

Guide to
the Microfilm Edition
of the

FBI File on the
National Association for the
Advancement of Colored
People (NAACP)

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Introduction

Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) became the leading organization advocating equal rights for minorities, a status it still claims. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) file on the NAACP, officially entitled "Communist Infiltration of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," spans the years from 1941 to 1957, a period in which many significant events of the civil rights movement took place. The FBI kept close tabs on the movement in the 1940s and 1950s despite the lack of federal civil rights legislation at that time. Alleged Communist infiltration of the NAACP, which was involved in protesting civil rights abuses, and Communist party exploitation of these abuses in order to gain political power were enough to keep the FBI interested. As a result, nearly all of the significant events of the movement are well documented. These events and investigations include: the Scottsboro trial (1942), possible enemy agitation among blacks during World War II, the Detroit riots (1943), postwar lynchings in the South, various instances of police brutality, voting code violations, discrimination against black soldiers in World War II and Korea, the Birmingham bombings (1951), the Oakland Fire Department discrimination case (1951), reaction to the Supreme Court decision on *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954), controversy surrounding the FBI's handling of southern investigations in the 1950s (most notably the 1955 Emmett Till case), the National Conference on Civil Rights (1956), the Alabama busling controversies (1955, 1956), and full reports on every NAACP Annual Conference from 1942 to 1956.

The FBI's concerns were not entirely unfounded. Some prominent early black civil rights leaders, such as NAACP founder W. E. B. DuBois and entertainer Paul Robeson, were leftists; and although the national leadership of the NAACP made constant anti-Communist statements, the FBI was convinced that party members were trying to take over branch organizations and wrest power from the local officers. The party also tried to use civil rights abuses to its own advantage, and this conflict made the NAACP an easy

target for allegations of Communist ties and sympathies. Accordingly, the FBI compiled detailed information on every known branch of the NAACP through the Bureau's field offices. Although instances of Communist infiltration were rare, the lists of branch officers and activities are unusual and useful research tools for historians of the civil rights movement.

Another interesting facet of this file is the correspondence between NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, which was surprisingly cordial. NAACP-produced material, including newspaper advertisements, newsletters, membership drive literature, copies of the *Crisis* (the NAACP's official publication), annual reports, and news releases also are contained within the file, as well as some pro-segregation literature.

The documents reproduced here were drawn from the Washington files of the FBI and have been released under the Freedom of Information Act; certain documents or portions of documents have been deleted by the FBI pursuant to provisions of that legislation. The material has been filmed in the exact order and condition in which it was released, and every effort has been made to publish the most legible copies available.

The file is in chronological order, and the FBI did not index documents. The Roll Notes is not a complete inventory of the file; however, it gives an indication of the types of material or specific documents that may be particularly worthwhile for research.

ROLL NOTES

FBI File on the Communist Infiltration of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Bureau File Number 61-3176

Section 1:

August 1923 - January 1942

Roll 1, 0001-0065

Memo dated 8/22/23 warning of possible racial hostility

Letter from James Weldon Johnson, secretary of the NAACP,
regarding cross burning in Rocky Ford, Georgia

Memo on the purpose of the NAACP, 4/19/30

List of NAACP officers, 9/15/30

Letter from Colorado Springs, Colorado, branch protesting police
mistreatment, 12/8/35

Report dated 3/11/41 on the NAACP, including a list of NAACP
achievements

Field reports on NAACP branches: Richmond, Honolulu,
Oklahoma City

Letters regarding the March on Washington for Jobs

Section 2:

October 1941 - April 1942

Roll 1, 0066-0132

List of national officers

Copy of constitution and by-laws

Report on Executive Secretary Walter White

White-Hoover correspondence

"Scottsboro," by Clarence Darrow (from the *Crisis*)

"The Negro and the Communists," by Walter White
(from the *Messenger*)

Section 3:

May - September 1942

Roll 1, 0133-0249

Memos regarding possible Japanese agitation of blacks

Speech by White in Madison Square Garden, June 16

Reports on mass meetings

Report on the 33d National Conference, July 14-19

Field reports on NAACP branches

Section 4:

October 1942 - January 1943 **Roll 1, 0250-0341**

Pamphlet urging blacks to vote in Birmingham, Alabama

American Negroes, a handbook by Edwin R. Embree

Memo reviewing *American Negroes*

Field reports on NAACP branches: Springfield, Miami, Boston,
Charlotte, Richmond, Oklahoma City, Indianapolis

Section 5:

November 1942 - September 1943 **Roll 1, 0342-0448**

Field reports on NAACP branches: South Carolina, Los Angeles

Detroit race riots over fair employment practices

Investigation of anti-Semitic propaganda targeted for black
soldiers

Section 6:

September 1943 **Roll 1, 0449-0492**

Field reports on NAACP branches

NAACP news release alleging racial hostility of Chicago police

Memos regarding alleged police brutality in Chicago

Section 7:

September - November 1943 **Roll 1, 0493-0560**

Speech by Thurgood Marshall

Field reports on NAACP branches

Memos regarding White's 25th anniversary with the NAACP

Copy of the August/September *Bulletin*, the NAACP newsletter

Section 8:

September 1943 - January 1944 **Roll 1, 0561-0664**

Field reports on NAACP branches: Miami, Chicago, Richmond,
Oklahoma City, Detroit, Indianapolis

Pamphlet: "Jim Crow Fights on Hitler's Side"

Authorization of technical surveillance on NAACP office in
Philadelphia, 12/17/43

Section 9:

January - June 1944 **Roll 1, 0665-0772**

Field reports on NAACP branches

Report on the New York state NAACP conference
Communist infiltration of Jamaica, New York, branch
Letter from White regarding the racial situation in Detroit
Correspondence between White and Hoover

Section 10:

June - November 1944

Roll 1, 0773-0866

Field reports on NAACP branches: Oklahoma City, Miami,
Richmond, Savannah, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis,
Washington

Copy of "Views and Reviews," a column in the *Pittsburgh Courier*
by George S. Schulyer

Section 11:

November 1944 - February 1945

Roll 1, 0867-0991

Field reports on NAACP branches: New Orleans, Philadelphia,
Miami, Savannah, Richmond, Grand Rapids

"Survey of Racial Conditions," dated 12/8/44

Memos and newspaper clippings regarding the NAACP police
school

Section 12:

January 1945 - January 1946

Roll 1, 0992-1124

Field reports on NAACP branches: Miami, Richmond, Oklahoma
City, Grand Rapids, New Orleans, Savannah, St. Paul,
Philadelphia

Memo regarding the police school

Invitation to NAACP dinner honoring Paul Robeson, 30th
Spingarn Medalist

Letter dated 10/24/45 from Walter White to J. Edgar Hoover con-
cerning FBI surveillance of the NAACP

Memo dated 11/1/45 regarding Bureau Executives Conference's
planned response to White

Section 13:

March - December 1946

Roll 1, 1125-1261

Law school entry case in Oklahoma

Field reports on NAACP branches, including full report on
Pennsylvania

Memo regarding property destruction on Detroit's west side
NAACP resolution against Klan violence
Memos regarding Louisiana lynching cases; FBI witness search
Complaints about FBI investigation; Hoover's rebuttal
Memos regarding Chicago police problems
December issue of the *Crisis*

Section 14:

January - August 1947

Roll 1, 1262-END Roll 1

Roll 2, 0001-0144

Marshall protests FBI's handling of southern cases
Response of Hoover
NAACP pamphlets: "Equal Justice Under Law," "The War Is Over — They Say"
July issue of the *Crisis* (includes transcript of Harry S. Truman's address at the National Conference)
NAACP press release: "NAACP Scores FBI Hiring Policy"
FBI hiring controversy; Hoover's response

Section 15:

August 1947 - April 1948

Roll 2, 0145-0266

Letters regarding alleged discriminatory hiring procedures of the Bureau
Letter dated 8/26/47 from Hoover advocating impartial hiring procedures
Letter dated 9/13/47 from Hoover to White refuting discrimination charges
Memo regarding civil rights and domestic violence
Field reports on NAACP branches: New Orleans, Oklahoma City

Section 16:

April - November 1948

Roll 2, 0267-0337

NAACP circulars for membership drives
Appropriation for proposed FBI "Civil Rights Unit"
Field reports on NAACP branches: New Orleans, Southern Mississippi, Honolulu
Major resolutions of the National Conference

Section 17:

November 1948 - July 1949

Roll 2, 0338-0425

Field reports on NAACP branches: Northern California

Report on the picketing of the Sears and Roebuck store in Santa Monica

"The NAACP and the Communists," from the March issue of the *Crisis*

Preparation for the 40th Annual Conference; newspaper clippings
Reports from Little Rock, Arkansas, regarding the DeWitt decision

Section 18:

August - September 1949

Roll 2, 0426-0475

Full report on the 40th Annual Conference

Speech by William H. Hastie

Section 19:

October 1949 - April 1950

Roll 2, 0476-0575

Brooklyn pickets protesting police brutality

Memos on the National Emergency Civil Rights Mobilization

Field reports on NAACP branches

"On the 40th Anniversary of the NAACP," by Edward Strong
(in *Political Affairs*, February 1950)

Section 20:

May - June 1950

Roll 2, 0576-0626

Field reports on NAACP branches: Alabama, Massachusetts, Indiana

Ballot denial controversy in Little Rock

Section 21:

June - September 1950

Roll 2, 0627-0689

Field reports on NAACP branches: Seattle, Boston, Chicago

Report on the 41st Annual Conference

Section 22:

October 1950 - March 1951

Roll 2, 0690-0776

Memos regarding Marshall's trip to Korea to intervene in army court-martial of a black soldier

Field reports on NAACP branches: Philadelphia, Southern
California, Indianapolis

Section 23:

June 1951 - May 1952

Roll 2, 0777-0914

White visits Washington, D.C., to discuss Birmingham bombings
Security division sends report of Communist activity in NAACP
to White

Kansas City pool ban controversy

Reports on the Joint Committee to Free the Trenton Two

Field report on NAACP branch: Philadelphia

Section 24:

June 1952 - October 1953

Roll 2, 0915-1019

Hoover declines White's request to speak on the radio with him
about civil rights

Oklahoma City branch accuses FBI of foot-dragging in Florida

Oakland Fire Department discrimination case

Field reports on NAACP branch: Philadelphia

Section 25:

November 1953 - April 1954

Roll 2, 1020-1100

Field reports on NAACP branches: Albany, Newark, Salt Lake
City, Baltimore, Arizona

Section 26:

April 1954

Roll 2, 1101-1191

Possible Communist infiltration in the West

Field reports on NAACP branches: Louisville, Charlotte, El Paso,
Chicago

Memos regarding the wording of the Bureau's application for
employment

Section 27:

April 1954

Roll 2, 1192-1256

Field reports on NAACP branches: New Orleans, Savannah

Section 28:

April 1954

Roll 2, 1257-1336

Field reports on NAACP branches: Anchorage, Houston, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Memphis, Indianapolis

Section 29:

May 1954

Roll 2, 1337-END Roll 2

Field reports on NAACP branches: Philadelphia, San Francisco, Denver, Springfield, Anchorage, Phoenix

Section 30:

May - June 1954

Roll 3, 0001-0073

Field reports on NAACP branches: Memphis, New Haven, Detroit, Miami, Norfolk, Savannah

Letter from "The Committee of 100" asking for financial support of the NAACP

Section 31:

June - July 1954

Roll 3, 0074-0214

Field reports on NAACP branches: Pittsburgh, Anchorage, Houston, New York

National NAACP report, dated July 19

Section 32:

July - September 1954

Roll 3, 0215-0293

Field reports on NAACP branches: Charlotte, Detroit, Anchorage, Houston, Philadelphia

Bureau memos regarding Communist subversion of NAACP

NAACP petition of school districts to end segregation after *Brown v. the Board of Education*

Memos regarding threatened mob violence over integration

Section 33:

September - October 1954

Roll 3, 0294-0375

Field reports on NAACP branches: Norfolk, Charlotte, Springfield, Birmingham, Mobile, Newark, Seattle, Louisville

Section 34:

October - November 1954

Roll 3, 0376-0442

Field reports on NAACP branches: Albany, New Orleans, Memphis,
Baltimore, Detroit, Milwaukee, Chicago

Airtel requesting biannual reports on the NAACP

Section 35:

November - December 1954

Roll 3, 0443-0514

Field reports on NAACP branches: Boston, Omaha, Minneapolis,
Memphis, Denver, Cleveland

Section 36:

December 1954

Roll 3, 0515-0610

Field reports on NAACP branches: Dallas, San Francisco, New
Haven, New York

Section 37:

December 1954 - April 1955

Roll 3, 0611-0709

Field reports on NAACP branches: Indiana

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights press releases

NAACP pamphlet, "Fight for Majority Rule in the United States
Senate"

Section 38:

March - May 1955

Roll 3, 0710-0805

Field reports on NAACP branches: Charlotte, Salt Lake City,
Knoxville, San Antonio, New Orleans, San Diego, Savannah,
Anchorage, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Albany

Death of White on March 21; Roy Wilkins named new executive
secretary

Synopsis of numbers search on Wilkins; summary of activities

Section 39:

April - May 1955

Roll 3, 0806-0867

Field reports on NAACP branches: Houston, Seattle, Newark,
Louisville, San Francisco, Milwaukee

Section 40:

May 1955

Roll 3, 0868-0935

Field reports on NAACP branches: Chicago, Memphis, Boston,
Baltimore, Dallas, Denver

Section 41:

May - June 1955

Roll 3, 0936-1012

Field reports on NAACP branches: Norfolk, Cleveland, Los
Angeles, Memphis, Detroit, Pittsburgh

Section 42:

June - July 1955

Roll 3, 1013-1094

Field reports on NAACP branches
NAACP Annual Report for 1954, "The Year of the Great Decision"
Memos regarding possible violence at Daytona Beach

Section 43:

July - August 1955

Roll 3, 1095-1186

Field reports on NAACP branch: Knoxville
Report on the Annual Conference

Section 44:

August - October 1955

Roll 3, 1187-1309

Memos and newspaper clippings regarding alleged police brutality
in Seattle
Field reports on NAACP branches: Knoxville, Mobile, Savannah,
San Francisco, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Dallas
Telegram regarding the investigation of the Lamar Smith murder
Memo regarding NAACP demands to investigate alleged
segregation by the Los Angeles Fire Department
Letter dated 9/12/55 from Effie C. Stewart, NAACP president,
regarding Emmett Till
Memo regarding T. R. M. Howard's attacks on Bureau investiga-
tions in the South
Letter dated 9/30/55 from Hoover to Thurgood Marshall regarding
attacks on the Bureau
Newspaper clippings

Section 45:

October 1955

Roll 3, 1310-END Roll 3

Field reports on NAACP branches: New Orleans, Boston, Chicago, Milwaukee, Memphis, Houston

Marshall writes Hoover about southern investigations, notably the Emmett Till kidnap and murder case

Section 46:

October 1955

Roll 4, 0001-0063

Field reports on NAACP branches: New Haven, Minneapolis, Philadelphia

Memo regarding the televised speech of Georgia Attorney General Eugene Cook, 10/19/55

Report dated 10/21/55 on the general state of the NAACP

Section 47:

October - November 1955

Roll 4, 0064-0158

Field reports on NAACP branches: Seattle, Newark, Baltimore, Denver, Buffalo, Chicago

Reports on the Reverend Moses Till's speaking tour

Section 48:

November 1955

Roll 4, 0159-0244

Field reports on NAACP branches: Omaha, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Knoxville

Memos regarding the investigation of Mississippi voting abuses
NAACP uses Hoover's 1947 statement about it to refute charges of communism

Wilkins replies to Georgia Attorney General Cook's speech before Georgia peace officers

Section 49:

December 1955 - January 1956

Roll 4, 0245-0334

Field reports on NAACP branches: Detroit, Baltimore

Memos regarding possible march on Washington

Report on the Annual Conference

FBI report on the national racial situation to the U.S. attorney general

Section 50 (2 parts):

Part 1

January 1956

Roll 4, 0335-0432

National report on the NAACP

Report on the Annual Conference

Part 2

Roll 4, 0433-0522

January - February 1956

Hoover responds to criticism of FBI investigations

Efforts of the Communist party to take advantage of the Emmett Till case

December 1955 issue of the *Furnace*

Letters regarding T. R. M. Howard's criticism of the FBI

Section 51:

February 1956

Roll 4, 0523-0629

Memo regarding Communist infiltration of the NAACP

Newspaper clippings

Memos regarding the 1956 March on Washington

Memo regarding William H. Hastie, S. Ralph Harlow, and Dr. Ralph J. Bunche

Memo regarding the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, March 4 - 6

Letter dated 2/14/56 regarding Lincoln Day address and national racial issues

Section 52:

February - March 1956

Roll 4, 0630-0755

Newspaper clipping: "Negroes Fight Red Invasion of Dixie Battle"

Memos regarding the coverage of the Leadership Conference

Letters dated 3/5/56 to the assistant chief of staff, Army intelligence, and Dillon Anderson, special assistant to the president, summing up the activities of the Leadership Conference

Memo dated 3/6/56 to the U.S. attorney general reviewing the Leadership Conference

Section 53:

March 1956

Roll 4, 0756-0875

Report on the Leadership Conference, March 3-6

Adam Clayton Powell calls for a "National Deliverance Day of Prayer," March 26
Alabama bus problems in Mobile and Montgomery

Section 54:

February - March 1956

Roll 4, 0876-0974

Pamphlet, "The Ugly Truth about the NAACP," a transcript of the 1955 speech by Eugene Cook
NAACP pamphlet, "Congress Must ACT on Civil Rights"
Newspaper clippings

Section 55:

March - April 1956

Roll 4, 0975-1076

Field reports on NAACP branches: San Diego, San Francisco, San Juan
Memo regarding attempts by the NAACP to enroll Autherine Lucy in the University of Alabama
Memos regarding the Montgomery bus boycott
Memo regarding desegregation in the South
Memo regarding picketing of Texas Governor Allan Shivers at Texas State University
Newspaper clippings

Section 56:

April 1956

Roll 4, 1077-1160

Field reports on NAACP branches: Dallas, Savannah, Anchorage, Salt Lake City, Charlotte, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh

Section 57:

April - May 1956

Roll 4, 1161-1254

Field reports on NAACP branches: Minneapolis, Memphis, Albany, Milwaukee, Norfolk, Mobile
Memos regarding extent of Communist infiltration

Section 58:

May 1956

Roll 4, 1255-1327

Field reports on NAACP branches: Baltimore, Seattle, Portland, Chicago

Section 59:

May 1956

Roll 4, 1328-1376

Field reports on NAACP branches: Buffalo, Philadelphia

Section 60:

May 1956

Roll 4, 1377-1443

Washington field office report on the "Delegate Assembly for Civil Rights"

List of individuals in the Delegate Assembly for Civil Rights

Section 61:

May 1956

Roll 4, 1444-END

Field reports on NAACP branches: Denver, New Orleans, Knoxville, Cleveland

Memo regarding letter sent to Congressman Jackson Betts