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*Finding a New Home in Harlem: Alice Childress and the
Committee for the Negro in the Arts*

[Paper presented for a panel, “Home Matters,” at the American
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Alice Childress’s performing career in the 1940s was primarily associated with the American Negro Theater, a collectively run professional theater company with a mission to nurture black talent and create compelling theater for Harlem audiences; as Childress would later comment, “We thought we were Harlem’s theater.” ANT made use of all available resources to accomplish this mission; producing plays written by black and white playwrights, hiring white teachers, and accepting white actors and technicians committed to its goals.

ANT’s aspirations to be “Harlem’s Theater” were in part derailed by the company’s breakthrough on Broadway following the 1944 uptown production of *Anna Lucasta*, a retelling of *Anna Christie* written by white screenwriter Philip Yordan and adapted

for a black cast by ANT founder Abe Hill and its white director, Harry Wagstaff Gribble. The initial production of *Anna Lucasta* showcased the talents of its black actors, including Alice Childress, and drew large audiences in Harlem, but largely avoided social questions. Its success garnered the move downtown. A long-running Broadway production and multiple touring companies, featuring Childress and some of the ANT black actors, provided long term employment and garnered mainstream attention for the actors, (notice of Childress's performance appeared in *Vogue* and *Life Magazine* in 1945) but the commercial benefits accrued to the Broadway producers and ANT's finances remained marginal. As an *Amsterdam News* columnist wrote, "ANT was left out in the cold when the money started rolling in." Its campaign to raise money for a permanent theater in Harlem was stalled.¹

¹ Errol G. Hill and James V. Hatch, *A History of African American Theatre* (NY and London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 351-357; "Negro Theatre Plans to Build in Harlem," *New York Times*, 4/2/1945, 17; William Du Bois, "History of a Dream: Relating the Birth and Travails of the American Negro Theatre," *New York Times*, 9/24/1944, Xi; Julius J. Adams, "American Negro Theatre Stands Out as a Model Experimental theatre for Harlem," *New York Amsterdam News*, 4/21/1945, 15.

Childress's role as Blanche , “a Brooklyn wharf whore, cadging, broken and funny in a heartbreaking way,” kept her fully employed in the Broadway run and in touring companies, but required her to be away from New York for extended periods of time until the end of May, 1947.

ANT's mission was a political, cultural, and social project: “to break down the barriers of Black participation in the theater, to portray Negro life as they honestly saw it,[and] to fill in the gap of a Black theater which did not exist.” ANT members debated how best to claim access to all dramatic roles, and convey the forms of resistance that enabled black survival in slavery and white supremacy while also bursting the bounds of constraining minstrelsy-influenced stereotypes and theatrical segregation. In 1946, a black press feature quoted Childress as saying she did not feel that “Negroes need confine themselves purely to the medium of the so-called Negro drama” nor that they should be “ashamed of the Negro drama,” but rather than they should “prepare themselves

to act in all drama as it realistically portrays actual life.”²

ANT’s refusal of Jim Crow segregation positioned it as part of the 1940s theatrical left. The company experimented with well-known plays and original dramatic material expressing black and left-wing concerns, dramatizing challenges to anti-unionism, colonialism, and white supremacy.³ ANT members also contributed their presence to left-led campaigns demanding racial equality and protesting racial injustice. Alice Childress and ANT and *Anna Lucasta* cast members Frederick O’Neal and Rosetta LeNoire participated in a July 1945 event celebrating Mary McLeod Bethune called by the National Negro Congress, a coalition of labor organizations and civil rights groups which

² As early as September, 1945 the Broadway company was sent periodically to replace the cast in Chicago: Childress performed in Chicago in September 1945 and in February 1946, and in September, 1946, Childress travelled with the show to Bridgeport, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Denver, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Allene Talmey, “New York Spotlight,” *Vogue*, 6/1/1945, 127; Abe Hill quoted in Ethel Pitts Walker, “The American Negro Theatre,” in *The Theatre of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed . Errol Hill (NY: Applause Theater Book Publishing, 1987), 251; Ruth Cornelius, “Anna’s Alice Has Rest Visit in the Gate City,” *Atlanta Daily World* 8/21/1946, 4.

³ For examples, productions of *Home is the Hunter* (1945), *Juno and the Paycock* (1946); *The Washington Years* (1948); *Sojourner Truth* (1948) *Freight* (1949) [check]

formed an official “Cultural Division” in 1946 to combat racial barriers in the culture industries. *Anna Lucasta* cast members devoted the proceeds from a September 1946 performance to help the families of the two couples lynched in Monroe, Georgia earlier that summer.⁴

By 1947, Childress was back in New York, the NNC was under attack from anti-communist crusaders, and its Cultural Division had renamed itself The Committee for the Negro in the Arts, with support from well-known black artists Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, Kenneth Spencer, Josh White, Hazel Scott, as well as white writers, directors and producers Margaret Webster, Carl Van Doren, Lee Sabinson, Franklin P. Adams, Louis Adamic, and George Abbott. CNA adopted the NNC Cultural Division’s project to protest racial barriers in the culture industries, and its structure of committees in music, art, literature and theatre. ANT

⁴ On the National Negro Congress, see Brian Dolinar, *The Black Cultural Front: Black Writers and Artists of the Depression Generation* (Jackson, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 49-69; “Mrs. Bethune Has a Birthday Party,” *Amsterdam News*, 7/28/1945, 8. Belafonte, *My Song* (NYC: Knopf, 2011), 62-4; “To Aid Lynched Negroes’ Families,” *New York Times*, 9/16/1946, 10.

members Alice Childress, Maxville Glanville, Sidney Poitier, Clarice Taylor, and Vinnie Burrows gravitated to CNA's theatre committee.⁵

Intense internal debate about ANT's future direction and financial sustainability resulted in the resignation of founding director Abe Hill in February, 1948, ceding leadership to its board of directors, including Childress. In March, 1948, ANT presented a benefit performance for CNA of their production of their new play about Abraham Lincoln, The Washington Years. Although ANT continued to mount productions into early 1949, and Childress appeared in some of them, none were able to draw significant audiences.⁶

Childress began to work out her ideas about creating drama

⁵ Dolinar, *Black Cultural Front*, 60-65; Hill and Hatch, *African American Theatre*, 359-362.

⁶ Dan Burley, "Abe Hill Resigns as Director of ANT: Founder to Remain With Organization," *Amsterdam news*, 2/28/1948, ; Hatch and Hill, *African American Theater*, 356-357; CNA clippings file, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library (SCRBC-NYPL). ANT productions in which Childress appeared include *Rain*, opening 12/26/1947; *Almost Faithful*, opening 6/2/1948. *The Washington Years* benefit took place on March 11, 1948. Childress also appeared as part of a "Negro Drama Group" cast for an all-black production of *Tobacco Road* playing at the Howard Theater in Washington, D.C. In December 1949.

from ordinary black lives when she wrote her first play, to explicitly challenge the prevailing common sense among some ANT actors that “in a play about Negroes and whites, only a ‘life or death thing’ like lynching could be interesting on stage.”

Florence dramatized an unfolding confrontation between a southern African American domestic worker and a patronizing northern actress that introduced powerful female characters while also explicitly critiquing standard-fare racial representation.

Childress remembered an initial ANT 1949 production of the play at a church on 125th St in Harlem.⁷ *Florence* was performed, and enthusiastically received, at gatherings of a black and interracial left. It was performed in June, 1950, in association with the left wing group, the Congress of American Women, which had an

⁷ Doris Abramson, *Negro Playwrights in The American Theatre, 1921-1959* (NY: Columbia University Press, 189; Kathy A. Perkins, ed., *Selected Plays Alice Childress* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), xix. A June 17, 1950 article in the *Amsterdam News* referred to Childress’s “debut as a playwright with the ANT production of *Florence* a few weeks ago, in ” “Sepia Artists, Models Open Course to the Public,” 22. This course was taught at 53 W. 125 St, the location of the offices of the Civil Rights Congress, an interracial left-wing civil rights and civil liberties coalition formed in 1946, that was labeled as “subversive” on the Attorney General’s list in 1947. Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown were early CRC supporters.

active Harlem chapter between 1946 and 1950; and was reviewed enthusiastically in the Communist daily press. In October, 1950, the play was published in the left-affiliated literary monthly, *Masses and Mainstream*.⁸

Various left organizations turned to Childress as an authority who could speak incisively about forms of racial discrimination, and about inadequate and damaging forms of racial representation in theater. In February, 1950, Childress was central to what was billed as “the first off-Broadway forum on “The Negro in American Theater,” at the Jefferson Theater Workshop, associated with the Communist Party’s adult education institution, the

⁸ “A confidential informant” noted the CAW performance of Florence in Childress’s FBI file; on the CAW’s Harlem chapter, see Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism in the Making on Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 60; Barbara Rubin, commenting on *Florence*, noted that Alice Childress, “In a quite unobtrusive way, puts across some of the most powerful blows against white chauvinism the theater has yet produced;” *Daily Worker*, 6/29/1950, 11; see also reference to *Florence* on August 6, 1950; publication in *Masses and Mainstream*, October, 1950, 34-47. *Florence* was performed as part of a February Negro History program for the American Labor Party in February, 1951, where Du Bois also spoke; at the Jefferson School in December, 1951 (*Amsterdam News* display ad, December 15, 1951, 14); at a performance of three short plays, including one by Langston Hughes performed by the Negro Arts Players at the Elks Theater, 15 W. 126 the St, in August, 1952; *NYT*, 8/2/52, 15; at St Martin’s Church in Harlem, 10/117/1952 with Beah Richards playing Marge and Childress playing Mrs. Carter.

Jefferson School. In announcing this event, the Amsterdam News described this Workshop (in words that might well have been elicited from Childress) as “a people’s theatre founded in the reality of everyday life” that “must be closely related to the needs of all people. No person can be denied the right to express his richness...Jim Crow has resulted in denying 15 million American Negroes the opportunity to express themselves fully, to give the American people the richness they possess.” By April 1951, Childress began to teach an evening class on drama at the Jefferson School, and she lectured on “The Negro in American theater” at a CNA Brunch, May, 1951 and on “the Relationship between the Negro arts to the community” at the CNA two day convention in January 1952.⁹

⁹ “Off-Broadway Group to Air Role of Negro in Theatre,” *NYAN*, 2/25/1950, 26. The other panelists who spoke were black playwright Theodore Ward, and Jewish novelist Howard Fast. The forum followed a performance Jefferson Workshop actors of Awake and Sing, Clifford Odets’ 1935 Jewish working class family drama; *DW*, 4/4/1951; see also CNA clippings file, SCRBC-NYPL; *DW* 5/25/51, 5/30/51, 1, 1/25/1952, 1/31/1952, 7.

CNA's cultural offerings on black history and culture also drew her efforts. Participants in CNA shared a left-wing analysis challenging class and race exploitation. Their commitment to black cultural nationalism emphasized a history of black resistance drawing on black culture. This stance co-existed with a commitment to internationalism, and a principled inter-racialism rejecting racialized boundaries as a product of white supremacy and colonialism.¹⁰ The Committee for the Negro in the Arts continued the work begun by the NNC Cultural Division to counter the mainstream invisibility of black arts and artists, and to foster robust black employment in theater, music, and broadcasting. CNA's encouragement of black performance and support for black arts created an important space where black artists could experiment with and develop their craft; it facilitated friendships and collegiality that might sustain them despite the many obstacles in their way.¹¹

¹⁰ Hansberry, Killens, Belafonte, Poitier

¹¹ Dolinar, *Black Cultural Front*, 52-53, 60-64 Smith, *Becoming Belafonte*, 64-67;

Childress was part of CNA's theater committee, and alongside black actors Frank Silvera, and Dots Johnson, she performed in a black history revue, "Lift Every Voice: a Narrative of the Negro in America's History, created for Negro History Week in February 1950, based on poems and historical documents from the Schomburg collections, at the 135th St. branch of the NYPL. In November, 1950, Childress directed another production of this "History of the Negro People through Literature and Music," adding a young a Sierra Leone dancer to perform the African dances, for the left-affiliated National Council of the Arts Sciences and Professions.¹² Mixing music, dance, and drama was characteristic of left-wing entertainment. Music and dance were widely understood to be popular forms that celebrated the creativity and resilience of ordinary people. New forms of theater fused political expression with musical idioms; for example, Langston Hughes' 1938 Harlem Suitcase Production of *Don't You*

¹² Clipping from *Daily Compass*, 2/14/1950 ; *DW*, 11/30/1950, and program; all in CNA clippings file, SCRBC-NYPL.

Want to be Free? (a "poetry play...with music, singing and dancing') and Duke Ellington's 1941 musical revue-history of Black America, *Jump For Joy*.¹³

Childress's vision and artistic sensibilities were absolutely central to CNA's 1950-1952 efforts to realize ANT's unfinished mission by creating a Harlem community theater. CNA's theater committee gained access to free space on weeknights at the Club Baron, a jazz nightclub on Lenox Avenue at 132nd St., which had opened in 1946 with balcony and box seats overlooking a stage that could accommodate a crowd of 350.¹⁴

CNA's first production, opening on September 20, 1950, was particularly well suited to draw enthusiastic Harlem audiences.

Childress had written a dramatic and musical adaptation of CNA mentor/ participant Langston Hughes' most popular writing in his

¹³ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front* (London:Verso, 1996), 309-319

¹⁴ Club Baron was the biggest of the new "first-rate" nightclubs opening in Harlem in 1946 that catered to blacks as well as white customers: "Harlem Night Club Boom," *Ebony*, November 1946, 28-30. Its white left-wing owner, Herman Baron, had founded the American Contemporary Artists Galleries in 1932, and showed the work of a number of artists on the left, including CNA artist Charles White.

“Simple” stories, first published as “conversations” between Jesse B. Semple, a southern migrant to Harlem usually conversing at the corner bar with a stuffy, middle-class interlocutor, in the *Chicago Defender* in 1943. These widely read and discussed conversations were then transformed into stories for Hughes’ best-selling book, *Simple Speaks His Mind*, published in April 1950. Childress constructed the show, *Just a Little Simple*, out of short theater pieces and musical numbers. The theater pieces included several vignettes featuring Jesse B. Semple, including one based on Semple’s criticism’s of the anti-Communist witch hunt, as well as a production of *Florence*.¹⁵ Audiences loved the production, and the run, planned for three weeks extended to four months, with attendance estimated of over 8,000.¹⁶

¹⁵ Dolinar, *Black Cultural Front*, 101-124; Hatch and Hill, *African American Theater*, 360. Hughes liked Childress’s “Just a Little Simple,” appearing at the closing Club Baron performance, on January 31, 1951, and praised *Florence* as “one of the most moving plays I have seen” in his *Defender* column, 1/20/1951, 6. See also the program for *Simple* in the Ginger Pinkard papers at the Tamiment Library.

¹⁶ The productions and its extensions were announced in the *New York Times* ((9/15/1950, 30; 10/3/1950, 33; 11/14/1950, 38; as well as *Amsterdam News*; other productions were mounted in Philadelphia in association with the National Council of Arts, Sciences and Professions, and in NY for the Fur Workers Union; see materials in CNA clipping file, SRBC, NYPL, including the information that the CNA

CNA followed *Simple* with a variety format, *Showtime at the Baron*, on Thursday nights, offering musical performance and also sometimes dramatic monologues or scenes from current or recent plays, including pieces from *Simple*. Some were announced as benefits to raise money for legal defense for black victims of white state and informal violence. Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier were among the many artists who performed.¹⁷

Childress's success in adapting *Simple* may have encouraged her to write her own column, answering Hughes' Jesse B. Simple with "Conversations from Life," in the voice of Mildred, a defiant, class-conscious domestic worker, whose conversations with her friend Marge at her kitchen table offered a black and left woman's perspective on the political debates of the day.

Childress's first column appeared in *Freedom* newspaper in October 1951, a publication founded by Paul Robeson at the beginning of that year in an effort to keep his voice and the issues

actors and technicians be paid for their work. Scenes from *Simple* were also presented at the CNA convention in January 1952.

¹⁷ CNA clippings file, SCRBC, NYPL; *DW*, 4/26/1951; Smith, *Becoming Belafonte*, 82-3.

with which he was associated in circulation after intensifying efforts to blacklist and marginalize him.¹⁸

In 1951, CNA was able to mount another provocative dramatic production at Club Baron, writer William Branch's new one act play, A Medal for Willie, featuring a black mother's sharp denunciation of celebrating her son's posthumous award for WWII bravery as a poor substitute for postwar social equality. The play received a review in the *New York Times*, as well as praise from Lorraine Hansberry in *Freedom and Masses and Mainstream*. "A Letter to the Community" encouraged audience to come to the Club Baron and "buy your share in a permanent cultural center in Harlem;" but this play was unable to duplicate the extraordinary popular success of "Simple."¹⁹

¹⁸ Childress's columns appeared in *Freedom*, and then after its publication ceased, in the Baltimore *Afro-American*; she published a revised set of them as *Like One of the Family*, published by the left wing International Publishers in Brooklyn in 1956. Childress was a founding member of the left-wing black women's organization Sojourners for Truth and Freedom, formed in September 1951 to mobilize women to protest all forms of racial injustice; she spoke a mass meeting, and according to her FBI file, addressed Negro History celebration on 2/12/1952 on the subject of "The Negro Woman, Yesterday and Today."

¹⁹ J.P.S., "The Theatre: Attack on Bigotry," *NYT*, 10/16/1951, 35; Hansberry, "'Medal for Willie' Deserves a Medal," *Freedom*, 11/1951, 7; Hansberry in *Masses and Mainstream*, 12/1951, 59-60; "Letter to Community" about *A Medal for Willie* in CNA

Alice Childress's play *Gold Through the Trees* was the last major play that CNA produced at Club Baron.²⁰ Another paper on this panel will discuss this remarkable production in depth, but I just want to highlight Childress and CNA's political and dramatic ambitions for the April 1952 production, described in the press release as weaving together "the aspirations of freedom of the African people and American Negroes," and featuring "an Ashanti warrior dance, an original Martinsville Blues, a modern dance and drums choreography, and the planning of the South African Resistance." *Gold Through the Trees* referred to, and its actual production was coordinated with, a day of mass rallies against the pass laws among black South Africans to counter the 300 year anniversary of white settlement in the Cape region of South Africa. South African leaders from the African National Congress,

clippings file, SCRBC-NYPL; "Branch's First Play in Debut at Harlem Club NY," (Baltimore) *Afro-American*, 10/20/1951, 7. *Willie* reviewed in the *Daily Compass* and *Amsterdam News*

²⁰ Hill and Hatch identifies several one act plays presented at Club Baron in the summer of 1953 by a group of CNA actors, as part of something called Burlap Summer Theater, *African American theater*, 362.

the South African Indian Congress, and the Coloured People's Congress used these rallies to announce the start of the South African "Defiance of Unjust Laws" campaign, marking the beginning of popular non-violent resistance to the apartheid state.

Childress set historical scenes in *Gold Through the Tree* in parts of Africa, in Haiti, and during slavery in the US, and its contemporary scenes unfolded in the brutalities of postwar "legal lynching" in Martinsville, W. Virginia, colonialism in the British West Indies, and of apartheid in South Africa. Through Childress's play, CNA's Harlem community theater made its boldest claims to offering cultural expression as a means to dramatize the past and present of black resistance in the US and in the diaspora.²¹

At the same time, pressure and harassment from anti-Communist scrutiny and investigation began to intensify, leaving

²¹ The program for *Gold Through the Trees* credits Du Bois, *The World and Africa*; Mercer Cook, *Haiti*; Ralph Korngold, *Citizen Toussaint*, Earl Conrad, *Harriet Tubman* as well as materials from *monthly Review*, *Freedom*, the Civil Rights Congress, and the Council on African Affairs; CNA clippings file, SCRBC, NYPL; see also *DW*, 5/19, 1952, 8. See also Myles Jefferson, "The Negro on Broadway, 1951-2—Another Transparent Season," in *Phylon* (Vol 13, No 3) 1952, 299-308. In January 1953, Childress joined the first course Du Bois taught at the Jefferson School on "Background on African Liberation Struggles;" *DW*, 21/2/1953 and 1/18/1953.

left wing black and interracial organizations like CNA more vulnerable. Radicals led many of the organizations demanding racial equality, and these were precisely the groups on the glare of anti-communist scrutiny. A scheduled appearance of Robeson on network television was cancelled in March 1950, and by August, he had lost his passport. In On February 16, 1951, Du Bois was indicted as a foreign agent for circulating the Stockholm Peace appeal. HUAC reopened its hearings on the entertainment industries in March 1951, and in May, Margaret Webster, the white director who had been one of the founders of CNA, was publicly named to the committee. In response to these events, and not long after the production of *Gold Through the Trees*, CNA members felt compelled to shut down their theatrical space at Club Baron, and with it, the hopes to constitute Harlem's community theater.²²

²² The National Negro Congress, the Communist party USA, the Civil Rights Congress, the Jefferson School, were labeled as "disloyal" by the Attorney General by 1947: "Groups Called Disloyal," *NYT*, 12/5/1947, 8; To no avail, CNA contested its placement on the "subversive" list in April, 1954: "U.S. Adds Groups to Subversive List," *NYT*, 7/22/1954, 4. See also

Childress publicly expressed her political convictions, during these years, protesting the anti-communist blacklist by reading a poem at National Council of the Arts Sciences and Professions Rally for the Hollywood Ten against HUAC in June, 1950, and continuing to appear with Robeson and to celebrate his work. She performed a scene from *Gold Through the Trees* at a fundraiser to help the South Africa Resistance Campaign in November, 1952.²³

On the years to come, Childress would write remarkable depictions of black culture that invited black and white audiences to understand the Negro people--“our neighbors, the community, the domestic workers, porters, laborers, white collar workers, churches, lodges and institutions.” When first challenged by black playwright Ted Ward in 1950 on the need for

http://www.archive.org/stream/reportoncivilrig1947unit/reportoncivilrig1947unit_djvu.txt

²³IDW, 6/19/1950; “Let Hollywood Ten Go, Group Asks Truman,” NYT, 6/20/1950, 22 Display ad for “Harlem’s Big Star Night,” *Amsterdam News*, 2/16/1952, 13 and 2/23/1952, 14; Display Ad for “Salute to South Africa,” *Amsterdam News*, 11/29/1952, 21. , Childress appeared at a National Council of the Arts Sciences and the Professions rally to defend the Hollywood Ten in June, 1950, and continued to attend events, conferences and meetings through 1953; she appeared at and contributed to events to honor Paul Robeson in February, 1952 and May, 1954

a Negro theater, she was worried that such a theater might be a Jim Crow institution. She came to support the idea of a “Negro theatre” because she thought the black freedom struggle, drawing on diverse theatrical cultures, including Chinese, Japanese, and Russian could “inspire, lift, and create a complete desire for the liberation of all oppressed people” without falling into what we now would call identity politics, “being guilty of understanding only ourselves.” Mary Helen Washington has described her vision of theater as “multicultural, black-centered and internationalist.” Childress saw her theatrical work in Harlem as part of interracial left wing crosscurrents: she tributed CNA and its production of *Just a Little Simple* alongside productions by People’s Drama, the New Playwrights, and Harlem’s Unity Theater as sharing the tasks of “seeking out every form of artistic expression... and striving for the development of all artists.”²⁴

²⁴ Alice Childress, “For a Negro Theater, “ in *Masses and Mainstream*, 2/21/1951, 61-64, printed in *DW* “For a Strong Negro People’s Theatre,” 2/11/1951, 11; discussed in *The Other Blacklist: the African American Literary and Cultural left of the 1950s* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2014) 129-130;135-140. Alice Childress, “For a Negro Theater, “ in *Masses and Mainstream*, 2/21/1951, 61-64, printed in *DW* “For a

Childress's quest to burst the bounds of black representation expanded from trying to establish a theatrical home in Harlem to exploring multiple stages with potential to open a window on the black world.

Strong Negro People's Theatre," 2/11/1951, 11; discussed in *The Other Blacklist: the African American Literary and Cultural left of the 1950s* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2014) 129-130;135-140. On the specific other left wing production Childress to which Childress called attention, see Chrystyna Dail, *Stage for Action: US Social Activist Theatre in the 1940s* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016), 143-151. People's Drama was an off Broadway theater company described in newspapers as 'an interracial theatrical group' and an experimental theater group": In the spring of 1950 it merged with the artistic staff of the Communist influenced Camp Unity to become Freedom theater: Dail, 148. Paul Peter's production of *Nat Turner* ran from November 1950 through May 1951 (Dail, 142). The original New Playwrights Theatre, founded in 1926, was a radical theatre group, John Howard Lawson, and John Dos Passos. It was revived as an interracial venture in the late 1940s. According to *Atlanta Daily World*, 7/28/1950, 5, "Alice Childress and Frank Silvera are among the Negro artists signed with the New Playwrights Company under the direction of Howard Fast." Sidney Poitier appeared in this company production's of Herb Tank's *Longitude 49* in the spring of 1949; they produced Howard Fast's *Play the Hammer* at the Czechoslovak House, 347 E. 73rd St, in September 1950, and Bernard Rubin's strike play, *The Candy Story*, in which Childress played a Jewish mother, in the spring of 1951; see *DW*, 2/20/1951, 3/18/1951, 7; *DW*, 4/3/1951; Perkins, ed., *Selected Plays*, xx. On the interracial Harlem Unity Theater's productions of the 1930s labor play Ben Bengal's *Plant in the Sun* and Malvin Wald's *Talk in Darkness*, in September, 1949, see Dail, *Stage for Action*, 92, and *DW*, 9/2/1949.

