COLEMAN, Sarah

MSRC Staff

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Scope Note

Sarah Williamson Coleman 1899-1986, missionary and educator, devoted her life to service in America and abroad.

In 1922 she began her missionary work in Liberia for the Missionary Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. Assigned first to the Bible Industrial Academy in Grand Bassa, she was later sent to the Seuhn Industrial Mission where she completed her tenure. At Seuhn, she cleared away much of the brush surrounding the Mission, dug its first well, set up its first laundry, built a dining hall, and started a cattle raising program. With the help of Mrs. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. Mrs. Coleman was also able to erect additional new buildings on the site.

Temporarily called back to the United States during the Depression by the Convention's Missionary Board, she helped raise funds and then returned to her post in Seuhn, where she served until 1932.

Mrs. Coleman later became the director of education for the Retreat for Foreign Missionaries, a gift to the Foreign Mission Board by the Woman's Convention of the National Baptist Convention. The Retreat was under the direction of Dr. Nannie Helen Burroughs. Located in northeast Washington, D.C., the Retreat was a center for foreign missionaries and diplomats, and guests of the State Department who wished to rest and recuperate, study, or participate in conferences and institutes. It was also the headquarters for the Missionary Committee of the Woman's Committee.
Scope Note continued

The papers reflect Mrs. Coleman’s wide-ranging missionary activities, including primarily photographs and slides documenting her work in Liberia. They span the period from 1953 to 1983.

The papers were donated by E. Pauline Myer in 1986.
Biographical Sketch

Sarah Williamson Coleman
1899 December 8 Born in Norfolk, VA on December 8 to Eli and Kizzie Williamson.

n.d. Attended the Hampton University Normal School and the University of Rochester.


n.d. Served as the Columbus (Ohio) YWCA Secretary.

1922 Made her first missionary voyage to West Africa for the Missionary Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. Assigned first to the Bible Industrial Academy at Grand Bassa, and later to the Seuhn Industrial Mission, both in Liberia.

1932 Left Seuhn Industrial School to return to Washington, D.C.

n.d. Served as administrator of the National Baptist Retreat for Foreign Missionaries, located at 1022 Maryland Avenue, N.E.

1973-1983 Although officially retired, she continued to work as the program coordinator for senior citizens' programs at Crawford Hall in the Edgewood Terrace Senior Citizens Program in Washington, D.C.

1986 November 19 Died in Washington, D.C. on November 19, at the age of 86.

Source: Sarah Coleman Papers, MSRC
Series Description

Series A
Personal Papers
Box 204-1
Highlights include Mrs. Coleman’s funeral program and her booklet describing various African missions. Also includes brochures of The Retreat for Foreign Missionaries, and a study of the controversy between Nannie Helen Burroughs’ school trustees and the Women’s Convention.

Series B
Awards, Certificates
Box 204-1
Contains numerous awards and certificates for her work in the community and with senior citizens.

Series C
Photographs and Slides
Box 204-1
Contains photographs of numerous individuals affiliated with Mrs. Coleman, including Nannie Helen Burroughs and others. Also includes photos of visitors and activities at the Retreat for Foreign Missionaries. Slides are primarily of people, programs and buildings in Africa, ca. 1956; and of The Retreat in Washington, D.C., ca. 1953-1961.

Series D
Audio Tapes
Box 204-2
Consists primarily of speeches by Mrs. Coleman.
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Container List

**Series C**  
**Photographs and Slides**

- **Box 204-l**
  - **Folder 4** The Retreat for Foreign Missionaries Mrs. Nannie Helen Burroughs and group in the Retreat, n.d.
  - The Retreat, interior photographs, n.d. (four photographs)
  - Unidentified man and woman in regal or ceremonial headdress, 1978
  - Mrs. ? Ross, successor to Mrs. N.H. Burroughs, as Retreat Director, n.d.
  - Mrs. Coleman with returned missionaries in the Retreat, n.d.
  - Mrs. Coleman and unidentified group in the State Dining Room of the Retreat, n.d.
  - Unidentified missionaries in the Retreat, n.d. (two photographs)
  - Unidentified returned missionaries, n.d.
  - Unidentified missionaries, n.d.

- **5** Photographic 35mm slides of African people, programs, and buildings, 1956
- **6** Photographic 35mm slides of the Washington, D.C. Retreat for Foreign Missionaries, 1953-1961

**Series D**  
**Audio Tapes**

- **Box 204-2**
  - **1** 18th Anniversary of the Purity Baptist Church, Rev. E.L.Harrison Women's Day guest speaker, Mrs. Coleman
  - **2** Sun Rise Chapel: Mrs. Coleman
  - **3** Dr. Jackson's church, Chicago
  - **4** Mrs. Coleman, Birmingham
  - **5** Liberia
  - **6** Liberian music, 1956
  - **7** 17th Annual Women's Day: First Baptist Church, Tulsa, OK, 1958
  - **8** Description of suit filed in U.S. District Court, District of Columbia, by officers of the Women's Auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention, trustees of Nannie Helen Burroughs, deceased, for recovery of property.
  - Convention among Mrs. Coleman, and unidentified women and child, n.d.
  - **9** Conversation among Mrs. Coleman, and unidentified child and woman, (barely
intelligible)
10 Conversation among Mrs. Coleman, and unidentified Woman, n.d.