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## ANN ALLEN SHOCKLEY

### An Activist-Librarian for Black Special Collections

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In 1961 Paul M. Smith Jr., associate professor of education at North Carolina College at Durham (now North Carolina Central University), authored an article on special collections in Negro college libraries. He expressed concern that a review of the American Library Directory (1960) revealed that only nearly half of the libraries indicated the existence of a special Negro collection. Smith felt that most of the collections lacked the uniqueness that historically defined such collections (Randall and Goodrich 1936, 150). He was particularly critical of the ability of small Black college libraries to successfully maintain special collections, with their limited funds, staff, and facilities. Smith posited, “Does not such conditions raise questions as to the validity and meaning of special collections on the Negro in small colleges?” (1961, 151).

The “small Black colleges” Smith spoke of were likely those not as large or as well-known as schools like Howard University, Fisk University, and Atlanta University. His critique implies that outside of a few special institutions, Black colleges were generally ill-equipped to host and manage special collections. The definition that Smith used is limiting and fails to consider the possibility that such collections at smaller Black colleges could serve a different, yet equally significant purpose.

This chapter will argue that special collections in both large and small Black college libraries and those serving Black studies programs indeed have a unique meaning, one that is closely tied to the mission of historically Black colleges and universities and Black studies’ to meet the needs of Black communities. Smith’s definition of special collections focuses on attributes such as “comprehensiveness,

quantity and worthwhileness"; as compared to collections at other libraries, Black special collections and Black studies collections often are special as they relate to the main collections in their libraries. In Black colleges, the development of these collections represents an attempt to push back against collections that were often imposed on Black libraries. Their development and maintenance speak to the deficiencies in cataloging and classification systems that traditionally have served to obliterate the experiences and accomplishments of Black people.

To shed light on Smith's question, this chapter will highlight the work of Ann Allen Shockley, a Black activist-librarian who wrote extensively on the purpose and function of Black special collections. Shockley, who was a part of a continuum of Black activist-librarians, was extraordinary in that she raised important questions about the need for special collections in libraries serving HBCUs, their function in support of Black studies programs on predominantly white campuses, and the roles of librarians and publishers in developing and supporting such collections.

### COUNTERNARRATIVE/CRT DEFINITION

Black special collections serve a special function within the libraries of Black colleges and in libraries serving Black studies programs. Historical evidence confirms that there is a long tradition in the Black community of collecting and preserving information that describes the experience of Black people (Albritton 1998). Beginning in the early 1800s, free Blacks established literary and historical societies, with a focus on social uplift through the reading and discussion of literature. In cities throughout the eastern United States, "large circles of bibliophiles" developed, evolving into the Negro Book Collectors Exchange in 1915 (Wesley 1990). Prominent members included Henry Proctor Slaughter, Arthur Alfonzo Schomburg, Rev. Charles Douglass Martin, and John Edward Bruce.

These organizations and their bibliophile members and founders were the fore-runners of today's Black special collections. Their materials functioned as a revisionist history for the race and "provided irrefutable proof that African Americans could achieve" (Albritton 1998, 38). Donations from collectors such as Schomburg, Jesse E. Moreland, and Slaughter enriched the libraries at Fisk University, Howard University, and Atlanta University, respectively. Their collections established Black intellectual legacies that persist into the present day.

Little attention has been paid to the role of Black librarians to advance the cause of highlighting the history and achievements of Black people. While bibliophiles such

as Schomburg, Moreland, and Slaughter collected materials, the ongoing responsibility of arranging and making collections widely available to researchers fell to librarians working in Black libraries (Battle 1990).

The building and maintenance of Black special collections is consistent with the counternarrative tool that is often invoked in applications of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT has recently been invoked in the literature of library science. In general, CRT analyses in library and information science (LIS) critique the image of the library as a neutral, objective, apolitical institution (Honma 2005). Seen through the lens of CRT, these claims become masks for hiding the many ways that the library has been used as a tool by dominant groups to maintain power and privilege. With the LIS field, the framework has been used to critique cataloging and classification systems (Adler and Harper 2018; Furner 2007; Higgins 2016), reference services (Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro 2015; Hall 2012), and the recruitment and promotion of library personnel (Hathcock 2015; Griffin 2013), among other topics. As demonstrated in scholarship by Mabbott (2017), it is also an appropriate framework for analyzing the inherent power in collection development.

Several tenets of CRT will be engaged in this chapter, including an appreciation for the lived experience of People of Color, a critique of liberalism, and an interrogation of institutionalized racism, particularly as it functions in cataloging and classification systems and library collections. Within the tenet that values the experiential knowledge of People of Color, the counternarrative, one that challenges existing narratives, emerges as a particularly useful tool. Through the work of Ann Allen Shockley, this chapter will present the idea that Black special collections, developed by Black librarians and others concerned with the plight of Black people, have operated as counternarratives within larger library collections. The traditional library collection functions as a “master narrative,” or single story, one that presents an often distorted, deficient narrative of Black people. CRT allows the Black special collection to emerge as a liberating tool for advancing social justice.

Black activist-librarians have played a particular role in countering racial stereotypes, partnering with Black bibliophiles, intellectuals, and organizations to challenge the embedded, persistent nature of racism in society and written knowledge. Such collaborations have required activist librarians to wholeheartedly reject notions of the library as a neutral, color-blind, apolitical institution. They have used their agency to curate materials by and about Black people as a bold testament against prevailing sentiments. The Black special collection is not just a mere assemblage of books and manuscripts, but a weapon in a centuries-old war for recognition of Black humanity.

## ABOUT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

For several reasons, it is critical to situate Ann Allen Shockley's life and work within the context of the historically Black college/university (HBCU). She received her undergraduate education from Fisk University, a private liberal arts HBCU. All of her experience working as a librarian was in libraries on HBCU campuses. Relatedly, her writings about libraries primarily center on working with Black special collections, initially in HBCUs and later in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) with Black studies programs. Collectively, these decisions suggest that Shockley was intentional about her praxis.

According to the Higher Education Act of 1965, HBCUs are "any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association...or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation" (White House Initiative on HBCUs, n.d.). Today there are 107 of these institutions, primarily located in the southern United States.

HBCUs were founded to provide higher education to African Americans at a time when most colleges and universities denied such opportunities to them. Established by formerly enslaved men and women, Black church denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and northern white missionary societies, these institutions endeavored to equip African Americans with the necessary skills to fully participate in American life.

Historically, HBCUs have faced significant challenges in areas ranging from enrollment to finances to leadership. Similarly, and relatedly, the libraries of HBCUs have faced problems related to their collections, staffing, technology, and funding. Despite the circumstances, Black librarians working in HBCUs have traditionally maintained separate collections of books and other materials about the Black experience. While several critiques of HBCU libraries exist in the literature, of note is a 1942 study of Black higher education, which compared libraries at Black colleges to their counterparts at PWIs. HBCU libraries were found to have larger collections of Black books and other resources than their counterparts (Brown et al. 1942).

It is worth noting that libraries at HBCUs have been the beneficiaries of white philanthropy, expressed through donations of funds to erect library buildings, to enhance collections, and to support the education of Black librarians. Foundations such as the Julius Rosenwald Fund donated collections of "well-balanced books" and appear to have had great influence over the development of library collections at

HBCUs (Smith 1940, 51). Within this context, attempts to build Black special collections at HBCUs, however meager, take on additional significance.

## BLACK LIBRARIANS AS ACTIVISTS

According to Beilin (2018), “the ideology of library neutrality, still a structuring feature of librarianship in North America, has served to obscure, minimize, or even deny the many ways in which librarians in the past were activists, both inside and outside of their libraries” (21). This is especially true for Black librarians, who when faced with the consequences of dual, segregated, and unequal education systems, have long fulfilled the role of activists, both on their campuses and in the larger society. Realizing the power of information, these librarians have been advocates for establishing and maintaining library collections for Black communities and for full and equal participation by Black librarians within the library profession.

One such early activist-librarian was Ruby Elizabeth Stutts Lyells, whose work in HBCU libraries took place at two Mississippi HBCUs, Jackson State College (now University) and Alcorn Agricultural and Mining College (now Alcorn State University). Valedictorian of the Alcorn class of 1929 (BS history) and the Hampton Institute Library School (BS), she was the first Black Mississippian to earn a professional library degree when she graduated from the University of Chicago in 1942 (Posey 1994).

Lyells’s educational achievements are noteworthy on several fronts. She was one of only 183 graduates of the Hampton Institute Library School, a ten-year Carnegie Foundation–funded experiment in segregated library education that provided bachelor-level training. She endeavored to obtain advanced librarianship training at a time when options for graduate education for Black students were limited. According to Curtis (1935), between 1900 and 1934, only two African Americans earned master’s degrees. It was not until the library education program at historically Black Atlanta University was established in 1941 that Black students in the southeastern United States gained wider access to master’s-level training. Prior to that date, those who aspired to obtain credentials beyond the bachelors of library science, like Lyells, were forced to attend library education programs in PWIs, where they were likely to encounter hostile conditions. For example, in response to a 1939 survey question on the performance of Black students in northern library schools, one school responded as follows:

While we have every sympathy for the Negro woman student of course no prejudice, we discourage them for trying to enter the \_\_\_\_ School for Library Science or indeed any department of the University, because there is literally no satisfactory place for them to live in \_\_\_\_\_. We have had, therefore, no Negro graduates since 1936. (Barker and Jackson 1939, 41)

It is worth noting that despite the passage of eighty years, the experience reflected in the quote above closely mirrors that of some contemporary library students of color who endeavor to gain master's-level education. The lack of progress in this area confirms the embedded persistent nature of racism in American society and the library profession, as CRT points out.

Lyells was an outspoken advocate for civil rights and libraries, both public libraries and those serving Black land grant institutions, such as Alcorn. At a time when the Mississippi Library Association denied membership to African Americans, she worked to establish a library division of the Mississippi Teachers Association, the state professional association for Black teachers who could not join the white Mississippi Association of Teachers (Carey 2018). She was also an active member of the Mississippi Republican Party and the Negro Federation of State Women's Club. A fiery orator, she understood the importance of collecting materials by and about Blacks, stating that "if a man can learn to look at himself through the perspective of history and of things to come, in whatever narrow category he may find himself acting at any given time, the immediate goals which he sets for himself will have direction and meaning" (Lyells, 1949, 660). While speaking at the 1944 Emancipation Day at the Jackson YMCA, Lyells connected the study of one's history to their liberation: "For when we study our past and contemplate our heroes, we fortify ourselves against a tendency to apologize for our racial identity. By frequently reviewing our history we come to know the heart and spirit of our race; we get a sense of our heritage; we get perspective and inspiration" (349–350).

Her graduate thesis evaluated the Negro special collection of the George C. Hall branch of the Chicago Public Library. She also wrote articles in various library and education journals, including *Library Journal*, *Library Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Negro Education*. Like the Black bibliophiles who came before her, Lyells engaged in efforts to document the history of African Americans. She authored a book titled *Understanding the Negro (Revised): A List of Books by and about the Negro, Selected to Give a Background for Understanding What the Negro Thinks in the Present Crisis*, a bibliography developed from reviews in *Book Review Digest*.

E. J. Josey is perhaps the best-known Black activist-librarian. Born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1924, Josey served in the United States Army from 1943 to 1946. Once discharged, he enrolled at Howard University, a private HBCU in Washington, D.C., where he studied music and graduated in 1949. Josey would go on to earn an MS degree in history from Columbia University, an experience which led to a job in the university's journalism library. Encouraged to attend library school by a colleague, he

received a master's in library science from the State University of New York at Albany in 1953, the second African American to earn an MLS from the school. After a brief stint at the Free Library of Philadelphia, he was employed at the library at Delaware State College (the 1890 land grant college for African Americans) before moving on to serve as director of the library at Savannah State College (Abdullahi 1992).

While working at Savannah State, Josey applied to join the Georgia Library Association (GLA), but was denied membership due to his race. GLA, like other southern library associations, denied membership to Black librarians well into the 1960s. Josey was strategic in calling for the American Library Association to deny membership to state organizations that excluded Black librarians from joining. His activism forced the GLA to integrate, and in 1964 he became the first Black member of the organization; other state library associations quickly followed suit, leading to a trickle-down effect that integrated virtually all of the southern state library associations. As African American librarians and other librarians of color continue to report discriminatory experiences in the profession, it is interesting to note that most southern library associations integrated less than sixty years ago.

Josey would go on to a long and prolific career in the profession. Among his many publications are *The Black Librarian in America* (1970), *What Black Librarians Are Saying* (1972), and *Handbook of Black Librarianship* (1977), the latter which was coauthored by Shockley. Lyells, Josey, and Shockley share several common experiences. Each of them received their undergraduate training in HBCUs. Favors (2013) argues that historically Black colleges and universities provided a "second curriculum" to their students, one that "ensconced students in racial consciousness, gave them political motive, and presented Black youth with a blueprint for how to tackle the hypocrisies embedded in American culture" (92). As students at Fisk, Howard, and Alcorn, respectively, Shockley, Josey, and Lyells were educated in this tradition. For example, while attending Fisk, Shockley wrote for the *Fisk Herald*, which described itself as "an outlet for the creative efforts of the Fisk student litterati [*sic*] and endeavors to make the student body more aware of the intellectual and social environment in which it finds itself today" (Fisk University 1948). Lyells served as associate manager for the *Alcornite*, Alcorn's yearbook.

Although educated in southern HBCUs, Lyells, Josey, and Shockley faced limited opportunities to obtain master's-level library training in the southeastern United States. As noted previously, it was not until 1941, when the library education program at Atlanta University opened, that southern African Americans gained wider access to master's-level preparation in their geographic region. Only two HBCUs,



Atlanta University and North Carolina Central University, ever offered an ALA-accredited master's of library science degree. Lyells, Josey, and Shockley all obtained advanced degrees at library education programs in PWIs.

Despite or perhaps because of their collective experiences, they all returned to service in HBCU libraries and, most importantly, served as activist-librarians in their own right. Of the three, Shockley is the only one whose library career took place exclusively in HBCUs.

### ANN ALLEN SHOCKLEY

Ann Allen Shockley was born to Henry and Bessie Lucas Allen on June 21, 1927, in Louisville, Kentucky. In 1948 she graduated from Fisk University, a historically Black liberal arts university in Nashville, Tennessee. She went on to earn a master's of library science degree from Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University) in 1959. Shockley began her career as a journalist, writing primarily for the *Louisville Defender*, the newspaper of her hometown (Dandridge 1987).

She is best known for her literary works centering the lives of Black lesbians. Her novels *Loving Her* (1974), *The Black and White of It* (1980), *Say Jesus and Come to Me* (1982), and *Celebrating Hotchlaw* (2005) illuminate the lives of an overlooked demographic. Her writing exemplifies the very type of work that Black special collections endeavor to preserve and make available, ones that illuminate experiences that might otherwise be unnoticed and undervalued by other collections. In addition to her literary works, she also authored *Afro-American Women Writers, 1746–1933: An Anthology and Critical Guide* (1988). Reportedly, the reference work was a labor of love for her, as she received no grant or clerical support, and she began assembling it in 1978, using extra time on holidays and over summers. In describing her inspiration for the work, she stated, “I shared a personal empathy with many of those women whose problems mirrored my own and those of women writers throughout the centuries” (Foster 1990, 151).

Between the time she worked as a journalist and when she authored her acclaimed novels, she was employed as a librarian in several libraries serving historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), including Delaware State College (now Delaware State University) in 1959 to 1960 and Maryland State College (now the University of Maryland Eastern Shore) in 1960 to 1969. She returned to her alma mater, Fisk University, in 1969, retiring as special collections librarian in 1988 (Bucher 2008, 184).

With the exception of recent scholarship by Pollock and Haley (2018), Shockley's writing on library issues and career as a librarian, and particularly her work as an



activist-librarian, have received little more than passing references. This is particularly interesting when one considers that Shockley was a contemporary of E. J. Josey, who is well-known throughout the library profession. Their paths likely crossed on multiple occasions, as both worked at Delaware State College, the state's 1890 Black land grant institution. Relatedly, both were involved in the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, the oldest of the American Library Association's five ethnic caucuses. A decade after their paths crossed at Delaware State, Shockley and Josey collaborated on *The Black Librarian in America* (1970).

### SHOCKLEY'S WRITINGS ON BLACK COLLECTIONS

Between 1961 and 1977, Shockley authored a series of articles and book chapters dealing with Black special collections. She first tackled the question of the proper place for books by and about Black people in a 1961 *Library Journal* article. At that time, Shockley was employed as circulation librarian at Maryland State College, where some students had questioned the library staff about why books by and about Black people were separated from the rest of the library collection. The topic appears to have also been discussed among librarians at Black colleges (Shockley 1961).

To address the question of the need for special Negro collections in the Negro college library, Shockley surveyed twelve Black colleges for their thoughts on the "nature, feasibility, and practicality" of such collections (1961, 2049). Of the twelve, only two lacked a Negro collection. Josey justified such collections this way: "Because of the progress of the Negro, he will be of increasing research interest" (Shockley 1961, 2049). At Hampton Institute, the respondent saw the collection as "a source of information as well as inspiration for its students" (Shockley 1961, 2049). At Fisk University, another advance was advanced: the benefits of such a collection to the surrounding community.

Shockley (1961) seemed to favor Negro special collections, arguing that such collections needed "special housing, special staff supervision, special acquisition policies, special usage" (2050). She concluded that "the collection should be interpreted as a source of pride, dignity, and worth" (2050). The question of the appropriateness of Black special collections was not settled by Shockley's article. Black librarians and historians continued to debate the question.

For example, from October 21 to 23, 1965, the Atlanta University School of Library Service collaborated with the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH; now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, or ASAALH) to deliver an institute called "Materials by and about American Negroes."

Sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, the institute featured librarians and historians concerned with available information on the Black experience. Atlanta University, where W. E. B. Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk*, edited the Atlanta University Studies, and established *Phylon*, among other accomplishments, was a fitting location for such a discussion. Ninety-six people including librarians and scholars attended (not including the historians), representing twenty-one states and the District of Columbia (Phinazee 1967).

This gathering of librarians and historians highlights the historical relationship between Black librarians and the professional association that birthed Negro History Week (now Black History Month) and published journals such as the *Journal of Negro History* and the *Negro History Bulletin*.

Of note was a panel titled, “Negro Collections vs. Negro Materials,” which featured a series of librarians who shared their opinions on the efficacy of Black special collections. The first panelist was Dorothy Briscoe, librarian at Texas Southern University, the state’s HBCU land grant institution. Briscoe affirmed the place and importance of Black special collections, stating,

College libraries, especially those that are predominately Negro and will undoubtedly remain that way for a number of years to come, more than ever before, are in need of collections for the study of Negro history. The Negro, for the most part, has been somewhat ignored and omitted from the history of the United States and much of what has been recorded has a one-sided orientation. For that reason, Negroes themselves know very little of their history and heritage and what is worse still, are inclined to be somewhat uninterested in their history. (Phinazee 1967, 6)

She suggested that a special collection was indeed beneficial. According to Briscoe,

The separateness of this type of collection is not based solely on the fact that material included is on the Negro. Rather, this type of special collection (made available through the gathering of books and other materials) allows for a more comprehensive consideration and treatment of a certain phase of history long neglected and misinterpreted, which by necessity must be studied, examined, and researched in order to provide the missing link in the history of a people and the history of a nation. (Phinazee 1967, 6)

Here we see a bold statement that alludes to the deficiencies of cataloging and classification systems that have historically marginalized nonwhite, non-Western materials. Black special collections then can be seen to have a liberating, emancipating function. Such collections, rather than relegating materials about the experiences of Black people to a subordinate status, instead elevate them to a level that is at least on par with libraries’ primary or main collections.

Virginia Lacey Jones, dean of the library school at Atlanta University, agreed with Briscoe. "It seems important that as we [Negroes] move into the mainstream of American life that we do not lose track of our background and our contributions to American life," stated Jones (Phinazee 1967, 1–2). Speaking on the special role of librarians, she continued,

We need to make every effort to develop well-organized collections of materials by and about Negroes. We owe this to ourselves as a group and to society as a whole. It is our responsibility to collect and preserve the materials to document the story of our contributions, our struggles, our problems and our achievements. Collections of materials by and about American Negroes are vital to Negroes to help them to know the facts and to develop pride in their racial heritage. Such collections are just as important for members of other racial groups so that they can learn the truth and develop greater appreciation and understanding of the Negro. (Phinazee 1967, 1–2)

Jones's challenge to other librarians requires them to take on the role of a storyteller through their collection work, to correct the injustices of past collection development efforts toward a goal of both educating and informing Black people about their history, but also to inform those of other races. Her use of the word *truth* implies that there is a need to correct past injustices, to offer a counterstory to correct one that is lacking.

John E. Scott, librarian at West Virginia State College and former president of the West Virginia Library Association, argued against Black special collections. He was generally opposed to separate special collections in small and medium-sized college libraries, regardless of the subject. Like Smith (1961) before him, Scott was critical of the capacity of the "majority of Negro colleges" to develop collections of quantity or quality that would constitute a special collection (Phinazee 1967, 9). He offered that "all libraries should be saturated with excellent collections of good books by and about Negroes; however, I would not like to see these books separated or segregated from other books. They should take their rightful place on the shelves" (Phinazee 1967, 10).

The different perspectives on the place of Black special collections illustrate the range of opinions among librarians working in Black colleges. Briscoe's and Jones's positions represent a more aggressive approach to addressing the marginalization created by traditional cataloging and classification systems. Scott, while not in total agreement with his colleagues, indirectly emphasizes the problem, as he articulates that all libraries should contain an abundance of books by Black authors and about Black experiences. It is interesting to note that while West Virginia State College was founded prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and meets the established criteria for designation as an HBCU, unlike Atlanta University and Texas Southern University,

its student population transformed from a majority Black population to a majority-white, commuter, adult demographic. At the time that John E. Scott attended the conference, the college he represented was not necessarily representative of Black colleges of the day and likely had different needs and objectives.

The question of the relevancy of Black special collections does not appear to have been resolved at the meeting. Although Shockley's name is not among the list of attendees, she continued to write and speak on the topic. By 1969, she was head of special collections at her alma mater, Fisk University. Although she was working in an HBCU, she remained interested in Black collections in general, particularly the mushrooming collections designed to support burgeoning Black studies programs at PWIs.

The genesis of the discipline of Black studies is often traced back to pressures and demands from students at several colleges in California in the late 1960s. The period saw an influx of students of color on white campuses, students who "confronted the false notions that scholarly investigations were objective and unbiased explorations of the range of human knowledge, history, creativity, artistry and scientific discovery" (Bobo, Hudley, and Michel 2004, 2). With this in mind, students at San Francisco State College (now University) began pushing for a more socially relevant education. For example, the Black Student Union began pressuring the administration to create a free-standing Black studies program. Similarly, at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB), students took over the computer center and outlined several demands, including the creation of a Black studies department and a Black studies center and support for library resources to support the curriculum, among other demands. The Black studies Department and the Center for Black Studies were established at UCSB in the fall of 1969 (Bobo, Hudley, and Michel 2004).

While the programs at San Francisco State College and the University of California Santa Barbara are often seen as the first Black studies programs, several scholars (Warren 2011; White 2011) credit the field's beginnings to groundbreaking work earlier in the twentieth century by Black intellectuals such as Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois. Woodson's work in establishing the ASNLH and Negro History Week and his editorship of the *Journal of Negro History* and creation of the *Negro History Bulletin*, along with Du Bois's Atlanta University Conferences and related research reports, arguably laid the "conceptual origins" for Black studies (White 2011, 70). From this standpoint, the argument can be made that Black studies "emerged from the segregated and self-determined spaces" such as HBCUs and independent associations like ASNLH (White 2011, 70). If this stance is accepted, it should not surprise that Shockley's expanded interest in Black special collections coincided with

the discipline's growth from within "segregated and self-determined spaces" to the establishment of autonomous programs and centers at PWIs. A close reading of her scholarship, both her writing and her speaking, supports this position.

Following her 1961 article on Black special collections in HBCUs, Shockley wrote numerous articles, served as an instructor at professional development conferences on Black special collections, and spoke on the topic. Her *Handbook for the Administration of Special Black Collections*, a rich collection of resources and activities, was used as a resource for four Black studies librarianship training programs hosted by Fisk in 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1974.

In her writing, she provided guidance on a wide range of topics related to Black special collections. She was keen to acknowledge the contributions of the forerunners of Black special collections, including HBCUs such as Howard, Fisk, Tuskegee, and Atlanta University, as well as the Schomburg Collection of the New York Public Library. According to Shockley (1971), those "libraries perceived the need for collecting and preserving materials on the black man as a truly visible force in the progress of mankind long before the black 'explosion'" (1).

She was openly critical of hastily assembled collections to support Black studies programs, noting that many were "staffed by librarians who know nothing about black history, black books, or black people" (1971, 1). In Shockley's view, librarians supporting Black collections "should be sensitive to the role of the Black man's experience in America and with that understanding, try to help interpret black people, black thoughts, and above all black feelings through books" (1971, 2). She understood the relationship between librarians and publishers, realizing that useful Black books would be overlooked if they were not reviewed in mainstream review publications. Black librarians in particular were encouraged to review Black books. Shockley lamented the lack of diversity among book reviewers; she advised concerned librarians to "take a cursory glance at the names of *Library Journal's* reviews and see how many black ones you recognize" (10).

Her criticism was not limited to librarians; she also chastised publishers for putting out reprints of little value and charging high prices for original editions of books by and about African Americans (Shockley 1974b). Her writing offered advice on collection development and evaluation related to Black special collections, often including lists of useful bibliographies for consultation. She encouraged librarians to become familiar with obscure Black publishers such as Broadside Press, Third World Press, Black Academy Press, and others (Shockley 1974a).

Shockley advocated for faculty and staff participation in decisions about the development of Black special collections. She also saw a role for students in building

collections, stating that “students, particularly black students, should also be enlisted to aid in selection. They should be made to feel that the establishing of a good collection that is indicative of the struggles, hopes and dreams of black people is *their* thing too!” (Shockley 1971, 4). She understood the value of the experiential knowledge of People of Color, an understanding that resonates with CRT as well as the Black studies discipline.

Shockley (1974a) also understood the embedded, persistent nature of racism and envisioned that Black special collections would always be needed:

As long as there is a need to study the black man’s past and record the present for posterity—and this will always be—there will be the need for Special Black Collections. The academic world cannot afford to repeat its pattern of making the black man invisible. By refusing to recognize this visibility in the past, a great blight has been inflicted upon the ethical and creditable scholarship of the academic world. As a constant reminder of foregone inequities, Special Black Collections should stand out as resource testimonials to the history of the black man, for here is where the true information is housed. (ii)

Years before the development of CRT as an analytical framework, Shockley understood the potential for librarianship to be used as a tool to advance racial justice. Not only did she use her knowledge, as shared through her writing, teaching, and speaking, but also her career trajectory serves as an example to present-day librarians on how they can use their vocation to challenge assumptions about the history and achievements of Black people. Rejecting beliefs about the library as a neutral, apolitical institution, Shockley recognized the power and potential of library collections to dispute the validity of stereotypes.

While working at Fisk University, Ann Allen Shockley interviewed acclaimed author and Jackson State University professor Margaret Alexander Walker, who stated, “I personally believe that black people need to preach in their work, but to preach so subtly that you don’t think of it as preaching” (Alexander 1973). Shockley’s career as an activist-librarian personifies Walker’s statement. While she was not viewed as an activist-librarian during her library career, viewing Shockley’s accomplishments through the lens of CRT allows one to reveal, expand, and acknowledge her activism in new ways. Her advocacy for the proper administration of Black special collections, whether on HBCU or PWI campuses, can be seen as not only leadership in the profession but also social justice work. CRT provides an opportunity for collection development to become a subversive, political activity, one with the potential to create a revisionist collective history, a counternarrative to the prevailing stories about Black people that exist in many academic library collections.

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# Knowledge Justice

## Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory

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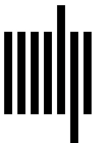
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