

# CHS sources related to [Connecticut's African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Course of Studies](#)

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The CHS is working to identify sources from the CHS collection that connect with SERC's African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies Course of Studies for teachers to utilize with their high school students. This document includes a small selection of Connecticut-based primary sources that correspond with curriculum units. This is an ongoing project, so please check back for updates as we add additional sources and resources. Please also see the research tools below to find more CHS collection items related to the Black and Latino history in Connecticut.

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## 1. Where can I find local sources?

### [Connecticut Historical Society](#)

- Visit us in person!
  - Gallery exhibits
  - Our Research Center is the gateway to our collection
    - More than 4 million manuscripts, graphics, books, artifacts, and other historical materials accessible at our campus and on loan at other organizations
    - [Research appointments](#) currently necessary for in-person visits
- [Research Tools](#) you can access from home or school
  - [CHS Digital Catalog](#): under construction, but a good place to start
  - [HistoryCat Library Catalog](#): Books, manuscripts, broadsides, maps, serials, newspapers, some audio/visual materials
  - [eMuseum](#): Clothing, furniture, weapons, needlework, tools, household objects, photographs, painting, prints, drawings
  - [Connecticut Digital Archive](#): collaboration of museums and institutions from around the state – still and moving images, documents, sound recordings (including oral histories), maps, books, pamphlets, broadsides, paintings, and three-dimensional artifacts

### Other Local History Links:

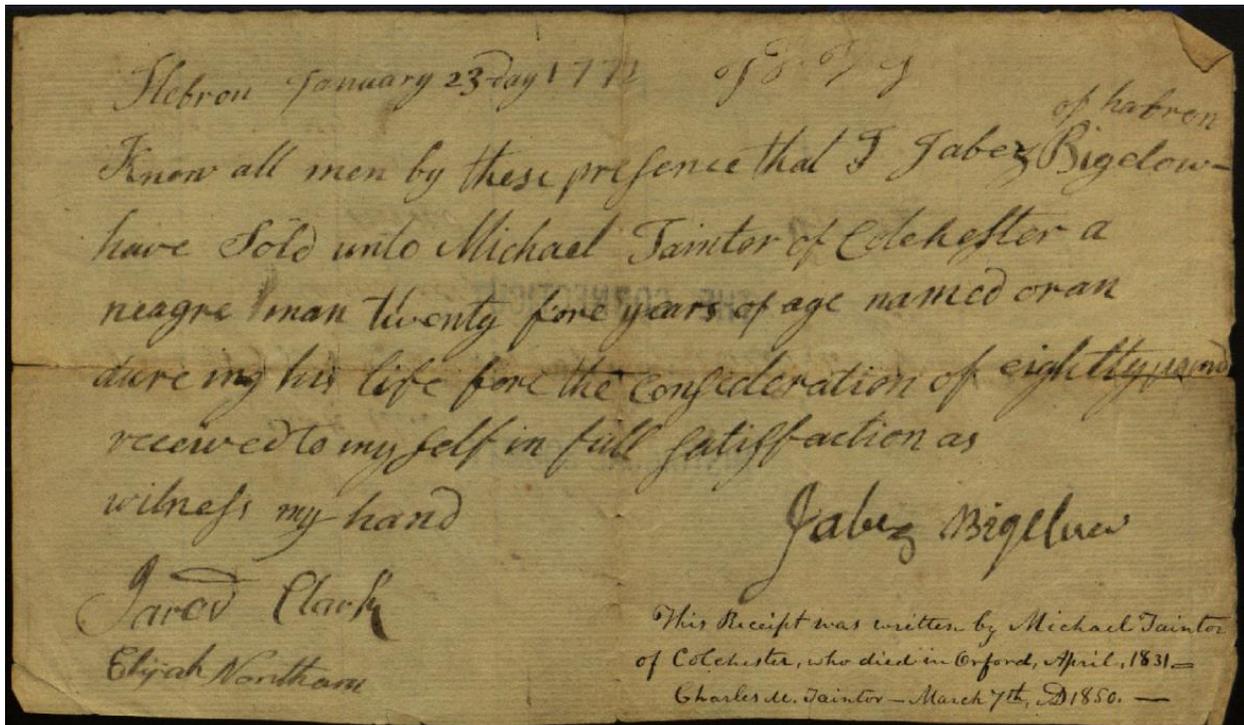
- [City of Elms: The Digital New Haven Project](#)
  - See especially [Oral Histories](#): “oral history interviews of New Haven’s Latin American community”

- [Connecticut Digital Newspaper Project](#): digitized Connecticut newspapers of “historical significance”
- [Connecticut Explored](#) (formerly *Hog River Journal*): “Through compelling stories and intriguing images, *Connecticut Explored* explores the state’s cultural heritage with the aim of revealing connections between our past, present, and future.”
- [ConnecticutHistory.Org](#): “Stories about the people, traditions, innovations, and events that make up Connecticut’s rich history”
- [Connecticut History on the Web](#): “Devoted to providing history and social studies teachers and their students with materials and lessons on various topics on Connecticut history”
- [Connecticut History Review](#) via JSTOR: “The only academic journal devoted to the history of Connecticut;” published by the Association for the Study of Connecticut History (ASCH)
- [Connecticut’s Archives Online](#): “Providing one-click access to Connecticut’s archival resources”
- [Connecticut State Library](#)
  - See especially [A-Z Databases: Freely Available](#)
- [Connecticut Supreme Court Historical Society](#)
- [Connecticut Women’s Hall of Fame](#): “Founded in 1994 in Hartford, Connecticut, the Hall fills the void that traditional curricula still fail to address and, today, stands as the state’s premier source for Connecticut women’s history.”
- [Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition Teaching Resources](#): “Dedicated to the investigation and dissemination of knowledge concerning slavery and its legacies across all borders and all time, from the distant past through the present day”
  - See especially [Citizens All: African Americans in Connecticut](#)
- [ProQuest Black Freedom Project](#): “select primary source documents related to critical people and events in African American history”
- [Teach It](#): “Driven by a desire to help the state’s educators foster a greater appreciation for Connecticut’s role in national historical narratives, Teach It provides inquiry-based activities that reinforce the learning principles found in the state social studies frameworks;” a project of Connecticut Humanities and the Connecticut League of History Organizations
- [Thinkalong](#) from Connecticut Public: “Using trusted source materials from PBS, NPR, and local public media stations, Thinkalong is a free program that helps students think critically about media, develop informed opinions, and practice respectful, civil discourse.”
- [Witness Stones Project](#): “Through research, education, and civic engagement, the Witness Stones Project seeks to restore the history and honor the humanity of the enslaved individuals who helped build our communities.”

## 2. Local sources to complement Semester 1 (African American and Black History)

### Unit 2: How African Americans Persisted: Slavery and Freedom Stories of Resistance and Agency (1619 to 1819)

Receipt documenting the sale of 24-year-old Oran from Jabez Bigelow of Hebron to Michael Taintor of Colchester, 1772 January 23, CHS collection, MS Slavery.



Selection of transactions from CHS manuscripts pertaining to enslaved people (MS Slavery).

1751 September 5 - Bill of sale of 12-year-old Black boy Surralong from Caleb Bull to Aaron Bull, both of Hartford

1760 April 29 - Bill of sale of Black man Jeams [sic] from William Hooker of Hartford, to Esther Robins of Canaan

1768 November 24 - Receipt for Black man Cipio given by John Mather of Lyme in partial exchange for land in Maine owned by Timothy Delano

1773 November 16 - Bill of sale of Black woman Jenny from heirs of Mary Edwards of Stratford to Gershom and Mary Banks of Fairfield

1782 February 20 - Bond holding unnamed enslaved person as surety by Josiah and Amos Burnham, location not indicated, for loan of 100 pounds to Samuel Ashly of Claremont, NH.

1782 December 3 - Indenture for unnamed eight-year-old Black boy from Edward Allen to Anne Pearce, both of Woodbury. Upon completion of 20 years of service he is to be given his freedom if consistent with the laws of Connecticut.

Discharge papers of Jeff Liberty of Washington, CT, CHS collection, MS 84476.

Jeff Liberty was an enslaved man from Washington, CT who earned his freedom by enlisting in the "Connecticut Line in the Continental Army" during the American Revolution.

To the Committee of Payable -  
Gentlemen.

Please to deliver the bearer hereof  
my State Note for serving in the Connecticut  
Line in the Continental Army in the Year 1781  
Ethan Mitchell  
Hon. A. M. Nichol. Jr.  
Washington Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> 1782.

Jeff Liberty  
marks

These certify that the aforesd. Jeff Liberty was  
a Soldier in the Connecticut Line of the  
Continental Army in the Year 1781 - &  
some time in the latter part of the Year 1781  
was regularly discharged.

Mr. [unclear] }  
Majr. [unclear] } Capt.  
Thomas [unclear] } Men  
[unclear] }  
Washington Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> 1783.  
personally signed Jeff Liberty  
and acknowledged the above orders  
to his face at [unclear]  
William Cornwall [unclear]

[Transcription]

To the Committee of PayTable –

Gentlemen,

Please to deliver the bearer hence my State Note for serving in the Connecticut Line in the Continental Army in the Year 1781.

Ehiathan Mitchel

Honer Mitchel J<sup>r</sup>.

Washington Nov.<sup>r</sup> 25<sup>th</sup>, 1782

his  
Jeff + Liberty  
mark

I here certify that the afors.<sup>d</sup> Jeff Liberty was  
a Soldier in the Connecticut Line of the  
Continental Army in the year 1781 – &  
some time in the latter part of the year 1781  
was regularly discharg<sup>d</sup>. –

Major Averill

Thomas Parnely } Held

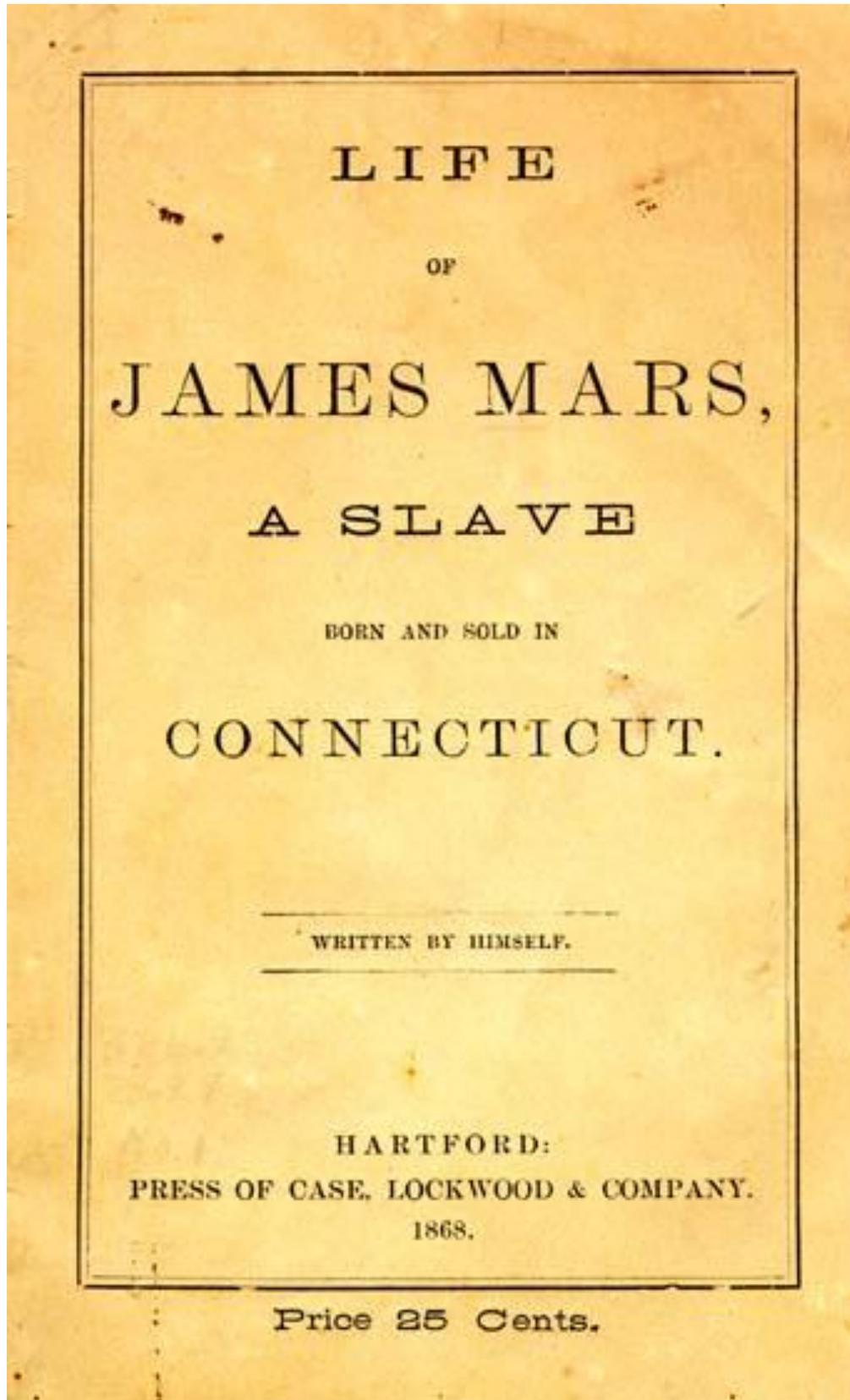
Abner Masbey Men

Washington April ~~26~~ 7<sup>th</sup>, 1783

personally apperd Jeff Liberty  
and acknowledges the above order  
to be his free act [illegible]

William Cogswell Justice of Peace

James Mars Autobiography, 1868, CHS collection, CT Imprints M363L.



L I F E

OF

JAMES MARRS,

A SLAVE

BORN AND SOLD IN

CONNECTICUT.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

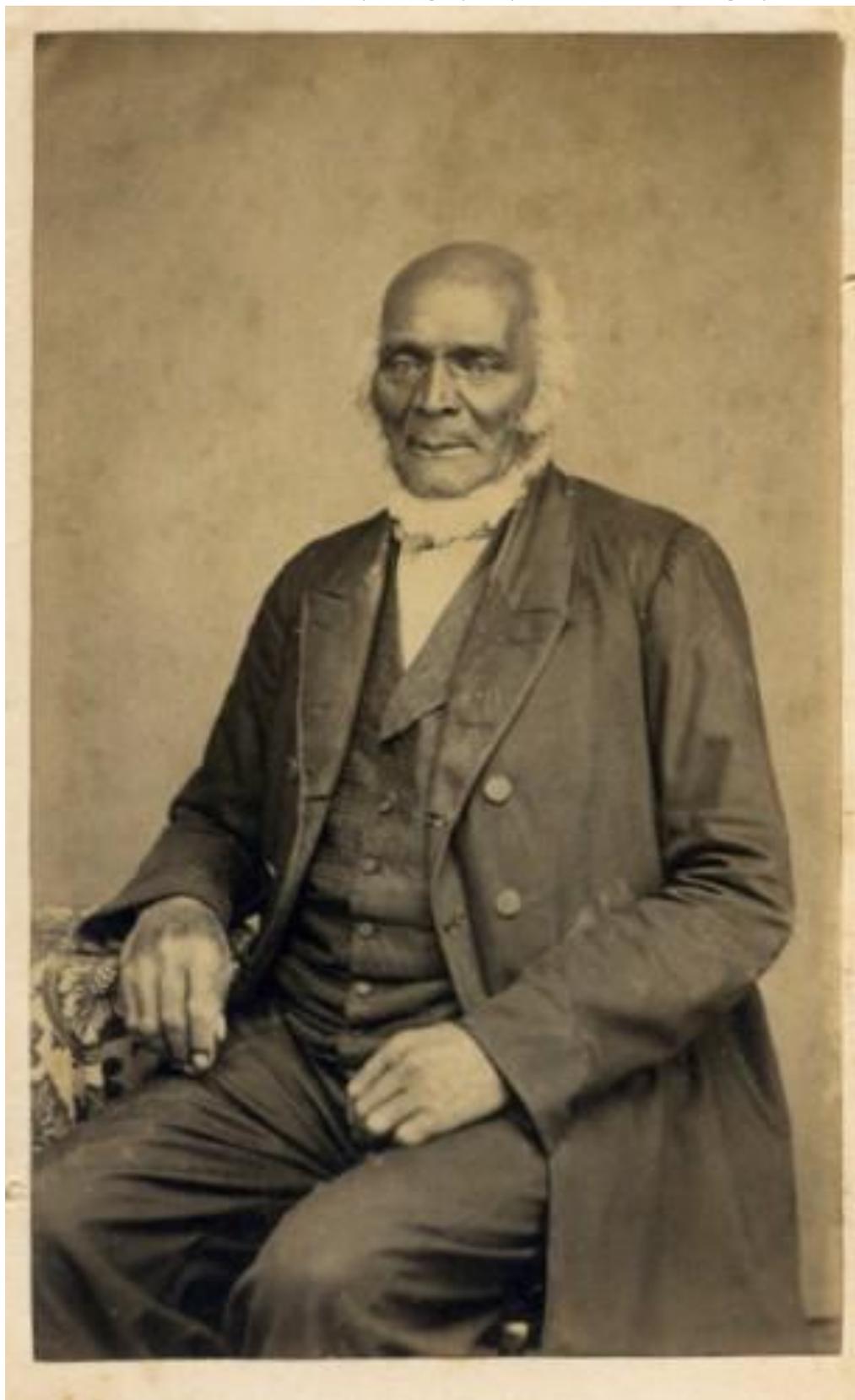
HARTFORD:

PRESS OF CASE, LOCKWOOD & COMPANY.  
1864.

#### INTRODUCTION

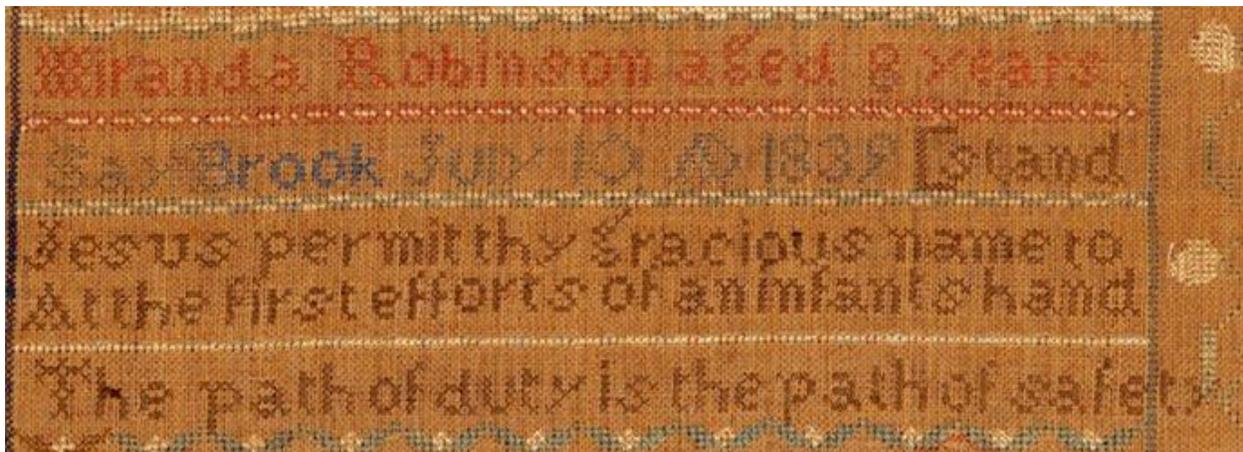
WHEN I made up my mind to write this story, it was not to publish it, but it was at the request of my sister that lived in Africa, and has lived there more than thirty years. She had heard our parents tell about our being slaves, but she was not born until a number of years after they were free. When the war in which we have been engaged began, the thought came to her mind that her parents and brothers and sisters were once slaves, and she wrote to me from Africa for the story. I came to Norfolk on a visit at the time the war broke out, and some in Norfolk remember that I was once a slave. They asked me about it; I told them something about it; they seemed to take an interest in it, and as I was in Norfolk now, and having an opportunity to write it, I thought I would write it all through. In telling it to those, there were a great many things that I did not mention that I have written. After I had written it out, I saw that my brother and my other sister would think that I might give them the same; and my children had often asked me to write it. When I had got it written, as it made more writing than I was willing to undertake to give each of them one, I thought I would have it printed, and perhaps I might sell enough to pay the expenses, as many of the people now on the stage of life do not know that slavery ever lived in Connecticut.

“James Mars, Winsted,” c. 1870, photograph by Thomas M. V. Doughty, CHS collection.



Unit 3: Black Literacy, Organizations, and Liberation (1820-1865)

[Miranda Robinson Sampler, 1839, CHS collection, 1990.142.0.](#)



## [Augustus Washington Daguerreotypes](#)

From [ConnecticutHistory.org](#):

Augustus Washington (1820 – 1875), the son of former slaves, was born free in Trenton, New Jersey. Determined to get an education, and working against the odds of poverty and racial prejudice, he attended schools in New Jersey, New York, and New Hampshire. Although he was ultimately admitted to Dartmouth College in the fall of 1843, he was forced to leave after one year for financial reasons. In addition to working at a variety of other jobs, Washington learned the skill of “daguerreotypy” in order to make money to pay for his education. The daguerreotype, named for Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre who invented the process in 1839, was the earliest form of photograph to become widely available. Its precise mirror-like images seemed miraculous to a public that previously had known only artists’ renderings.

Washington came to Hartford in the fall of 1844 to run Talcott Street Congregational Church’s North African School, one of two schools in Hartford for black students. Under the leadership of the Reverend James W. C. Pennington, this church was a hub of regional anti-slavery activity. In 1846, Washington left teaching and opened his daguerreotype studio on Main Street, one of 20 such studios that opened in Hartford between 1840 and 1855. Although many of these businesses quickly failed, Washington established a reputation for quality and prospered for more than six years. A newspaper advertisement at the time read “Washington is at home, and daily executing beautiful and correct Miniatures, equal to any in this country, at his uncommonly cheap prices.” Believing that African Americans could not “develop [their] moral and intellectual capacities as a distinct people” in the United States, Washington and his family left Hartford for Africa in 1853. He became a prominent citizen of Liberia, a West African colony founded in 1820 for freed American slaves and others of African descent.

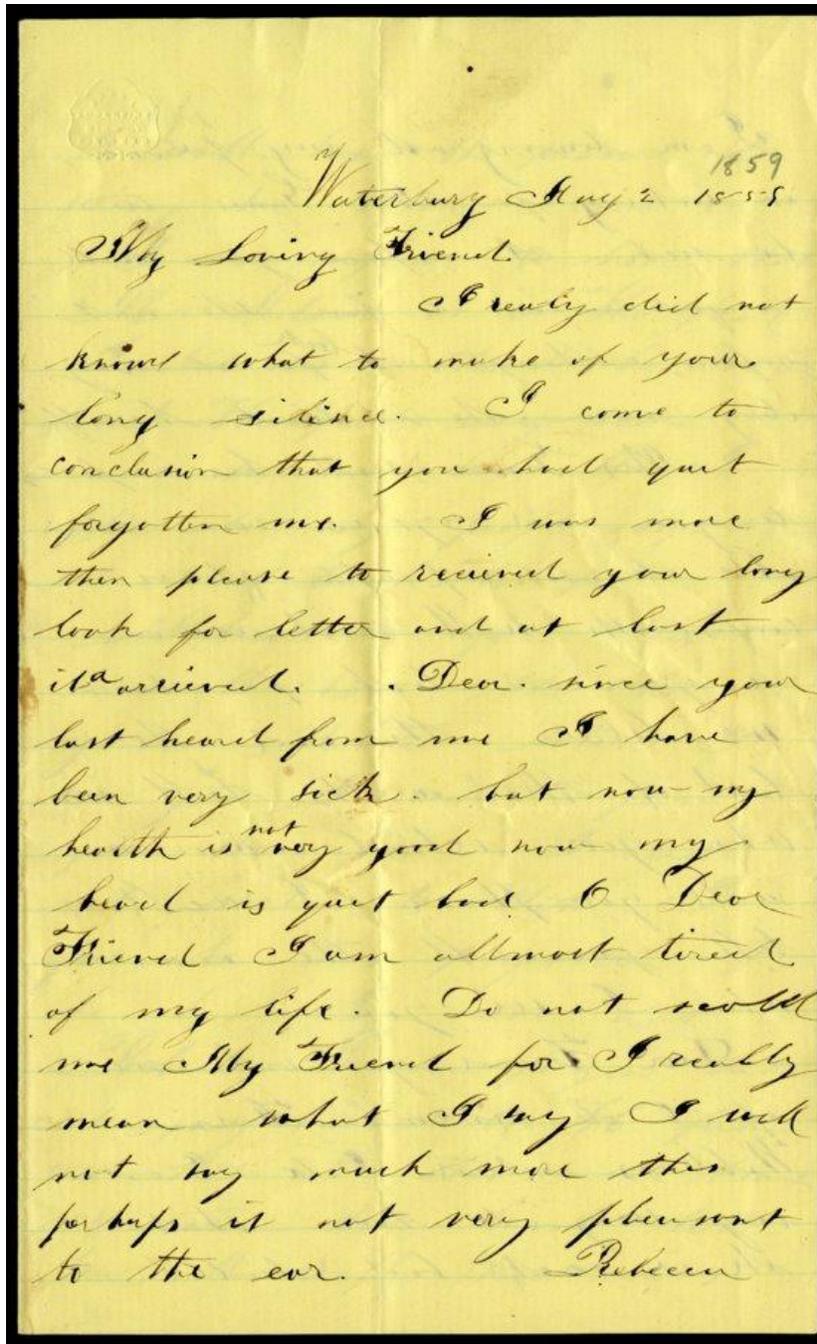
[Sarah Taintor Bulkeley Waterman, photographed by Augustus Washington, c. 1850, daguerreotype, CHS collection, 1995.203.0.](#)



Unit 4: Long, Long History for Equality (1865-1915)

[Primus-Brown Correspondence, Primus Family Papers, 1859, CHS collection, MSS 44012.](#)

Rebecca Primus was born in 1836 in Hartford to a socially prominent Black family. She completed high school and became an educator. During the early years of Reconstruction, Primus moved south to Royal Oak, Maryland, to establish and teach at a school for previously enslaved African Americans under sponsorship of the Hartford Freedman's Aid Society. This letter is among many pages of correspondence between Primus and her friend, Addie Brown, some of it erotic in nature.



Waterbury May 2 1859  
My Sairy Friend.  
I really did not  
know what to make of your  
long silence. I come to  
conclusion that you had quite  
forgotten me. I was more  
than please to receive your long  
look for letter and at last  
it arrived. Dear since you  
last heard from me I have  
been very sick. but now my  
health is <sup>not</sup> very good now my  
soul is quite bad O Dear  
Friend I am almost tired  
of my life. Do not scold  
me My Friend for I really  
mean what I say I wish  
not say much more this  
perhaps is not very pleasant  
to the ear. Rebecca

**Unit 5: Black Movement for Equality (1915-1965)**

[Shiloh Baptist Church, 350 Albany Ave., Hartford, 1920, CHS Collection, 1995.136.1194.](#)



Colored Women's Liberty Loan Committee, October 21, 1917, State Archives, Connecticut State Library, RG012.

From left to right, Elizabeth R. Morris, Mary A. Johnson, and Rosa J. Fisher.



Please visit [“The Work Must Be Done: Women of Color and the Right to Vote,”](#) an ongoing research project.

From the CHS website: “Inspired by the words of notable African American reformer and political activist, Mary Townsend Seymour, ‘The work must be done,’ the Connecticut Historical Society presents exciting new research about the women of color who worked for women’s suffrage. As the nation, and Connecticut, celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment which legalized women’s right to vote, attention is growing about the critical need to identify and raise up the stories of the women of color who participated in the fight for suffrage and those who, like their white counterparts, were against the enfranchisement of women. Historically, research about the fight to win the right to vote has focused on the white women who were both for and against this act. Due to the internalized racism of many of the national and state-wide suffrage organizations, women of color, and particularly African American women, were denied agency within these activist organizations. This does not mean that women of color were not involved in the fight for and against suffrage. They absolutely were. Women of color were active leaders who developed their own associations, both nationwide and state-based, to achieve social and political reforms, including working for woman suffrage.”

Fredi Washington Collection, CHS collection, 2001.22.1-234, 2001.22.11, 2001.22.20.

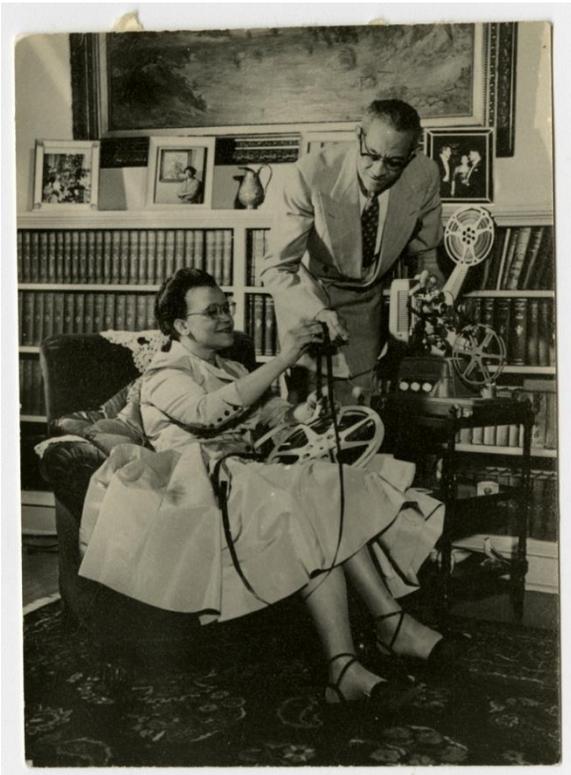
Fredi Washington was a dancer, actress, and activist whose career intersected with notable Black artists including Duke Ellington, Josephine Baker, and Paul Robeson. She helped found the Negro Actors Guild of America and later became the entertainment editor of the African American newspaper, *People's Voice*, established in 1942 by her brother-in-law, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. These photographs are part of a large collection of Washington's held at the CHS.



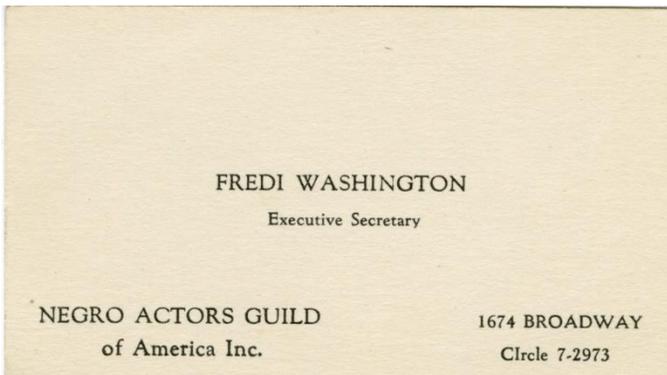
*Fredi Washington, née Bell (1903-1994)*



*Fredi Washington (bottom right) with unidentified friends, 1933*



*Fredi Washington with her husband, Dr. Hugh Anthony Bell*

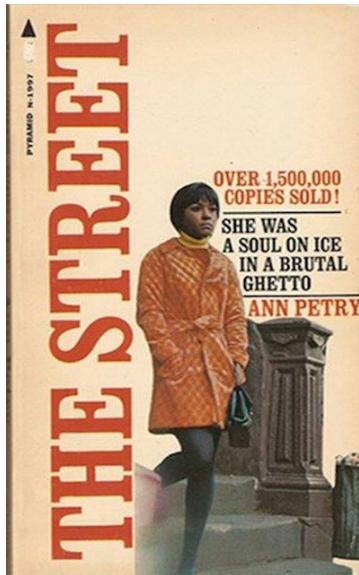


*Fredi Washington's business card*

Ann Petry (1907-1997)

Ann Petry was born in Old Saybrook to middle-class parents. Petry went to pharmacy school but instead became a writer. She moved to New York City when she married George Petry and began to write short stories for *The Crisis*, the official newspaper of the NAACP. She published *The Street* in 1946 and became the first Black woman to sell more than a million copies of a book. Her work has recently been reissued by the Library of America. Her desk and a copy of *The Street* were given to the CHS by her daughter.

*The Street*, by Ann Petry, 1974 edition, CHS collection.



Ann Petry's Writing Desk, CHS collection, 2001.8.0.



William J. Brown, gift of Andrea Brown Seldon, CHS collection, MS 102042.

William J. Brown was an activist and civil rights pillar in Connecticut. He founded the Urban League of Greater Hartford in 1964 and served as its Executive Director until 1983. The CHS holds a collection of his papers from his time at the Urban League.



Shoes worn by William “Bill” Brown for the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, CHS collection, 2017.107.0 a,b.



For more Connecticut stories from this time, please visit the CHS virtual tour, [Connecticut Freedom Workers: Remembering the Civil Rights Movement](#).

From the CHS website: “During the 1960s, people of various races, religions, ages, genders, and classes contributed to an integrated civil rights movement—in Connecticut and around the nation. This exhibition shares stories of Connecticut freedom workers who supported the movement.”

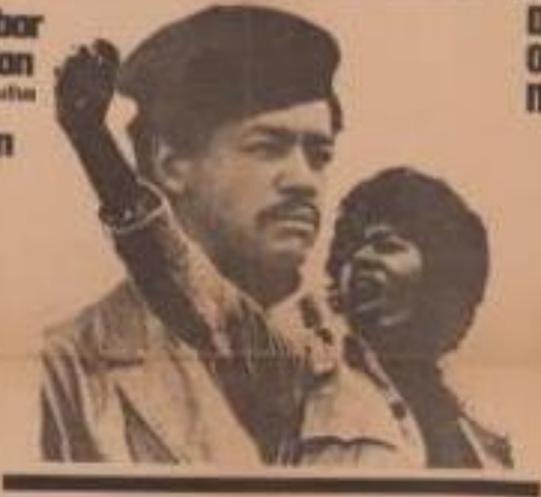
**Unit 6: Protest, Politics, and Power (1965- Present)**

Black Panther Broadside, CHS Collection, Small 1970 P421c.

**FREE BOBBY?**  
**FREE ERICKA!**

**SPEAKERS ...**  
**Michael Tabor**  
**Penny Jackson**  
(sister of George and Jonathan Jackson)  
**Elaine Brown**

**SPEAKERS ...**  
**Dave Dellinger**  
**One of the New Haven 9**



*"The primary task of the American Revolution, at this point in our history, is to defeat the Nuclear War machine of the fascist power structure, which is to make an example of Bobby Seale by putting him to death in the Electric Chair in the state of Connecticut. - FLORENCE CLEARER*

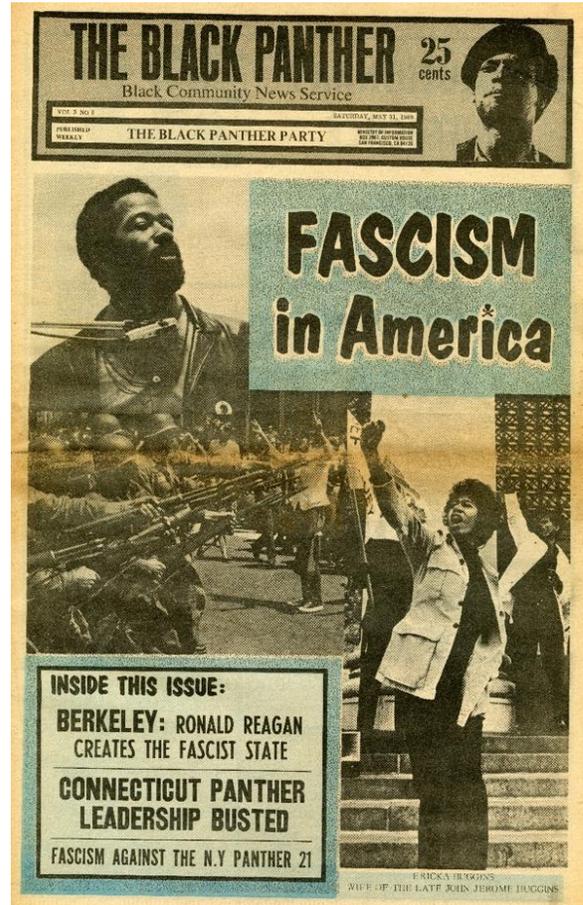
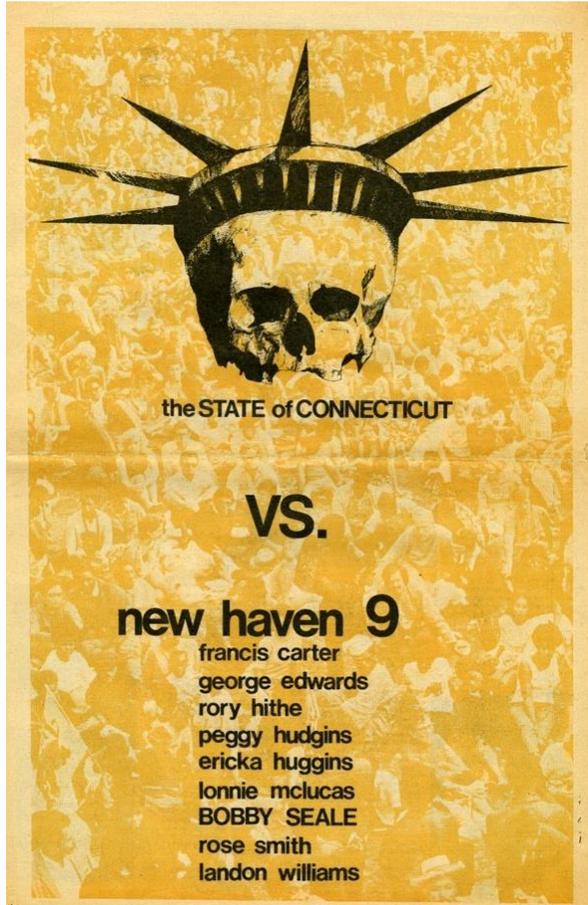
**RALLY  
ELECTION DAY  
NEW HAVEN GREEN  
TUES. NOV. 3, 12 NOON**

Hours will be leaving for New Haven from New York, Boston and other cities on the east coast for more information - call

Committee to Defend the Panthers  
New York - 228-1783  
New Haven - (203) 777-8234  
Boston - (617) 891-1286

Selections from *The Black Panther*, CHS collection.

A collection of *The Black Panther: Black Community News Service* newspapers, spanning 1969-1972, are in the CHS collection. The twenty-two English (and one Danish) issues chronicle the voice of the Black Panther Party, including the New Haven chapter which became the center of the 1969-1971 "Black Panther Trials."



## Carnival Traditions in Connecticut

[From ConnecticutHistory.org](#): A significant wave of immigration to the United States from the West Indies began in the 1940s, spurred by labor shortages during World War II. Many immigrants were drawn to the Hartford region by the surplus of available jobs in the tobacco fields along the Connecticut River Valley. Men worked in agriculture while women often found work as housekeepers, teachers, nurses, and health aides. Local community organizations helped newcomers settle in offering friendship, housing, and economic opportunities.

Today, Connecticut's West Indian community includes immigrants from all the Caribbean Islands. They have established significant sports, cultural, and social clubs. The community sponsors dance and music groups, and produces an annual week-long festival that attracts audiences from all over the Northeast. With Greater Hartford now being home to the third largest West Indian community in the nation, beloved traditions like Carnival have been transplanted and sustained here.

["Together at Mas Camp: The Culture of Carnival in Connecticut", YouTube, Connecticut Historical Society, August 28, 2019.](#)

[Mas: Carnival Costumes from Hartford's Caribbean Community, Connecticut Historical Society digital exhibition archive.](#)

### 3. Local sources to complement Semester 2 (Puerto Rican and Latino History)

#### Tobacco Farming in Connecticut

The story of tobacco farming in Connecticut incorporates African American/Black histories and Puerto Rican/Latino histories. Beginning in 1916, Black college students were recruited by tobacco companies to spend their summers working on Connecticut tobacco farms. During World War II, Connecticut growers began looking to Jamaica and other Caribbean nations for seasonal help. When Connecticut set the minimum age for child labor at 14 in 1947, the need for more out-of-state labor grew. At this time, several thousand workers from Puerto Rico came to CT to work in the tobacco fields, mostly from spring to fall. Many of seasonal workers ultimately made their home in Connecticut, finding factory jobs in Hartford and other towns and establishing the roots of today's Hispanic, Puerto Rican, and West Indian communities.

For additional background:

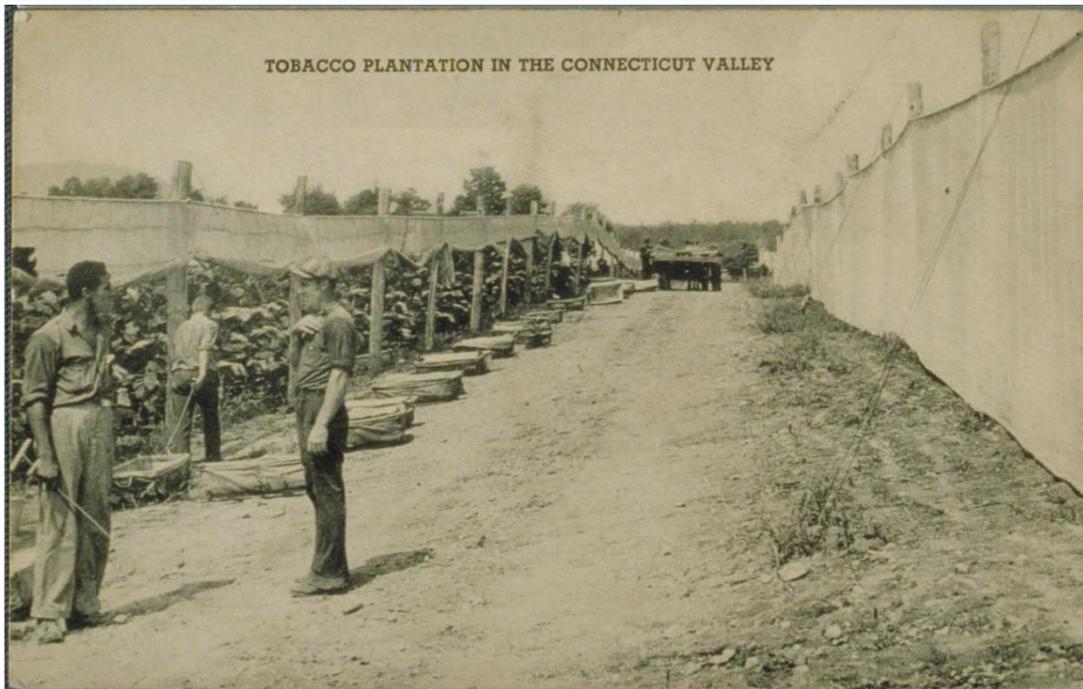
["Tobacco Valley: Puerto Rican Farm Workers in Connecticut" from \*Hog River Journal\* \(now \*Connecticut Explored\* magazine\), Winter, 2003.](#)

["Cash Crop: L.B. Haas & Co. and the History of Tobacco in Connecticut" from \*ConnecticutHistory.org\*, August 8, 2015.](#)

Unidentified workers on the L. B. Haas & Company Farm tend tobacco plants, ca. 1965, gift of Susan Haas Bralove, CHS collection.

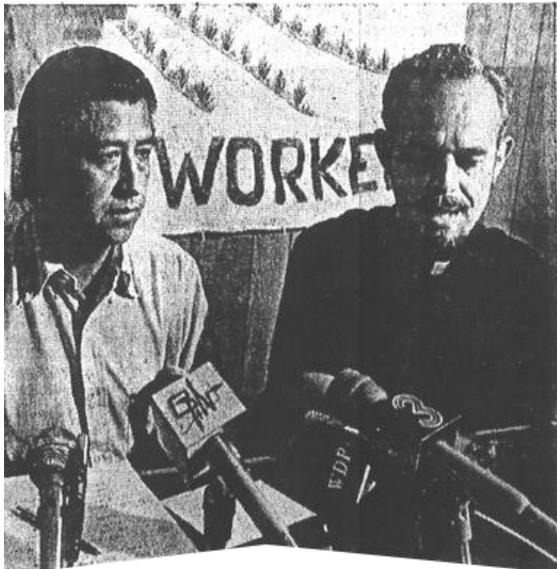


[Tobacco plantation in the Connecticut Valley, about 1945, CHS Collection, 1991.175.52.](#)



*"Chavez Here to Push Boycott," Hartford Courant, August 1, 1974.*

Cesar Chavez visited Connecticut in 1974 to promote nationwide boycotts and to support the efforts of the Puerto Rican Farm Workers Association to organize tobacco workers of the Connecticut Valley into a union.



*Cesar Chavez meets with priest from Sacred Heart Church in Hartford*

María Sánchez (1926-1989)

Selection from *Individuals Who Shaped Connecticut: Connecticut Document Book*, 2008, developed by the Connecticut Historical Society and Hartford Public Schools and funded by a United States Department of Education Teaching American History Grant.

María Sánchez emigrated from Comerío, Puerto Rico to Hartford, Connecticut in 1954. She arrived with a fifth-grade education and worked in tobacco fields, then in a meat-packing plant in New Britain for fourteen years, and then opened a newsstand in Hartford. From her newsstand headquarters, Sánchez reached out to members of the city's Hispanic community, many of whom were new immigrants, did not speak English, and faced discrimination in education and employment.

Sánchez helped found community groups such as the Spanish Action Coalition and the Teachers Corps, which recruited Spanish-speaking teachers to Hartford. In 1964, along with Hartford's Sacred Heart Parish, she founded the Puerto Rican Parade Committee to showcase the presence and talent of the Puerto Rican community, draw community members and activists together, and register Hispanic voters.

Sánchez became a respected leader of the Puerto Rican community. In 1969 anger over police mistreatment of Hispanics boiled over into rioting. At one point Sánchez confronted an angry crowd on Main Street and later facilitated a grievance meeting between the Hispanic community and City Council members. In 1973 she ran for and won a seat on the Board of Education, becoming the first Puerto Rican elected to public office in Hartford.

In 1988 Sánchez was elected a representative in the Connecticut state legislature, joining two other Puerto Rican legislators (Juan Figueroa and Américo Santiago) in Hartford. However, less than a year later, María Sánchez died of a heart attack. She left behind a legacy of political activism, inspiration, and advocacy – especially for education – in the Hispanic community.

# More Unity Called For By New Board

By BARBARA WILLIAMS  
Staff Reporter

New members to the Hartford Board of Education today called for more unity and organization in the governing body for the city's schools.

"Our first job is to get that board together," said Mrs. Maria Sanchez, the city's first Puerto Rican to be elected to office.

In a clear mandate for change, Hartford voters failed yesterday to return two incumbents to the Board of Education in favor of four newcomers and Lewis Fox, a 35-year veteran of the board.

In a surprise upset, incumbents Frederick Bashour, a former principal of Bulkeley High School, and Mrs. Warren, director of Post-Matamoras urban school program, endorsed by the city Republican party failed to gain reelection. Bashour finished sixth in a race of eight candidates with 3,410 votes while Mrs. Warren finished last with 2,933 votes.

Fox, long the number one vote getter in city Board of Education elections, relinquished the top spot in the



MRS. BARBARA KENNY  
... "accountability . . ."

returns to Mrs. Barbara Kenny, an endorsed Democrat. Mrs. Kenny received 5,207 votes to Fox's 5,124. Mrs. Sanchez, who operates a state day care center at Bulbera and the Rev. David King, director of the Inner City Church exchange, completed the slate with 4,955, 4,030 and 3,888 votes respectively. Those who failed to gain



LEWIS FOX  
... "must go forward"

seats were Bashour, with 3,410 votes, Mrs. Jean Kearney, 2,918 votes, and Mrs. Warren, 2,933. All those elected issued statements pledging unity in spite of the election results. "I pray that God will give us the grace to go forward together," said Fox. "We must go forward not in bitterness, but in brotherhood, not in rancor, but in love."



MRS. MARIA SANCHEZ  
... "represent . . . city"

Mrs. Kenny called for unity but emphasized that new board members should "strive to bring about a greater degree of accountability at all levels." Mrs. Kenny, a newcomer to politics, said she was "delighted and overwhelmed" by her big win and would approach her new duties as a board member "like cleaning house. It's always a hard



LINDA RUBERA  
... "strong campaign"

decision to decide what room to start in first." Mrs. Sanchez, surrounded by jubilant supporters in her store, pledged to "work for the benefits of all students. We must get the Board of Education together," she said. "I may be the first Puerto Rican elected, but I am just a person who was elected to represent the entire city." King said the biggest task



REV. DAVID KING  
... "work for the good . . ."

facing the board was developing a change in attitude. Course organization is important," King said. "But we must forget about personalities and sectionalism and work for the good of the entire city." Mrs. Rubera, whose campaign manager was Arthur Brouillet, former president of Hartford Federation of Teachers, said she was pleas-

ed with her victory. "I'm so high on it," she said.

Miss Rubera, whose father is a Hartford County sheriff, was not officially endorsed by the Democratic Party but ran as a Democrat. She stowed a strong campaign in the South End.

"As a new board, we must strive to develop the student-teacher relationship," Miss Rubera said. "We have to work on developing a communication base and work to reduce class size so teachers can manipulate their students better."

Bashour said he "wished the new Board of Education luck. I have enjoyed my tenure on the board."

Bashour said he "didn't spend a penny on my campaign for the board. People spend money for elections, but they don't vote for them if they don't spend money. I thought the people knew me and my reputation," he said. "Evidently people thought others had more qualifications," the former Bulkeley principal said.

Bashour indicated he might try his hand at politics again in the future.

"Puerto Rican Parade in City Has 2 Purposes," *Hartford Courant*, August 11, 1969.

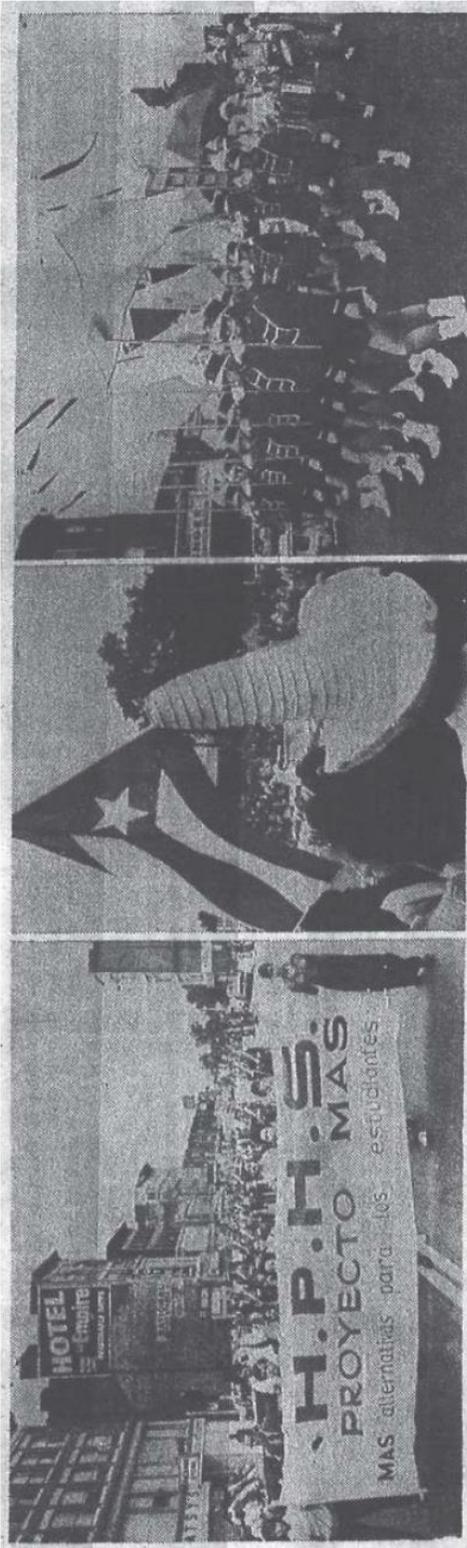
## **Puerto Rican Parade in City Has 2 Purposes**

Mrs. Maria Sanchez, secretary of the Committee to Organize the Puerto Rican parade in Hartford, told committee members Sunday the parade has a dual purpose.

First, she said, the parade is entertainment and enjoyment of Puerto Rican life. Second, it serves to show politicians throughout the state the large voting potential of the Puerto Rican community. The parade will be Sept. 28 in Hartford.

Mrs. Sanchez gave a history of the parade, which was first organized as a pageant in 1964 in Hartford. Through the years, she said, it has evolved into a large parade. Cities sponsoring the parade have been Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury and New Haven.

This year's parade will be quite large. More than 10 cities will participate, and there will be bands, beauty queens, floats and visiting dignitaries, she said.



Thousands of people from throughout the state viewed and marched in the ninth annual Puerto Rican Parade Sunday in the streets of Hartford. At left are representatives of

## Puerto Rican Parade Brightens City

Hartford Public High School's MAS, an alternative education program for potential dropouts in the city. A spectator, center, flies a small flag of Puerto Rico from his hat. The Renegades Drum and Bugle Corps, right, marches proudly down Main Street (Courant Photos by Jerry Williams).

### Unity Theme Stressed

# 5,000 March in Puerto Rican Parade

An estimated 5,000 persons, including a 106-year-old woman, marched Sunday afternoon in Hartford in the 9th annual Puerto Rican parade.

The parade, which began at 1 p.m., was replete with marching bands, floats, beauty queens, carloads of people and ordinary foot soldiers and at one point stretched from Main and West Avon streets to Colt Park.

Mrs. Juana Torres Gonzalez, 106, of 38 Center St., Meriden, walked the full length of the parade, about two miles.

At Colt Park, about 2,000 people listened to short statements from Maria Sanchez, president and founder of the Central Committee of the Puerto Rican Pa-

rade of Connecticut Inc.; and other representatives of the Puerto Rican community.

Mrs. Sanchez described the parade as a "great display of unity" for the state's Puerto Rican community.

Other speakers included Hartford Mayor Athansoni; Dr. Jaime Gonzalez Garbo, representing Puerto Rico's Gov. Luis Ferre; and Ruben Figueroa, commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, representing Gov. Meskill.

Albanson was the only speaker not to speak in Spanish, except when he cried, "Viva Puerto Rico."

Figueroa cited increasing Puerto Rican representation on state commissions and urged

Puerto Rican participation "in all parts of the community—including the legislature."

Gov. Ferre is proud of Connecticut's Puerto Rican community.

Heriberto Martinez, a past president of the parade committee, spoke of what he called "police brutality in Waterbury." He alleged that 11 police broke up a Puerto Rican dance Sept. 17, arresting 18 persons, including four community leaders.

A float in the Waterbury parade was made up to look like a jail and members of the group were dressed to look like police throwing persons into jail.

As the speeches were going

on, about 75 members of the Puerto Rican Socialist party of Hartford denounced "oppression of the Puerto Rican community" and protested their exclusion from the parade.

William Acevedo, assistant to the city manager for community affairs, said the group would have been allowed to participate in the parade if they had made a float and if they agreed not to picket and shout slogans.

"The parade does not serve a political function, but a cultural one," said Acevedo.

Acevedo, who served as the master of ceremonies, was asked if he considered the parade a success. "We couldn't ask for anything better," he replied.

Nuestras Historias – Our Histories, English Audio Selections, 2001, CHS collection QUARTO 305.868 N964n and MS 101741

Though Puerto Ricans have had a presence in Connecticut as early as the 19th century, the largest numbers began arriving in the mid-1940s, during World War II. Puerto Ricans were employed in tobacco cultivation, factory work, and in the defense industry, replacing American men and women who had gone overseas. Many of these newcomers found Connecticut to be dramatically different from their home in language, climate, custom and cuisine. While World War II era Puerto Ricans puzzled over where they could buy plantains almost 60 years ago, today it is easy to find Puerto Rican groceries in the Hartford area. Puerto Rican heritage artists pass on traditional music, artisanry, and dance in local cultural centers and an annual Puerto Rican Day Parade shares the resources and energy of this growing community – 195,000 statewide.

Like all migrant communities, the Puerto Rican community persists in part because of the cooperation between generations – the first who arrived paved the way for the next arrivals by assisting them with such things as housing, jobs, language, and by providing support and friendship. This cycle continues as more Puerto Ricans make the journey to Hartford, Connecticut.

Through the Nuestras Historias project, The Connecticut Historical Society has collected oral histories and photographs from a few of those who helped establish the Puerto Rican community in Hartford. This online exhibition presents the story through the words and images of the pioneers themselves.

The complete oral history transcripts from this project can be viewed in the library at the Connecticut Historical Society.

Nuestras Historias Contributors:

We graciously thank the individuals who contributed their time, stories, and photographs to create the Nuestras Historias Project. They are:

- Jose Colon
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- Jesus Malave
- Olga Mele
- Ramona Marrero
- Florencio Morales
- Jose Negrón
- Joaquina Rodriguez
- Juan Roman

## Memories of Puerto Rico

Trip to San Juan (Tape 2, Side A, #069 – 086/087)

My childhood? Oh, it was beautiful, my childhood. Do I remember? I remember one thing, that you might be surprised. In May 1924, at 5 o'clock in the morning, dark, I left with my grandmother, my father, my aunt Benigna, and my cousin...for a trip to San Juan. In a Model T Ford. We left at 5 o'clock in the morning in Coamo and we arrived in San Juan when the sun was almost fading. We took the whole day, because the car would only go about 10 miles and you had to get out and fill the radiator with water again.

- Florencio Morales

When I was a kid (Tape 1, Side A, #130 - 139)

But you were out there on your own with the mangoes, with the mameyes, eating coconuts from the coconut trees, and all those good things...Even today when I go to Puerto Rico...I like to just sit and think, bring me back to my days when I was kid.

– Juan Roman

## Coming to Hartford

Learning language (Tape 1, Side A, #221/222 – 227)

And at the time we used to go to a restaurant with a limited ability to ask for variations...So you'd eat ham and eggs in the morning, ham and eggs at noon, ham and eggs in the afternoon, and then you learn how to say 'chicken' or something, then you vary a little...until I learned my menu pretty good.

– Juan Roman

"Oh, that's rented." (Tape 1, Side A, #305-308)

Nobody wanted them, the landlord...say no. Every time we call they said, 'Are you Puerto Rican?' 'Yes, I'm very proud to be a Puerto Rican.' 'Oh, that's rented.'

- Olga Mele

## Paving the Way

Lay the path for others (Tape 1, Side A, # 361-376)

If there was prejudice...then, it was not getting in a job...And there two things that I was looking at, number one, I wanted to be a cop and I wanted to be a darned good cop. And number two, I wanted to lay the path for others that would be behind me. And if I were to start a fight in the police department I'd go out. No, I couldn't do that. I couldn't damage myself, my family, my co-Puerto Ricans...So I took it.

– Juan Roman

Working Tobacco (Tape 1, Side A, #517 – 523/524)

And these people were being fed poorly. Besides there was no health care at all. There was no participation in religious groups. See these people were just like in a camp with a guy with a gun. So we start raising hell with that and fighting with the farmers in the tobacco industry...

- Florencio Morales

### Building a Community

"We were all like a family" (Tape 1, Side B, # 494 - 500)

We were all like a family...Maria Sanchez was like our mother...for all the young kids...She used to take us to activities and our parents would let us go with her...If we went to anyplace we would say...'we're going with Maria, okay?' 'it's okay.'

- Carmen Malave

### Gaining a Voice

Investing in your community (Tape 2, Side 1, #076-080)

...the new thing is now we're here to stay, we're not going anywhere. And since you're here to stay you build, you invest, and you get involved in whatever is there.

- Carmen Malave

English in school (Tape 1, Side A, # 370-375)

The kids in schools they didn't know English at all...they wouldn't talk, they wouldn't do nothing. So they say they say they was retarded. So I had to prove that he was not retarded...I went to ...talk to the board...

- Olga Mele

Puerto Rican Parade (Tape 1, Side B, # 269/270 – 276)

The Puerto Rican parade was established to bring the attention to the Puerto Rican people to register and vote. That was their main theme...to register and vote...Maria did a great job in registering...to make sure that they voted and that their vote counted. And that's how...we were able to get the...city council person...and the board of education.

- Jesus Malave

Affirmative Action (Tape 1, Side B, # 116-136)

Our job was to go there, 'Mr. Employer, I am here from the Department of Defense representing the Affirmative Action Program. You have a big contract with the federal government. You make bombs for the federal government, do you not?' 'Oh yes I do.' All right, so you reap enough...not employing the community ...people who represent your community.' 'What do you mean by that?' I said, 'how many blacks you have here?' 'Well blacks don't apply here.' 'Well, you have to see that they apply. How many women you have in the high-paying jobs?' 'Oh, well, the women do not like to be bosses.' 'Well, you have to make them like it.' So our job...at the beginning was to indoctrinate, it was to teach what affirmative action was or is, and what equal opportunity is...

- Florencio Morales

Maria Sanchez (Tape 1, Side A, # 225-232)

When she was involved in the store, that was just like a...city hall., where everybody who have a problem would come to her and she would either help them, saying 'this is the proper way of doing it,' or she'd call me and say 'can you stay here, I have to take this person...to the welfare, see if we can find a way to help this person.'

- Jose Colon