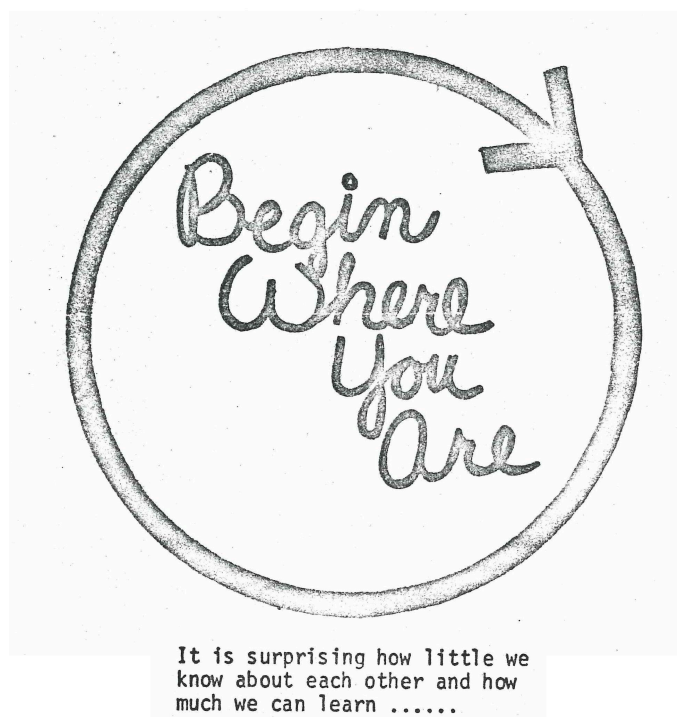




Learning about Race Relations and Minnesota's Black Community through Resources at the Minnesota Historical Society

People come into our library every day looking for stories. Stories of their family. Stories of their community. Stories of their cause. Stories of Minnesota. They look for newspaper articles, books, letters, photographs, government documents, and more. It's our job as reference librarians to help them find these things in our collections, to help people uncover and experience the history of Minnesota as part of their story.

"As many black families pulled up stakes and left the communities where they'd been born and raised, searching for a better life, this part of the collective African American story never seemed to be grasped by the communities to which they moved, Minnesota included. Truly welcoming weary strangers into your community means, first, learning something about their story. [...] And there's a stark, simple equation at work here: if you fail to value a people's stories, you fail to value *them*."

**--David Lawrence Grant in "People Like Us"
*A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota***

The following list is a small offering of materials from our collections to begin to understand the historical context that helped shape recent events here in Minnesota. If you have any questions about these collections or others at the Minnesota Historical Society, please don't hesitate to reach out to the librarians at reference@mnhs.org or via our [Facebook page](#). We're here to help.

--The Reference Librarians of MNHS
July 2016

Interested in donating a piece of this ongoing story to the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society? Let us know [here](#).

Note: Where possible, links direct you directly to digitized collections. Books are linked to [WorldCat](#) where you can find titles in the nearest library. Other archival collections require you to visit our library in person, for more information on that see [Using the Minnesota Historical Society Library](#).

Books: Understanding the Larger Stories

[*A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota*](#) edited by Sun Yung Shin

Collection of essays offering a range of perspectives on what it is like to live as a person of color in one of the whitest states in the nation. Minnesota communities struggle with some of the nation's worst racial disparities. As its authors confront and consider the realities that lie beneath the numbers, this book can be an important tool to those who want to be part of closing those gaps.

[*The Lynchings in Duluth*](#) by Michael Fedo

On the evening of June 15, 1920, in Duluth, Minnesota, three young black men, accused of the rape of a white woman, were pulled from their jail cells and lynched by a mob numbering in the thousands. Michael Fedo, a former journalist, recounts the small but telling stories of individual participants and observers--both blacks and whites--in a manner that casts them as ordinary people caught up in an extraordinary moment of violence and hatred.

[*African Americans in Minnesota*](#) by David Vassar Taylor

As part of the People of Minnesota series, Taylor recounts the triumphs and struggles of the state's African Americans who have had a profound influence on the history and culture of Minnesota from its earliest days to the present.

[*A Study of Conflict and Accommodation in Negro-White Relations in the Twin Cities*](#) by Maurine Bois

Graduate thesis from 1932 that explores segregation in residential districts, discrimination in public places, epithets and ridicule, crime and sex, competition and friction in industry from 1926 - 1931.

[*Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865-1912*](#) by William D. Green

Covering nearly fifty years after the Civil War, Green paints a picture of the black experience in predominantly white, and outwardly progressive, Minnesota. Relating experiences of the black men and women who worked as farmhands and laborers, built communities, started businesses, and launched a newspaper; Green also shows how national figures, such as Frederick Douglas, championed civil rights in Minnesota.

Stories of Individuals and Organizations:

[Matthew Little](#)

Matthew Little was a leader in the civil rights and social justice movements of Minnesota. Little's chairmanship of the Minnesota March on Washington Committee in the early 60's and his long tenure as president of the Minneapolis NAACP are documented in two separate manuscripts collections.

[David Vassar Taylor: Minnesota Black History Project Materials](#)

Reports, brochures, newspaper articles, correspondence and related materials from educational institutions, churches, organizations, government agencies, individuals, and other sources documenting the Black community in Minnesota. Within this collection are records of the St. Paul Department of Human Rights (1955-1975), which includes reports on police brutality in St. Paul

[Rondo Oral History Project](#)

This collection of interviews captures the lives and experiences of long time residents of St. Paul's Rondo community. A mixed neighborhood with respect to ethnicity and income, it has been home to a significant African American population since the early 1900s. Subjects discussed include life in the Rondo community; resistance and reaction to the highway construction; and racism. [Debbie Gilbreath Montgomery](#), St Paul's first female police officer, discusses her experience as an African American woman in the police force in her interview. [Nathaniel Abdul Khaliq](#), a community activist and Rondo native, discusses police brutality in the old Rondo neighborhood.

[St. Paul Police Oral History Project](#)

Some of the subjects discussed by the interviewees include: police culture; racial discrimination and barriers; and civil unrest in the 1960s. Within this collection, [Edward Buehlman](#) specifically addresses race riots that occurred in the Rondo neighborhood in 1968. Another interviewee, [James Griffin](#) discusses the history of blacks in the St. Paul Police Department from the 1930s and the discrimination he faced in applying for employment with the SPPD. His [papers](#) are also in our collections and available for use at the Library.

State Archives: Stories from Government

[St. Paul Human Rights Department Case Files](#)

City government unit responsible for investigating complaints of discrimination that have taken place within the City of Saint Paul. Case files include summary complaints, investigation reports, interview transcripts, information on disposition of cases, and tape recordings.

[Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training](#)

State board responsible for licensing peace officers, part-time officers, and constables. It regulates peace officers' pre-service training and their continuing education while in service, establishes hiring standards and standards of professional conduct, and certifies training schools, programs, and instructors.

[Council on Black Minnesotans Published Records and Reports](#)

One of the state councils created by the legislature in 1980 to represent and advocate for communities of color. Records cover various aspects of the council's activities including legislation, planning, and crime.

News Coverage: How Stories Have Been Told and By Whom

[Minnesota Black Newspaper Index](#)

In 2002, Brenden Henahan created an informal index to Minnesota Black Newspapers. As he explains, "my goal in creating this index is to share information and whet folks' appetites about regional African American history. There are a lot of good stories here. And my goal is to get more people interested in them." For more information on how to access referenced newspapers, see [MNHS Newspaper Collection](#).

[Historic KSTP News Clips](#)

[Scotty Stone Black Power](#)

Press conference to organize and unite black power. In addition, raise awareness to coalition politics and appeal to students of various ethnic backgrounds. October 6, 1967.

[1960 Civil Rights Events](#)

4 separate segments, dated/titled: 3/26/1960 - Woolworth Picketing; 4/2/1960 - Negro Picketing, St. Paul, Minnesota; 4/11/1960 - Freedom Parade; and 4/14/1960 House Trailer Segregation.

MNopedia Articles: Making a Long Story Short

[African Americans at Gustavus Adolphus College, 1963-1982](#)

Founded by Swedish Americans in St. Peter in 1862, Gustavus Adolphus College attracted a mostly white student body for much of its history. In the 1960s, the college took steps to diversify its campus by recruiting and retaining African American students from the South. This effort made Gustavus unique among Midwestern liberal arts colleges.

[Civil Unrest on Plymouth Avenue, Minneapolis, 1967](#)

On the night of July 19, 1967, racial tension in North Minneapolis erupted along Plymouth Avenue in a series of acts of arson, assaults, and vandalism. The violence, which lasted for three nights, is often linked with other race-related demonstrations in cities across the nation during 1967's "long hot summer."

Research Guides: Finding Stories within Stories

[Rondo Neighborhood & I-94](#)

In the 1930s, Rondo Avenue was at the heart of St. Paul's largest African American neighborhood that was displaced in the 1960s by freeway construction. African Americans whose families had lived in Minnesota for decades and others who were just arriving from the South made up a vibrant, vital community that was in many ways independent of the white society around it.

[Somali-Americans in Minnesota](#)

Most Somalis who now live in Minnesota came to the United States as refugees, many after first living as refugees in countries like Kenya and Ethiopia. Minnesota is home to the country's largest population of Somali residents, which numbered 87,853 as of 2008.

[African American Civil Rights Movement](#)

The civil rights movement in Minnesota was headed by leaders of the African American communities, including Fredrick L. McGhee, the Reverend Denzil A. Carty, Nellie Stone Johnson, and Harry Davis. Also essential to the struggle were ministers and congregations of black churches, editors and publishers of black newspapers, racial, interracial, and interdenominational organizations, and orchestrated legal challenges in the courts. Minnesota politician, Hubert H. Humphrey, joined the cause early in his political career.

Image Credit: St. Paul Department of Human Rights Community Relations Council Report
1971. Minnesota Black History Project Materials. Municipal Agencies. Minnesota Historical Society, St.
Paul, MN.