

Law Library – Special Collections

Overview:

The Law Library Special Collections contains over 1,900 monographs and 2,000+ microform volume equivalents that focus on the African American experience in North America and abroad. Housed on the main floor of the Law Library, the Special Collections comprise five topical areas (Sections): Africana, Diaspora, General Works, Civil Rights, and Genealogy. Following is a brief description of each Section.

Africana Section:

Most Texans are unaware that hundreds of continental-born Africans once inhabited Brazoria and Matagorda Counties during and after the Republic of Texas era. Pirates and other speculators smuggled Africans into Texas, mainly via Cuba, after the congressional mandate (1808) that prohibited the importation of enslaved Africans into the United States. The African presence in Texas is evident by many African-born entries enumerated in the 1870 federal census (e.g., Brazoria County). And while some “scholars” may try to trivialize the numbers of “illegally” imported Africans into the mainland North America in general, Texas was nonetheless mindful of the trafficking of Africans into the republic. Thus, the Africana Section reconnects Texas’ African heritage to its multiple points of origin, historical backgrounds, cultural agencies, and ancient civilizations.

Diaspora Section:

The social scientist Edward Franklin Frazier asserts that African Americans' African cultural heritage denigrated or vanished due to “slavery.” Nothing could be further from the truth. The Gullah Geechee African Americans are the living custodians of the African heritage of “Black America.” There are two cultural wombs of African retention in the United States – Gullah Geechee and Afro-Creole Louisiana. In this case, the Gullah Geechee Nation represents the direct link between African Americans and Africa. In addition, they maintain affirmed linguistic ties with West and West-Central Africa. The late linguist Dr. Lorenzo Dow Turner collected thousands of African-derived words, names, phrases, songs, and folktales from Gullah Geechee informants in Georgia and South Carolina during the 1930s, published in his seminal work, **Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect. The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor** is also part and parcel of the “Atlantic Creole” cultural continuum that includes the African Diaspora in the Caribbean. The Diaspora Section connects the global presence and influence of African “Ancestored” peoples.

General Works Section:

The African American experience in British North America and the United States of America is broad and varied. “Slavery” and “social justice” topics tend to overshadow pertinent subjects such as free African Americans, Black slave owners, African American Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers, cowboys, seamen, inventors, towns, etc. The General Works Section attempts to capture the wide range of nuances, variances, and layers that color the African American experience in continental North America.

Civil Rights Section:

This Section covers a broad range of subjects, including traditional Civil Rights, Black Power Movements, political activism, government intervention, and social justice. The bulk of the information is available in microfilm format and housed in the microfilm cabinets located outside the Special Collections Room. There are also collection guides accompanying this extensive microform collection.

Genealogy Section:

Genealogy is reportedly the second most popular hobby amongst Americans. In addition, genealogy and family history research has increased exponentially among African Americans. Genetic genealogy has opened doors to significant ancestry discoveries that would otherwise seem virtually impossible. The Genealogy Section contains the necessary tools, methods, and principles to help reconstruct your genealogy and family history.

Policies & Procedures

Items in the Special Collections are for Library Use Only. However, some monographs are interlibrary loan eligible provided there is a second copy available. See the librarian at the Circulation/Information Desk for more information. Please be prepared to present a valid ID (student ID/driver's license) before the material is released.

Hours of Operations

Access to Special Collections material is by appointment only Monday - Friday, during regular reference hours (8 AM to 5 PM). Photocopies are available upon request.

Contact

For more information, contact [Mrs. Patrina Epperson-Emmanuel](#), Circulation Librarian (713.313.1011); or [Ms. Denise Cebrun](#), Cataloging Assistant (713.313.1143).