



## MAYME A. CLAYTON LIBRARY & MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

Volume VII, Number 3, May - June 2007 Contact us via E-mail: [aclayton@wsbrec.org](mailto:aclayton@wsbrec.org) Website: [www.wsbrec.org](http://www.wsbrec.org)  
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*"To know where you're going, you have to know where you've been"*



The Mayme A. Clayton Library & Museum (MCLM) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, public interest organization that serves as custodian of the Mayme A. Clayton Collection of African American History & Culture. The Clayton Collection is the world's largest privately held collection of rare and out-of-print books, documents, films, music, photographs and memorabilia on African American history and culture. MCLM was founded BY Dr. Clayton in 1981 as Western States Black Research & Education Center and was recently renamed to honor our founder, Dr. Mayme Agnew Clayton (1923 – 2006).

### *Reflections on a Legacy*



Mayme A. Clayton in Baltimore, Maryland, July 2006

By Avery Clayton

August 4, 2007 marks the 84<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Mayme Agnew Clayton. Her life and work present an extraordinary opportunity in the annals of American history. Dr. Clayton, a middle-class wife, mother and career librarian was able to accomplish what institutions have been unable to do: Namely, to collect and preserve the creative and intellectual records of the black presence in America.

Much still remains to be done. The vast majority of African American history lays dormant in boxes in basements and attics, endangered by neglect, water, fire, theft, pests, mold and mildew. MCLM's

mission is to collect, preserve; exhibit and celebrate the unique history and cultural heritage of Americans of African descent. Through these efforts we will strive to provide a more complete view of American history.

What makes the Clayton Collection unique is that it is only privately held collection of its kind in the world. All the other major collections of African American history and culture were pre-established and are line items in the budgets of larger institutions. As such, they do not receive the full financial attention of the institutions of which they are a part. Further, the African American community never had an opportunity to participate in the creation of those institutions. The Clayton Collection will be offered not only to the African American community, but to all of America, so that we may all join in the creation of an organization that needs to see the light of day. *The time has come*, the Clayton Collection exists and the American public is ready.

Mayme Agnew Clayton's cultural treasure was assembled as a labor of love and pride. We at MCLM will honor the life and work of Dr. Clayton by offering her collection to the American public in the spirit in which it was assembled. Our goal is to use the collection as an instrument of friendship and healing to bring people together under the umbrella of culture.

The size and scholastic value of Dr. Clayton's collection is stunning. The average mid-sized American library contains about 30,000 volumes, in total. Dr. Clayton amassed over 30,000 rare and out-of-print books, single-handedly. Rare and out-of-print books are harder to come by and more valuable. She was only interested in those books, written by or about African Americans that were in danger of becoming extinct. Her collection of Harlem Renaissance materials (1900 – 1940) is especially strong.

Dr. Clayton didn't stop at rare and out-of-print books. The Documents and Manuscripts Collection is vast and uncounted. It is considered to be the largest of the collections and contains original handwritten manuscripts from slavery, such as travel passes, plantation inventories, bills of sale and slave sale announcements. It also contains the personal correspondence of noted Twentieth Century black leaders such as Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Pearl Bailey, Josephine Baker and Marcus Garvey, to name a few. Also included are rare pamphlets and periodicals that give us a glimpse into of the mindset of the time.

With over 1,700 titles Mayme Agnew Clayton's film collection represents one of the largest assemblages of black independent and Hollywood produced films in the world. The collection is made up of 16 and 35mm films that date back to 1916. There are also hundreds of rare VHS videos and a collection of DVDs.

The Sheet Music & Record Library is curated and maintained by Lloyd Clayton. It contains original scores by Fats Waller, W.C. Handy, Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle and more. It ranges from old Negro Spirituals to the Fisk Jubilee Singers; Ragtime to jazz; rhythm & blues to rock & roll; and bee-bop to pop to rap to hip hop. The music archives chronicle how African American music revolutionized the aesthetic and social values of the world. The music collection is a glorious tribute to African American creativity.

The Photograph Collection is estimated to contain over 75,000 images that date back to the birth of the camera in the mid 1800s. The collection includes rare linotypes, daguerreotypes, tintypes and ferrotypes. Dr. Clayton was a shrewd collector. Beginning in the late 1960s when black magazines would go out of business, she would buy out their photo collections. The collection has a strong representation of early black Los Angeles. The Photograph Collection is remarkable because extraordinary and everyday moments in African American history are captured for all of us to experience.

Finally, there is a collection of memorabilia, i.e. artifacts that reflect the attitudes of then racialized American society. The collection includes mammy dolls, utilitarian items and product labels. The production of racially derogatory items was banned by the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Mayme Agnew Clayton was able to assemble such an astounding collection because she followed her passion and left the details to God. Her life is an example of the fact that one person can make a difference. She was extraordinary; an iron butterfly, kind and strong. She was filled with joy and loved to laugh. Her will, determination and pride in the accomplishments of black Americans lead her to greatness.

As the anniversary of her birth approaches I remember that this time last year, Dr. Clayton and I were in Baltimore, Maryland where she was honored by her sorority, Iota Phi Lambda as Businesswoman of the Year at their 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. As it happened, the Ragsdale branch of our family held the annual family reunion just blocks away, the same week, in Baltimore. We were blessed to be able to attend both events. Mom was in Seventh Heaven. The photograph above was taken at the Iota Phi Lambda Awards Dinner where she was honored. She was extremely happy and proud to be acknowledged by her sorority and to be with her family. I was proud to be her escort and am proud beyond words to continue her work.

Happy Birthday Mom: We know that you are smiling about the progress that we've made and we are grateful that you are in Heaven sprinkling stardust on our efforts.

## MCLM News & Updates

### **MCLM and the Library of Congress of the United States of America**

We are pleased to announce that the Library of Congress of the United States of America and MCLM will collaborate. After a December 30, 2006 meeting with Dr. James H. Billington, the Librarian of the Congress of the United States of America a team was dispatched from the LOC to survey the Clayton Collection. The survey generated a report in which it was suggested that items in the MCLM collection would complement and enhance the African American collections of the LOC. A letter of intent sent by the LOC states that once the Clayton Collection is processed, the LOC will digitize portions of the collection and the digitized materials will be hosted on the LOC website and the MCLM website. *Now, MCLM must secure the funding to process the collection.* MCLM's \$8 million dollar fundraising goal includes \$1.5 million necessary to hire essential staff to implement the processing of the collection (inventory, cataloging, conservation and archival supplies). **MCLM's relationship with the LOC is historically significant for the African American community and represents the first West Coast institutional relationship for the LOC.** In order to preserve and share the collection MCLM needs your support. Please make your tax deductible contribution today. **Mail your check to MCLM at 4130 Overland Avenue, Culver City, CA 90230 or make an on-line contribution on our website. Go to [www.wsprec.org](http://www.wsprec.org) and click on the Memberships and Donations tab. Together we can make a difference.**

### **MCLM on the History Detectives**

On Monday, July 23, 2007 the popular PBS television show the History Detectives aired an episode that featured rare artifacts from the Clayton Collection, one of which was an autograph book owned by Nora Douglas Holt Ray, a resident of New York City during the 1920s. The autograph book included the authenticated signatures of Presidents Calvin Coolidge, Warren G. Harding and Woodrow Wilson; writer Theodore Dreiser; Captain of Industry and philanthropist, Andrew Mellon; FBI Director, Herbert J. Hoover; Harlem Renaissance figure, Carl Van Vetchen and many others. The questions that the History

Detectives solved were as follows: 1) Who was Nora Douglas Holt Ray? 2) Was she African American? 3) If she was African American how did she happen to be at an event in the 1920s with the leading world figures of the day? The History Detectives did an amazing job of telling the story. If you missed the program and you'd like to know that answers to these questions and more, you can order a DVD of **Episode 505** from PBS to find out for yourself. Click on this link:

<http://www.shoppbs.org/product/index.jsp?productId=2766736&cp=2809871.2780128&sr=1&origkw=history+detectives&parentPage=family>

You will find Nora Douglas Holt Ray to be an absolutely fascinating character of the Harlem Renaissance Era and you'll enjoy the excellent sleuthing of the PBS History Detectives.

## MCLM in 'O' Magazine!!!

MCLM collaborated with Casa Frela Gallery to present *Hollywood to Harlem*, June 2, 2007 – August 25, 2007. The exhibition salutes the life and work of Dr. Mayme Agnew Clayton. Casa Frela Gallery is located at 47 West 119<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10012. *Hollywood to Harlem* features rare vintage films from the Clayton Film Archives and new original paintings by Avery Clayton. The opening night reception also featured an exhibition of rarely seen pre-Emancipation writings from the Mayme A. Clayton Collection of African American History & Culture.

MCLM is proud to have the *Hollywood to Harlem* exhibition sited in the **August 2007 issue of 'O' Magazine on page 44** (pictured to the left). The article is written by Faith Adiele.

Films from the Clayton Archives can still be seen at Casa Frela Gallery through August 25, 2007. For information, please contact Casa Frela Gallery Director, Lawrence Rodriguez at (212) 722-8577.

Among the films being screened are the classic *Hallelujah*, 1929 starring Nina Mae McKinney and Daniel L. Hayes. *Hallelujah* was the first black-cast, Hollywood-produced, sound film and was a blockbuster hit. One of the most amazing elements about *Hallelujah* is its sensitive depiction of rural Southern life in the 1920s. Stellar performances by Daniel L. Hayes and Nina Mae McKinney stand out 78 years after it was produced.

Other films include Paul Robeson's *Song of Freedom*, 1933. Robeson was the first African American star to have final cut approval of his films and that is apparent in *Song of Freedom*, an unusually respectful film for its day.

*Cabin in the Sky*, 1943 starring Ethel Waters, Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson and Lena Horne and *Stormy Weather*, also 1943 starring Lena Horne, Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson, Fats Waller, Katherine Dunham, Duke Ellington and many more round out the entertainment. Reservations are required. Call Casa Frela Gallery at (212) 722-8755. Take the entire family.

**O-ZONE**

**Cinema Rarities**

**Movies**

DUKE ELLINGTON AS THE DEVIL'S bathrobe-clad bandleader? Josephine Baker as a barefoot shepherdess? Sammy Davis Jr. as president of the United States? You can see all this and more in *Hollywood to Harlem*, an exhibition of historic black films playing this summer at Harlem's Casa Frela Gallery ([casafrela.com](http://casafrela.com)). The series honors the legacy of Mayme A. Clayton, a California librarian who died last year, leaving behind a personal collection of some 3.5 million pieces of African-American memorabilia. If you can't make it to New York, you can rent several of the films on DVD, complete with commentary by leading black cultural scholars. These treasures include King Vidor's Oscar-nominated *Hallelujah!*, the first major Hollywood studio production to feature an all-black cast. Filmed in Tennessee and Arkansas, this early talkie tells the story of a sharecropper's struggle against temptation (personified by film goddess Nina Mae McKinney). And don't miss *Song of Freedom*, the first production to grant an African-American star final-cut approval, with Paul Robeson as John Zinga, a British dockworker turned opera star who travels to Africa in search of his roots. Notable for its portrayal of the slave trade, interracial dock life, and Zinga's loving relationship with his wife, the film still resonates today. —FAITH ADIELE



Nina Mae McKinney and Daniel L. Hayes in *Hallelujah!*



## MCLM and the Ford Foundation

On July 20, 2007 MCLM received a prestigious Ford Foundation grant. MCLM will use the funds to develop a strategic plan. MCLM is very grateful to the Ford Foundation for recognizing the value of Dr. Mayme A. Clayton Collection of African American History & Culture and assisting MCLM in making it available to the public.

## MCLM and the Huntington Library

The Mayme A. Clayton Library & Museum is featured on page 5 of the Spring/Summer 2007 issue of the Huntington *Frontiers* Magazine. Please click the link below to read the article.

<http://huntington.org/Information/frontiers/S07dreams.htm>

The Clayton & Huntington Libraries

*Are pleased to present*

### **The Talented Tenth: Harlem Renaissance in Los Angeles, 2009**



Left to right: Madame C. J. Walker, America's first self-made female millionaire; entertainer, Josephine Baker; writer, Langston Hughes; and author/activist Booker T. Washington

The Clayton and Huntington Libraries are pleased about the development of the upcoming Harlem Renaissance Exhibition for 2009. The Harlem Renaissance Period (1900-1940) is one of the strengths of the Mayme A. Clayton Collection and a high point in African American history. Though the Renaissance was born in Harlem it was manifested by African Americans from shore to shore, which the upcoming exhibition will highlight.

The exhibition will feature rare books, personal correspondence of noted Renaissance figures, such as Langston Hughes; photographs, Oscar Micheaux films and other Renaissance period films; posters and artifacts from the collections of the Clayton Library and the Huntington Library.

The Harlem Renaissance is largely attributed to the works of its writer's, but it was more than a literary movement. It included racial consciousness and "A Back to Africa Movement" led by Marcus Garvey. It saw the beginnings of racial integration. There was an explosion in music, particularly jazz, spirituals and blues. The visual arts, dramatic revues, and films thrived. The Renaissance also included entrepreneurs like Madame C.J. Walker; scientists such as George Washington Carver; and religious leaders such as Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., Sweet Daddy Grace and Father Divine. The title of the upcoming exhibition is taken from W.E.B. Du Bois' "The Talented Tenth," from *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day* (New York, 1903) and was written in response to Booker T. Washington's 1915 autobiography, "*Up From Slavery*."

## **MCLM Signage Up at 4130 Overland Avenue, Culver City**

The new home of the Mayme A. Clayton Collection of African American History & Culture now bears the name of the **MAYME A. CLAYTON LIBRARY & MUSEUM**. The signed was installed on July 26, 2007.



### **Home of the Mayme A. Clayton Collection of African American History & Culture**

With your support MCLM will become a research and education center; a repository for endangered collections; a museum for contemporary art; and a media center for film and live performances. Classes workshops, film programs, genealogy and DNA analysis will be a few of the services MCLM will provide. Join us today. Make a tax deductible contribution to MCLM. *Together we will make a difference.*

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## **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

MCLM is grateful for the support and generosity of the Ford Foundation, New York, NY; the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, Pacific Palisades, CA. Thanks also to the Seattle based Wyman Youth Trust; filmmaker, Rita Cash; the Culver Marina Pacesetters and scores of others who recently sent contributions.

## **MCLM Intern Leah Kerr**

MCLM is pleased to welcome Leah Kerr. Ms. Kerr is a graduate student at UCLA with a dual major in film archives and library science. Leah's first MCLM project is to develop an annotated filmography of the Clayton Film Archives. Leah showed tremendous initiative and wrote a grant that enabled her to begin the filmography. We are thrilled to welcome her on board and very grateful for the support that UCLA faculty is providing Ms. Kerr.

## **The Links, Incorporated Invite MCLM Presentation**

MCLM presented an update to the Western Regional Conference of The Link, Incorporated, Saturday, July 6, 2007 at the beautiful San Diego Sheraton Hotel and Marina. The Links, Incorporated is a not-for-profit organization of more than 12,000 women of color, committed to enhancing the quality of life in our communities. The Links commitment to community services is through four main facets. They are as follows: 1) national trends and services, such as organ and bone marrow donation; 2) international trends and services, such as improving the quality of life for the African Diaspora; 3) services to youth, such as teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and juvenile delinquency; and 4) the arts for which the

Links have a strong and rich tradition of support. MCLM is proud to have the support of the Links, Incorporated.

**MCLM is fortunate to be represented by the outstanding agencies listed below  
Please consider them for your professional needs**

**LEGAL COUNSEL**

**Praxis LLP** specializes in corporate, international and real estate law; strategic transactions, intellectual capital, and investment banking and is providing legal counsel to MCL *pro bono*. James Roberts III, Partner and Michael Leventhal, Partner <http://www.praxisllp.com/index.php>

**EVENT PLANNING & PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**Personal Services Plus**, headed by Wendy Gladney Brooks is a full service event planning and public relations firm specializing in non-profit organizations, corporate, community based organizations, churches, political and small businesses alike and is providing services to MCL *pro bono*.  
<http://www.personalservicesplus.com/about.html>

**INSURANCE**

Tim Claire, R.J. Ahmann Company <http://www.rja.com/>

**MUSEUM PROJECT DESIGN**

**BRC IMAGINATION ARTS** is a global leader in the design creation and production of innovative and immersive experienced-based attractions for museums, experiential marketing such as corporate branding and cultural attraction sites. <http://www.brcweb.com/>

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**KMC PARTNERS** works with forward thinking entrepreneurs, investors, technologists and executives whose businesses and inventions are changing the world as we know it. <http://www.kmcpartners.com>

**To Contribute**

**PLEASE MAIL A CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:**

**MCLM (Mayme A. Clayton Library & Museum)  
4130 Overland Avenue, Culver City, California 90230  
Or**

**To make an on-line contribution, please go to:  
[www.wsbre.org](http://www.wsbre.org) and click on Memberships and Donations**

*Together we will make a difference*

*Parting Thought*

Last July, Dr. Clayton and I were in Baltimore, MD, where she was honored by Iota Phi Lambda sorority and to attend a family reunion. One of my most cherished memories happened as our friend Bridget Barnett (an LA to Baltimore transplant) was driving us to an appointment. Mom's favorite song came on the radio; Earth, Wind & Fire's "That's the Way of the World." Sitting in the backseat, I got the biggest kick out of watching my 82 year-old Mom's head bob to the beat of the music as she sang along. She loved the lyrics. Her favorite stanza was:

*You will find peace of mind  
If you look way down in your heart and soul  
Don't hesitate cause the world seems cold  
Stay young at heart cause you're never, never, never old*

Written by Maurice White, Charles Stepney & Verdine White