

1. ACCESSION NUMBER: GTU 2023-04-02

2. LOCATION:

**GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION ARCHIVES**  
**MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTION**

3. COLLECTION NAME: **James Farmer Historical Collection**

4. COLLECTION DATES: 1910-2002

5. NUMBER OF CONTAINERS AND SIZE (in linear feet): 2 boxes (record box and oversize box), 1.5 linear feet

6. ABSTRACT: A small collection by and about James Farmer, one of the Big Four civil rights leaders in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, collected by Robert L. Tinsley, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, poet, and civic leader in Anniston, Alabama, who secured the publishing contract for Farmer's autobiography. His accomplishments included staging the first sit-in at a restaurant in Chicago in 1942, founding the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942, initiating the Freedom Rides in the 1960s, and as a civil rights storyteller as a professor at Mary Washington College.

6. TYPE OF MATERIAL:

The collection is two-fold. First, there are drafts of *Lay Bare the Heart*, related published books, and a binder of Farmer's later years and recognition after his death in 1999. Second, there are materials related to Robert L. Tinsley, a retired lieutenant colonel from the Air Force and an executive assistant to Farmer. These include correspondence related to publishers and to his own life and interests. Folders 23-42 in Box 1 were extracted from a large binder collected by Tinsley.

7. SOURCE AND DATE

Received July 27, 2023, from Joseph Evans, a professor at the Berkeley Divinity School, who received it from Robert L. Tinsley, a member of his congregation.

9. BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

"Those who are not black are my children too. The movement is as much a part of American experience as any other odyssey crowding the pages of the nation's past. No one who lives here, or whoever will, can inhale this air without breathing the breath of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney, Viola Liuzzo, or Reverend Leeb, or Medger Evers, or Martin Luther King, Jr. All, the evil and the good, have suckled some of that experience from their mother's breast; in some way, great or small, they cannot be the same."

"Living was tenuous in movement days, but the grasping at liberty, and the reaching toward happiness ennobled life for this nation."

*Lay Bare the Heart*, p 351.

James L. Farmer Jr (1920-1999), outlived the other members of the Big Four Civil Rights leaders: Martin Luther King (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), Roy Wilkins (NAACP executive director), and Whitney Young (National Urban League). He also is one of the Big Six, which included Representative John Lewis and Dorothy Height (National Council of Negro Women), forming the Council of United Civil Rights Leadership.

He was born in Marshall, Texas, in 1920, and grew up in a separate black and white world. His father was a minister who had received a doctorate in religion from Boston University and later became a professor of theology at several black seminaries.

Farmer graduated from Wiley College and Howard University School of Religion, where he learned about Gandhi's non-violent approach to civil protests from Howard Thurman. He worked for Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a Quaker organization, after graduation. Fighting desegregation from an early age, he was a founder of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Chicago in 1942. There, he and others successfully conducted a sit-in against a diner.

After years as a union organizer, he returned to become CORE's national director in 1961, where he organized the Freedom Riders in the South. This intense period of protest led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1968, he ran against Shirley Chisholm for Congress and lost. She became the first Black woman representative. After a series of public service positions, including assistant secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, he became a professor at Mary Washington College, where he taught civil rights history. His autobiography, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement*, published in 1986, was well received. He received numerous awards in recognition of his contributions to civil rights including the Presidential Award in 1998. After years of ill health, he died in 1999. In 2010, a documentary about his life was released: *The Good Fight: James Farmer Remembers the Civil Rights Movement*.

Robert L. Tinsley (1933-2020), a retired lieutenant colonel from the Air Force and executive assistant for Farmer for 25 years, collected this material. He ran a creative agency, obtained the publishing contract for Farmer's autobiography and arranged speakers for special events. These materials include correspondence related to publishers and to his own life and interests. Folders 23-42 in Box 1 were extracted from a large binder collected by Tinsley documenting Farmer's life after his autobiography was published.

Additional information: The James Farmer Lectures, [jamesfarmerlectures.umwblogs.org](http://jamesfarmerlectures.umwblogs.org); James L. Farmer Collection, [https://umw.access.preservica.com/index.php?name=SO\\_37d8ee73-80f5-4546-b835-81fe17863fd2](https://umw.access.preservica.com/index.php?name=SO_37d8ee73-80f5-4546-b835-81fe17863fd2); and James Leonard Farmer, Jr., and Lula Peterson Farmer Papers, 1908, 1921-1999, [https://txarchives.org/utcah/finding\\_aids/00004.xml](https://txarchives.org/utcah/finding_aids/00004.xml).

## 10. SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The materials were collected by Robert L. Tinsley. They include correspondence related to publishing Farmer's autobiography and his later life and to Tinsley's life and interests. Folders 23-42 in Box 1 were extracted from a large binder collected by Tinsley featuring Farmers life after 1984, including events that recognized his contributions for civil rights.

#### 11. SUBJECTS:

African Americans  
Civil rights demonstrations  
Education  
Politicians  
Race relations

#### 12. NAMES AS SUBJECTS (ADD AUTHOR):

James Leonard Farmer, Jr., 1920-1999  
Robert L. Tinsley, 1933-2020

#### 13. PROCESSOR: David Stiver, 8/23/2023

EAD: David Stiver, 7/26/2024

#### 14. CONTENTS OF CONTAINERS:

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	1	Autobiography-Rejection letters	1981
1	2	<i>Lay Bare the Heart</i> -correspondence and synopsis	1981-1982
1	3	<i>Lay Bare the Heart</i> -signed contract Arbor House	1984
1	4	<i>Lay Bare the Heart</i> -correspondence with Arbor House and Jet	1984-1986
1	5	<i>Lay Bare the Heart</i> -financial credits	1985-1986
1	6	Writings and announcement of autobiography`	1977-1984
1	7	Correspondence with William Morrow	1990-1995
1	8	Tinsley-Sermon's collected by his father: William Holmes Borders, "Emancipation Address"; Booker T. Washington, "Team Work"; Wilbur O. Daniel, "Turned On and Turned In"	1915, 1946, 1968

1	9	Tinsley reads citation for Muhammad Ali ( <i>The Tuskegeean</i> )	1978-11
1	10	Tinsley--Citizen's Award from Tuskegee Institute	1979
1	11	Tinsley arranged lecture--Farmer "Africa Needs You Now"	1985--1-13
1	12	Tinsley arranged lecture--Julian Bond, at National Institute of Health	1/18/1985
1	13	Tinsley arranged lecture--Benjamin Hooks	2/4/1985
1	14	Tinsley arranged lecture--Kyung Soo Choi	5/9/1986
1	15	Tinsley arranged lecture--Benjamin Hooks	2/12/1987
1	16	Tensley--General Gems of Wisdom	2001, 2007
1	17	Tinsley--Black Military History	1994-2008
1	18	"Freedom Now CORE" buttons (2)	circa 1964
1	19	Drafts of <i>Lay Bare the Heart</i> (comb bound books)--Vol 1	1984
1	20	Drafts of <i>Lay Bare the Heart</i> (comb bound books)--Vol 2	1984
1	21	Drafts of <i>Lay Bare the Heart</i> – Chapters IV, VIII, IX, X	Circa 1984
1	22	Audio cassettes (3) of Farmer on the Larry King Show interviewed by Jim Bohannon on 3/25/1985 [digitized]	3/25/1985
1	23	Farmer--Lay Bare the Heart and other documents	Circa 1984-1985
1	24	Farmer--black and white photographs	1960s-1990s
1	25	Farmer--Regarding death sentence for James Dyrall Briley	1985-04-07
1	26	Farmer--Color photographs	1980s
1	27	Farmer--Hubert Humphrey Civil Rights Award	1987-05-04
1	28	Farmer-Variou documents	1980s
1	29	Farmer-Tribute Congressional Record	1991-07-18
1	30	Black History Month-Farmer; Carter Woodson	1990-02-15, 1992-02-06

1	31	Farmer-Civil Rights Leadership Award (Reform Judaism and Israel Embassy)	1997—01-27
1	32	Farmer--Presidential Medal	1998-02-27
1	33	Farmer--Retiring from Mary Washington College	1998-08-21
1	34	Farmer--Service of Remembrance	1999-07-16
1	35	Farmer--Poem from Francis Carter (last caretaker)	1999-07-23
1	36	Farmer--National Tribute	1999-09-10
1	37	R. Adams, "He Lay Bare His Heart..." <i>Common Quest</i>	1999
1	38	First Farmer Scholar--Andrew Young	2001-03-24
1	39	Farmer--Dedication of a Memorial	2001-04-20
1	40	Freedom Riders Reunion--60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	2001-11-08 – 2001-11-11
1	41	Proposal for a Farmer Biography by Dorothy Drinkard	2000
1	42	Showing of documentary: <i>The Good Fight: James Farmer Remembers the Civil Rights Movement</i>	2010-02-12
1		Book- <i>Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement</i> , Arbor House	1985
1		Book- <i>Si Tu Es Noir</i> , Services Complets D' Edition, Quebec	1986
1		Book- <i>James Farmer: Civil Rights Leader</i> , Jeff Sklansky, Chelsea House Publishers	1992
1		Book-Robert Louis Tinsley, <i>Whom Shall We Call Our Brother?</i>	1978
2	1	Clippings of Robert Tinsley's father, James A. Tinsley, a civic leader in Anniston, Alabama	1981, 1985
2	2	Tinsley boxing photos and clippings. Muhammad Ali, Sonny Liston, and others	2008-2014
2	3	Farmer-Oversize New York Times review, photos and poem. Also clippings: "I Consider Myself a Textbook," <i>Town and Country</i> , Fredericksburg, VA, 12/28/1991; "Inside View of Civil Rights," <i>Richmond Times Dispatch</i> , 12/20/1993; "A Long Ride's Reward," <i>Washington Post</i> , 1/15/1998; "Lift One Voice and Sing," <i>Washington Post</i> ,	1985-2000

		7/12/1999; "Our Superhero," <i>The Free Lance-Star</i> , 9/11/1999; "A Life of Courage," (John Lewis) 7/18/2004.	
2	4	Calendar- <i>Migrations</i>	2008
2	5	Poster by Robert L Tinsley "James Farmer's Life Purpose"	1999-2007

Separations: Multiple documents and unrelated material.