A Guide to the

LOUISE DAVIS COLLECTION, 1939- 1955

Fisk University Archives

Processed by

Uzoma O. Miller, Archival Assistant

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE
SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Louise Davis Collection consists of two boxes, containing two series: Correspondence, and Writings. The Correspondence comprises three subseries: Davis, Louise; Harwell, Coleman A.; and Myers, Anne, and the Writings are divided into eight: Clippings; Diary/Journal; Essays; Journalism; Manuscripts; Poetry; Spirituals; and Writings by Others.

Series I: Correspondence

The Correspondence contains three subseries: Davis, Louise; Harwell, Coleman, A., and Myers, Anne. Most of the Correspondence documents communication associated with Davis’ efforts to publish her manuscript on the Jubilee Singers under the direction of Anne Myers. Communication with Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company, former Fisk president, Thomas Elsa Jones, vice-president, and editor of the Nashville Tennessean, Coleman Harwell, as well as between Mrs. Myers and Ms. Davis establishing thematic content are represented. Additionally, the series contains documents of the Department of State endorsed by Mrs. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. in support of the Jubilee Singers touring Europe and Africa, and from Puerto Rico raving in review as well.

Series II: Writings

The Writings are divided into eight subseries primarily from Louise Davis and Henrietta Myers: Clippings; Diary/Journal; Essays; Journalism; Manuscripts; Poetry; Spirituals; and Writings by Others. The Clippings hold copies of Davis’ coverage of Jubilee Day 1946, a historical overview of the group’s 75 year history, and promotion for an upcoming Latin American tour published in The Nashville Tennessean Magazine. Found in the Diary/Journal subseries are pages of detailed daily routines with consistent mention of dynamics associated with taking care of her mother, and professional responsibilities and opportunities derived from free-lance writing. The week days are provided with no years. The Essays subseries has a copy of Myers’ “The Negro Spiritual,” and the Journalism subseries captures Davis’ first-hand accounts of the Jubilee Singers’ 1959 European tour through commissioned assignments from The Nashville Tennessean. London, Paris, and Rome are covered in extensive detail.

The most comprehensive subseries is Manuscripts, wherein Davis’ unpublished book on the legacy of the Jubilee Singers under the guidance and direction of Henrietta (Mrs. James A.) Myers is contained. Mission in Music is the substantially edited and condensed form of the previous Steal Away Jesus. Corresponding text outlines and summaries are contained here also. The original Steal Away Jesus had thirty two chapters, and the revised Mission in Music ended up with thirteen. Despite extreme evidential value of the Jubilee Singers, and informational value regarding Fisk University’s public relations in the 1940s and 1950s, the Manuscripts were never published. Two poems are found in the Poetry subseries, one unidentified to the author of “The Fire Regained,” and the other an ode dedicated to Mrs. Myers by the Jubilee Singers in an unspecified year. The remaining two subseries are comprised of copies of several classic Spirituals, such as “Lord I Can’t Turn Back,” “Steal Away,” and “Swing
Low,” as well as **Writings by Others** on topics related to spirituals, the Jubilee Singers travels under Mrs. Myers, and graduate work in the respective fields.

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3 “Our First Trip to Europe,” by Carl Barbour, n.d.
5 “Philosophy, Experience, and the Present,” by Bryant S. Cooper, 1946
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