## Robert L. Carter Papers

# A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Joseph K. Brooks Revised and expanded by Melinda K. Friend with the assistance of Thomas Bigley and Dan Oleksiw



# Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

## 2010

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Latest revision: 2012 January

## Collection Summary

Title: Robert L. Carter Papers Span Dates: 1941-2006 Bulk Dates: (bulk 1969-2004)

ID No.: MSS81818

Creator: Carter, Robert L., 1917-2012

Extent: 10,000 items; 29 containers; 8.8 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Civil rights lawyer and judge. Correspondence, memoranda, legal cases, speeches, writings, subject files, newspaper clippings, ephemera, biographical material, photographs, notes,

and research material relating primarily to Carter's career after 1968.

### Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

#### People

Carter, Robert L., 1917-2012.

#### Organizations

Attica Correctional Facility.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

New York (State). Special Commission on Attica.

Poletti Freidin Prashker Feldman & Gartner.

United States. District Court (New York: Southern District)

#### Subjects

African Americans--Societies, etc.

Civil rights--United States.

Correctional institutions--New York (State)--Attica.

Practice of law--New York (State)--New York.

Prison riots--New York (State)--Attica.

#### Occupations

Jurists.

Lawyers.

## Administrative Information

#### Provenance

The papers of Robert L. Carter, civil rights lawyer and judge, were given to the Library of Congress by Carter in 1992 and 1993 with additional material received in 2010.

#### **Processing History**

Part I of the papers of Robert L. Carter was arranged and described in 1995. The finding aid was revised in 2009. In 2010 the collection was expanded and the finding aid revised to include Part II.

#### **Transfers**

Audiotapes have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division where they are identified as part of the Robert L. Carter Papers.

#### Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the <u>NAACP</u> and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

#### Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Robert L. Carter in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress is reserved. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for further information.

#### Access and Restrictions

The papers of Robert L. Carter are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

#### **Preferred Citation**

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Roman numeral designating the Part followed by a colon and container number, Robert L. Carter Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

Date 1917, Mar. 11	Event Born, Careyville, Fla.
1937	A.B., Lincoln University, Lincoln University, Pa.
1940	LL.B., Howard University, Washington, D.C.
1941	LL.M., Columbia University, New York, N.Y.
1941-1944	Served in U.S. Army Air Corps
1944	Legal assistant, NAACP
1945	Admitted to New York Bar Assistant special counsel, NAACP
1946	Married Gloria Pamela Spencer (died 1971)
1956-1968	General counsel, NAACP
1969-1972	Partner, Poletti Freidin Prashker Feldman & Gartner
1971-1972	Member, New York State Commission on Attica, investigating the riots at the state prison in Attica, N.Y.
1972-1986	Appointed U.S. district judge, Southern District of New York, by President Richard M. Nixon
1987-2012	Senior judge

## Scope and Content Note

Part I of the papers of Robert Lee Carter (1917-2012) spans the years circa 1960-1993 and consists of correspondence, case files, hearing transcripts, speeches, and writings. The focus is on the hearings of the New York State Special Commisssion on Attica, to which Carter was appointed to investigate the riots at the state prison in Attica, New York. Correspondence and other material relate to his work as general counsel of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Part II of the papers spans the years, 1941-2006, with the bulk of the material dating from 1969 to 2004. The papers are organized into the following series: <u>Cases</u>, <u>General Correspondence</u>, <u>Subject File</u>, <u>Speeches and Writings File</u>, and <u>Miscellany</u>.

The <u>Cases</u> represent opinions rendered by Carter as a United States district judge, many of which also appeared in the *New York Law Journal*. Other material retained with the cases includes notes, memoranda, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and communications with other judges. Prominent among the cases are *Bery v. City of New York* and *Prisco v. New York*. The *Westminster School District v. Mendez* case was argued by Carter as an attorney in 1946.

The <u>General Correspondence</u> is organized into an <u>alphabetical file</u> and a <u>reading file</u>, with both comprised of correspondence with friends, family, associates, and organizations. The reading file, however, also covers legal cases handled by Poletti Freidin Prashker Feldman & Gartner, the law firm in which Carter was a partner from 1969 until 1972.

The <u>Subject File</u> highlights Carter's career with articles written about him, biographical material, and Carter's work with various organizations, panels, and persons. Included in the series is material relating to his friends and colleagues Derrick A. Bell and Kenneth Bancroft Clark, his involvement with the NAACP especially during the resignation of the entire legal staff in 1968 over an article written by Lewis M. Steel, and his work on the New York State Special Commission on Attica investigating the prison riots at Attica, New York, in 1971.

The <u>Speeches and Writings File</u> is organized into a <u>speeches and speaking engagements</u> file and a <u>writings</u> file covering Carter's career especially for the years 1968-1972. The <u>speeches and speaking engagements</u> file includes oral history interviews, award presentations, celebratory dinners, and statements as well as speeches. Remarks are not present for every event. Of interest in the <u>writings</u> file is Carter's first attempt at a memoir, "Trench Warfare: The Enduring Effort to Achieve Racial Justice Through Law"; the unpublished "Law and the Black Community: A Profile in Failure and Frustration"; and his master's thesis from 1941, "The Three Freedoms." He also wrote many articles on civil rights as related to education, law, housing, and employment.

The Miscellany series is comprised mostly of research material and legal briefs collected by Carter.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in two parts containing six series:

• Part I, circa 1960-1993

#### Part II:

- <u>Cases, 1946-2006</u>
- General Correspondence, 1968-2002
- Subject File, 1946-2004
- Speeches and Writings File, 1941-2005

• <u>Miscellany, 1945-1996</u>

## Description of Series

Container Series

BOX I:1-I:7 Part I, circa 1960-1993

Biographical material, legal cases, correspondence, transcripts of individual hearings, subject files, and speeches and writings.

Arranged alphabetically by type of material.

BOX II:1-3 Part II: Cases, 1946-2006

Legal cases heard or argued by Carter including printed decisions, notes, memoranda, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and documents printed from electronic files.

Arranged alphabetically by name of case or type of material.

BOX II:4-8 Part II: General Correspondence, 1968-2002

BOX II:4-6 Alphabetical File, 1968-2002

Incoming and outgoing correspondence with friends, family, associates, and organizations.

Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and therein chronologically with unidentified items at the end.

BOX II:6-8 Reading File, 1969-1972

Outgoing correspondence file created by Carter while in private law practice.

Arranged chronologically by year and therein in reverse chronological order.

BOX II:8-16 Part II: Subject File, 1946-2004

Biographical material, information about organizations and other persons, articles about Carter, newspaper clippings, photographs, trip file, notes, and printed matter.

Arranged alphabetically by name of person, organization, and topic or by type of material.

BOX II:16-18 Part II: Speeches and Writings File, 1941-2005

BOX II:16-18 Speeches and Speaking Engagements, 1954-2005

Speeches, interviews, newspaper clippings, ephemera, and background information.

Arranged chronologically by date of event.

BOX II:18-21 Writings, 1941-1998

Articles, book reviews, books, an unpublished memoir, a master's thesis, background information, newspaper clippings, drafts, and correspondence.

Arranged alphabetically by type of writing and therein by title or topic. Articles are arranged chronologically.

### BOX II:21-22 Part II: Miscellany, 1945-1996

Legal briefs, notes and fragments, and research material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.

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	Arranged alphabetically by name of case or type of material.
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	Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and therein chronologically with unidentified items at the end.
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(14 folders) BOX II:17 1971-1994	BOX II:16	1954-1970
BOX II:17 1971-1994	-	
	BOX II:17	
		(22 folders)

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BOX II:18	1995-2005, undated
	(20 folders)
BOX II:18-21	Writings, 1941-1998
	Articles, book reviews, books, an unpublished memoir, a master's thesis, background information, newspaper clippings, drafts, and correspondence.
	Arranged alphabetically by type of writing and therein by title or topic. Articles are arranged chronologically.
BOX II:18	Articles
BOX II:18	1965-1966
	(2 folders)
BOX II:19	1968-1998
	(16 folder)
BOX II:19	Books and reviews
BOX II:19	A.C.L.U. Guide to Your Rights, "The Right to Equal Educational Opportunity," 1969-1970
BOX II:19	The American Negro Reference Book, foreword, 1972
BOX II:19	Justice: The Crisis of Law, Order and Freedom in America, review, 1970
BOX II:20	"Law and the Black Community: A Profile in Failure and Frustration"
BOX II:20	Chapter 1: Search for Equal Education
BOX II:20	Background information and notes, 1955-1959, 1968-1970, undated (2 folders)
BOX II:20	Drafts, circa 1970
BOX II:20	Chapter 2: The Quest for Decent Shelter, 1969-1970, undated
BOX II:20	Chapter 3: Employment, 1969, undated
BOX II:20	Miscellany, 1969-1970, undated
BOX II:20	Synopses, circa 1970
BOX II:20	Politics of Southern Equality: Law and Social Change in a Mississippi County, review, 1970
BOX II:21	"Trench Warfare: The Enduring Effort to Achieve Racial Justice Through
	Law," memoir
BOX II:21	Correspondence, 1995-1998
BOX II:21	Drafts, 1995
BOX II:21	Miscellany
BOX II:21	By Carter
BOX II:21	Carswell, G. Harrold, circa 1970
BOX II:21	Education and poverty, undated
BOX II:21	Letters to the editor, 1967-1969
BOX II:21	"Lynching," 1971
BOX II:21	"Race Relations in the Reagan Era," circa 1987
BOX II:21	"The Three Freedoms," master's thesis, 1941
BOX II:21	By others, 1968-1972, undated
BOX II:21-22	Part II: Miscellany, 1945-1996
	Legal briefs, notes and fragments, and research material.
	Arranged alphabetically by type of material.

## Part II: Miscellany, 1945-1996

Container	Contents
BOX II:21	Legal briefs, 1967-1972
	(2 folders)
BOX II:21	Notes and fragments, undated
BOX II:22	Research material, 1945, 1962-1977, 1987, 1993-1996, undated
	(3 folders)