

# CHURCHWELL, ROBERT, 1917- Robert Churchwell papers, 1943-2002

Emory University  
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library  
Atlanta, GA 30322  
404-727-6887  
rose.library@emory.edu

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## Descriptive Summary

**Creator:** Churchwell, Robert, 1917-  
**Title:** Robert Churchwell papers, 1943-2002  
**Call Number:** Manuscript Collection No. 826  
**Extent:** 2.25 linear feet (5 boxes), 1 oversized bound volume (OBV), and 3 oversized papers boxes (OP)  
**Abstract:** Papers of the African American journalist Robert Churchwell, including correspondence, photographs, writings, scrapbooks, and printed material.  
**Language:** Materials entirely in English.

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## Administrative Information

### Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

### Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

### Source

Gift, 1999 with subsequent additions.

### Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Robert Churchwell papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

### Processing

Processed by Susan Potts McDonald, April 26, 2002.

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## Collection Description

### Biographical Note

Robert Churchwell was born on September 9, 1917, in Clifton, Tennessee, to Johnnie Ross and Jesse Churchwell. During World War II, he served as Staff Sergeant in the 1310th Engineers Regiment, Company C, with tours in both the Pacific and European theaters. It was during his tour of duty overseas that Churchwell's interest in writing professionally steadily increased due to the numerous letters he wrote home to his mother.

After being honorably discharged from the Army on December 19, 1945, Churchwell enrolled at Fisk University, where he took journalism classes and graduated in 1949 with an English degree. He joined the previously all-white *Nashville Banner* in 1950. Although the *Banner* hired him in order to increase the newspaper's circulation in the African American community, he accepted the position because Nashville's black paper had no paying jobs available. At the *Banner* he covered many civil rights-related events in Nashville and for over two decades he was assigned to the education beat.

In 1951, he married Mary Elizabeth Buckingham. The Churchwells have five children: Robert Jr., Andre L., Marisa Y., Keith B., and Kevin B.

Churchwell retired from the *Banner* in September 1981, after thirty-one years of service. For a short time in 1980-1981, he became Acting Public Relations Director at Tennessee State University. He continues to remain active by serving as a writer and a member of the editorial consulting staff of the *National Union Review*, a publication of the National Baptist Publishing Board.

### Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of the personal papers of Robert Churchwell from 1943-2002. The papers include correspondence, photographs, writings by and about Churchwell, scrapbooks, and printed material. The correspondence contains general letters written to Churchwell from a variety of individuals, as well as letters to and from his family. The majority of the family correspondence is between Churchwell and his children when they were attending college. The photographs in the collection document Churchwell's career in journalism and include images of Marian Anderson and Muhammad Ali. Other photographs reveal his personal life and include pictures of his wife and children.

The collection also includes both writings by and about Churchwell. The writings by Churchwell include newspaper columns, articles, speeches, an oral history, and an incomplete copy of his autobiography, "What's That Nigger's Name?" Information regarding Churchwell's journalist career is included in numerous magazine, journal, and newspaper articles.

Of the two scrapbooks in the collection, one was presented to Churchwell by the Tennessee Education Association and contains correspondence and articles written by Churchwell in 1973. The other scrapbook consists of loose pages containing photographs of students, probably collected by Churchwell during his coverage of education beat.

### Arrangement Note

Arranged by record type.

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## Container List

### Correspondence: Churchwell

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	1943-1979
1	2	1980-1989
1	3	1991-1996
1	4	1997-2002

### Correspondence: Family

2	1	1975-1976
2	2	1977-1979
2	3	1980-2001

### Photographs: Robert Churchwell

2	4	Robert Churchwell, Sr. (RC)
2	5	RC receiving awards from various groups
2	6	RC in journalism class [lower left], Fisk University, ca. 1947-1948 [Robert Hayden, instructor, standing in light-colored jacket]
2	7	RC with Marian Anderson, publicists Mabel Crooks Bodie and Dr. William Crump, David Halberstam, and Nashville Globe editor M.W. Day prior to Nashville concert sponsored by Tennessee A. & I., 1957
2	8	RC in Nashville Banner newsroom, 1972
2	9	RC with Muhammad Ali at the Nashville Banner, July 26, 1979
2	10	RC, Black Journalist Hall of Fame, 1994
2	11	RC, Emory University Journalism Symposium with Ozell Sutton and Reginald Stuart, 1997
2	12	RC and Mary E. Churchwell with David Halberstam, Fisk University reception, ca. 1998
2	13	RC, Fisk University 50th-year reunion, 1999 June

### Photographs: Family

2	14	RC and Mary Churchwell marriage, 1951
2	15	Churchwell family, 1999 March
2	16	Churchwell, Andre with RC, n.d.
2	17	Churchwell, Jesse W. [father] and Isom Churchwell [grandfather] and others, ca. 1900s
2	18	Churchwell, Johnnie Ross [mother] holding Robert Churchwell, Jr., n.d.
2	19	Churchwell, Mary
2	20	Churchwell, Jr., Robert

**Photographs: Others-People**

- 2 21 Birch, Adolpho A.
- 2 22 Douglas, Aaron, sketch by Aaron Douglas
- 2 23 Handy, W.T.
- 2 24 Van Vetchen, Carl, sketch by Aaron Douglas

**Photographs: Events**

- 2 25 Blue Triangle YWCA
- 2 26 Meharry commencement, 1971
- 2 27 St. John's AME Church choir, annual Tennessee Conference, 1956
- 2 28 Tennessee A. & I State College banquet, ca. 1950s [photo includes *Banner* publisher James G. Stahlman, third from left and Tennessee Governor Gordon Browning, fifth from left]
- 2 29 Tennessee Parent Teacher Organization, 1969
- 2 30 Vanderbilt University, Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture Series, Poster, 2001 [RC Featured Speaker]

**Writings by Robert Churchwell [Manuscript]**

- 3 1 "What's that Nigger's Name?" book proposal
- 3 2 "What's that Nigger's Name?" Chapter I: Jackie Robinson of Journalism, TS
- 3 3 "What's that Nigger's Name?" Chapter IV: What's that Nigger's Name, TS with corrections
- 3 4 "What's that Nigger's Name?" Chapter IV: What's that Nigger's Name, TS
- 3 5 [History of Black Journalism in Nashville], TS
- 3 6 Speeches, 1997-2002

**Writings by Robert Churchwell [Printed material]**

- OP1 1 *Nashville Banner*, Newspaper columns
- 3 7 *LBJ: To Know Him Better*, J. Willis Hurst and James C. Cain, contains "The Sensitive Touch of LBJ" by RC and "A View from the Other Side" by Andre L. Churchwell, 1995 [includes letter from
- 3 8 *Second Impressions: The School Story Day by Day. A Collection of Reprints from the Press, Oct.-Dec. 1972*, compiled by the Dept. of School-Community Relations

**Personal papers**

- 3 9 Biographical
- 3 10 Diary, 1942 April 15 – August 23 [World War II training]
- 3 11 Military Service records [photocopies]
- 3 12 *Nashville Banner*, blank expense reports
- 3 13 *Nashville Banner*, phone list

- 3 14 *Nashville Banner*, press card
- 3 15 Notes
- 3 16 Oral history transcript, Nashville Public Library Civil Rights Oral History Project, 2003

### Writings by others [Manuscript and printed]

- 4 1 Cloud, Fred, "Pioneer in the Newsroom," *Nashville*, September 1969 [article about RC]
- 4 2 King, Tom, "Madison Avenue, Here I Come," TS
- 4 3 King, Tom, "The Youth Tour to Washington," 1972, TS
- 4 4 Margolick, David, *Vanity Fair*, "The Book of David," March 1998 [includes photo of RC]
- 4 5 Ridley, Greg, "Aaron Douglas: The Last Portrait," TS
- 4 6 Stuart, Reginald, "News and Blues: Minority Journalists in the South, Twenty-Five Years Later," *Southern Changes*, Summer 1997 [2 copies]
- 4 7 Sumner, David E., "Nashville, nonviolence, and the newspapers: The convergence of social goals with news values," *Howard Journal of Communications*, Vol. 6, Nos. 1-2 (October 1995)
- 4 8 Sumner, David E., "The Publisher and the Preacher: Racial Conflict in Nashville," 1996 [includes TLS from Sumner to RC, April 3, 1996]

### Printed materials

- 4 9 *1100 Broadway*, July-August 1979 [article with photo of RC]
- 4 10 Battle, Dick, program honoring, 1973
- 4 11 Bontemps, Arna Wendell, In Memoriam, Fisk University, 1973
- 4 12 Churchwell, Andre, newspaper and magazine articles about
- 4 13 Fisk University
- 4 14 Fisk University Alumni Gala Banquet, 1999 May Class 1949 Reunion [photo of RC]
- 4 15 Fisk University, "A Degree That Is Respected" Brochure [photo and quote by RC]
- 4 16 *Gannetteer*, March 1974 [photo of RC]
- OP2 1 Guiding Lights calendar [features RC]
- 4 17 H.A. Cameron Post No. 6, 3rd Annual Founder's Homecoming Program and Banquet, 1961 June 22
- 4 18 *A Look at the Life of Robert Churchwell, Sr. "The Jackie Robinson of Journalism,"* play program, by Gloria Repress-Churchwell and Chequita Winters, performed at Percy Priest Elementary School, February 2010
- 4 19 M.W. Grand Lodge F. & A.M., State of Tennessee, Prince Hall, 1969 [RC receives Citizen of the Year award]
- 4 20 National Baptist Convention of America, program, 1974 [includes RC's story notes]

- OP2 2 *National Union Review*, National Baptist Publishing Board, 1994-2002
- 4 21 Newspaper articles, 1970s
- 4 22 Newspaper articles, 1980s
- 4 23 Newspaper articles, 1990s
- 5 1 Newspaper articles, 1990s
- 5 2 Newspaper articles, 2000s
- 5 3 Order of the Eastern Star, Eclipse Chapter #220, Prince Hall Affiliated, Program, 1992 April 4 [RC receives award]
- 5 4 Pearl High School, Fifty-third commencement, program, 1940 June 7 [RC mentioned]
- 5 5 *The Reporter*, Vanderbilt Medical Center, 2001 January 19 [photo of RC]
- 5 6 Seay-Hubbard United Methodist Church
- 5 7 Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, newsletter, 1961 July 1 [RC mentioned]
- 5 8 Symposium: "Struggling to Report and Reporting the Struggle: The African American Journalist in the South, November 7-8, 1997
- 5 9 The Torch, "A Giant Among Us," Vol. 2, No. 4 (April 2002)
- 5 10 The Union Review (National Baptist Publishing Board), January 2002-October 2002
- 5 11 YWCA Black Achievers, Flyer, 1998 November [RC received Adult Citizens Achievement Award]
- 5 12 Yours..., *The Nashville Newsmagazine*, No. 1, Vol. 4, n.d. [includes explanatory note by RC]

### Awards/Honors

- 5 13 Gold Star Club, *The Nashville Tennessean*, 1943 [w/ explanatory note by Churchwell]
- 5 14 Harvard Medical School, Certificate of Appreciation, 1979 [from son Andre]
- 5 15 40th Anniversary Award, June 2, 1991 [from brother and sister-in-law]
- 5 16 Eclipse Chapter 220, Order of the Eastern Star, Prince Hall Affiliated, Certificate of Appreciation, April 4, 1992
- OP3 1 National Association of Black Journalists, Region VI, Hall of Fame, plaque, April 23, 1994
- OP2 3 National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, Presidential Citation, April 20, 1996
- OP6 Hillsboro High School, Appreciation plaque, May 16, 2002
- OP4 Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Resolution, May 9, 2002

### Scrapbooks

- OBV1 Tennessee Education Association, 1973 School Impressions from the *Nashville Banner*, School Bell Awards, presented to Churchwell, January 1, 1974  
[contains correspondence and articles by Churchwell in the *Banner*]
- OP2 4 Loose scrapbook pages containing photographs of students [probably from RC's coverage of education beat]
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