



THE FREEDOM CENTER COMMUNITY
ARCHIVE:
A POST-CUSTODIAL EXAMPLE OF
COMMUNITY-OWNED SERVICE WORK

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FREEDOM CENTER
of Oklahoma City





AGENDA

1. Introduction

2. How It Began

3. Work Thus Far

4. Into the Future

5. Conclusion



FREEDOM CENTER ARCHIVES

How it Began

Presented By Bailey Hoffner



How It Began

- Creators and carriers of community knowledge
 - Community-Owned project
 - Clara Luper, Barbara Posey, Gwendolyn Fuller, Marilyn Luper, Richard Brown, Lana Pogue, and so many others
 - *Behold the Walls* by Clara Luper (University of Oklahoma Press)
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How It Began

- Didn't just show up, offering services
- Pre-existing foundation of trust
- Shared values and goals



How we put institutional values to work

Mining the strategic priorities and principles for gold:

- “Priority 4: **Embody** OU’s **diverse community** of stakeholders by establishing the UL as **an inclusive place** for the exchange of ideas, learning, and discovery”
- “Leveraging library expertise and **partnerships**”
- “Enhance, preserve, and promote ~~our~~ **distinctive research collections**”
- “**Diverse and evolving communities**”
- “We lead initiatives and **collaborations expanding our impact on the research and learning objectives of the communities we serve.**”

How we put institutional power to work

- Who is already doing this work at your institution and within the community?
 - How to build a powerful network of trust, across members of your institution?
 - Trusted advisor: Dr. Karlos Hill
 - *1921 Tulsa Race Massacre: A Photographic History*
by Dr. Karlos Hill (University of Oklahoma Press)
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HOW WE PUT INSTITUTIONAL POWER TO WORK

“...There will be several opportunities for the University of Oklahoma to **provide human, financial, and other resources in support of this monumental community effort.**

This project allows OU to lend **professional expertise while also creating meaningful hands-on learning and community engagement opportunities for students, staff, and faculty**...we look forward to identifying additional ways for the University to partner with the Freedom Center’s board and staff...”

-Joseph Harroz, Jr.
President, OU



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA.

Office of the President

September 28, 2021

Re: Letter of support for the
Freedom Center Renovation
Project & the Clara Luper History
Civil Rights History Center

To whom it may concern:

It is with distinct pleasure that I write this letter to endorse the Freedom Center Renovation Project & the Clara Luper History Civil Rights Center. As the home of Oklahoma City’s NAACP Youth Council, the Freedom Center served as a hub for civil rights activity for many years. This building is a physical reminder of Clara Luper’s important and necessary work as the Youth Council’s advisor for 50 years. Today, the Freedom Center’s Board of Directors is actively working to preserve this legacy by developing facilities and programs that reflect on the past, present, and future of the Civil Rights Movement in Oklahoma.

This work will happen in phases, starting with the restoration of the historic Freedom Center building and culminating with the creation of a brand new, Clara Luper Civil Rights Center in northeast Oklahoma City. There will be several opportunities along the way for the University of Oklahoma to partner by providing human, financial, and other resources in support of this monumental community effort.

This project allows OU to lend professional expertise while also creating meaningful hands-on learning and community engagement opportunities for students, staff, and faculty. As plans for the future Civil Rights Center unfold, we look forward to identifying additional ways for the University to partner with the Freedom Center’s board and staff. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance and thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Harroz, Jr.", written over a white background.

Joseph Harroz, Jr.
President

The University of Oklahoma

Getting the project off the ground

- Funds for processing materials
 - Oklahoma Heritage Preservation Grant from the Oklahoma Historical Society
 - Space for housing and processing the materials
 - 5 office suite, donated by John Kennedy, Irish Realty
 - Initial remediation work
 - “The Bubble” at the Sam Noble Museum (OU)
 - People to do the work
 - 20% of OU Library Archivist’s time for 1 year
 - Funds for 2 Graduate Assistants (OU) from History and Library and Information Studies
 - Collaboration with African and African American Studies Capstone Course, student service project
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FREEDOM CENTER ARCHIVES

Work thus Far

Presented By Dr. Autumn Brown

Where are we now?

The screenshot shows the Freedom Center of Oklahoma City website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Home, Repositories, Collections, Digital Objects, Accessions, Subjects, Names, and Classifications. The main content area is titled "Freedom Center Community Archive (1924-2020)" with a collection identifier FC.001. Below this, there are tabs for "Collection Overview", "Collection Organization", and "Container Inventory". The "Collection Overview" tab is active, displaying a search bar, date range filters, and a "Collection organization" section with a list of sub-collections. The "Extent" section at the bottom provides details on the physical materials, including 120 legal boxes and 15 shelves of magazines.

This screenshot shows the detailed description and arrangement of the Freedom Center Community Archive. The "Language of Materials" is listed as English. The "Biographical / Historical" section provides a detailed account of Clara Luper's life and her role in the Civil Rights movement, including her education, her work with the NAACP Youth Council, and her leadership in the sit-in movement. The "Extent" section details the physical materials, including 120 legal boxes of series cataloged material, 15 shelves of magazines, and various other items like newspapers, photos, and documents. The "Arrangement" section explains that the collection is organized into 25 series, with the core series including NAACP Youth Council, Freedom Center, and Oklahoma and Regional NAACP. The "Collection organization" sidebar on the right lists 20 sub-collections, such as "01 NAACP Youth Council, 1949-2008" and "02 Freedom Center, 1969-2020".

Home - Google Drive x Freedom Center Archive Descrip x +

docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Rk6S27k8Qaf0D1mfVw0T4CgoEMwHwGzJed1Agid=727372915

Freedom Center Archive Descriptive Finding Aids **XLXK** ☆ 📄 🗑️

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Help

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AI | Accession Number

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Accession Number	Title	Description	Notes	Date									
2	01.01.001	"Certificate of Recognition 'Service for Humanity'"	Chi Eta Phi Sorority Inc. Certificate of recognition to NAACP Youth Council on		October 28, 2001									
3	01.01.002	"Certificate of Appreciation for OAC NAACP Youth Council"	OAC Chapter of NAACP Youth Council certificate of appreciation for outstanding service performed in sit-ins	552 copies	Circa 1963									
4	01.01.003	"NAACP: Mobilize to Manifest the Mission Certificate of Excellence"	Certificate of excellence awarded to OAC Youth Council		March 25, 2003									
5	01.02.001	"Brenda Tinner's NAACP Youth Council Complaint Sheet"	Brenda Tinner filed a complaint against co-worker & Assistant Manager and included her shift work guidelines	Information to be redacted: Tinner's address & phone numbers; Tinner included written information about her complaints which included a copy of her shift work guidelines	Circa 1968									
6	01.02.002	"Patricia Johnson's NAACP Youth Council Complaint Sheet"	Patricia Johnson filed a Charge of Discrimination to the Oklahoma Human Rights Commission and a complaint to the NAACP National Legal Defense against the EEOC after continual dismissals of her complaints	Information to be redacted: Johnson's address & phone numbers	Circa 1975-1997									
			Monique Krantz filed a											

Series 1

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WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **Deeper, richer meaning to materials**
 - Accession numbers
 - Title of object
 - Description of materials
- **Recruiting students across Oklahoma City**
- **University's**
- **Oral History Planning**
 - Documentary work



Where are we going?

- **Broadening our institutional networks**
- **Archive → Exhibition**
 - Interpretive design plan
- **Digital Infrastructure for wider public access**
- **Positioning ourselves for more national funding & support**
- **Establish this history (& Oklahoma History) into national record of Civil Rights history**

FREEDOM CENTER of Oklahoma City

August 8, 2023

Andrew Magnusson, Ph.D. & Heidi Vaughn, Ph.D.
University of Central Oklahoma
100 N. University Dr.
Edmond, OK 73034

Clara Luper (1923-2011) was a Civil Rights leader and teacher based in the Oklahoma City metro area. She graduated from Langston University in 1944 where she received a B.A. in Mathematics with a minor in history. Luper was the first Black student admitted into the graduate history program at the University of Oklahoma and earned her M.A. in History Education in 1951. Luper revamped the Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council in 1957, leveraging her role as an educator to recruit and catalyze student activists. She led a sit-in movement with her Youth Council to desegregate public accommodations in Oklahoma City beginning in 1958, two years before the sit-in action in Greensboro, North Carolina sparked a national movement.

The Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council continued their demonstrations well into the early 1960s, up until the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Luper and her Youth Council actualized a physical space for their organizing with the purchase of the Freedom Center in 1967. Luper continued her activism long after the sit-in movement, hosting a radio show, teaching in Oklahoma City Public Schools, leading the 1969 sanitation workers' strike, and publishing her autobiography called Behold the Walls. She passed away in 2011.

The Freedom Center Archive is unique because it spans nearly a century, with materials dating back to as early as 1924 and continuing to include materials from as late as 2020. The archive has varied materials that cover OKC's history of the NAACP Youth Council as well as the regional and national chapter, examples of Luper's pedagogy and classroom materials, her famed Freedom Fiesta, a community cultural event that is still celebrated today, and a great deal of materials that preserve the history of Luper's Miss Black Oklahoma Pageant. Akin to the mission for the Freedom Center physical space, it is our aim to use this archive to educate, empower and enlighten our nation to reflect on the past, present and future of the Civil Rights Movement in Oklahoma.

The Freedom Archive is seeking the support of students—both undergraduate and graduate—throughout the Oklahoma City metro area. This unpaid internship/research assistantship will consist of processing the materials which will include assigning accession numbers to each individual item and providing richer, deeper descriptions of materials. In addition to processing these materials, students will help make decisions about which items should be prioritized for digitization. Students will work directly with Dr. Autumn Brown who manages the archive. To apply, please email freedomcenterarchives@gmail.com or contact Dr. Brown directly at (405)-808-8392.

Respectfully submitted,

Autumn B. Brown

Autumn B. Brown, Ph.D.
Archive Manager

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ARCHIVES

Into the Future

Presented By Tuesdae Pelt-Willis



Beginning of the Future

- Graduate work with Chair Dr. Karlos Hill and OU History Graduate Department. Started with developing a relationships with Ms. Marilyn and Clara Luper Legacy committee members
 - Introduction to the Freedom Center, Christina, Bailey and Dr. Autumn Brown.
 - Archival work in the beginning stages of the Freedom Center Archives.
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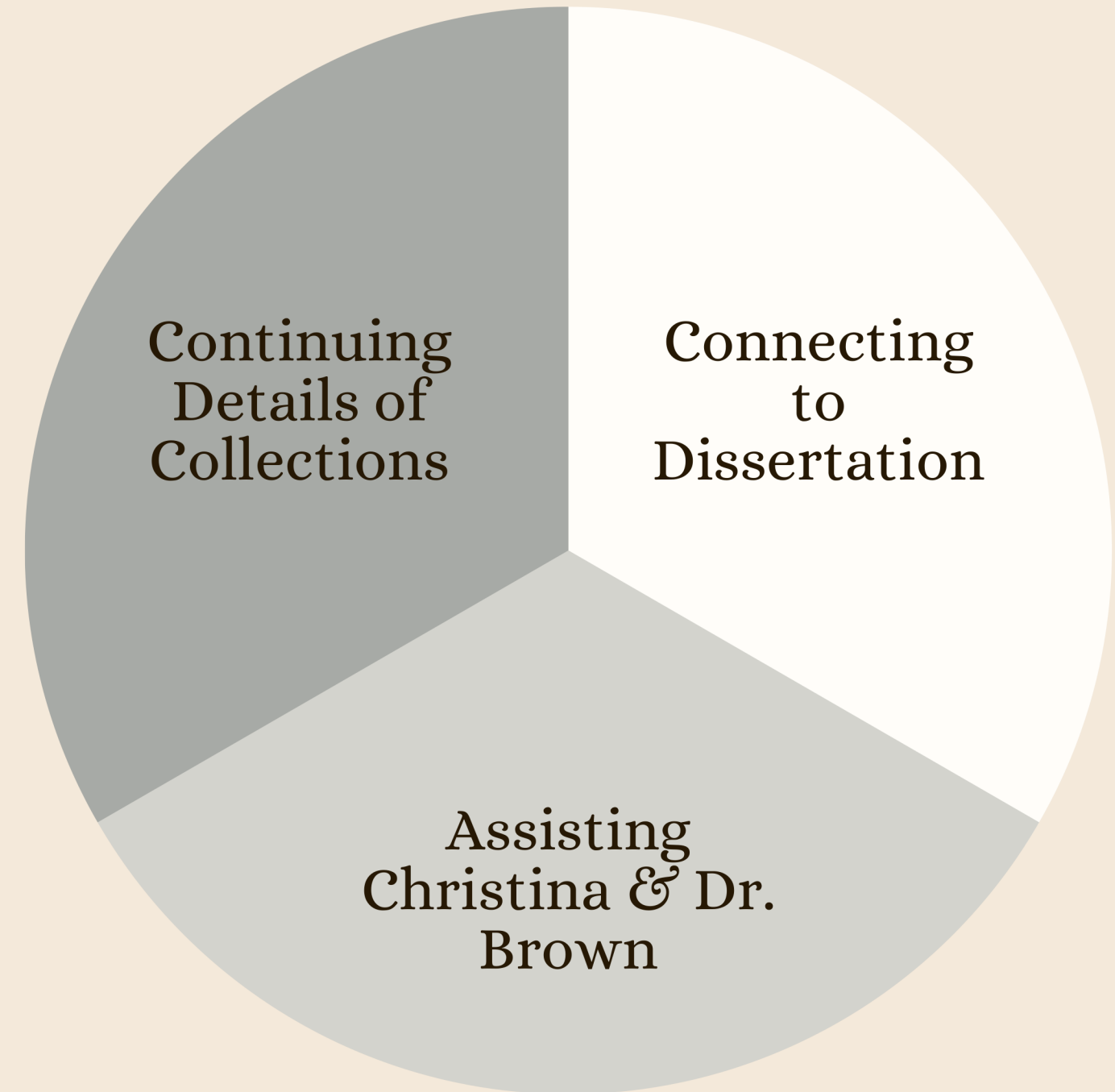
Development

- Moving into graduate research.
- Utilizing the archives for conferences.
- Aiding in research analysis for future scholars
- Developing a broader scope of details for the collections for future historians.



Future Archival Work

- Building and maintaining the collections.
- Cataloguing the series in greater details
- Assisting new and upcoming graduate students
- Bringing in more community interests to archival projects for the future.



Bibliography

Jules, B. (2019). Architecting sustainable Futures: Exploring funding models in community based archives. *Shift US*.

Freedom Center of Oklahoma City
<https://freedomcenterokc.org/>

Luper, C. (2023). Behold the walls: Commemorative Edition (K. K. Hill & B. L. Blackburn, Eds.). UNIV OF OKLAHOMA PRESS.



Questions?