

ALICE CHILDRESS

PAPERS

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**ALICE CHILDRESS (1916-1994) PAPERS, 1937-1997. 50 boxes. 17.1 linear ft.**

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Pioneering writer, actress and director Alice Childress (1916-1994) bears the distinction of being one of the most prolific and dynamic figures in the history of African-American literature. Popularly known for her best-selling novel, A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich, she is also known for her plays, most notably *Wedding Band: A Love Story in Black and White*. Childress is the first African American female playwright whose works have been produced over four decades.<sup>1</sup> The hallmarks of Childress's craft deal primarily with what she described as the men, women and children "who come in second, or not at all – the four hundred and ninety-nine and the intricate and magnificent patterns of a loser's life."<sup>2</sup>

Born into poverty in Charleston, South Carolina on October 12, 1916 (some sources credit her birth date as 1917 or 1920), Alice Herndon<sup>3</sup> was an only child who at the age of nine was sent to live with her maternal grandmother, Eliza Campbell, in Harlem after her parents separated. Little is known about her parents, Alonzo Herrington (who worked in insurance) and Florence White (a seamstress). In an oral history conducted by writer and librarian Ann Shockley in 1973, Childress remarked that both of her parents were dead, and that her mother, Florence, died very early in her life. She also mentioned that she had half siblings, but she was her mother's only child. Her grandmother Eliza, the daughter of a slave, was a guiding force in young Alice's life, and encouraged her to write. Childress said as a child she would sit with her grandmother and watch people from their window, and then make up stories about them. Her grandmother also served as a muse for the protagonist in Childress's novel, A Short Walk.

As a teenager Childress became interested in pursuing a career as an actress after seeing one of Shakespeare's plays. Although she did not complete high school, around this time she began studying with thespians Venzuella Jones and Nadja Romanov. Around the age of 19 she met and married actor Alvin Childress (1908-1986), best known for his role as Amos in the controversial television show, Amos and Andy. The couple had only one child, a daughter named Jean, born November 1, 1935.

Records reveal that the young couple worked together in at least two productions together, the most notable being the American Negro

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<sup>1</sup> Jennings, La Vinia Delois. Alice Childress. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Children's Literature Review, Gale, Volume 14, 1988, pp. 85-94.

<sup>3</sup> Records do not reveal the specific origins of the author's last name Herdon.

Theatre's (ANT) *Anna Lucasta* in 1944. According to documentation Childress was one of the founding members of the ANT in 1939. Childress and her husband appeared as supporting actors in both the ANT and Broadway productions, alongside lead actress, Hilda Simms, after the play had a successful run at the ANT's 135<sup>th</sup> Street playhouse. Critics raved about the play and noted Childress's playful and strong acting as Blanche, a sharp-tongued prostitute (a role she originated). In 1944, her performance garnered a TONY Award nomination for "Best Supporting Actress." The Childress's also wrote a play together called *Hell's Alley* sometime during the late 1930's. Alice Childress appeared in other ANT productions including Abram Hill's *On Strivers Row* (1940); Theodore Brown's *Natural Man* (1941); *Rain* and *Almost Faithful* (both in 1948).

Prior and during her tenure with the American Negro Theatre the young mother, wife, and budding writer, worked a number of jobs to support her family including jobs as an apprentice machinist, domestic governess, insurance agent and salesperson. Later, her experiences would provide grist for her writing, particularly for the book *Like One of the Family: Conversations from a Domestic's Life*. In the 1986 edition of the book, Childress recounts that the day she quit doing domestic work, she threw the house keys at her employer's head.

Aware of the shortage of quality theatrical roles for black women, in 1949 Childress wrote, directed and starred in her first professionally produced play, *Florence*, a one-act drama centering on a conversation between two women, one black and the other white, in a segregated bus station. The play was later published in 1950 in the journal *Masses and Mainstream*. *Florence* was a small production but it drew praise and launched Childress's career as a playwright, and by the end of the 1960's, she would be known primarily as a playwright who spoke her mind.

The 1950's would witness the ascent of "Alice Childress, the Playwright" and the slow, almost complete descent of "Alice Childress, the Actress." Although she would go on to act in a few productions over the years, Childress would focus primarily on her work as a playwright for the next 30 years. Her tenure with the American Negro Theatre had provided her with the skills and confidence to develop her own plays, however those experiences would also almost put a complete end to her acting. Childress cites one incident in an oral history interview where she auditioned and won a role in *Joy Exceeding Glory*, a play with an all-black cast produced by the Rose McClendon Players in 1941. The following day, she was contacted by the director who stated that she was "too light" for the role. Childress credits this and similar experiences together with the lack of quality roles for black actresses with her decision to focus almost completely on writing. "This is the

reason I dropped out of acting...I can express myself on a piece of paper, and I stayed with it trying to do (just) that," Childress said in the interview. Subsequent acting jobs were always weighed against her current writing projects, and were often turned down. Childress's determination gave birth to a voluminous body of work, primarily plays, as well as other genres.

In 1950 Childress adapted Langston Hughes' novel, Simple Speaks His Mind into the play, *Just a Little Simple*, which was presented at the Club Baron Theatre in Harlem. The same year she also received an award from the Committee for the Negro in the Arts for "Outstanding Contributions as an Artist." Two years later she followed with *Gold Through the Trees*, the first play by a black woman produced in the United States. *Gold Through the Trees* is a dramatic revue with music that takes place in Africa prior to colonization and after. The play was also produced at Club Baron; Clarice Taylor directed the play that starred Childress, Vinie Burrows, Hilda Haynes, Helen Martin, and Taylor. The following year Childress appeared in two plays, *The World of Sholom Aleichem* starring Howard da Silva (Chicago, 1954), and *The Emperor's Clothes* starring (\*no one in the cast is/was famous, what to do for the sake of consistency?) (Off-Broadway, Greenwich Mews Theatre, 1960s), concurrently writing what would become one of her most enduring plays, *Trouble in Mind*.

*Trouble in Mind* made its debut at the Greenwich Mews Theatre in 1955, and starred Clarice Taylor and Hilda Haynes. The interracial drama was essentially a play within a play and laid bare the struggles of one black actress who refused to play a mammy – as a character or as a human being. Originally the play ends when the lead character, Wiletta, leaves the play after criticizing the director for his racism, but in another version (with which Childress disagreed), the cast walks out behind Wiletta in a show of unity. Only after the director calls in the author to make changes does the cast return. The producers of the show demanded this version, but Childress felt that this ending not only let the director off the hook, but that it was "wishful thinking" that blacks and whites would unite in this fashion in 1955. In 1971, the original play was published in the anthology Black Theatre, which was edited by Lindsay Patterson.

The *New York Times* raved that *Trouble in Mind* was a "fresh and lively satire," and that Childress has a "quick eye for the foibles and crotches, the humor and pathos of black stage life." Childress, who also directed the production with Taylor, was given a "Pat-on-the-Back" from an organization called "Off-Broadway," and in 1956, she received an OBIE for Best Off-Broadway Play, the first black woman in history to receive that honor. Although *Trouble in Mind* was optioned for Broadway, Childress would not consent to the

changes that the producers wanted to make in the script. As a result the play never went to Broadway. In the years to come, the play would be produced at playhouses nationally and internationally including Buffalo, Cleveland, Florida, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington, DC, and London.

The success of *Trouble in Mind* was followed by Like One of the Family: Conversations from a Domestic's Life. Published in 1955 by Independence Publishers, Like One of the Family was a series of anthologized vignettes, at the crux of which was the voice of an unnamed domestic conversing with her friend, Marge. Based on Childress's Aunt Lorraine, a woman she described as "a woman who refused to exchange dignity for pay," these monologues were first published in Paul Robeson's newspaper, Freedom, in a column called "Conversations from Life," for no compensation. After the book was published, Childress republished all of the vignettes in a column called "Here's Mildred" in the Baltimore Afro-American for twenty-five dollars per installment from 1956-1959. Although Childress received letters from readers from both newspapers, Like One of the Family was not an immediate success. In her introduction to the 1986 Beacon Press reprint, scholar Trudier Harris suggested that perhaps the book's success may have been circumscribed due to Childress's association with Paul Robeson, and/or that the book itself may have gone "against the prevailing grain of the time." Harris, nonetheless, hailed the book noting that it celebrates an "image of black women...and suggests that they are no less dignified for having spent time on their knees," for scrubbing floors.

While working at Freedom, Childress met and collaborated with Lorraine Hansberry, who, at the end of the decade, would become famous for her first play, *A Raisin in the Sun*.<sup>4</sup>

Politically, the focus of Childress's work, especially *Trouble in Mind* and Like One of the Family, challenged both racism and sexism, and were powerful for their treatments of blacks, particularly black women, as self-actualizing individuals. Where *Trouble in Mind* focused on equal opportunities for black actors, in real-life Childress was active in helping to bring Harlem's all-union off-Broadway contracts into practice, which were then recognized by the Actors' Equity Association and the Harlem Stage Hand Local Union. Targeted as a communist as early as 1951 for her association with Robeson, publishing in the journal Masses and Mainstream, and her affiliation with groups considered communist fronts or communist-dominated, were a few of the activities recorded in her FBI file. Among the groups mentioned included were the Civil Rights Congress,

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<sup>4</sup> An FBI report suggests that the two authors collaborated on an untitled black history program for a Negro History Week celebration held on February 12, 1952.

Congress of American Women, the National Council for the Arts, Sciences and Professions, and the Committee for the Negro in the Arts. In one report Childress was listed as under "discreet surveillance." While acting in the play *The Candy Story* in 1951, the FBI reported that Childress taught a "Dramatic Workshop," was a leader in the "Forum" at the Jefferson School of Social Sciences, and that she attended a meeting of the Harlem Regional Committee of the Communist Party. In October of that year Childress published "For a Strong Negro People's Theatre," in the newspaper, The Daily Worker (first printed in Masses and Mainstream), where she considered the role of blacks in the development of a strong, vital theatre that embraced the history and culture of black people.

On a few occasions FBI agents had planned to approach Childress, but since the "unemployed actress and playwright" did not keep regular hours, coupled with the fact that her large apartment building (The Grinnell, 800 Riverside Drive in Manhattan) had four separate exits, Childress was never interviewed.

By the time the fifties came to a close, many things had changed in Childress's personal life. She was divorced from Alvin Childress, and had married musician Nathan Woodard in 1957, to whom she stayed married until the end of her life. The couple would collaborate on a number of musicals and plays with music, including *Young Martin Luther King* (originally titled *Freedom Drum*), *The African Garden*, *Gullah* (originally titled *Sea Island Song*) and *Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne*. Her daughter Jean had graduated from high school and was attending college. Childress continued to hone her writing skills and had penned a number of short stories, most of which were never published. Regardless, her reputation was growing as a playwright and author. In 1959, she received a Citation of Merit award from the Tasket Street Baptist Church, which was further evidence of her growing popularity as a writer and role model in Harlem, as well as the performing arts community. As the sixties drew near, Childress started writing what would become her most successful - and controversial - effort to date, the play, *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White*.

Prior to starting the play, she appeared in the play *The Cool World*, by Walter Kerr, which also starred Hilda Simms and Billy Dee Williams, in 1960. The New York Herald Tribune called "a play about the street-corner jungle that turns schools boys into heroin addicts [and] schoolgirls into dollar-and-a-half prostitutes." While Childress's performance is praised as "instantly and honestly touching," critics complained that as the "boy's knives get sharper, their tongues get duller."

A year later Childress began writing *Wedding Band*, a drama focusing on the ill-fated relationship between a black woman and white man

in the Charleston, South Carolina in the 1950s. The play debuted at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1966. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee were involved in the initial production; Davis as a producer, and Dee as Julia, the lead character. Due to the controversial theme of the play (miscegenation) *Wedding Band* struck a chord with critics and theatre-goers, and it remains one of Childress's most popular plays. Several years later the play would be presented off-Broadway and be broadcast on television, but not without protest. Eight ABC-TV affiliates refused to broadcast the play due to its inter-racial romance and "frank" language. All eight stations were situated in the south in the states of Arkansas (2), Tennessee, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and four stations delayed the telecast until a later time.

The same year, Childress was appointed as an Independent Scholar at Radcliffe College, where she was researching and writing another play, *The African Garden*. Childress remarked in an interview, "my play is about poor whites and poor blacks who have caught the most hell in life...which takes place in Louisiana following World War I."<sup>5</sup> Childress completed her independent study at Radcliffe in 1968, the same year she makes an appearance in the Paramount film, *Up Tight* with Julian Mayfield, a drama set in Cleveland about the black power movement after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. It was at this time that Childress turned her attention to writing dramas specifically for children.

The same year she penned the play *Freedom Drum*, which was later renamed *Young Martin Luther King, Jr.*, a musical for children about the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1969, the play was produced first by the Nassau County Office of Performing and Fine Arts, the first in a series of plays called "Prelude to Greatness," presented to Long Island schools. The play focuses primarily on King's life from the time of his marriage to Coretta Scott, to his involvement with the Montgomery bus boycott. Although the play is factual, combining excerpts from King's speeches and action, Childress said she also infused Young Martin Luther King, Jr., with humor to keep the children's interest. The Performing Arts Repertory Theatre of New York also produced the play for two benefit performances in Roxbury, New York, in 1970, which was free for students.

In 1969, Childress had two plays produced, both in the month of March. *String*, an adaptation of Guy de Maupassant's "A Piece of String," which was first produced Off-Broadway by the Negro Ensemble Company (NEC), along with two other one-act plays, *Contribution* by Ted Shine and *Malcochon!* by Derrick Walcott. Although inspired by de Maupassant's short story, (her first take

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<sup>5</sup> Bourne, Kay. "The Call Board." The Bay State Banner. August 22, 1968.



on the play was an adaptation) Childress's focuses on memory and class as peculiar and often unreliable sites to establish innocence or guilt. *String's* action centers on a neighborhood block association's picnic, where one of the residents is accused of stealing a man's money. Childress traveled with NEC as an observer of the company's touring productions.

The other play was *Wine in the Wilderness: A Comedy-Drama*, televised in Boston on WGBH-TV. This was the first drama in the series On Being Black, produced by Luther James with a grant from the Ford Foundation. The all-black cast, two-scene play's action takes place during a riot, and exposes the class differences between Bill, a college educated artist and Tommy, a no-nonsense woman from the neighborhood who he thinks of as a "messed up chick." Because of the play's inflammatory language and radical themes, the entire state of Alabama banned the telecast.

It was also in 1969 that Childress, along with several prominent African-Americans, including James Baldwin, Harry Belafonte, Dick Gregory, and Douglas Turner Ward, were quoted in the *New York Times* article "Can Whites and Blacks Work Together?" In the article, Childress's response, titled "But I Do My Thing," outlines (and outright rejects) the notion that black theatre is self-segregation, saying that black theatres have always existed in black communities, when they could, and that "all whites aren't bad or good, the same goes for blacks—but this fact equalizes nothing. The whole racism mess is based upon the action of white supremacist deed and thought."

Childress continued working in the theatre at the beginning of the 1970's. *Mojo: A Black Love Story*, a one-act play about a black couple, was produced at Harlem's New Heritage Theatre in 1970. The next year she published Black Scenes: Collections of Scenes from Plays Written by Black People about the Black Experience, a book comprised of 15 scenes (would it be better to say "excerpts?") from plays written by Ossie Davis, William Branch, Julian Mayfield, Lofton Mitchell, Lorraine Hansberry, Ed Bullins, as well her very own *The African Garden*. A year later, Childress embarked on a trip to the Soviet Union to study Soviet life, arts and culture, as a member of an African-American delegation (and one white) of professionals led by editor George B. Murphy, Jr., of the Washington Afro-American newspaper chain.

By 1972, several changes in Childress's professional and personal life were looming. Director Joseph Papp brought *Wedding Band* to the New York Shakespeare Festival Theatre in September with Childress as co-director of the production. Again Ruby Dee headed the cast and critics universally raved that the play showed blacks as individuals yearning for a better life, rather than as caricatures.

Two years later the play was broadcast on ABC Theatre. Several of the network affiliates refused to carry the broadcast because of its theme of interracial love and explicit language. On a more personal front, Childress became a grandmother. Her only grandchild Marilyn Alice was born that year.

After several years of relative success as a playwright, by the end of the 1970's Alice Childress would achieve recognition in an entirely new genre of writing, this time as a children's author. Her first children's novel, A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich in 1973 propelled the 56-year old author into another level of success. In Speaking for Ourselves: Autobiographical Sketches by Notable Authors, Childress remarked that she started writing for children because she wanted to "deal with characters who feel rejected and have to painfully learn how to deal with other people." In an interview in 1993, she explained how she came up with the title of the book.

I was down in Greenwich Village. I saw a man who looked like he was done in by drugs, leaning against a plate-glass window of a restaurant. And he's weeping and about to go over. At the top of his head was a sign on the window that said "A Hero." Then he slid to the ground; the rest of it said "Sandwich, \$1.50." And I said to my companion, "We're living in a time when a hero ain't nothin' but a sandwich." <sup>6</sup>

Hero paints a disturbing portrait of 13-year old black heroin addict. Reviewed as groundbreaking, *The New York Times* hailed the book as "brilliant and masterful," and awarded the book an Outstanding Book of the Year citation. Scholar Susan Koppleman wrote that the book "revolutionized writing for young adults by introducing the nitty-gritty realities of urban life." Two years later A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich became the focus of a landmark case, Steven Pico vs. The Board of Education. The Island Trees Union Free School District's Board of Education (the "Board"), acting contrary to the recommendations of a committee of parents and school staff, ordered that certain books (including Soul on Ice by Eldridge Cleaver, Down These Mean Streets, by Piri Thomas, and Slaughter House Five, by Kurt Vonnegut) be removed from its district's junior high and high school libraries. In support of its actions, the Board said such books were: "anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and just plain filthy." Acting through his friend Francis Pico, and on behalf of several other students, Steven Pico brought suit in federal district court challenging the Board's decision to remove the books. In 1982, the Board won; the

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<sup>6</sup> DeVine, Lawrence. "Playwright Childress has a Certain Following." Detroit Free Press. March 11, 1993.

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit reversed. The Board petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court, which granted certiorari (a writ of superior court to call up the records of an inferior court or a body acting in a quasi-judicial capacity.) The Supreme Court ruled that school boards could not remove books from libraries simply because they did not like the ideas in them.

No stranger to controversy involving her works, Childress felt that censorship threatened everyone, but that it had a historical significance for blacks and wrote about it in an article called "On Censorship," in 1984. "History tells us that Africans, held on American soil, were forbidden by law to speak African languages or learn to read or write English. It was considered dangerous for one in bondage to be literate... To keep human beings down, it is necessary to keep them illiterate. If that fails, the next step is to monitor and select reading material." <sup>7</sup>

A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich garnered Childress several awards including the Jane Adams Award for the young adult novel, the American Library Association Best Young Book, and the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award in 1975. In 1976 she received a National Book Award Nomination. Childress also penned the screenplay for the 1978 film *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*, starring Cicely Tyson and Paul Winfield, which was a box office success. Childress was honored for this work with the first "Paul Robeson Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Performing Arts," and was elected to the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1977.

Ever educating herself as a writer, Childress's travels took her to China in 1973 where she observed the theatre arts in cities including Peking and Shanghai. The following year she journeyed to Ghana to research dance and music at Accra, Aburi and the Cape Coast. Childress also spent time at the University of Ghana to audit classes in African music, religion and politics.

In the following years, Childress penned and published two children's plays, *When the Rattlesnake Sounds* (1975) and *Let's Hear It for the Queen* (1976). *When the Rattlesnake Sounds* is a play fictionalizing a scene from the life of Harriet Tubman prior to the end of American slavery. The action in *Let's Hear It for the Queen* takes a feminist eye to the "Queen of Hearts" nursery rhyme. All of the characters in the play have different ethnic backgrounds, a multicultural twist unique for its time.

Around this time, Childress started to focus on her roots as inspiration for her work. The result was *Sea Island Song*, a musical set in the Gullah Islands off the Carolina coast. The play was

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<sup>7</sup> The Schomburg Center Journal, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1984.

commissioned by the South Carolina State Arts Commission for the state theatre company, Stage South and was produced in 1977, in Charleston, South Carolina. Coincidentally, Childress's play *Wedding Band* was being performed by the Columbia Workshop Theatre in Columbia, South Carolina. To capture the moment, the mayor declared Alice Childress Week in both cities to celebrate the author's contributions to the living arts.

By the close of the decade, Childress had written her first adult novel, *A Short Walk* (1979), inspired by the phrase "Life is just a short walk from the cradle to the grave - and it sure behooves us to be kind to one another along the way." The novel traces African-American history from the turn of the century to the mid-century civil rights movement by following the life of Cora James, who was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and her struggle to survive in Harlem in the 1940s. The book received mixed reviews. Author Alice Walker wrote one of the unfavorable reviews in *Ms Magazine*. Writing to Trudier Harris, Childress expressed her hurt, stating that the review was particularly upsetting because it came from another black woman writer. The same year she published *A Short Walk*, Childress received yet another award, the Golden Circle Award from the Black Theatre Festival U.S.A., for her work as a playwright and actress.

In the 1980's Alice Childress continued to write plays and books, concurrently keeping up a busy schedule of speaking appearances at conferences. In 1981, the author turned her attention back to children's novels with the publication of her second young adult novel, *Rainbow Jordan*. The novel tells the story of a 14-year old teenage girl named Rainbow who struggles with issues of family and being poor. The book garnered good reviews and received a Coretta Scott King Award Honorable Mention in 1982.

In 1984 Childress became an Artist-in-Residence at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, while her play *Gullah*, a revision of her 1977 musical play, *Sea Island Song*, was being produced at the university's Hampden Theatre. In this version, a graduate student born on John's Island returns to study the African cultures preserved there for his doctoral thesis in anthropology.

A year later, Clarice Taylor, a friend and actress who worked with Childress in a number of her productions including *Gold Through the Trees* (which she directed and starred in) approached the author about writing a play about comedienne Jackie "Moms" Mabley's life, starring Taylor. Childress agreed and the result was *Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne*, produced at Green Plays in Art Awareness in Lexington, Massachusetts in 1986. A year later the play reached off-Broadway and was well received at the Hudson Guild Theatre. After *Moms* closed, Childress moved on to her third young adult novel, *Those Other People*, which centered on a young man

coming to terms with his homosexuality. Taylor, who had a reoccurring role on The Cosby Show as Bill Cosby's mother, Anna Huxtable, wanted to mount the play again, and in August of that same year Taylor and playwright Ben Caldwell "reworked" the play and mounted the newly named production *Moms: The First Lady of Comedy* at Astor Place in New York City. Childress filed a lawsuit against Taylor, Caldwell and everyone involved in the new production, primarily for copyright infringement. The lawsuit also alleged that Childress was the sole author of "Moms" and that Taylor had essentially mounted a modified version of it. Taylor's lawyers stated that she was a joint author of said play. After four years of litigation, a U.S. Court of Appeals Circuit judge argued that Childress was the sole author, and a year later she was awarded a summary judgment of \$30,000 in statutory damages.

During the 80's, Childress also received numerous awards including a Graduate Society Medal from Distinguished Achievement for Radcliffe College (1984); an African Poets Theatre Award (1985) an Outstanding Pioneer Award from AUDELCO (1986); a Humanitarian Award from the Harlem School of the Arts (1987); and was nominated for an NAACP Image Award for *Wedding Band* for Best Stage Play (1983).

#### **Childress's Last Four Years: The 1990s**

1990 was a year of both tragedy and triumph for Childress. On May 14, her daughter Jean died of cancer. While still grieving the loss of her only child, the author continued to work at a busy pace, lecturing and making appearances at colleges and universities, as well as other venues. That year she received an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the State University of New York for her lifelong achievements in the arts. And, in November, Childress's many accomplishments were celebrated at the Langston Hughes Festival "Tribute to Alice Childress," at the City College of New York. Longtime friend and colleague Ruby Dee, hosted the event which featured presentations and performances by Woodie King, Jr., James V. Hatch, Vinie Burrows, and J. e. Franklin.

Although now in her 70's and with her health deteriorating, Childress continued working. In November 1992, her play *Trouble in Mind* premiered in London at the Tricycle Theatre to rave reviews. Childress talked about why she wrote the play in The Voice, a London newspaper, saying that it was "the stereotype of thought [and of] attitude. You could dress them [blacks] well and give them good diction, but the ideas [about blacks] stayed the same. Seeing [actors] go through these things turned me to this play. I wanted recognition for them."

In March 1994, the author was inducted into the South Carolina Academy of Authors, where she joined the ranks of well-known South Carolina authors such as Pat Conroy, James Dickey, and Dori

Sanders. By this time, Childress was in and out of the hospital, and on August 14, she died of complications from cancer. At the time of her death, she was working on a novel about her great-grandmothers: an African who had been a slave until the age of nine, and a white woman living in South Carolina entitled Almost Free. She left behind her husband Nathan, and her granddaughter, Marilyn Jean Lee.

### Scope and Content

The Alice Childress Papers, ca. 1937-1997, documents Alice Childress's acting and writing careers from the late 1930s until three years after her death. Divided into three series: **PERSONAL PAPERS**, **PROFESSIONAL**, and **WRITINGS**, the collection consists largely of manuscripts, correspondence, and printed matter, and represents for the most part Childress's writing career, which began in the late 1940s. Manuscripts in the collection include typescripts and handwritten drafts of plays, novels, essays, articles, speeches, and poetry.

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General	4
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### **PERSONAL PAPERS, 1938-1994 (1.4 lin. ft.)**

The **PERSONAL PAPERS** series is divided into four subseries, **Biographical Information**, **Family**, **Correspondence**, and **General**. These subseries provide a brief overview of the actress/author's personal life as a wife and mother, colleague and friend.

The **Biographical Information subseries, 1950s-1997 (.4 lin. ft.)** highlights Childress's acting and writing careers. The Obituary and

Tributes files contain clippings and letters of remembrance from longtime colleagues and friends including Kay Bourne, Harold (Hal) Courlander and Susan Koppleman. There is a small amount of information about the Alice Childress estate, pertaining to some of Childress's books and play scripts. A copy of the interview conducted by writer and librarian Ann Shockley in 1973 for an oral history project at Fisk University can be found here.

The largest set of files contains a large number of Biographical Sketches, which effectively chronicle Childress's long, rich and diverse career. Childress wrote most of these sketches and her publishers and/or her agent created the rest. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) file contains both an FBI report as well as Childress's correspondence with the U.S. Government to obtain this file. The file focuses primarily on Childress's association with Communist party organizations and suspected communists. In addition, there is a file containing assorted Interviews and Clippings, which feature Childress primarily as a novelist and playwright.

In the **Family subseries, 1932-1994, (.2 lin. ft.)** there are files for her two husbands, Alvin Childress (1932-1938) and Nathan Woodard (1941-1997, n.d.). The Alvin Childress file contains programs and clippings for several productions in which he appeared including *Brown Sugar* (1937), *Out of The Crimson Fog* (also known as *Hell's Alley*, 1931), *Savage Rhythm* (1932), and *Haiti*, the last play was written by W.E.B. DuBois (1938). Woodard's file is primarily composed of love letters written to Childress while traveling on band dates in the United States, Japan, Hawaii and Canada. Woodard was a trumpet player, who, after graduating high school began his professional career with Royal American Show's "Harlem in Havana," revue with Bill Harvey's band. He played with band leaders Duke Ellington and Johnny Ace among others, and performed the works of composers Melvin Van Peebles and Howard McGhee. The file also contains a few letters Childress wrote to Woodard, as well as resumes for the musician. There is also a small file of letters, which are believed to have been written to Childress by various members of her family. A small file related to Childress's daughter Jean Lee and granddaughter Marilyn Lee are restricted.

The files contained in the largest subseries, **Correspondence, 1950s-1990s, (.4 lin. ft.)** are chiefly from colleagues, friends, and well-wishers, and are distinguished by their personal nature which is largely absent from her professional correspondence which can be found in the **PROFESSIONAL** series. There are four files of Letters from Prison Inmates, which reveals what may have been a benefactor relationship that Childress assumed (as "auntie") to help young incarcerated black men.

The four files found in the **General subseries, 1963-1992, (.4 lin. ft.)** include Diaries and Calendars for the years 1963-1964, her USSR Trip in August in 1971, the year 1977 (incomplete), and the years 1981-1985, and contain, for the most part, professional information. These diaries and calendars give insights on the writer's life as artist, wife and mother. Each diary contains Childress's thoughts on a variety of themes including (but not limited to) the discipline of her craft, upcoming speaking engagements, character development for such plays as *Wedding Band*, in addition to information regarding readings, rehearsals, production and publicity interests. Most notable is her USSR trip diary, where the writer records her thoughts about the various cities she visited which included Moscow and Leningrad. In addition there is also a file for her trip to China in 1973 that contains souvenirs and a bill from the Guardian newspaper that hosted the tour.

The **General** files offer a glimpse into Childress's education and activism. In the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study file, there is a copy of Childress's biographical statement that accompanied her application to the Institute, along with letters, and minutes from the Radcliffe Institute Trustee Visiting Committee, of which she was a board member. Most interesting is a letter penned by Childress that describes how the fellowship allowed her the space to do her work. The scattered information found in the Financial file contains pertinent information about how one of the most enduring black female writers in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was plagued with financial problems, primarily for the years 1984-1987. Detailed income, health insurance and tax information can be found here. (For more information about Royalties, see the file in the Professional Series.)

**PROFESSIONAL PAPERS, 1940-1994 (2.5 lin. ft)**

This series consists of documents that represent aspects of Childress's life as a professional actress, writer, and speaker, in addition to a number of studies conducted by scholars about Childress and her influence primarily as a playwright. The five subseries are: **Acting Career, Associations and Committees, Correspondence, Royalty Statements, and About Alice Childress and Her Work.**

**Acting Career, 1940-1981, (.2 lin. ft.)**

The files in this subseries represent a significant portion of the productions, both theatre and film, in which Childress appeared over 30 years. Although the information is often scant, it provides a rich overview of her acting career. The files found here are primarily for the productions, but also include theatrical organizations and agencies in which she had participated and include broadsides, contracts, programs, reviews, and other



ephemera. There are also files for the American Negro Theatre, *Anna Lucasta* (the original Broadway production, plus a scrapbook), *The Candy Store*, *The Cool World*, *The Emperor's Clothes*, *Grace*, *Hell's Alley*, *A Milestone on the Road to the Truth*, *Natural Man*, *Three-One Act Plays - The Harlem Players*, and *The World of Sholem Aleichem*, among others. These files are arranged alphabetically.

**Associations and Committees, 1945-1993 (.4 lin. ft.)**

Childress was active in many professional organizations throughout her life. The files in this subseries largely represent writing associations, but there are political and social organizations and committees as well. In addition, there are a few files for organizations and committees requesting information from Childress as well as seeking her membership or support. Although these records do not run the course of Childress's professional life, they provide valuable insight into the professional and political activities in which she engaged. The files are listed alphabetically, and contain letters, agendas, minutes, newsletters, flyers and others ephemera.

Files include the National Ad Hoc Committee to End the Crimes Against Paul Robeson, which contains "A Statement of Conscious," an open letter printed in Variety and signed by over 50 prominent African Americans. The letter was partly in response to the play *Paul Robeson*, which opened on Broadway January 1978, and largely due to the *persona non grata* status Robeson was subjected to by the United States government starting in the 1950's. This file also contains an annotated copy (by Childress) of the "Statement of Conscious," letters, reviews of the play, copies of form letters signed by Robeson himself, and an incomplete copy of the play script, *Paul Robeson*. The Rainbow Coalition - Blacks on Roosevelt Island file includes letters, agendas and notes Childress kept as the Chair of the Rainbow Coalition Steering Committee. The organization was a chapter of the National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition (RPC), an international membership organization founded by Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. in 1985. Other files include the Actors' Equity Association, the Authors Guild, Inc., National Coalition Against Censorship, P.E.N., A World Association of Writers, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., W.E.B. DuBois Foundation, Inc., and the Writers Guild of America, East.

**Correspondence, 1940s-1990s (bulk dates 1980-1989) (1.4 lin. ft.)**

Childress's professional correspondence captures the essence of her life working to produce and publish throughout her career. The correspondence is predominately incoming, although there are a few files with copies of letters written by Childress. This subseries is further delineated into six sub-subseries: Publishers and Agents, Awards, Conferences, Speaking Engagements, General - Alphabetical, and General. Subjects include invitations for

speaking engagements, letters of appreciation, requests from playhouses and colleges to perform her plays and requests for biographical information.

The Publishers and Agents files are arranged chronologically. Letters from publishers in these files include Afro-American Newspapers, Avon Books, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., Ebony, Freedom newspaper, Ms, and Macmillan Company and Putnam. Found here also are letters from several of Childress's literary agents including Max Pfeffer, James Bohan, and Flora Roberts. Roberts was Childress's literary agent for several decades, and her letters make up the largest part of this sub-subseries. Some of the letters are annotated (e.g., "answered") and the subjects range from the publication of her works (e.g., Like One of the Family) to requests for biographical information from biographical dictionary publishers (e.g., Gale, Who's Who). The Rejection Letters is a small but interesting file that contains several rejection letters (mainly for short stories) Childress received early in her career, largely under the *nom de plume*, "Alice Franklyn."

This subseries also contains a small amount of letters from Childress, both copies and handwritten drafts. The file is particularly rich in content dating from the year she had her first play *Florence* produced, and gives an overall candid look at the author's concerns as they relate to her writings. The file contains letters to Carl Murphy, President of the Afro-American Newspapers, whose Baltimore paper published "Here's Marge," scholar Trudier Harris, Flora Roberts, and Harold Courlander, among others. Many of the subjects Childress addresses are requests to option her plays, ideas for projects, Harlem, and the role of a writer. One letter addressed to a student named Donnie George, painstakingly details why she wrote A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich, and her use of profanity (what the student called "bad language") in the book.

Most significant are the Awards, Conferences, and Speaking Engagement files. An overview of the files reveals that Childress traveled widely and was an in-demand speaker regardless of whether she had published a book or had recently mounted a play. While some files do relate to the publicity for her written works, the letters reveal that she was in demand for her skills as an orator. The Awards files contain mostly certificates, letters and programs that Childress's received over the course of her writing career beginning in the 1950's.

The Conferences files are largely composed of agendas, brochures, flyers, letters of invitation and appreciation, programs, schedules and clippings. Childress participated in a number of literary conferences. Of note is the file on the First International Women Playwrights Conference, October 14-23, 1988, which contains

letters, itineraries, drafts for the proceedings, and printed transcriptions of the two panels "International Women Playwrights" and "Censorship and Self-Censorship" on which Childress participated. Papers for both panels are filed here as well. Her keynote address for this conference can also be found in the file.

The largest set of the three files, Speaking Engagements, is arranged by decade and contain letters of invitation and appreciation, contracts, itineraries, letters of commitment, programs and clippings. There are invitations to appear at conferences, radio and television programs, symposiums and festivals, and at various colleges and universities, schools, community organizations and libraries. Particularly interesting is a series of thank you letters sent to Childress after she appeared on the PBS variety show, Soul in 1972. There is also information about the "Prophets for a New Day" conference held at Hartford College in February 1990, which included distinguished writers such as Ann Petry, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Sonia Sanchez. A draft of Childress's speech, along with letters, newsletters, programs, research information and clippings can be found here, some of which are heavily annotated by Childress. There is also a folder for the trip the author took as a part of the 1981 Delegation to the German Democratic Republic. This folder contains drafts of her impressions of the G.D.R., letters, a program, and U.S. Committee for Friendship with the German Democratic Republic newsletters. Childress also lectured at a number of colleges and universities including Spelman College, Howard University, Rutgers University, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Rollins College, and Hartford College for Women.

In the General - Alphabetical sub-subseries contains letters from a number of prominent individuals, some of whom Childress counted among her friends including academicians, activists, filmmakers, playwrights, and writers such as John Henrik Clarke, Owen Dodson, W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Duberman, Hoyt Fuller, Trudier Harris, Hilda Haynes, Eva Jessye, John O. Killens, Susan Koppleman, Julian Mayfield, Lofton Mitchell, Louise Thompson Patterson, Paul Robeson, and Jacqueline Shearer. The most substantive letters are from writers Kay Borne and Harold Courlander and Anne Snyder, all of whom discuss their works as well as provide Childress with insights into many areas of their lives, primarily as writers and teachers. The last sub-subseries, General, consist of letters of appreciation, requests from playhouses and colleges to perform her plays and for biographical information. The files are arranged chronologically. General fan mail can be found here. Note: fan mail associated with a particular book or play is filed with that book or play.

**Royalty Statements, 1940s-1990s, (.2 lin. ft.)**

This subseries offers a look into the sales made and royalties earned by Childress as an author, playwright and freelance writer, primarily for her work in the 1980s, with a few exceptions for the 1940's and 1950's. Childress received royalties for a play called *So Early Monday Morning* in 1957, however there is no information in the collection that refers to that title, along with "I Couldn't Hide My Sin" (originally titled "I Didn't Know How to Live") published in Tan magazine, for which there is a check stub. There is a ledger listing royalty payments for 1984-1985, and combined statements for most of the 1980's and 1990's primarily for books; subsidiary rights; reprints of short stories or quotes from her works; and amateur and professional performances of her plays.

**About Alice Childress and Her Work, 1980-1996, n.d. (.4 lin. ft.)**

There were a number of studies written about Childress, her writing and the influence she had on the work of contemporary writers. This subseries contains a few of those studies along with biographical information collected by biographical references works and interviews conducted by scholars. This set of files represents a cross-section of writings about Childress and her work including interviews, critical papers, a dissertation (In Praise of African-American Women: Female Images in the Plays of Alice Childress by Barbara Rothman Vojta) and biographical sketches. Some files also include correspondence with Childress. Among the items found here are papers such as "Embracing Heritage in Alice Childress's *Wedding Band*," by Roberta Maguire; "Self-Knowledge as the Ultimate Female Subjectivity: The Plays of Terry, Childress, and Howe," Susan Koppelman; and "'Alice Childress's *Wine in the Wilderness*,'" by Gayle Austin, which was included in Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism: Paying Her Attention. Other notable papers include "The Artist as Activist: The Views of Alice Childress," by Betsy R. Spratt, which was part of a master's project that identified the creative activism of women in various fields. This manuscript is heavily annotated by Childress.

Transcriptions of interviews found here include an 18-page transcription of an interview conducted by Shirley M. Jordan for her book, Broken Silences: Interviews with Black and White Women Writers. Writer/historian Martin Duberman's transcribed interview with Childress for his biography, Paul Robeson, is also in this file.

Many of these documents have been annotated by Childress. Notable is a brief sketch of Childress by Paul Robeson, "About Alice Childress," which may have been intended as the introduction to the first edition of Like One of the Family but was not included in the 1956 edition.

Two years after Childress's death, a symposium in her honor entitled "The Life and Work of Alice Childress," was held at the Third Annual National Symposium on African American Theatre, North Carolina A&T State University, October 25-26, 1996. The symposium featured contributions by theatre historian Samuel A. Hay, playwrights Addell Austin Anderson and William Branch, with music by her husband, Nathan Woodard. A program from that event is filed here.

**WRITINGS, 1949-1994 (bulk dates 1970s-1980s) series (13.2 lin. ft.)**

The largest and most substantive series, **WRITINGS**, contains the manuscripts for nearly every published book and play script written by Childress. The series is divided into six subseries (by genre) and begins with Childress's best-known works. The subseries represented are: **Children's Books; Novels; Play Scripts, Screenplays and Teleplays; Fiction and Non-Fiction;** (Columns, Editorial work, Monologues, Non-fiction, Short Stories, and Speeches); **Other Writings** (Poetry, Songs, and Research Notes) and **Other Authors**. This series contains an array of manuscript drafts, reviews, fan mail, teacher's critical guides, research notes, manuscript scores (for her musicals), galleys, publicity information, letters, contracts, outlines, programs, flyers, and clippings. Many of the manuscripts have been heavily annotated by Childress. Titles in each subseries are listed alphabetically.

**Children's Books, 1973-1989, n.d. (1.2 lin. ft.)**

Childress began writing for children in 1968 beginning with her play, *Young Martin Luther King* (originally titled *A King Remembered*). Manuscripts for all of Childress's published children's books and works can be found here, including the aforementioned titles, as well as Let's Hear it For the Queen, Rainbow Jordan, Those Other People, When the Rattlesnake Sounds, an incomplete novel that focuses on Native American culture.

The A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich files contain an early draft of the novel with annotations by Childress, correspondence, promotional materials for the book, reviews and fan mail, and a study guide.

Files for *Let's Hear it For the Queen* contain a play script, a galley (both annotated by Childress) music scores written by her husband Nathan Woodard, and reviews of the book.

Found in the files for Rainbow Jordan Childress's second novel for children, are manuscripts, galleys (both annotated by Childress), publicity lists, reviews, and a study guide for Rainbow Jordan.

Those Other People was Childress's third novel for children, and contained within the files are several versions of manuscripts and typescripts (all with annotations by Childress and the copy

editor's notes), galleys, and letters that accompanied reviews of the book from her publisher, Putnam & Grosset Group.

There is a small file for the published play script, *When the Rattlesnake Sounds* containing reviews sent to Childress by her publisher, Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan.

The files for the play, *Young Martin Luther King*, (later edited and renamed *A King Remembered* in 1975) contain several versions of the play script, and reviews for two performances of the play.

**Novels, 1961-1994, n.d. (1.4 lin. ft.)**

Childress published only one adult novel during her life, A Short Walk, in 1979. This subseries contains manuscripts for several novel projects, including a novel she was working on at the time of her death, Almost Free, a fictionalized story based on the lives of her great-grandmothers: one of whom was born in Africa and was enslaved until the age of nine, and the other was a white woman who lived in South Carolina. Also found here are two manuscripts, "Blood March," and an untitled work.

The Almost Free files include handwritten and typed drafts, notebooks, and research data describing the customs, food, and life in general during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Blood March file contains an incomplete manuscript, typed and handwritten notes, research information about Seminole and Creek Indians, character descriptions, and an outline of the chapters, along with a letter to a Miss Ullman (April 19, 1961) that provides insights into Childress's idea about the story she wished to create. This was her first attempt at penning a novel that wasn't strictly about blacks and whites.

Files for A Short Walk (1978-1981, n.d.) contain a number of typescript drafts, a final manuscript (all with annotations by Childress), publicity information and reviews, and research information which includes handwritten notes featuring A Short Walk's working title, What to Do Until Freedom Comes: A Novel about a Life of a Black Woman. There is also information about Marcus Garvey, a copy of a letter to "Art" that explains her modus operandi concerning her writing style ("I write in swatches") and her rationale for writing the novel.

**Play Scripts, Screenplays and Teleplays, 1949-1993, n.d. (9.2 lin. ft.)** comprise the largest and most substantial subseries in the **WRITING** series. This subseries begins with Play Scripts, 1949-1993, n.d. (bulk **dates 1960s-1980s**) (7.4 lin. ft.), which contains documentation for all of Childress's produced plays. Many of the files contain drafts, programs, research materials, as well as reviews. Included is information (mostly play scripts) for: *Gold*

*Through the Trees, Gullah, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, Florence, Just a Little Simple, Mojo: A Black Love Story, Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne, Sea Island Song, String, Trouble in Mind, Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White, and Wine in the Wilderness.* There are also files for a number of unpublished, unproduced work.

The **Play Scripts** are organized into five categories: Full-Length Plays; Musicals; One-Act Plays; Adaptations and Collaborations; Ten-Minute (or less) and Incomplete Play Scripts and Outlines. Childress's full-length plays include four of her best-known works, *Gold Through the Trees, Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedian, Trouble in Mind, and Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White.*

The files for *Gold Through the Trees* (1952) contain various drafts, as well as a flyer for the production at Club Baron in Harlem, and a contract for Helen Martin, one of the actresses who appeared in the production.

Files for *Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne*, are particularly rich with information about the genesis of the play, and the copyright infringement case Childress brought against Clarice Taylor in 1987. The files begin with versions of the play script, and includes casting call lists, correspondence, contracts, programs and reviews of the first staging at the Green Plays Theatre in Lexington, New York in 1986, and at Hudson Guild Theatre in 1987. There are also research materials about Jackie "Moms" Mabley, several drafts, (mostly with annotations, some incomplete), rehearsal scripts, and the transcription of an oral history with one of Mabley's sons.

The rest of the files relate specifically to the Childress vs. Taylor lawsuit. There are a number of legal documents included here such as affidavits, briefs, depositions, memorandums of law, and a copy of the judgment. In addition there are files of correspondence, copies of the two play scripts, *Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne*, by Childress and *Moms: The First Lady of Comedy*, by Ben Caldwell and Clarice Taylor, annotated by Childress, two of Taylor's play scripts, *An Evening with Moms*, and *An Evening of Comedy with Jackie 'Moms' Mabley*, which were sent to Childress via her lawyers for review in order to verify that Taylor created an original work.

The files for Childress's first major success, *Trouble in Mind* (1956-1992, n.d.) include several undated scripts with annotations, correspondence, contracts, notes, programs and reviews of performances in New York, Ohio, Florida, Washington, DC, and London. An annotated play script for *Eight in a Box* (n.d.), an early version of *Trouble in Mind*, can be found in this section.

The next largest set of files in the Play Scripts subseries contain information on Childress's best known play, *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White* (1962-1992, n.d.) Included in this file are over a dozen versions of the play script with annotations, some relating to performances in New York, Chicago, Boston, Atlanta, Norfolk, Va., New Brunswick, and Philadelphia; drafts, correspondence, programs, pages of a diary discussing producers, potential cast members, and rewrites; and production notes relating to the first production of the play at the University of Michigan in 1966. Favorable reviews of the play when it was broadcast on ABC Theatre in 1974, as well as reviews for other productions, can be found here. The files for *Lady in the Backyard* (c. 1961), *My Carolina* (c. 1961) and *The Wings of Time* (n.d.), all appear to be early versions of *Wedding Band*, and can be found in this section. Other plays in this series include: *Copra: A West Indian Drama*, n.d., *A Host of Friends*, 1980, 1981, 1993; *Man Bearing a Pitcher*, n.d., and *The Penny Pinchers*, n.d.,

Childress wrote several musicals, three of which were produced. Her most well known musical, *Gullah* (formerly called *Sea Island Song*) (1977-1981) contains several versions of the play script with annotations, sketches, programs and reviews of the performances in South Carolina and Massachusetts, both in 1984. Materials in the *Gullah* files directly relate to the play's resurrection in 1984 under that title. The *Sea Island Song* files are filed separately.

The files for *Sea Island Song* (1977) were found together and are differentiated from the latter version of the play, *Gullah*, by virtue of their date and performance. Play scripts, outlines, performance schedules for the play in Dillon, South Carolina, and research about the Carolina Sea Islands and *Gullah* culture can be found here. The research files for the play are particularly rich and contain a report titled Doctor Can't Do Me No Good: Social Concomitants of Health Care Attitudes and Practices Among Elderly Blacks in Isolated Rural Populations, that focuses specifically on the elderly residents of the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, as well as songs, folklore, studies and clippings about life on the Islands.

Files for Childress's first and only attempt at writing an opera, *The Sun Like Gold* (1970-1971), with music by Ulysses Kay, is a drama about the life of Harriet Tubman. One of the twentieth century's most prominent African-American composers, Ulysses Kay was known in his lifetime mostly for his symphonic and choral writing. The files contain correspondence, the libretto, handwritten notes, outlines, research, and clippings. Childress often used real-life incidents as fodder for her work. Her play *The Trial of Emile Zola* is a dramatization of the French novelist's article, "J'Accuse! (I Accuse!)," that appeared in L'Aurore (The Dawn) in 1898, and basically took to task the French



government for the 1894 arrest and (false) conviction for treason of Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish artillery officer in the French army. Childress dramatizes the events in musical form. The files for *The Trial of Emile Zola* (n.d) play include two copies of the play script with annotations.

The only play that Childress ever penned that does not feature blacks is *The First Three Hundred Years* (n.d.). The story focuses on the history of Jewish people, featuring both Yiddish and English speaking characters. This file contains a play script with annotations.

*Behind Every Door: A Light Opera for a Working Lady* (1984-1985), with music by Nathan Woodard, bears the distinction of being a finalist in a contest sponsored by the New York Shakespeare Festival (NYSF), although it was not performed. Included in this file is a play script, letters from the NYSF, and sheet music with annotations.

Childress began writing One-Act plays as early as the late forties, among them *Florence* (1949-1950), the first one-act drama she wrote and produced for which there is a file. The published version of the play, which appeared in the Masses and Mainstream in October 1950, is also included.

The files for the play *Wine in the Wilderness* (1969-1986, n.d.) contain a published play script, reviews for both stage productions, and the television broadcast of the play on the "On Being Black" series, featuring Abby Lincoln. The file for *Mojo: A Black Love Story* (1970) contains an earlier version of the play script, *In Teddy's Apartment*, is filed here, as well as a script for *Mojo: A Black Love Story*.

Other one-act plays found here include: *Billy on the Ball* (n.d.); *The Chinese Excursion - Harlem Play* (n.d.); *The Fundraisers* (1955, n.d.); and *The World on a Hill* (n.d.)

Childress crafted adaptations of several plays, novels and short stories early in her writing career, and collaborated with a number of people, particularly her second husband, Nathan Woodard. There is a small group of materials pertaining to Childress's first adaptation (and second play), *Just a Little Simple* (1950), based on Langston Hughes's Simple Speaks His Mind (1950). The working title for the play was *All is Simple*. Included are several versions of the play script with annotations, hand written drafts (all incomplete) along with a program, and a review of the play which appeared in Freedom newspaper.

*String*, based on a short story by French writer, Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), *A Piece of String*, is Childress's second adaptation to

be produced. Represented in the files is a copy of the version of the published play as it appeared in an anthology, early drafts of the play, the "original" script, a program and reviews pertaining to the Negro Ensemble Company production of the play in 1969, "An Evening of One Acts," and the combined rehearsal scripts of *String* and Ted Shine's *Shoes*, for KCET in Los Angeles in 1978.

The file for the dramatic adaptation of Childress's novel *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich* contains a letter to the author, and reviews for the production mounted by the Theatre Company at the University of Detroit, March 12-28, 1993. The record does not indicate who wrote the dramatization, nor indicate how involved Childress was in the production.

Childress also sought to adapt William Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello...The Moor of Venice* (n.d.) and structured her version of the play for three characters. This file contains a play script with annotations that show that Childress wanted to integrate musical interludes in the drama.

Childress also collaborated with musician Irving Lord Burgie, a well-known composer and arranger, for the play *Song of the Storm*. Popularly known as "Lord Burgess," Burge wrote the lyrics for the national anthem of Barbados. The files for *Song of the Storm* (1966?) include a play script, and copious notes taken by Childress about the Garvey movement.

The files for *So You Want to Be a Musician?* (1954, 1956, c 1960) contain three plays scripts, and were initially written under the pen name, "Eddie Franklyn."

Throughout Childress's marriage to Nathan Woodard, the two collaborated on a number of musicals and plays with music, including *Young Martin Luther King* (originally titled *Freedom Drum*), *The African Garden*, *Gullah*, *Sea Island Song*, and *Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne*. (*Young Martin Luther King* is filed under Children's Books; *The African Garden*, *Gullah* and *Sea Island Song* are filed with Musicals, and *Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne* filed with Full-length Plays.)

Other adaptations and collaborations include: *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*, n.d. (adaptation and collaboration with Serge Hovey); *I Got Shoes*, by Frank Merlin, 1963, n.d.; *Joe Magarac*, 1950s? (adaptation), and *The White Haired Girl*, by Ting Yu and Ho Chin-Chih.

Included in the following category, Ten-Minute (or less) Plays, Incomplete Play Scripts and Outlines, are several unpublished play scripts by Childress. Many of the scripts are undated, yet

sometimes there are clues as to when she might have penned some of them. The sketch *And So They Lived* was written under Childress's nom de plume, "Eddie Franklyn," a pseudonym Childress appeared to use only during the 1950's.

There are two draft scripts for *Converstatic*, one with annotations, and one with different character names.

Other files include *And Yet So Far*, n.d. (incomplete); *Audition Play*, n.d. (incomplete); *The End of the Civil Rights Movement*, (1964?) (incomplete); *Friendship Festival*, n.d. (incomplete) and *A Tapping Sound*, n.d. (10-min.) None of these plays were produced.

**Screenplays, 1951-1979, n.d. (.6 lin. ft.)** features the only screenplay Childress wrote which made it to the screen, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich. Along with drafts, there is a promotional program, a scene breakdown, and reviews. The file for The Beauty of Darkness, a screenplay commissioned by Clairol for a feature film or a commercial project, contains drafts and outlines. The files for Happy Birthday, Mrs. Craig consists of several versions of the screenplay with annotations, including one that was optioned by Belafonte Enterprises, Inc. The Stomping at the Savoy (1979, n.d.) file contains several versions of the screenplay with annotations. Other screenplays include More Than a Notion (1951, n.d.), A New Sound (n.d.), and a treatment for a screenplay, Robie and Rose (1978).

**Teleplays, 1972-1990, n.d. (1.2 lin. ft.)** encompasses adapted works by Childress (*Wedding Band*), or works that focus on fictional or actual black women ("Bessie Smith;" "The Finish of Patsy Barnes;" "Hattie;" "A Portrait of Fannie Lou Hamer.") There are also files for "Bricks Without Straw," (1983) a miniseries about Booker T. Washington and his wife Olivia proposed by New Image Productions. Nothing in the collection indicates whether any of the teleplays were ever produced. These files include drafts of scripts, correspondence, outlines, research, treatments, and notes.

**Fiction and Non-Fiction 1803-1989, n.d. (bulk dates 1960s-1980s) (1.4 lin. ft.)** subseries contains information pertaining to Childress's first book, Like One of the Family; columns; Black Scenes: Collection of Scenes from Plays Written by Black People About Black Experience, monologues, articles and essays, reviews and other types of writings.

Files for Like One of the Family: Conversations from a Domestic's Life, Childress's first published book of anthologized vignettes, contain rich information about the relationship between Childress and her publisher, Arthur Kahn of Independent Publishers, Inc. Several letters between the author's and the publisher reveal a contentious partnership. These letters are accompanied by an

agreement detailing the author and publisher's responsibilities, a list of activities undertaken by Childress to promote the book, and letters (one in German) regarding the reprinting rights of the book to a German publisher and notes. In the 1986 file, there is a draft of the introduction for the reprint edition by literary scholar Trudier Harris, with annotations by Childress, along with reviews of the book.

There are three files of manuscripts for "Here's Mildred," the column Childress wrote for the Baltimore Afro-American, and a file of drafts that appear to be edited copies of columns in a folder titled "Overheard and Understood." There is no evidence in the files that these columns were ever published. Childress also penned a column for Freedom, but no manuscripts are found in this collection.

There are two files for Black Scenes: Collection of Scenes from Plays Written by Black People About Black Experience containing a draft of the book's introduction, correspondence, reviews, and a copy of *The Bird Cage*, by Floyd Barbour, which was excerpted in the book. There is one file containing an annotated sample for a monologue called "Man at the Phone."

Of interest are three articles Childress wrote when she was with the Works Progress Administration Federal Writers Project, "Brief History of the Minstrel Show and It's Form," "Early Days of New York...Negro Residents," and "Notes on History of Colored Baseball." Additionally there are files for published articles that contain drafts, correspondence, reviews, notes, among them "Knowing the Human Condition," (Black American Literature and Humanism; "Why I Write in New York," (Writers Guild of America); "Negro Woman in Literature" (Freedomways; "A Woman Playwright Speaks Her Mind" (Negro Life and History); "Those Were the Days, My Friend," (New York Times); and an introduction to a reprint of Fannie Hurst's book Lummox.

Ebony Magazine commissioned Childress to write a story about "Harlem on My Mind," the exhibition of the same name featured at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. Based on Childress's annotations on one of the drafts, Ebony never published the essay, and she was seeking to publish it in Negro Digest. The file includes drafts with annotations and notes.

Another item of note is the program for the "Negro History Festival, Paul Robeson" that Childress wrote with Lorraine Hansberry for a black history celebration on February 12, 1952. Childress's eulogy for the son her friend and fellow actress, Hilda Haynes is also found here.

There are files for several projects in the collection including a "Proposal to set up a Dialogue Concerning the Production of an Afro-American Film in the USSR," which may relate to her trip to the Soviet Union in the 1970's. There is also a file for a "Report on the Gold Coast" (n.d.) that contains drafts, correspondence, research, and notes.

There are two files for an introduction Childress wrote ("Treasure in Space") for the book, A True Likeness: The Black South of Richard Samuel Roberts, 1920-1936 edited by Thomas L. Johnson and Philip C. Dunn. The files contain a draft, correspondence, research and notes. Another file, Pico vs. Board of Education, Island Trees relates specifically to the censorship case related to A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich. This file contains a copy of a brief and the ruling, as well as drafts, notes and research material relating to a non-fiction project Childress appears to have been interested in developing about Steven Pico's life. Also of note are clippings from two book banning cases concerning the novel in the Island Trees School District in Long Island, New York, and the Savannah-Chatham Public Schools in Savannah, Georgia.

In the 50's, Childress wrote short stories for magazines in order to make ends meet, often under the nom de plume, "Eddie Franklyn." Many of the short stories are not dated with a few exceptions, and there is little evidence in the collection that any were published. Most of the files for the stories contain manuscripts and drafts with annotations, and two contain letters. Among the twenty-three stories found here are: "All About Miss Harriet Tubman," "A Black Christmas Story," "Dunbar - Alice and Doctor," "The Magi Went Seeking," "The Story of Ola," and "Street Corner Speaker."

Files containing Speeches appear to be only a fraction of the dozens of appearances Childress made over the last four decades of her life. Many of the speeches filed here were found separated from related materials and have been collected to provide a sense of the variety of her speeches. Found here are speeches made at libraries and library associations ("Address to New York Librarians," Donnell Library, New York Public Library; "Banned Authors, Banned Books," American Library Association; "Praise and Simplicity," Roosevelt Island Library); recounting her career as a playwright and actress ("The Black Experience in Theatre," ANTA, School of Printing; "Notes on the Black Theatre," SUNY at Purchase, NY; "The Paul Robeson Award to Harry Belafonte,"), and at educational conferences ("Education and the Black Child," Black Educators.) There is file for a speech about Langston Hughes that includes his resume, n.d., which may have been for a eulogy or a remembrance at a memorial service. There is also a file of drafts and fragments for unidentifiable speeches.

**Other Writings, c.1951, n.d.** includes poetry, songs and research files. The poetry file contains two poems by Childress including "Martinsville Blues," and an untitled poem.

**Other Authors, 1940-1996, n.d. (bulk dates 1960s-1980s) (.8 lin. ft.)** Childress was well integrated into the theatrical and writing communities, and was often called upon to read other author's works. In the Other Authors subseries, there are several pieces (consisting primarily of play scripts, teleplays, essays, shorts stories and critical studies) by Childress's colleagues and friends. Included are several files of note, among them adaptations of Childress's work. There is a screenplay for an 8-10 minute short film of The Pocketbook Game (1986), by Dawn E. Gross, based on a vignette that appeared in Like One of the Family. Childress's annotations imply that she was not pleased with the characterization of the story's heroine, Marge. Theatre historian Samuel A. Hay's play, *Crack, Cream, and Brown Sugar* (1996), names Childress's A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich as inspiration. The play was performed during "The Life and Work of Alice Childress," a tribute to Childress at the Third Annual National Symposium on African American Theatre, North Carolina A&T State University, October 25-26, 1996. Additionally there is a teleplay adaptation of Childress's Wedding Band (1991) by Jeff Stetson, who was working with Producer/Actress Debbie Allen to produce a television movie for NBC. Records do not indicate that this project was produced.

The work of Langston Hughes is represented in two files, a play script, "Emperor of Haiti" (alternate title: "Trouble Island," c. 1949) and a speech for the National Assembly of Authors and Dramatists at the Alvin Theatre, New York (1957). Writer/activist (and the wife of Paul Robeson) Eslanda Goode Robeson's unpublished manuscript for "Color" (n.d.) can be found here as well. Play scripts, screenplays, reports, and essays by other writers of note in these files include Ed Bullins (*A Son, Come Home* and *Ten One-Act Plays*, both n.d.); Steve Carter (*One Last Look*, 1967); Harold Courlander ("The Emperor Wore Clothes," an essay about the author's visit to Haile Selassie in 1943, American Scholar, 1989); Samuel A. Hay ("Black Theatre History Research Conference," 1986); Ted Shine (*Contribution*, n.d.); Derek Walcott (*Malochon! Or The Six in the Rain*).

Also found here are a set of files related to a film project by the late documentary filmmaker Jacqueline Shearer, titled Addie and the Pink Carnations (1984), including versions of the manuscript "The Pink Carnations." There are also files for a related film project, Didn't Take Low (1980-1981), a film about black domestic workers in the Depression. These files include correspondence between Childress and Shearer that indicates Shearer wanted Childress to serve as story consultant for the project. In addition to scripts,

and a National Endowment for the Arts application, John Edgar Wideman's manuscript, a first draft for Didn't Take Low, is also included here.

Complementary Collections

American Negro Theatre

American Negro Theatre Scrapbook

Freedom newspaper

Negro Ensemble Company Records

The Jacqueline Shearer Papers

Frank Silvera Writers Workshop Records

Source: Gift of the Estate of Alice Childress and Nathan Woodard,  
1998 SCM98-56

Processed by: Steven G. Fullwood, October 2005

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	9	<i>Hell's Alley</i> , n.d.
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\* See Box 51 (scrapbook)

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	6	Incomplete - Annotated, n.d.
	7	Tricycle Theatre - Correspondence, Contract, Notes, 1992-1993
	8	"Old Copy," n.d. Programs and Reviews
	9	"The Negro In America," BBC, Third Programme, October- December 1964
	10	The Board of the Takoma Players, Inc. (Washington, DC)
	11	Bowling Green State University, 1979
	12	La Cave Theatre, 1977
	13	Various, 1956-1984
	14	Valencia Community College, Orlando, Florida, n.d.

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
29		<i>Wedding Band</i>
		Typescripts
	1	#5 -Annotated, May 1962
	2	Oklahoma Version, c.1962, 1963
	3-4	Annotated, c.1962, April 30, 1963
	5-6	Annotated, c.1962, April 13, 1964
	7	Annotated - ("Not most up to date") April 13, 1964
	8-9	c.1962, Revised 1965
30	1	Annotated, c.1962, Revised 1965
	2	Chicago-Ivanhoe - Draft, Annotated, Revised July 1972
	3	#11 - Old Version, c. June 1972
	4	Rehearsal - The Newman Theater, August 29, 1972
	5	#26 - Annotated, c.1962- August 1972
	6	Annotated - Revised November 8, 1972
31	1-2	Annotated, n.d.
	3-4	Annotated - Incomplete, n.d.
	5	#4 - Annotated, n.d.
	6	Draft - Annotated, n.d.
	7	Draft - Annotated, Incomplete with Notes, n.d.
32	1	Diary - October-November 1963
	2	Correspondence, 1963-1965
		Production Materials
	3	Mendelson Theatre - University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1966-1969
	4	Hartford Stage Company, January-February 1979

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
32	5	Wells Theatre, Virginia State Company, Norfolk, Virginia, October-November 1990
		Programs
	6	Boston University School of Fine Arts and Applied Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, December 2-7, 1973
	7	Riverview Playhouse, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, February 26-March 6, 1982
	8	Theatre Center Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1983
	9	Academy Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia, March 1986
	10	Rutgers Arts Center, New Brunswick, New Jersey, October-November 1992
	11	Shapiro Theatre, Barnard College, New York, New York, February 1992
		Reviews
	12	Ivanhoe Theater, Chicago, Illinois, 1972
	13	The Public Theater, New York, New York, 1972-1973
	14-15	ABC Theatre, 1974
	16	Various, 1970s-1980s
		<i>Wings of Time</i>
		Typescripts
	17	#3, n.d.
	18-19	Annotated, n.d.
33		Musicals
		<i>The African Garden</i>
		Typescripts [c.1967-1968]
	1	Clean copy
		"OC"
	2	#1
	3	#6
	4	#14
	5	"42 <sup>nd</sup> Street & City Version"

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>		
33	6	Annotated	
	7	Annotated and Lyrics (Incomplete)	
	8	Old Version	
	9	Working Copy, Earlier Version	
	10	Incomplete	
	11	Reviews, 1968	
	12	<i>Behind Every Door</i> - Music by Nathan Woodard, Book, Sheet Music, Correspondence, Notes, 1984-1985	
	13	<i>Every Day's A Special Occasion</i> - Typescript, Sheet Music, n.d.	
	14	<i>The First Three Hundred Years</i> - Typescript, Annotated, n.d.	
	34		<i>Gullah</i>
			Typescripts
		1-2	Annotated - c.1977-1980
			Annotated - c.1977-1980
		3	#3
4		#4R	
5		#26	
6		"Alice"	
7		"Alice Copy #4"	
8-9		"Nathan"	
10		"Nathan's Copy #7"	
11		"Nathan's Copy #16"	
35	1-2	Incomplete	
	3	Music in Columbia, SC Version	
	4	c.1981	
	5	Reading, January 7, 1982	
	6	"Cut Reading Version," n.d.	
	7	Annotated, n.d.	
	8	Incomplete - Annotated, n.d.	
	9	Draft - Annotated, n.d.	
	10-11	Hampden Theater - Production Materials, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, 1984	



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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
35	12	The Dramatists Guild - Reading, May 20, 27 (?)
	13	Third World Theater - Program, Flyer, Review, April 1984
	14	Sketches and notes, [1984?]
36		<i>Sea Island Song</i>
		Typescripts
	1	Annotated, n.d.
	2	Fragment, c.1977
	3	Outline, Notes, n.d.
	4	Performance Schedule - Dillon, South Carolina, 1977
	5	Reviews, 1977
	6-7	Research, 1977, n.d.
		<i>So You Want to Be a Musician?</i>
		Typescripts
	8	1954
	9	1956
	10	c.1960
		<i>Space, Man!</i>
	11	"Book for Musical," Annotated, n.d.
	12-16	Incomplete, n.d.
	17	Incomplete - Annotated, c.1970
		<i>The Sun Like Gold</i>
	18	Libretto - Correspondence, Outline and Notes, 1971
	19	Libretto, n.d.
	20	Correspondence, 1970-1971
	21	Outline, Research, n.d.
		<i>The Trial Of Emile Zola</i>
	22-24	Typescript, Annotated, n.d.
	25	Typescript, Incomplete Annotated
37		One-Act Plays
		<i>Billy on the Ball</i>
	1	Typescript - First Draft and Outline, n.d.
	2	Typescript - Incomplete, n.d.
	3	<i>The Chinese Excursion - Harlem Play, Child and Family - Three Typescripts, Annotated, n.d.</i>

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
37		<i>Florence</i>
	4	Typescript, [1949?]
	5	Typescript - Incomplete, Invitation, [1949?]
	6	"Masses in Mainstream," October 1950 Version
	7	<i>The Fundraisers</i> - Typescripts - Annotated, 1955, n.d.
	8	<i>In Teddy's Apartment</i> - Typescript, n.d.
	9	<i>Mojo: A Black Love Story</i> Typescript ("Original") - Annotated, c.1970
	10	Reviews, 1973, 1981
		<i>Wine in the Wilderness</i>
	11	Play Script - Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1969
	12	New Heritage Theatre - Review, New York, New York, 1970
	13	Flyer - Barringer High School, Newark, New Jersey, February 21-23, 1986
	14	Reviews - Various Productions, 1969, 1970, 1977, 1980, n.d.
		<i>The World on a Hill</i>
		Typescripts
	15	No date
	16-17	Annotated, n.d.
	18	"Published by MacMillan," Annotated, n.d.
	19	Incomplete - (Originally titled "The Liar") - Annotated, n.d.
	20	Untitled - Draft, n.d.
		Adaptations and Collaborations
38	1	<i>Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven</i> by Mark Twain - Dramatic Adaptation by Alice Childress, Music By Serge Hovey - Drafts, n.d.

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
38	2	<i>A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich</i> - Stage Adaptation - Theatre Company, University of Detroit Mercy - Programs and Reviews, March 1993
	3	<i>I Got Shoes</i> , by Frank Merlin - Adaptation - Rewrite n.d.
	4	<i>Joe Magarac</i> - (Adaptation From Bondsky's Burning Valley)- Typescript, [1950s?] <i>Just A Little Simple</i>
	5	Adaptation of "Simple Speaks his Mind" by Langston Hughes - Typescript, 1950
	6	Program and Review, 1950s
	7	<i>Othello...The Moore of Venice</i> , Adaptation For Three Characters, n.d. <i>String</i>
	8	<i>A Piece of String</i> , by Guy De Maupassant and adapted by Alice Childress - Typescript, Annotated, n.d.
	9	Typescript - "Original," Annotated - [1969?]
	10	<i>String</i> by Alice Childress and <i>Shoes</i> by Ted Shine - Typescript for "Visions" for KCET, Los Angeles, CA, 1978
	11	Copy of <i>String</i> for Inclusion in an Anthology and Correspondence, 1980
	12	Program and Reviews, 1969
	13	<i>Song of the Storm</i> by Irving Lord Burgie and Alice Childress - Typescript and Notes, (1966?)
	14	<i>The White-Haired Girl</i> by Ting Yi and Ho Chin-Chih - Adapted by Alice Childress - Typescripts, n.d.

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
39		Ten-Minute Plays
	1	<i>Converstatic</i> - Typescript - Annotated, n.d.
	2-3	<i>A Tapping Sound</i> - Typescript - Annotated, n.d.
		Incomplete
	4	<i>And So they Lived...</i> , n.d.
	5	<i>Audition Play</i> , n.d.
	6	<i>The End of the Civil Rights Movement, Couple in Mississippi</i> , [1964?]
	7	<i>Friendship Festival</i> , n.d.
		Outlines
	8	<i>And Yet So Far</i> - Annotated, n.d.
40		Screenplays
	1	"The Beauty of Darkness" - Outline, 1968, n.d.
		"Happy Birthday, Mrs. Craig"
	2	Script - Annotated, [1971]
	3	Draft - Annotated, Production Of Belafonte Enterprises, Inc., 1970, 1971, n.d.
	4	Screen Treatment of a Harbel Production - First Draft, n.d.
		"A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich"
	5	Script, 1975
	6	Script - Annotated, n.d.
	7	Scene Breakdown, 1975, 1976
	8	Reviews, Promotional Program, 1977, 1978
		"More Than A Notion"
	9	First Draft - Annotated, 1951
	10	Script - #35, n.d.
	11	Draft - Incomplete, Annotated, n.d.
	12	Fragment - Annotated, c.1951
41	1	"A New Sound," n.d.
	2	"Robie and Rose" - Proposal, November, 1978
		"Stomping At The Savoy"
	3	Script - Annotated, 1979
	4	Script - Annotated, n.d.

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
41	5-6	Script - Annotated, pgs. 1-101
42		Teleplays
	1	"Bessie Smith" - Research, Notes, n.d.
		"Bricks Without Straw"
	2	Fragments, [1983?]
	3	Outline - Annotated, [1983?]
	4	Scene Samples - Annotated, 1984
	5	First Draft For Episode II - Two Versions - Annotated, [1984?]
	6	"Olivia" - Corrected Final Draft - Annotated, (1984)
	7	"Olivia" - Treatments - Annotated, Various Drafts, 1984
	8	Final - Annotated, [1984]
	9	Final Draft, n.d.
	10	Correspondence, 1983-1984
	11	Research, [1983?]
	12	"The Finish Of Patsy Barnes" - Teleplay Adaptation by Alice Childress, Proposal - CPB Program Fund, (1982)
	13	"Harriet Tubman" (a.k.a. "Glory By Starlight")- Scripts, Outlines - Annotated, Research, 1975, 1976
	14	"Hattie" - Teleplay, Outlines, Draft - Incomplete, Annotated) Correspondence, Research, 1976
43		"Of Time and Tears"
	1-2	Correspondence, Drafts, Notes, 1979
	3-4	Research Material, 1979
		"A Portrait of Fannie Lou Hamer"
	5	Script - Annotated, c.1978
	6	Script - Outlines, 1978
	7	Fragments - Annotated, 1978
	8	Correspondence and Notes, 1977-1978
	9	Research, 1978
	10	WGA V. NIA Productions, Inc. Arbitration and Award - Correspondence, 1979

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44	1	"Vashti's Magic Mirror" - Draft, Outlines - Annotated, n.d.
	2	"Wedding Band" Script - Annotated, Incomplete, c.1972
	3	Second Draft, n.d.
	4	Script - Annotated, n.d.
	5-7	Scripts and Clippings, n.d.
	8-9	Scripts - Annotated with Debbie Allen
	10	Corrected Version ("Alice") - Debbie Allen Notes, 1990
	11	Script Revised - Debbie Allen Project, February 1993,
	12	Notes, n.d.
45		Fiction and Non-Fiction
		Fiction
		<u>Like One of the Family</u>
	1	Contract, Correspondence, Independent Publishers, 1956, 1958
	2	Draft of Introduction by Trudier Harris (Annotated by Alice Childress), Beacon Press - Reviews, 1986
		Columns
	3-5	"Here's Mildred" <u>Afro-American</u> Newspaper - Drafts - Annotated, [1956- 1959], 1984
	6	News Clippings, [1956-1959]
	7	"Overheard and Understood," Drafts, n.d.
		Editor
		<u>Black Scenes</u>
	8	Draft - Correspondence, Reviews, 1968-1971
	9	<i>The Bird Cage</i> by Floyd Barbour, 1969
		Monologues
	10	"Man at the Phone" - Monologue, n.d.

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
45		Non-Fiction
	11	"At Ren-Ho...Near Canton China" - Essay, n.d.
	12	"The Black Preacher" - Essay n.d.
	13	"Black Women Writers" - Essay,
	14	"Elks Play" - Arthur Riggs, Review, n.d.
	15	"Energy Guide Label" - (Commercial?) Draft, Notes, n.d.
		Federal Writers Project - Essays
	16	"Brief History of the Minstrel Show and its Form," [1938-1941]
	17	"Early Days of New York...Negro Residents" [1938-1941]
	18	"Notes on History of Colored Baseball," [1938-1941]
19-20		"Harlem On My Mind" - Draft Notes, 1970
	21	Hilda Lashley Haynes - Eulogy n.d.
	22	"Knowing the Human Condition" - Essay for the Book, <u>Black American Literature and Humanism</u> , 1980
	23	<u>LummoX</u> by Fannie Hurst - Introduction to Book, Correspondence, 1989-1990
	24	"Marked By Fire" by Joyce Carol Oates - Review, n.d.
	25	"Negro History Festival," Featuring Paul Robeson, with Lorraine Hansberry - Script, February 29, 1952
	26	"Negro Woman in Literature" - Freedomways - Essay, 1966
	27	"Notes on Film and Theatre", Essay - n.d.
	28	"Noticing the Now" - Notes, n.d.
	29	"On Censorship" - Essay, The Schomburg Center Journal, 1984

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
46	1-2	"Pico vs. Board of Education Island Trees" with Steven Pico - Drafts, Notes, Research Material, 1985
	3	"A Proposal to Set Up a Dialogue Concerning the Production of an Afro-American Film in the U.S.S.R.," n.d.
	4	"Report on the Gold Coast," n.d.
	5	"Report: Production Observer, <i>The Sound of Music</i> ," September 1, 1959
	6	"The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne - Review - Annotated, n.d.
	7	"The Soulman" by Ellis Haizlip - Review, n.d.
	8	"Those Were the Days, My Friends", Sunday News, (NY Times?) - Review, December 3, 1972
		"Treasure in Space" - Richard Samuel Roberts - Essay
	9	Draft, Correspondence, 1986
	10	Research Materials, 1986
	11	"Why I Write in New York" - Essay, "Writers Guild of America, East, 44 <sup>th</sup> Annual Awards" - Program, New York, 1992
	12	"A Woman Playwright Speaks Her Mind," <u>Negro Life and History</u> , 1966
	13	Untitled - Essay, n.d.
	14	Miscellaneous
47		Short Stories
	1	"Alice (Dunbar) and Doctor" - Draft - Annotated,
	2	"All About Miss Harriet Tubman" - Drafts - Annotated, n.d.
	3	"A Black Christmas Story" - Drafts - Annotated, Letter, December 1969, n.d.



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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
47	4	"Christmas Story" - Drafts, 1970 (Incomplete?), n.d.
	5	"Forty Years Hath September" - Drafts - Annotated, n.d.
	6	"Girls And Boys" - Drafts - Annotated, n.d.
	7	"Kevin and the Beautiful Clover" - Draft - Annotated, n.d.
	8	"Landlady 'Victoria'," n.d.
	9	"Lila", n.d.
	10	"Listen for the Music", n.d.
	11	"Little Brown Jug," n.d.
	12	"Little Sister and the Lonely Hearts," n.d.
	13	"Little Sister's Jury," n.d.
	14	"Little Sister's Relatives" - Drafts, n.d.
	15	"The Magi Went Seeking" - Incomplete, n.d.
	16	"Miss Zee" - Drafts, n.d.
	17	"The Pocketbook Game" - Contract, February 6, 1967
	18	"The Soul Guide to Integration Land...", n.d.
	19	"The Story Of Ola," n.d.
	20	"Story Telling Time" - Submission to <u>Callaloo</u> ; Correspondence, Charles Johnson, 1984
	21	"Street Corner Speaker," n.d.
	22	"The Supermarket" - Drafts - Annotated, n.d.
	23	"The Woman Who Would Not" - Drafts - Annotated, n.d.
	24	Various Short Stories, n.d.
	25	Story Ideas, n.d.
		Speeches
	26	"Address To New York Librarians," Donnell Library, March 26, 1982

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
47	27	"Black Authors, Banned Books" - American Library Association, Dallas, Texas - Draft, June 7, 1989
	28	"The Black Experience In Theatre" A.N.T.A., School of Printing, 49 <sup>th</sup> Street, October 19, 1968
	29	"Education And The Black Child" - Black Educators, Trenton, New Jersey, April 1976
	30	"Langston Hughes" - Speech and Hughes's Resume, n.d.
	31	"Notes On the Black Theatre", N.Y.S.U at Purchase, NY, March 27, 1976
	32	"The Paul Robeson Award To Harry Belafonte", January 11, 1980
	33	"Praise and Simplicity", n.d.
	34	"Two or Three Insights from My Work Toward our Collective Survival," n.d.
	35	Various, n.d.
	36	Drafts and Fragments, n.d.
		Other Writings
	37	Poetry, c.1951, n.d.
	38	Songs, n.d.
48		Research and Notebooks
	1	Jenkins Orphanage, 1933, 1954, n.d.
	2	Marcus Garvey, n.d.
	3	Patient Rights, 1940s-1970s
	4	Slave Document (copy), 1803
	5	"Showbiz" - newsletters, by Maxwell Glanville, 1986, 1990
	6	Various, 1960s-1980s
	7-14	Notebooks
	15	Fragments (unidentified)
49		Other Authors
	1	Allman, John - "The Trust" - Treatment for "Bricks Without Straw," 1984

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
49	2	Baeza, Ifa - "The Pink Carnations," - Screenplay Treatment, 1981, 1982
	3	Barbour, Floyd - <i>Day Work</i> - Play Script, 1968
	4	Brown, Janet - "The Coon Singer and the Coon Song: A Case Study of the Performer Character Relationship" - Paper, n.d.
	5	Bullins, Ed <i>A Son Come Home</i> - Play Script, n.d.
	6	Ten One-Act Plays, n.d.
	7	Barlow, Evelyn - "Murder of a Marriage": A Dialogue of Factual Events in the Life of Mrs. Evelyn Barlow," 1976
	8	Carter, Steve - <i>One Last Look</i> - Play Script, 1967
	9	Courlander, Harold - "The Emperor Wore Clothes: Visiting Haile Selassie in 1943" - Article, 1989
	10	Gill, Glenda - "'Her Voice Was Ever Soft, Gentle, and Low, and Excellent Thing...'Ruby Dee" - Essay, 1992
	11	Gross, Dawn E. - "The Pocketbook Game" (Adapted from Childress's "The Pocketbook Game") - Short Story, 1986
	12	Hairston, Andrea - <i>The Enemy's Not On Safari Coming to Round Us Up in the Jungle No More</i> - Play Script, 1979
	13	Hay, Samuel "African American Theatre: A Critical History, 1821-1972" - Paper, [1987?]
	14	"Black Theatre History Research Conference" - Report, February 1, 1986

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
49	15	<i>Crack, Cream and Brown Sugar</i> (Inspired by Childress's <u>A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich</u> ) - Play Script, 1996
	16	Haynes, Betty - "Our Betty" - Manuscript, 1940-1941
	17	Herman, Gertrude B. - "The Golden Journey: The Protagonist in Children's Literature" - Opening Address, The Golden Journey Conference, 1981
	18	Hughes, Langston <i>Emperor of Haiti</i> , also known as <i>Trouble Island</i> - Play Script, c.1949
	19	Untitled Speech for National Assembly of Authors and Dramatists at Alvin Theatre, New York, May 7, 1957
	20	Johnson, Charles - "Bricks Without Straw" - Episode #3, Treatment for Teleplay, 1984
	21	King, Ron "Business is Business" - Short Story, 1987
	22	Kirkland, Avon "Bricks Without Straw" - Episode #4, Treatment for Teleplay,
	23	"Up and Coming" Treatment for Series, 1978
	24	Lawing, Lee Richard - <i>Prosperity</i> - Play Script, 1991
	25	Lindsay, Howard - "A Talk on Playwriting" - Speech, n.d.
	26	Litwack, Leon F. - "The Ordeal of Black Freedom" - Essay, n.d.
50	1	Ravetch, Irving and Harriet Frank, Jr., "Conrack" - Screenplay, 1972
	2	Richardson, Yvette - <i>All Hell Break Loose</i> - Play Script, n.d.
	3	Robeson, Eslanda Goode - "Color" - Manuscript, n.d.

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
50	4	Rodrique, Jessie M. - "Black Women and Birth Control, 1915-1945" - Paper, n.d.
	5	Schramer, James J. "The Creole Writer and the Averted Glance: Mary Seacoles's 'Wonderful Adventures'" - Paper, n.d.
	6	Shearer, Jacqueline "Addie and the Pink Carnations" - Screenplay, 1984
	7	"Addie and the Pink Carnations" with Steve Seidel - Screenplay and Correspondence, 1984
	8	"Didn't Take Low" - National Endowment for the Arts Application and Correspondence, 1980-1981
	9	"The Pink Carnations" - Story Treatment, 1981, 1982
	10	"The Pink Carnations" - Outline for Film, 1982
	11	Shine, Ted - <i>Contribution</i> - Play Script, n.d.
	12	Snyder, Anne and Louis Pelletier "Baseballs and Cotton Candy" - Short Story, n.s.
	13	"Open House" - Proposal for Television Series, 1988
	14	Stetson, Jeff - "Wedding Band" (Adaptation of Childress's <i>Wedding Band</i> ) - Teleplay, 1991
	15	WNET/Thirteen - "The American City" by the Office of Higher Education, National Endowment for the Arts Proposal, 1981
	16	Walcott, Derek - <i>Malochon! Or the Six in the Rain</i> - Play Script, n.d.
	17	Wideman, John Edgar - <i>Didn't Take Low</i> - Play Script, 1983
51	1	Scrapbook - <i>Anna Lucasta</i>

**SEPARATION RECORD**

The following items were removed from:

**Name of Collection/Papers** Alice Childress Papers

**Accession Number** SCM 98-56

**Donor:** Dino Woodard

**Date received:** 1998

**Date transferred:** 2006

The item(s) listed below have been sent to the division indicated, either to be retained or disposed of there. Any items that should receive special disposition are clearly marked.

**Schomburg Photographs and Print Division:**

File of portraits of Alice Childress (B&W and color, various sizes)  
and others.

**Accessioned by:** Steven G. Fullwood

**Date:** June 22, 2006