

# STILL HERE: THE GRIFFITH J. DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARCHIVES IN CONTEXT STUDY GUIDE

## INTRODUCTION

Our mother, Muriel Corrin Davis, took her first trip on a plane from New York to Monrovia, Liberia, in March 1952, to marry our Dad, Griffith Jerome Davis. In his marriage proposal letter to her he said that she would have to join him in Liberia for their wedding. He had to finish editing the film *Pepperbird Land*, which Liberia's President William V.S. Tubman had commissioned. The film was being narrated in Liberia by an emerging actor named Sidney Poitier. The wedding was the culmination of our parents' initial friendship as students at Spelman College and Morehouse College in Dad's hometown of Atlanta, followed by a post-college courtship in New York City. Dad's story and photographs from their "Global Honeymoon"—the trip included stops in Kakata, Liberia, Lisbon, Portugal, Paris, France, and Madrid, Spain, before a return to New York City—was published under that very headline in *Ebony* magazine's September 1952 issue.

Griff Davis' preferred media for creating his outstanding images were the camera, the pen, and typewriter rather than a paintbrush and canvas. After graduating from Morehouse College in 1947, Davis became the first Roving Editor of *Ebony* magazine at the recommendation of his professor, mentor and lifelong friend Langston Hughes to the publication's Founder and Publisher John H. Johnson. Hughes subsequently recommended him to attend Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism as the only African American in the Class of 1949. While attending Columbia, Davis rented a room in Hughes' Harlem home. He also took courses at the New School for Social Research with Kurt Safranski, co-founder of Black Star Publishing Company, the first privately owned picture agency in the United States. Upon graduation, he became the only African American international freelance photojournalist for Black Star and started shooting and filing stories from Liberia, Ethiopia, Ghana and elsewhere between 1949 and 1952. His work appeared in such publications as *Fortune*, *Time*, *Atlanta Daily World*, *Modern Photography*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *New York Times*, *Ebony* and *Der Spiegel*. His exclusive article and photographs of The Private Life of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was the cover story for *Ebony*'s 5th anniversary issue of November 1950.

In 1952, he passed the U. S Foreign Service exam and became a pioneer African American Foreign Service Officer and founder of U.S. President Harry Truman's Point Four Program (a predecessor to the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID). Our parents' first diplomatic post was to the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia, the first U.S. Embassy in Liberia and simultaneously in Africa led by the first African American US Ambassador Edward R. Dudley. Our subsequent posts were to newly independent Tunisia (1957-1961) and Nigeria during the Biafran War (1966-1971).

From 1952-1985, Davis worked in many capacities for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). He traveled to more than 25 of Africa's then 51 countries (in 1985), and served as an advisor to several African governments as well as to the U.S. Bureau of Africa and the Bureau for Population and Humanitarian Assistance. He assisted the governments of Liberia and Tunisia in establishing their ministries of information and broadcasting; assisted the federal

regional ministries of education in Nigeria in using radio and television for educational purposes; and served as Deputy Chief Education Officer of USAID in Lagos. For ten years, he directed the Information, Education and Communication Branch of USAID's Population Office, which provided family planning training for some 1500 foreign nationals from 102 countries. In 1981, his nomination to the U.S. Foreign Service with the rank of Counselor was ratified by the U.S. Senate. He retired as Senior Foreign Service Officer in 1985.

Throughout his 35-year diplomatic career, Davis was an advisor to emerging African governments and influenced their development policies in communications, education, population and economic development. With his ever-present camera, but also through film and writing, he captured and documented the private and public moments of key leaders and personalities at the heart of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the Independence Movement of Africa.

To date exhibitions of his photography have included: the solo exhibition *Liberia 1952*, commissioned by Liberian President William V. S. Tubman at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City (1952); the Smithsonian's traveling *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present* (2000-2003), curated by Deborah Willis; the U.S. Supreme Court's *Reading the Law: Legal Education in America* (2015-2017), and *Griff Davis-Langston Hughes, Letters and Photographs, 1947-1967: A Global Friendship*, at the Florida Museum of Photographic Arts (2020). On October 1, 2020, Davis was posthumously awarded the Lifetime Achievement Impact Award by the Tampa Bay Businesses for Culture and the Arts at the organization's 31st Annual Impact Awards (Virtual) Program.

*Still Here: The Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives in Context* is the first time the full range of Davis' images has been publicly shown along with their back stories. We are very excited to have his photographs and films complemented by the works of extraordinary artists like Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, Emory Douglas, Deana Lawson, Zanele Muholi and Hank Willis Thomas.

Thanks to Professor Antoinette Jackson, Chair of the USF Anthropology Department, Margaret Miller, Director and Professor, USF Institute for Research in Art, Noel Smith, Deputy Director of CAM, Christian Viveros-Fauné, CAM Curator-at-large, the entire USFCAM team and all of the sponsors of this exhibition.

Dorothy Davis  
Co-Curator and President  
Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives

**ALL PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARCHIVAL MATERIALS COURTESY OF GRIFFITH J. DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARCHIVES.**

**GRIFFITH J. DAVIS IMAGE CHECKLIST**

Photojournalist, diplomat, and filmmaker, Griffith J. Davis (1923-1993) spent a lifetime keeping company with prominent “legislators” of two distinct types. The first were leading presidents, political leaders and diplomats from Africa and the U.S. who launched decisive independence and civil rights struggles beginning in the 1950s. The second were figures the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley would have dubbed “the unacknowledged legislators of the world”—artists, poets, philosophers, writers and musicians—with whom Davis regularly rubbed elbows after befriending poet Langston Hughes in 1947.

*Still Here: The Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archive in Context* brings together Davis’ images of these celebrated personages from the intertwined worlds of politics and culture, while also addressing the life and work of this pioneering African-American figure. Additionally, the exhibition puts Davis’ images and diplomatic work in context with current and historical artworks made by contemporary African-American and African artists. In many cases, the inclusion of contemporary artworks serves to chronicle the ongoing social and cultural impact of liberation struggles on both continents.

**UNACKNOWLEDGED LEGISLATORS:**

**1) Nat King Cole and Marie Cole await plane to Acapulco on the Pacific coast for their honeymoon in Mexico, 1948. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

Nathaniel Adams Coles (1919-1965), a Black American jazz musician and singer was recognized as one of the most influential pianists and small group band leaders of the swing era. However, Cole is more noted as a singer, celebrated for his liquid voice, impeccable enunciation, and relaxed delivery of ballads and classics. He was active during a time when American music was profoundly segregated, with record sales listed on three separate charts in Billboard magazine: Pop music was white; Hillbilly music was Country; and R&B, or Race music, was Black. Despite this division, Cole was the biggest single record-seller of his generation, outpacing singers such as Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. In 1956, Cole broke race barriers on television with the *The Nat King Cole Show* on NBC. Despite the show’s popularity with diverse audiences, it aired without commercial sponsorship. Not a single national client would book advertising time for fear of boycotts by white southerners. His wife, Marie Cole, was a jazz singer and mother of the singer Natalie Cole.

[www.npr.org/2010/04/19/126110985/nat-king-cole-an-incandescent-voice](http://www.npr.org/2010/04/19/126110985/nat-king-cole-an-incandescent-voice)  
[www.britannica.com/biography/Nat-King-Cole](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Nat-King-Cole)

**2) Missionary and Nobel Laureate for Peace Dr. Albert Schweitzer at his clinic for lepers in Lambaréné, Gabon, 1960. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), priest, musician, missionary, and physician, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. After studying theology, he decided to dedicate his life to alleviating suffering, and entered medical school, specializing in tropical medicine and surgery.



20) Griffith J. Davis. His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie feeding his ducks in the pond of the Imperial Palace in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1950: Cover story of *Ebony*’s 5th Anniversary issue November 1950. Digital black and white print. 12 x 12 in. Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives.

In 1913 he and his wife, Helene Bresslau, a nurse, established a small hospital in Africa, in Lambaréné, Gabon, then a French colony. By the time of Schweitzer’s death in 1965, the compound comprised 70 buildings, 350 beds and a leper colony for 200.

Schweitzer was a complicated man, a humanitarian with some views that are today unacceptable. Despite his worldview of showing reverence for all life in both deeds and words, Schweitzer was a man of his time and not immune to colonialism, paternalism and racism, common at the time.

[www.pbs.org/newshour/health/dr-albert-schweitzer-a-renowned-medical-missionary-with-a-complicated-history](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/dr-albert-schweitzer-a-renowned-medical-missionary-with-a-complicated-history)

**3) Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, first Black President of Howard University, prepares to take a photograph of celebrations during Ghana’s Independence Day in its capital, Accra, on March 6, 1957. Digital black and white print. 12 x 9 in.**

An educator and pastor, Mordecai Wyatt Johnson (1891-1976) was the son of former slaves. He was educated at Morehouse College (then Atlanta Baptist College), University of Chicago, and the Rochester Theological Seminary, where he was exposed to the “social gospel” advocacy of Walter Rauchenbusch, which strongly influenced his thinking and career. He graduated in the same Class of 1911 of Morehouse College as Griff Davis’ father, Philip M. Davis, Sr.

Early in his career, Johnson taught English and economics at Morehouse, and later went on to be elected the eleventh President of Washington D.C.’s Howard University, the first Black man to serve in that capacity. During his 34-year tenure,

Johnson brought the university into national prominence, increased the enrollment five-fold, and raised millions of dollars in funding. He was a famed orator, noted for his "hypnotic effect" and brilliance, and attracted large audiences to his speeches about racism, segregation, and economics in the United States, Africa, India and the British Isles.

[kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/johnson-mordecai-wyatt](http://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/johnson-mordecai-wyatt)

Morehouse College is a private institution that was founded in 1867 in Atlanta. Morehouse College is the only four-year liberal arts institution that's historically Black and all male. The College is a member of the Atlanta University Center Consortium, an academic partnership between Morehouse, Clark Atlanta University and Spelman College.

[www.usnews.com/best-colleges/morehouse-college-1582](http://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/morehouse-college-1582)  
[www.morehouse.edu/](http://www.morehouse.edu/)

**4) Poet William Stanley Braithwaite in his apartment at 409 Edgecombe Avenue, New York City, 1948 or 1949. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

William Stanley Braithwaite (1878-1962) was a poet, literary critic, editor and anthologist. His father was from the West Indies; his maternal grandmother had been a slave in North Carolina, and his mother possibly the daughter of the property owner. Braithwaite never received formal schooling and by the age of twelve, after his father died, was working to help support his family. As an apprentice at a publishing company, he learned to typeset and also discovered his love of poetry, particularly English Romantic poets such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Wordsworth, who influenced his own work.

Braithwaite was a key figure in the revival of American poetry, and his publication *Anthology of Magazine Verse* (1913-1929), showcased the work of emerging poets, equally featuring both Black and white poets. During his life Braithwaite was termed the "Boston Dictator" for his influence, which later waned.

[www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-stanley-braithwaitehttps://biography.jrank.org/pages/2734/Braithwaite-William-Stanley.html](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-stanley-braithwaitehttps://biography.jrank.org/pages/2734/Braithwaite-William-Stanley.html)

**5) Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes, January 1949. Cover of their book *Anthology of Negro Writers* (1949) and *Arna Bontemps-Langston Hughes, Letters, 1925-1947*. Black and white inkjet print. 12 1/8 x 11 in.**

Arna Bontemps of Nashville, Tennessee and Langston Hughes of Harlem (in light jacket) appeared on the jackets of their two books: 1949 *Anthology of Negro Writers* and *Arna Bontemps-Langston Hughes, Letters, 1925-1947* published by Dodd Mead Publishing Company. According to Griffith Davis' daughter, Dorothy Davis: "The significance of the *Arna Bontemps-Langston Hughes, Letters, 1925-1947* book was that until that date it was the 'only extensive correspondence between two Afro-Americans ever to find its way into print.' Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes were 'dear friends' of Griff Davis. Davis took the photo when the two writers met in Chicago to work on the *Anthology of Negro Writers* that was published by Doubleday Company on January 4, 1949. There are 13 mentions of Griff Davis or his wife, Muriel Corrin, in their book of '...Letters.' At the time, Griff Davis lived as a 'star roomer' at Langston Hughes' Harlem home at 20 E. 127th Street in New York City in between trips to Africa."

Arna Wendell Bontemps (1902-1973) was an American poet, novelist and librarian, and noted member of the Harlem Renaissance. His novels include *God Sends Sunday* (1931); two children's books, *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti*, in collaboration with Langston Hughes (1934), and *You Can't Pet a Possum* (1934); as well as *Black Thunder: Gabriel's Revolt: Virginia 1800* (1936). Bontemps served as a librarian at Fisk University from 1943 to 1965, and held honorary degrees and professorships at University of Illinois and Yale University.

[poets.org/poet/arna-bontemps](http://poets.org/poet/arna-bontemps)

**6) First Nobel Laureate for Literature from Africa Wole Soyinka of Nigeria receives an honorary Doctorate from Morehouse College from its President Leroy Keith, Jr., 1988. Digital black and white print. 11 x 14 in.**

Dorothy Davis: "In recognition of Wole Soyinka as the first Nobel Laureate from Africa, institutions from around the world wanted to give Mr. Soyinka an honorary degree. It was due to Griffith Davis's friendship with Soyinka, who initially refused, that Soyinka accepted the honor from Morehouse College on behalf of all the institutions who wanted to honor him. Their friendship stemmed from Davis's tour of duty as a U. S. Foreign Service Officer in Lagos, Nigeria during the Biafran War. The ceremony was attended by Atlanta Mayor and Morehouse College alumnus Maynard Jackson and Dr. Henry Louis 'Skip' Gates, Jr."

A dramatist, novelist and poet, Soyinka studied and worked in England and was influenced by Irish, British and classical literature. However, once he returned to Africa his work linked up with the traditional popular African theatre with its combination of dance, music, and action. He based his writing on the mythology of his own tribe-the Yoruba-with Ogun, the god of iron and war, at the center. Since 1975, Soyinka has been a professor of comparative literature in various universities in Ibadan, Lagos, and Ife. In 1960, he founded the theatre group, The 1960 Masks and in 1964, the Orisun Theatre Company, in which he produced his own plays and took part as actor. Soyinka has periodically served as a visiting professor at the universities of Cambridge, Sheffield, and Yale.

[www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1986/soyinka/biographical](http://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1986/soyinka/biographical)

**7) Jazz pianist Bud Powell (middle) chats with Eddie Barclay (right), founder of Barclay Records (Paris, France), ca. 1949. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

The great jazz pianist Bud Powell (middle) chats with Eddie Barclay (right), Founder of Barclay Records in Paris, France, circa 1949, possibly in New York?. Dorothy Davis indicates that this photo was taken, possibly in New York, for publicity purposes for Barclay Records and later appeared in the book *La Danse des Infideles* by Francis Paudras, 1987. Griff and Muriel Davis were friends of Eddie Barclay and his wife at the time, Nicole.

Earl "Bud" Powell (1924-1966) is generally considered to be the most important pianist in the history of jazz. In *Visions of Jazz* noted jazz writer and critic Gary Giddins goes even further, saying

that "Powell will be recognized as one of the most formidable creators of piano music in any time or idiom."

Powell's first recordings were made in 1944, when he was a 20 year old pianist in the Cootie Williams Band, and his last recordings were made in 1964 when he returned from several years in Europe to play at Birdland.

Between those dates Bud Powell played with the greatest jazz musicians of his generation including Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon, Charlie Mingus and Max Roach. The recordings he made for the forerunners of the Verve label and for Blue Note, as well as many lesser known labels, are among the greatest jazz recordings of all time.

Not as much of a showman as musicians like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell has not received as much public recognition as some of his contemporaries. Nevertheless his fellow musicians were in awe of his creativity and skill, which in his prime were considered almost superhuman.

[www.budpowelljazz.com/content/whois\\_bud.php](http://www.budpowelljazz.com/content/whois_bud.php)

**8) Griff Davis reviews the script for Liberia's first promotional film "Pepperbird Land" with its narrator, emerging actor Sidney Poitier in Monrovia, Liberia, 1952. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

Dorothy Davis: "Mr. Poitier required payment of \$75 and listing of his name and role in the film's credits. The film was a Griff Davis Production commissioned by Liberia's President William V.S. Tubman."

"At the crack of dawn, the melodious warble of the pepper bird is heard all over Liberia. For generations, its trill has served to awaken the villagers to another day of work under the tropical sun. This common bulbul has given Liberia its nickname 'land of the pepper bird.'"

[wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1989366](http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1989366)

Sidney Poitier (1927, U.S.), is a Bahamian American actor, director, and producer who broke the color barrier in the U.S. motion-picture industry by becoming the first Black actor to win an Academy Award for best actor (for *Lilies of the Field* [1963]) and the first Black movie star. He redefined roles for African Americans by rejecting parts that were based on racial stereotypes.

Poitier was born prematurely in the U.S. while his parents were visiting from the Bahamas but grew up on Cat Island, Bahamas. As a teenager Poitier returned to the United States, where he enlisted in the U.S. Army during WWII. Upon his discharge, he applied to the American Negro Theatre (ANT) in New York City but was refused because of his accent. Poitier practiced American enunciation while listening to the accents of radio voices and reapplied to ANT six months later. This time he was accepted, and he began studying acting while appearing in a series of ANT productions. In 1946 he made his Broadway debut in *Lysistrata*. In 2001 Poitier, the recipient of many prestigious acting awards, was presented with an honorary Academy Award for "his remarkable accomplishments as an artist and as a human being." A dual citizen of the United States and The Bahamas, he served as Ambassador to Japan for The Bahamas from 1997 to 2007. In 2009 he was awarded the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom. Poitier chronicled his experiences in *This Life* (1980) and *The Measure of a Man: A Spiritual Autobiography*

(2000). *Life Beyond Measure: Letters to My Great-Granddaughter* (2008) was a volume of advice and insights in epistolary form. He also released a suspense novel, *Montaro Caine*, in 2013.

[www.britannica.com/biography/Sidney-Poitier](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Sidney-Poitier)

**9) Langston Hughes, 1947. Portrait used on cover of 1947 pocketbook edition of Mr. Hughes' book, *The Ways of White Folks* and on Dr. Jonathan Scott's book *Socialist Joy in the Writing of Langston Hughes* (2007). Black and white inkjet print. 12 1/8 x 11 in.**

Dorothy Davis: "Griff Davis took the photograph in Langston Hughes' faculty apartment at Atlanta University dormitory when he was Guest Professor of Creative Writing, in Atlanta, Georgia, 1947. Griff Davis' marriage to Muriel Corrin Davis was the basis for 'Simple Takes A Wife' of his *Simple* series."

Langston Hughes (1902-1967), who claimed Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Carl Sandburg, and Walt Whitman as his primary influences, is particularly known for his insightful portrayals of Black life in America from the twenties through the sixties. Hughes wrote novels, short stories, plays, and poetry, and is also known for his engagement with the world of jazz and the influence it had on his writing, as in his book-length poem *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (Holt, 1951). His life and work were enormously important in shaping the artistic contributions of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance. Unlike other notable Black poets of the period such as Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, and Countee Cullen, Hughes refused to differentiate between his personal experience and the common experience of Black America. He wanted to tell the stories of his people in ways that reflected their culture, including their love of music, laughter, and language itself alongside their suffering.

A two volume biography was written by Arnold Rampersad: *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume I: 1902 -1941 I, Too, Sing America* and *Volume II: 1941 - 1967 I Dream A World*. Griff Davis contributed to Rampersad's research about Langston Hughes for these books. Volume II references Langston Hughes' friendship with Griff Davis and includes some of his photographs of Langston Hughes.

For more details about the global friendship between Langston Hughes and Griff Davis, see exhibition catalog for *Griff Davis-Langston Hughes, Letters and Photographs, 1947-1967: A Global Friendship* at the Florida Museum of Photographic Art: [griffdavis.com](http://griffdavis.com).

[poets.org/poet/langston-hughes](http://poets.org/poet/langston-hughes)

The Harlem Renaissance was the development of the Harlem neighborhood in New York City as a Black cultural mecca in the early 20th Century and the subsequent social and artistic explosion that resulted. Lasting roughly from the 1910s through the mid-1930s, the period is considered a golden age in Black culture, manifesting in literature, music, stage performance and art.

[www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/harlem-renaissance](http://www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/harlem-renaissance)  
[www.britannica.com/event/Harlem-Renaissance-American-literature-and-art](http://www.britannica.com/event/Harlem-Renaissance-American-literature-and-art)

**10) Mattiwilda Dobbs, Spelman College senior and later internationally renowned concert artist, rehearses with teacher Willis Lawrence James, 1946. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Receiving her B.A. degree in music from Spelman College in 1946, Dobbs (1925-2015) began formal voice training under the direction of Naomi Maise and Willis Lawrence James. After graduating, Dobbs studied with Lotte Leonard and Pierre Bernac and attended the Mannes College of Music and the Berkshire Music Center's Opera Workshop.

Dobbs gained prominence after winning a 1951 international music competition in Geneva, Switzerland. In 1953, Dobbs performed at the La Scala Opera House in Milan, making her the first Black woman to appear in a principal role there. After becoming the first Black person to play a major role for the San Francisco Opera in 1955, she debuted at New York's Metropolitan Opera in 1956. Refusing to appear before segregated crowds, Dobbs did not perform in her hometown of Atlanta until 1962, where she appeared in front of an integrated audience at the Municipal Auditorium.

In 1973, Dobbs started teaching at the University of Texas at Austin. She also worked as a professor at Spelman College, the University of Illinois, the University of Georgia and Howard University. She ended her teaching career when she retired from Howard in 1991 and she retired from singing two years later. Ms. Dobbs was a member of the prominent Atlanta John and Irene Dobbs Family and aunt of Atlanta's first Black Mayor Maynard Jackson.

[www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/mattiwilda-dobbs-janzon-40](http://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/mattiwilda-dobbs-janzon-40)

**11) C.A. Scott, publisher of Atlanta Daily World, 1948. Digital black and white print. 12 x 9 in.**

C. A. Scott (1908-2000) was publisher of the *Atlanta Daily World* from 1934-1997. *The Atlanta Daily World* was the first daily Black newspaper in the U.S. It served as a much needed voice against the Jim Crow laws and lynchings prevalent in the South at that time. As a highly educated man and prominent conservative Republican, he published news of general interest to Black Atlanta but he also steered the newspaper toward politics, and the editorial pages reflected his views.

Griff Davis began his career as a freelance photojournalist with the *Atlanta Daily World* while a student at Atlanta University Laboratory High School and campus photographer for Morehouse College, Spelman College, Atlanta University and Black Atlanta.

*The Daily World* covered police brutality cases, lynchings, and the Scottsboro cases throughout the 1930s, and supported efforts to promote Black businesses. In the 1940s it campaigned against school segregation and the mistreatment of Black soldiers in World War II. The paper also supported voter registration campaigns. In 1944, the *Daily World* became the first Black newspaper to have a Black journalist cover the White House.

By the 1960s C.A. Scott opposed the sit-ins and other direct action protests that swept across Atlanta and the South. He argued that challenging school segregation, voter registration, and the growth of Black wealth through business ownership would be more effective strategies for ending racial oppression.

[www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/w-scott-c-scott-and-atlanta-daily-world-1928](http://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/w-scott-c-scott-and-atlanta-daily-world-1928)

**12) John H. Johnson (founder Johnson Publishing Company) signing copy of his autobiography *Succeeding Against the Odds*, with Griffith J. Davis, 1989. Digital c-print. 12 x 12 in.**

Griff Davis stands next to John H. Johnson (1918-2005), Founder and Publisher of Johnson Publishing Company, while the latter autographs his autobiography, *Succeeding Against The Odds*. Griff Davis was *Ebony's* first Roving Editor from 1947-1948. Mr. Johnson writes the following in his book with *Ebony* historian Lerone Bennett, Jr.: "I spent a lot of time in the late forties recruiting editorial talent...In the next two years, we added several major writers, artists, and photographers. Among the best known were ...Griffith Davis, who was recommended by Langston Hughes..."

While studying at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, John H. Johnson worked for a life insurance company that marketed to Black customers. There he conceived the idea of a magazine for the Black community following the *Life* magazine format; in 1942 he began publication of *Negro Digest*. Its first issue sold some 3,000 copies, and within a year the monthly circulation was 50,000. From that beginning, Johnson launched *Ebony*, a general-interest magazine providing a positive image of Black people, in 1945. *Ebony's* initial pressrun of 25,000 copies was completely sold out. By the early 21st century it had a circulation of some 1.7 million. *Ebony* had a high readership among Africans during the Independence Movement of Africa.

Griff Davis subsequently recommended his Morehouse collegemates, Robert H. Johnson, Editor of *Jet* magazine, and *Ebony* historian Lerone Bennett, Jr. to John H. Johnson.

Johnson went on to create other Black publications, including *Jet* magazine in 1951. His firm, Johnson Publishing Company, later diversified into book publishing, radio broadcasting, insurance, and cosmetics manufacturing. In the 1980s Linda Johnson Rice, his daughter, began assuming management of the company. Johnson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996.

[www.britannica.com/biography/John-H-Johnson](http://www.britannica.com/biography/John-H-Johnson)

**13) Lena Horne at a backstage party at the Copacabana Club in New York, circa 1949-1950. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

Lena Horne (1917-2010) was born in New York City and was the granddaughter of the prominent inventor and community leader Samuel Raymond Scottron (who set up organizations to promote racial fairness and harmony in New York, and fought for the end of slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico). Horne was a singer, actress and Civil Rights Activist who first established herself as an accomplished live singer and then transitioned into film work. She signed with MGM studios and became known as one of the top Black performers of her time, seen in such films as *Cabin in the Sky* and *Stormy Weather*. She was also known for her work with civil rights groups and refused to play roles that stereotyped Black women, a stance that many found controversial.

By the end of the 1940s, Horne had sued a variety of restaurants and theaters for discrimination and become an outspoken member of the leftist group Progressive Citizens of America. McCarthyism was sweeping through Hollywood, and Horne soon found herself blacklisted, believed to be due in part to her friendship with actor Paul Robeson, who was also blacklisted. She still performed primarily in posh nightclubs around the country as well as Europe and was also able to make some TV appearances. The ban had eased by the mid-1950s, and Horne returned to the screen in the 1956 comedy *Meet Me in Las Vegas*, though she would not act in another film for more than a decade. After some time out of the limelight during the '70s, she made a revered, award-winning comeback with her 1981 show *Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music*.

[www.biography.com/musician/lena-horne](http://www.biography.com/musician/lena-horne)

**14) Jazz artist Duke Ellington composing at piano while blowing smoke, circa 1950. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in.**

Duke Ellington (1899-1974) was an American pianist who was the greatest jazz composer and bandleader of his time. One of the originators of big-band jazz, Ellington led his band for more than half a century, composed thousands of scores, and created one of the most distinctive ensemble sounds in all of Western music. Ellington referred to his music as American music. He was noted for his inventive use of the orchestra, or big band, and also for his eloquence and charisma. He recorded for most of the important American record companies of his era, performed in and scored several films, and composed a handful of stage musicals. Many jazz musicians who were once members of Ellington's orchestra are considered among the best jazz players of all time.

[www.britannica.com/biography/Duke-Ellington](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Duke-Ellington)

**15) Portrait of artist Hale Aspacio Woodruff working on the California Centennial Mural, 1948. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Hale Aspacio Woodruff (1900-1980) was an American painter, draftsman, printer, and educator who is probably best known for his murals, especially the *Amistad Mutiny Murals* (1939) at the Savery Library at Talladega College in Alabama. The murals tell the story of the mutiny aboard the slave ship *Amistad*, the trial of the rebellious slaves, and their acquittal and return to Africa.

Woodruff studied in France from 1927 to 1931, and was greatly influenced by African art and cubism. However, upon his return to the United States he concentrated on social issues, including scenes of Southern poverty and depictions of lynchings.

[www.britannica.com/biography/Hale-Woodruff](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Hale-Woodruff)

The Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company Building in Los Angeles was built in 1949 and was designed in the Late Modern style by Paul R. Williams (1894-1980), the first certified Black architect west of the Mississippi River, the first Black member of the American Institute of Architects, and who also served on the first Los Angeles Planning Commission in 1920.

The interior lobby of the building was designed to incorporate two integrated painted murals, one for each sidewall. Together these large, vibrant, Social Realist style murals, *The Negro in California History—Exploration and Colonization* by artist Charles Alston and *The Negro in California History—Settlement and Development* by artist Hale Woodruff, are a panoramic depiction of Black history in California from 1527 through 1949. Building architect Paul Williams sat on the three-person committee that selected the murals' artists and subject.

Founded in 1925, Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company ("GSM") made history as the first Black owned insurance company to be established west of the Mississippi. As the company grew and developed over the years, GSM increased in prominence, becoming a central figure in the development of Black businesses in America.

[www.westadamsheritage.org/read/1242](http://www.westadamsheritage.org/read/1242)

**16) Fighting for Her Right To Dream: Thurgood Marshall, then-Chief Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and future U.S. Supreme Court Justice, defends Ada Lois Sipuel vs. University of Oklahoma Law School, Norman, Oklahoma, 1948. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993) was an American lawyer who was appointed as an associate justice of the Supreme Court in 1967. He was the first Black man to hold the position and served for 24 years, until 1991. Marshall studied law at Howard University and as counsel to the NAACP, utilized the judiciary to champion equality for Black people.

In 1948, Marshall, then-Chief Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, defended Ada Lois Sipuel vs. University of Oklahoma Law School, Norman, Oklahoma, 1948. This was the precedent-setting case for his winning the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* case against the *Separate But Equal* education system in the United States of America, effectively ending racial segregation in public schools.

[www.biography.com/law-figure/thurgood-marshall](http://www.biography.com/law-figure/thurgood-marshall)

Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher (1924-1995) was a key figure in the Civil Rights Movement in Oklahoma. She applied for admission into the University of Oklahoma law school in order to challenge the state's segregation laws and to become a lawyer. Fisher's admission to the OU College of Law 70 years ago was preceded by a three-year legal battle. At the time of her application to OU's law school in January 1946, Oklahoma schools were segregated. Despite the merit of her academic credentials, Fisher's application was rejected because of her race.

With the support of civic leaders from across the state, Fisher filed a lawsuit in Cleveland County District Court. This launched a three-year fight through the justice system, ultimately reaching the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled unanimously in her favor. Fisher was finally admitted to the OU College of Law on June 18, 1949. Her landmark case laid the groundwork for the elimination of segregation in public education nationwide.

After graduating from the OU College of Law in 1951, Fisher practiced law in Chickasha and later joined the faculty at Langston University. She retired 30 years later as assistant vice president of academic affairs. In 1991, OU awarded her an honorary doctorate of humane letters, and the following year, she was appointed to the OU Board of Regents—the very group that once rejected her.

Fisher passed away Oct. 18, 1995, at the age of 71. In her honor, the university dedicated the Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher Garden on the Norman campus. The garden's fountain is made from rocks from all 77 counties in Oklahoma.

[www.ou.edu/web/news\\_events/articles/news\\_2020/civil-rights-icon-ada-lois-sipuel-fisher](http://www.ou.edu/web/news_events/articles/news_2020/civil-rights-icon-ada-lois-sipuel-fisher)

**17) Eleanor Roosevelt, circa 1950. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was the longest-serving First Lady throughout her husband President Franklin D. Roosevelt's four terms in office (1933-1945). She was an American politician, diplomat, and activist who later served as a United Nations spokeswoman. Roosevelt was noted for her activism on behalf of women, American workers, refugees, and against racism. In 1934 during Roosevelt's first term she was a strong supporter of anti-lynching legislation. While it didn't pass (and it was not until December 2018 that a federal anti-lynching bill passed in the Senate), her work earned her many enemies, among them the Ku Klux Klan who placed a \$25,000 bounty on her head. Mrs. Roosevelt was also responsible for shaping the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights with the assistance of her friend, Mary McLeod Bethune, Founder of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW).

[www.history.com/topics/first-ladies/eleanor-roosevelt](http://www.history.com/topics/first-ladies/eleanor-roosevelt)

[www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/first-ladies/anna-eleanor-roosevelt](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/first-ladies/anna-eleanor-roosevelt)

**18) Hale Woodruff, working on California Centennial Mural, 1948. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

**LEGISLATORS:**

**USA**

**19) Julian Bond, on election night, ponders his loss to newly elected U.S Congressman John Lewis with Atlanta journalists in hall decorated for Bond's planned victory celebration, 1986. Digital c-print. 14 x 11 in.**

Horace Julian Bond (1940-2015) was a leader of the American Civil Rights Movement, politician, educator and writer. Bond graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta and helped found the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). He was the organization's president from 1971 to 1979. While a student at Morehouse College during the early 1960s, he helped establish the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Bond was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1965. Despite his standing and the fact that his father Horace Mann Bond had become the first Black President of Lincoln University (Pennsylvania) where many state and global leaders attended, white members of the House refused to seat him because of his opposition to

the Vietnam War. In 1966, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the House had denied Bond his freedom of speech and had to seat him.

From 1965 to 1975, Julian Bond served in the Georgia House and served six terms in the Georgia Senate from 1975-86. In 1968, Bond led a challenge delegation from Georgia to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and was the first Black man nominated as Vice President of the United States. He withdrew his name from the ballot because he was too young to serve.

Bond ran for the United States House of Representatives for Georgia's 5th congressional district, but lost to civil rights leader John Lewis in an upset that pitted the two longtime colleagues against each other. John Lewis (1940-2020) went on to serve 17 terms. In the 1980s and '90s, Bond taught at numerous universities, including American, Drexel, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Virginia. Later in his life, he became Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) after serving 11 years (1998 to 2009).

[www.naacp.org/julian-bond](http://www.naacp.org/julian-bond)

[www.nytimes.com/1986/09/03/us/ex-colleague-upsets-julian-bond-in-atlanta-congressional-runoff.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/03/us/ex-colleague-upsets-julian-bond-in-atlanta-congressional-runoff.html)

**ETHIOPIA**

**20) His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie feeding his ducks in the pond of the Imperial Palace in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1950: Cover story of Ebony's 5th Anniversary issue November 1950. Digital black and white print. 12 x 12 in.**

Haile Selassie I, original name Tafari Makonnen, (1892-1975), emperor of Ethiopia from 1930-1936 and again 1941-1974, sought to modernize his country and steered it into the mainstream of post World War II African politics. He brought Ethiopia into the League of Nations and the United Nations and offered Addis Ababa to be the major center for the Organization of African Unity (now African Union). Ethiopia was one of only two (the other being Liberia) non-colonized countries in Africa before Ghana's independence in 1957 sparked the independence movement across Africa. Selassie was considered one of the godfathers of that movement along with Liberia's President William V. S. Tubman.

Haile Selassie (Tafari) was educated at home by French missionaries. At an early age he favorably impressed the emperor with his intellectual abilities and was promoted accordingly. He followed progressive policies, seeking to break the feudal power of the local nobility by increasing the authority of the central government—for example, by developing a salaried civil service. He thereby came to represent politically progressive elements of the population. Haile Selassie was regarded as the messiah of the African race by the Rastafarian movement.

[www.britannica.com/biography/Haile-Selassie-I](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Haile-Selassie-I)

## LIBERIA/GHANA

Dorothy Davis:US Embassy/Monrovia was simultaneously the first U.S. Embassy in Liberia and Africa with Ambassador Edward R. Dudley as its first Black Ambassador in the world. Liberia was the first diplomatic post for pioneer U.S. Foreign Service Officer Griffith J. Davis and Muriel Corrin Davis. At the time, the U.S. State Department only posted African American Foreign Service Officers to Liberia or Haiti due to the institutional racism within the Department.

[www.nytimes.com/2020/06/23/opinion/state-department-racism-diversity.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/23/opinion/state-department-racism-diversity.html)  
[progressive.org/dispatches/racism-at-the-state-department-hunt-200715/](http://progressive.org/dispatches/racism-at-the-state-department-hunt-200715/)  
[foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/11/u-s-black-diplomats-state-department-george-floyd-protests-trump-pompeo-state-department-diversity-racial-injustice-police-violence-soft-power/](http://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/11/u-s-black-diplomats-state-department-george-floyd-protests-trump-pompeo-state-department-diversity-racial-injustice-police-violence-soft-power/)

### 21) Portrait of President William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman of Liberia, ca. 1952-1957. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.

William V.S. Tubman (1895-1971) was the 19th president and the longest serving in the country's history. He was responsible for numerous reforms and social policies, including enactment of suffrage and property rights for all female residents of 21 or older; authorization of direct participation in government by all tribespeople, who comprised about 80 percent of the population; and the establishment of a nationwide public-school system.

In 1961 he travelled to the U.S. and met with President John F. Kennedy, who met him with extensive arrival ceremonies at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. President Tubman and His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia were considered the godfathers of the Independence Movement of Africa due to their support of African liberation movements freeing their respective countries from colonialism.

[www.britannica.com/biography/William-V-S-Tubman](http://www.britannica.com/biography/William-V-S-Tubman)  
[www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHP/1961/Month%2010/Day%2019/JFKWHP-1961-10-19-A](http://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHP/1961/Month%2010/Day%2019/JFKWHP-1961-10-19-A)

### 22) President William V. S. Tubman and First Lady Antoinette Tubman of Liberia walk past well-wishers including Chicago's Etta Moten Barnett (second from left), first Bess in George Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess*, during Inauguration Celebration in Monrovia, Liberia, 1952. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in. (Dorothy Davis)

Singer and community leader Etta Moten Barnett (1901-2004) graduated from the University of Kansas, and set out for New York City and more specifically, Broadway. She went on to achieve stardom in the theater, performing in legendary Broadway productions of *Sugar Hill*, *Lysistrata* and *Porgy and Bess*, joining the ranks of Black America's most elite talent. Etta Moten also appeared in many films including *Flying Down to Rio*, with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

In 1934 Etta Moten married Claude Barnett, founder of the Negro Associated Press. Their marriage represented a change in the scope of Barnett's influence. Barnett and her husband began to focus on philanthropic efforts. Together they enjoyed a special bond, traveling during the late 1950s as members of a U.S. delegation to Ghana. Etta Moten Barnett also represented the United States at the independence ceremonies of Nigeria, Zambia and Lusaka. After her husband's death in 1967, Etta Moten Barnett became more active in domestic affairs, including working with the Chicago's DuSable Museum and Lyric

Opera. Her many distinctions included honorary degrees from Spelman College, Lincoln University and the University of Illinois; an award for her Contributions to American Music by Atlanta University; and the establishment of a scholarship in her name for minority students at the Chicago Academy for the Performing Arts.

[www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/etta-moten-barnett-40](http://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/etta-moten-barnett-40)

### 23) President William V. S. Tubman and First Lady Antoinette Tubman and Griffith J. Davis and his wife, Muriel Corrin Davis, convene in the Executive Mansion in Monrovia, Liberia, ca. 1952-1957. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in.

### 24) Dancing into Independence. Gold Coast Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah teaches Muriel Corrin Davis how to dance the "high life" at a reception in his honor held on the yacht of Liberia's President William V.S. Tubman, Monrovia, Liberia, January 1953. Digital black and white print. 12 x 9 in.

Nkrumah had been officially invited by Tubman to Liberia four years before Ghana's independence in March 1957. It was his first official visit to Liberia. Griff Davis' story and photographs of the visit appeared in the June 1953 issue of *Ebony* magazine.

### 25) Griff Davis (on the right) as Information Officer for U.S. Embassy/Monrovia discusses the development potential of the waterfall to provide electricity for the village below with support from the U.S. government, ca. 1952-1957. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.

This is an example of how U.S. Foreign Service Officer Griff Davis used photography as a companion tool with proposals submitted to his superiors at the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the U.S. Department of State to request funding for development projects in Liberia, circa 1952-1957. As the first Information Officer at the U.S. Embassy/Monrovia, Griff Davis was a pioneer in international development communications. (Dorothy Davis)

### 26) Gabriel Meaux, FOA Rice Production Specialist, and his Liberian aide inspect progress on the Gbadin Swamp Rice Project recently started in north Central Liberia, ca. 1953-1955. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in.

The Gbadin Swamp covers an area estimated to be 15,000 acres. The swamp rice project is intended to make Liberia self-sufficient in rice. Meaux was formerly county agent in the rice growing parish of Allen, Louisiana, ca 1953-1955. Griffith Davis photo for Foreign Operations Administration.

### 27) Lumber processed on the sawmill of the Liberia company, ca. 1950 - 1953. Digital black and white print. 9 x 12 in.

"Lumber processed at the sawmill of the Liberia Company...is used primarily in construction work on the...cocoa plantation... Through the (assistance) program, the U.S. is cooperating with

the government of Liberia to improve agricultural output and technical skills in that country." Griffith Davis caption and photo for Technical Cooperation Administration.

**28) Rubber tapper scraping bark of rubber tree in Liberia, ca. 1952-1957. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in.**

"Rubber is one of the crops derived from trees which has for years contributed to Liberia's economic development. Under the Joint Development Program, other important export crops are being encouraged." Griffith Davis caption and photo for U.S.A. Operations Mission.

**29) Solo portrait of Gold Coast Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, during visit to Liberia in January 1953 or as Prime Minister of newly independent Ghana during the country's Independence Celebrations in March 1957. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

Kwame Nkrumah (1909- 1972) was a Ghanaian nationalist leader who led the Gold Coast's drive for independence from Britain and presided over its emergence as the new nation of Ghana. He headed the country from independence in 1957 until he was overthrown by a coup in 1966.

The Gold Coast was a British Crown Colony on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa from 1821 to its independence as part of the nation of Ghana in 1957. It was the first country in sub-saharan African to throw off European colonial rule. He was a graduate of Lincoln University in Lincoln, Pennsylvania.

**30) Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah in the first handover ceremony as part of Ghana's Independence Celebrations, March 1957. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in.**

**31) Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah and first cabinet, as part of Ghana's Independence Celebrations, March, 1957. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in.**

**32) Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah facing phalanx of reporters at Ghana's Independence Celebrations, March 1957. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in.**

**33) Soldiers in fancy dress with rifles participate in Ghana's Independence Celebrations, March 1957. Digital black and white print. 8 x 10 in.**

**34) British flag coming down at launch of Ghana's Independence Celebrations, March 1957. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

**35) Ghanaian flag going up for first time as part of Ghana's Independence Celebration, March 6, 1957. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

**36) Duchess of Kent during Ghana's Independence Celebrations, March 1957. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

Princess Marina of Greece and Denmark (1906-1968) was married to the Duke of Kent, 4th son of King George V and Queen Mary. Widowed in 1942, she carried out many royal engagements, and was appointed by the Queen to represent her at the independence celebrations for Ghana and Botswana.

**37) President William V. S. Tubman in tails with other African dignitaries at Ghana's Independence Celebrations, March 1957. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

**38) First Meeting of U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon and Martin Luther King, Jr. and their respective wives - Patricia Nixon and Coretta Scott King—at official reception hosted by First Prime Minister and President Kwame Nkrumah on Independence Day of Ghana in its capital, Accra, March 6, 1957. Black and white inkjet print. 12 1/8 x 11 in.**

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King attended the occasion just months after the end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in Alabama. Prime Minister Nkrumah had invited them to the Independence celebrations. During this conversation, Mr. Nixon invited King to stop in to see him when he passed through Washington en route to Montgomery. This picture was not allowed to be shown in the United States of America due to the racial political environment at the time. *The Tampa Bay Times* was the first publication to publicize (publish) this photograph on January 19 and 20, 2020.

In his capacity as U.S. Foreign Service Officer stationed at U.S. Embassy/Monrovia (Liberia), Griff Davis was assigned to cover the official U.S delegation headed by Vice President Richard Nixon to the Ghana Independence Day celebration. He was one of 20 official photographers for Ghana's Independence Day. It was the first trip for the Nixon and King families to Africa.

In his speech, "Where Do We Go From Here? A Personal Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr. by Griffith J. Davis, USAID/Lagos (Nigeria)" at Memorial Service for King on April 9, 1968, Davis describes his lifelong friendship with King stemming from their Atlanta childhood. (Dorothy Davis)

**TUNISIA**

Dorothy Davis: Griffith Davis' second post as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer for U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was to newly independent Tunisia from 1957 to 1961. In that capacity, the Davis' family was among the first American families officially being posted to that country. He served as Communications Resource Officer. In that capacity, he provided technical assistance to the Government of Tunisia in creating Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism. During this time, President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon made official visits to Tunisia's Founding Father

and President Habib Bourguiba. Captions in this section attributed to Griffith Davis.

**39) President Habib Ben Ali Bourguiba of Tunisia with Griffith Davis in his capacity as U.S. Foreign Service Officer for U.S. Embassy/ Tunisia, ca. 1957-1961. Digital black and white print. 9 x 12 in.**

H. E. Habib Bourguiba, in full Habib ibn Ali Bourguiba (1903- 2000) architect of Tunisia's independence and first president of Tunisia (1957-87), one of the major voices of moderation and gradualism in the Arab world.

**40) Camera training class probably at Tunisian Ministry of Information, organized as part of U.S.-Tunisia technical assistance project managed by Griffith Davis, ca. 1961. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in.**

Griffith Davis' photo for Special Mission for Economic and Technical Cooperation.

**41) Newly arrived mobile cinema van is inspected at La Goulette port by Tunisian and USOM officials., ca. 1957. Digital black and white print. 12 x 12 in.**

The equipment, including two vans, would be used to set up a media production center in the Secretariat of State for Information to produce and utilize audio visual materials in support of the joint development program. Left to right are shown Griffith J. Davis, USOM Communications Media Advisor, Donald B. MacPhail, Deputy Director, USOM, Mr. Zouhaier Cbelli, Chief of Cabine of the Secretariat of State for Information and other officials of this Secretariat. The audio visual equipment was first to arrive under the U.S.-Tunisian technical assistance agreement signed in March 1957. USIS Photo

**42) Van driver asking man with camel for directions, ca. 1957-1961. Digital black and white print. 9 x 12 in.**

**43) Rapt crowd watching movie, ca. 1957-1961. Digital black and white print. 9 x 12 in.**

**44) Girls watching movie mouths wide open, ca. 1957-1961. Digital black and white print. 5 ¼ x 5 ¼ in.**

**45) President Bourguiba planting a seedling, ca. 1957-1961. Digital black and white print. 12 x 12 in.**

**46) Berber father and child, ca. 1957-1961. Digital black and white print. 12 x 19 in.**

**47) President Dwight Eisenhower and President Habib Bourguiba meet in Tunisia, 1959. Digital black and white print. 9 x 12 in.**

President Eisenhower made an official visit to the North African country of Tunisia to meet with President Bourguiba. Mr. Bourguiba took Mr. Eisenhower's hand and held it up high in the air, in La Marsa, 10 miles from Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. Mr. Bourguiba gave Mr. Eisenhower two gazelles and a pretty brown horse as presents.

## **NIGERIA**

Davis first worked in Nigeria as a photojournalist for Black Star Publishing Company from 1949-1952 (see below). Later, Nigeria became Davis' third posting in Africa as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer in the capacities of Communications Media Advisor and ultimately as Deputy Education Officer during the Biafran War. During his tour of duty from 1966 to 1971, he provided technical assistance to the Government of Nigeria in creating national educational radio and television systems and facilitating civil war reconstruction projects.

The region of West Africa was ruled by the United Kingdom from the mid-19th century to 1960. The British imposed Crown Colony government on what became known as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, with administrative and military control exercised primarily by white Britons in London and Nigeria. Sir John MacPherson, Governor, introduced the MacPherson Constitution in 1951 after a period of three years during which the Nigerian people were consulted. The Constitution established a wider representation of the people by introducing a new central body called the House of Representatives, among other reforms. The Federation of Nigeria was granted full independence on October 1, 1960.

Griff Davis was an international freelance photojournalist for Black Star Publishing Company, the first privately owned picture agency in the United States.

Benjamin J. Chapnick, President, Black Star, commented on Griff Davis: "At the time he was the only Black freelance photojournalist represented by Black Star and he was one of the few Blacks working on the international scene...He was recruited by the three founders of Black Star, Ernest Mayer, Kurt Kornfeld and Kurt Safranski, because of his photographic prowess and storytelling ability as well as his people skills. They considered him one of the best photojournalists of his generation."

The following images were part of the photographic series that Griff Davis shot for the story "Waning Empire" published by *Ebony* magazine. (Dorothy Davis)

**48) Back View, Nigeria, August 1951. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Governor MacPherson's bemedalled orderly holds His Excellency's feathered helmet behind standing group and out of camera range.

**49) Governor Sprawls, Nigeria, August 1951. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Governor Sprawls lifts both feet as he drops heavily into chair. Rev. Ogunbiyi beside him always sits by governor in group photos. He was regarded by Nigerians as a lackey for the British.

**50) Members brace, Nigeria, August 1951. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Members brace themselves for pose in last Legco group photograph. The wealthy polo-playing Emir of Katsina sits in his provincial dress.

**51) An Oba Sits, Nigeria, August 1951. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Oba of Benin, wearing glass-beaded hat, places cigarette can on ground. Behind, two other Legco members hunt for their places.

**52) Bewigged barrister, Nigeria, August 1951. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

Bewigged Legco member shifts to his position in group, which is carefully arranged according to protocol standing.

**53) Depart II, Nigeria, August 1951. Digital black and white print. 14 x 11 in.**

(Nnamdi Benjamin) Azikiwe's departure in American Hudson sedan brought clapping and cheers of "Z-Z-Z-Zik!" from Nigerians who crowded roads to see 46-year old "self government now" champion.

H.E. Nnamdi Benjamin Azikiwe served as the first President of Nigeria from 1963 to 1966. Considered a driving force behind the nation's independence, he came to be known as the "father of Nigerian nationalism." He was a graduate of Lincoln University (Pennsylvania) and University of Pennsylvania.



8) Griff Davis reviews the script for Liberia's first promotional film "Pepperbird Land" with its narrator, emerging actor Sidney Poitier in Monrovia, Liberia, 1952. Digital black and white print. 10 x 8 in. Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives.

## **GRIFFITH J. DAVIS ARCHIVE**

*Ebony* magazine article about Atlanta signed by Davis, Langston Hughes and Alston, January 1948. Facsimile.

*Ebony* 5th Anniversary issue, cover story Haile Selassie, November 1950

"Global Honeymoon" spread in *Ebony* magazine, September 1952

*Ebony* magazine, "World's Top Negro Statesmen Meet," June 1953  
Two contact sheets of images used in the article: Gold Coast Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah and Suite traveling on President William V. S. Tubman's yacht from Accra, Gold Coast for historic meeting in Monrovia, Liberia, January 1953. Digital black and white prints.

*Life International Edition*, "Africa: A Continent in Ferment Special Issue," June 15, 1953

*Time* magazine cover story on Kwame Nkrumah connected to Ghana's Independence Day celebrations in March 1957. Digital c-print.

Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folk* (1947)

Arna Bontemps, *Langston Hughes: Letters 1925-1967* (1980)

John H. Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds: The Autobiography of a Great American Businessman* (1989)

Jonathan Scott, *Socialist Joy in the Writing of Langston Hughes* (2006)  
with image of inscription and self-portrait with Johnson that Griffith J. Davis glued inside the cover.

Audiotape of Benjamin Davis reading speech written and given by Griff Davis in Lagos, Nigeria on occasion of assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., April 1968.

DVD Video of "Pepperbird Land – 1952 Liberia (The Country, People, Industry, Leaders)" produced by Griff Davis, 1952. 23 minutes. Color/Sound.

DVD Video of "Coketails for Dorothy: Monrovia Children's Birthday Party" produced by Griff Davis, 1956. Unedited 25 minutes. Black and white.

**STILL HERE: CONTEMPORARY WORKS**

**Romare Howard Bearden**  
(American, 1911 - 1988)

*Reunion, 1971*

lithograph collage

21 1/4 x 16 1/2 in.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Gardner, 1983.34.6

The Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College Collection

One of the most important American artists of the 20th century, Romare Bearden fused Cubism and Black culture. He is best known for collages made from torn images of popular magazines, which he reassembled into powerful statements on Black life in America. Like Griff Davis' portrait of Thurgood Marshall and Ada Lois Sipuel, Bearden's print also hangs in the archives of the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Emory Douglas**

(American, b. 1943)

*The Lumpen-The Heirs of Malcolm have picked up the gun, 1970.*

offset lithograph on paper.

22 x 14 in.

The Alford Collection of Art, Gift of Barbara '68 and Theodore '68

Alford, 2017.15.8

*Only on the Bones of the Oppressors can the People's Freedom Be Founded...*, 1969.

Offset lithograph on paper. 23 x 15 in. The Alford Collection of

Art, Gift of Barbara '68 and Theodore '68 Alford, 2017.15.10

The Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College Collection

Emory Douglas was the Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party from 1967 to 1980. During this period he oversaw the art direction and production of the party's official newspaper while creating a radically Afrocentric iconography to represent Black oppression.

**Jacob Lawrence**

(American, 1917-2000)

*Revolt on the Amistad, 1989*

silkscreen

35 x 25 3/8 in.

Museum Purchased from the Wally Findlay Acquisition Fund, 1995.26

The Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College Collection

Jacob Lawrence memorialized some of the most important events in American history through colorful narrative paintings and prints. His subjects included the Great Migration, the Depression-era flight of Black Americans from the rural south to the north, as well as the famous revolt of African captives aboard the slave ship *Amistad*. Lawrence made this print in 1989 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the 1839 revolt.

**Deana Lawson**

(American, b. 1979)

*Binky & Tony Forever, 2009*

pigmented inkjet print

37 x 43 1/4 in.

Museum Purchase, 2019, SN11654

Collection of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida, Florida State University, Sarasota, Florida

Brooklyn-based photographer Deana Lawson specializes in Black subjects pictured in environments that reveal as much about them as they do about the viewer's assumptions. The totemic *Binky & Tony Forever* captures young lovers inside a pristine bedroom watched over by the image of Michael Jackson. This photograph served as the cover art for Blood Orange's 2016 album *Freetown Sound*.

**Zanele Muholi**

(South African, b. 1972)

*Kodwa II, Amsterdam, from the series Somnyama Nyonyama (Hail the Dark Lioness), 2017*

gelatin silver print

44 7/16 x 31 1/16 in.

Museum purchase, 2017, SN11594.2

*Misiwe IV, Bijlmer, Amsterdam, from the series Somnyama Nyonyama (Hail the Dark Lioness), 2017*

gelatin silver print

32 5/8 x 20 3/4 in.

Museum purchase, 2017, SN11594.1

Dedicated to Nancy Parrish by the Ringling Foundation Board in recognition of her distinguished service as Chair 2018-2020. Collection of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida, Florida State University, Sarasota, Florida

Zanele Muholi describes herself as a visual activist. From the early 2000s, they have documented and celebrated the lives of South Africa's black lesbian, gay, trans, queer and intersex communities. In each of these self-portraits the artist uses the tropes and conventions of standard portraiture to rearticulate the demands of contemporary identity politics.

**Hank Willis Thomas**

(American, b. 1976)

*Behind every great man..., 1973/2015, 2015*

38 5/8 x 50 in.

Museum purchase with funds provided by William and Jane Knapp, 2016, SN11548.10

*The Breakfast Belle, 1915/2015, 2015*

48 7/8 x 40 in.

Museum purchase with funds provided by William and Jane Knapp, 2016, SN11548.1

*Golly, Mis' Maria, Folks Jus' Can't Help Havin' a friendly feeling' for Dis Heah! 1935/2015, 2015*

40 x 50 1/16 in.

Museum purchase with funds provided by William and Jane Knapp, 2016, SN11548.3

*The Men Cheered! 1945/2015, 2015*

28 1/8 x 50 in.

Museum purchase with funds provided by William and Jane Knapp, 2016, SN11548.7

**digital chromogenic prints**

**Collection of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida, Florida State University, Sarasota, Florida**

Hank Willis Thomas is a conceptual artist whose primary interests are identity, history, and advertising. Through photographs, sculpture, video, and public art, he invites us to consider popular culture's role in instituting discrimination, while asking how art can raise critical awareness and promote social justice. Thomas is the son of renowned curator and scholar Deborah Willis, a leading authority on Black photography in America. Ms. Willis considered Griff Davis to be one of her mentors.



Jacob Lawrence, *Revolt on the Amistad*, 1989.  
© 2020 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation,  
Seattle / ArtistsRights Society (ARS), New York.