mae Gibson, notebooks, 1960-1964 |
| | 36 | Miscellaneous Parent Body Materials: William R. Sherrill, Chairman, National Public Relations Committee, correspondence, 1940-1952 and undated |

Roll Folder

No. No.

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|---|----|---|
| 7 | 37 | Miscellaneous Parent Body Materials: Mae Thomas, Executive Secretary, High Commissioner, and International Organizer, correspondence, 1951-1968 and undated |
| | 38 | Miscellaneous Parent Body Materials: Mae Thomas, notebooks, 1955-1958 |
| 8 | 39 | Miscellaneous Parent Body Materials: Mae Thomas, miscellaneous correspondence, 1924-1968 and undated |
| | 40 | Conferences and Conventions, minutes, agenda, resolutions, and miscellany: First State Caucus, Ohio, April 10, 1938; Emergency Conference, August 18-21, 1940; First Annual Conference, August 15-20, 1941; Ninth International Convention, August 13-19, 1942; National Conference, August 28, 1943; Tenth International Convention, August 16-24, 1946; National Conference, August 30-September 1, 1947; miscellaneous conferences 1947; National Conference, August 20-22, 1948 |
| | 41 | Conferences and Conventions: Midwest Conference, April 8-9, 1950; miscellaneous conferences, February-May 1952; Conference, Columbus, Ohio, February 20, 1953; District Meeting, Detroit, Michigan, |

Roll No.	Folder No.	
8	41	April 18-19, 1953; (Ohio) State Conference, (cont'd) April 25, 1953; Annual Conference, September 5-7, 1953; miscellaneous conferences, 1953; Conference, January 1-3, 1954; Conference, February 20-22, 1954
	42	Conferences and Conventions: Twelfth International Convention, September 10-19, 1954; Conference, November 27-28, 1954; miscellaneous conferences, 1954-1962
	43	Conferences and Conventions: Miscellaneous conferences, 1963-1974 and undated
	44	Speeches: James Stewart, 1940-1950 and undated; Charles L. James, undated; miscellaneous speeches, 1940 and undated
	45	Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts, November-December 1940; Receipts, December 1940-January 1951; Receipts, February-March 1941
	46	Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts, March 1941-February 1942
9	47	Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts and Disbursements, 1942-April 1943

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| 9 | 48 | Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts and Disbursements, 1942; Membership and Dues, miscellaneous U.N.I.A. chapters, 1942 |
| | 49 | Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts, 1946-1947 |
| | 50 | Parent Body Ledger Books: Cash Receipts and Disbursements, 1947-1949 |
| | 51 | Parent Body Ledger Books: Cash Receipts and Disbursements, 1948 |
| | 52 | Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts, March-October 1948 |
| | 53 | Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts, March 1950-October 1950; Receipts, September 1950-June 1951 |
| | 54 | Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts, 1951-1956 |
| 10 | 55 | Parent Body Ledger Books: Receipts, 1956-1967 |

Series II: *New Negro World Magazine*

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|----|---|
| 56 | Agents of <i>The Blackman Magazine</i> and Accounts Ledger Book, 1940 |
|----|---|

Roll No.	Folder No.	
10	57	“Daily Mail Sent Out” Ledger Book, 1942-1944
	58	Correspondence regarding publication, 1940-1953 and undated
	59	Local Division Reports submitted for publication, ca. 1941-1945, and undated; miscellaneous articles, poems, and essays, ca. 1941-1942
	60	Miscellaneous articles, poems, and essays, ca. 1942-1945
	61	Miscellaneous incomplete contributions, 1942 and undated; miscellaneous manuscript materials: Marcus Garvey, essay, undated; Reverend Zebedee Green, miscellaneous manuscript pages, 1921, 1940, and undated
	62	Miscellaneous manuscript materials: Reverend Zebedee Green, undated; Henry Mims, “The Five Courts that Condemned Me,” 1940; James R. Stewart, poems, undated

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No. No.

Series III: School of African Philosophy

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|----|----|--|
| 11 | 63 | Miscellaneous materials, undated
Lesson 1: Intelligence, Education, Universal Knowledge, and How to Get It, undated
Lesson 2: Leadership, undated
Lesson 3: Aims and Objectives of the UNIA, undated
Lesson 4: Elocution, undated |
| | 64 | Miscellaneous materials, undated
Lesson 5: God, undated
Lesson 6: Christ, undated
Lesson 7: Character, undated
Lesson 8: The Social System, undated
Lesson 9: Diplomacy, undated
Lesson 10: Economy, undated
Lesson 11: Man, undated
Lesson 12: The Purpose of Institutions, undated
Lesson 13: The Universe, undated
Lesson 16: Propaganda, undated
Lesson 17: Communism, undated
Lesson 19: Life, 1940 |

Series IV: Universal African Legions

- | | |
|----|--|
| 65 | Conference, 1948, 1950, 1956, and undated; Cleveland Division miscellany, 1942-1957, scattered; miscellany, 1924, 1946 |
|----|--|

Roll **Folder**
No. **No.**

11 66 Cleveland Division Ledger book with
miscellaneous entries, 1944-1952

Series V: Cleveland Division #133

67 “Pass” book consisting of names, addresses,
ages, destination, and dates, 1919-1920

68 Membership and dues book (Insurance plan?),
including miscellaneous financial
information, rents, disbursements to
trustees, 1922-1938

69 Minutes of meetings, 1923-1930

70 Tenant book, 1934

12 71 Minute book, including miscellaneous
financial, information, mortgages, and rent,
1931-1944.

72 Treasurer’s Ledger Book, 1936-1938

73 Daily Report Book, financial, 1940-1942

74 Membership and Dues book, 1942-1947

75 Minute book, 1949-1956

Roll No.	Folder No.	
12	76	“Sunday Night Club” ledger book, 1950
	77	Rent Receipt Book, October 1946-May 1947
13	78	Rent Receipt Book, 1948-1950
	79	Rent Receipt Book, 1950-1951
	80	Rent Receipt Book, May 1951-December 1952
	81	Rent Receipt Book, December 1952-October 1954
	82	Rent Receipt Book, October 1954-September 1956
14	83	Rent Receipt Book, September 1956-October 1960
	84	Rent Receipt Book, November 1960-August 1968
	85	Rent Receipt Book, August 1968-December 1971
	86	Monthly Report of Local Division Statements, 1953-1963, scattered; Daily Report sheets, 1947-1958, scattered
	87	Monthly Receipt and Disbursement Statements, 1928-1963, scattered

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| 14 | 88 | Monthly Receipt and Disbursement Statements, 1965-1967 and undated, scattered; miscellaneous financial records, 1940-1966 and undated |
| | 89 | Miscellaneous records, 1940-1972 and undated; ledger books with miscellaneous entries, 1940-1949, 1966-1968 |

Series VI: Printed Materials and Miscellany

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 15 | 90 | <p><i>The Black Man</i>, July 1935, August-September 1935, July 1938, November 1938, January 1971</p> <p><i>The Black Pilot</i>, March 9, 1946, January 3, 1948, February 7, 1948, February 21, 1948</p> <p><i>Garvey's Voice</i>, August 1957, January 1958, October 1971, August 1983</p> <p><i>Negro History Bulletin</i>, January 1941, February 1941</p> <p><i>The New Negro Voice</i>, March 13, 1943</p> |
| | 91 | <i>The New Negro World</i> , volume 1, numbers 2-7, 9-11, 1941-1942 |
| | 92 | <i>The New Negro World</i> , October 1942, November-December 1942, January 1943, February 1943, March 1943, April 1943, June 1943, July-August 1943, September 1943 |

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No. No.

15 93 *The New Negro World*, April-May 1944,
 July 1944, November 1944, December
 1944, miscellaneous pages, undated
Our Book-Goodwill Magazine, February
 1943, May 1943
UNIA State Herald, May 17, 1941
Stewart's Voice, April-June, September-
 November 1953, May, June 1954,
 April, May 1955, February, October-
 December 1956, July, October,
 November 1957, December 1957-
 January 1958

94 Miscellaneous printed materials: *Headlines*,
 April 5, 1955
African Opinion, November-December 1975
National Scene, February 1984
Qua, undated

95 Miscellaneous materials consisting of
 certificates of membership, dues cards,
 petitions, partial minutes and reports, essays,
 and notes, 1924-1964 and undated

96 Membership Dues book, 1926-1927

16 97 Membership Dues book, 1927-1928

98 Membership Dues book, 1929-1931

99 Membership Dues book, 1935-1942

100 Membership Dues book, 1947-1955

Appendix

UNIA Local Divisions Reporting to Parent Body

Florida:	Miami (Division #201) Tampa (Division #272)
Illinois:	Chicago (I.M., #217, #324) East St. Louis (#226)
Indiana:	Gary (#132)
Louisiana:	Baton Rouge (#298) New Orleans (#320)
Michigan:	Detroit (#407)
Mississippi:	Natchez (#135)
Missouri:	St. Louis (#125) South Kinloch Park (#198)
New Jersey:	Burlington (#134) Camden (Garvey Club) Newark (#291)
New York:	Brooklyn (#336) East Brooklyn (#252) New York City (#340) Advance Club (#807) Garvey Club (#137)
North Carolina:	Bailey (#406) Kingston (#361) Wilson

- Ohio: Campbell
 Cincinnati (#146, #139)
 Dayton (#371)
 Youngstown (#102)
- Pennsylvania: Braddock (#177)
 Philadelphia (#121, #337, #812)
 Pittsburgh (#908)
- South Carolina: Charleston (#112)
- Tennessee: Knoxville
- Virginia: Berkley (#339)
 Newport News (#108)
 Norfolk
 Richmond (#193)

