This pdf consists of the portion of Clara Stanton Jones's essay that focuses on the film "The Speaker"
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CONTENTS

Foreword
Major R. Owens vii

Introduction
Ismail Abdullahi ix

E. J. Josey: Librarian for All Seasons
Clara Stanton Jones 1

E. J. Josey, the 101st President of the American Library Association
Lucille Thomas 21

E. J. Josey as Mentor and Leader in ALA
Patricia Glass Schuman 27

Advocate for the Profession
Floyd Hardy 32

Robert B. Ford, Jr. 39

A "Chapter" Chapter: E. J., ALA, and Civil Rights
Eric Moon 44

E. J. and Me: Twenty Years of Correspondence and Agitation
Sainford Berman 53
It is noteworthy that not only have E. J.’s contributions in his professional capacity been well recognized, but his active role in promotion of the welfare of the communities in which he has lived has also been gratefully acknowledged. For the most part, he has channeled his civic efforts through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The series of NAACP awards he has received began back in 1963 with a “Certificate of Appreciation” from the Savannah (City) Branch NAACP. Also included are the Savannah State College NAACP Chapter Award, 1964; the NAACP National Office Award for “Leadership in Youth Work,” 1965; and the Albany, New York, “Branch Award,” 1981. In addition to the NAACP awards, he received the Savannah-Chatham County “Merit Award for Work on Economic Opportunity Task Force,” 1966.

E. J. has been a guest lecturer at many colleges and universities, especially at library schools. He has written well over two hundred articles in library and other professional journals in addition to the ten books previously mentioned. He has identified very closely with the ALA Association of College and Research Libraries, and has served on several of its committees.

E. J. has risen to prominence and leadership in ALA during a period of societal change that has affected all institutions with increasing intensity. All along the way, he could have edged around racial concerns in order to protect his personal acceptability for advancement to ALA’s highest offices. That was not E. J.’s way. Unfolding historic events challenged him to advocate equality and inclusiveness. This is an obligation of every sincere leader of so-called “minority people.” It is a heavy burden added to the normal load of duties, but E. J. accepted without demurrer, never becoming a self-made martyr. He had no feeling of apology about calling attention to unequal treatment of minorities and women. He rejected the arrogant belief that their inclusion in the mainstream of professional experience is a favor bestowed with condescending benevolence. He understood beyond doubt that ALA, and the larger society, needed the contributions of all people, and he proceeded on that premise.

E. J. is no stranger to conflict. However, I believe the whirlwind that raged over The Speaker, the film produced in 1977 by the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), surpassed anything he, and most people, had ever experienced in ALA. E. J. had not yet been elected to the ALA Executive Board at that time; consequently, he was not involved until he saw the preview for the Membership at the June 1977 Conference. His reaction was passionately negative, as was mine and that of virtually all Black librarians, along with a great many White members. E. J. supported me stoutly at the center of the ensuing controversy. The dispute was so fierce and prolonged that Eric Moon, who succeeded me as ALA President, said he felt that continuing reverberations from The Speaker were ruinous to his Presidency.

Since E. J. played a major role in the searching discussions that took place (many people sought him out, and he was a leader in the Black Caucus deliberations), a summary of the affair follows for the record in this Festschrift.

The story of the film began when the Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) requested permission from the ALA Executive Board at its April 1976 quarterly meeting to produce a film “to explain the special role of the library in preserving and disseminating controversial works.” The Director proposed, further, that the film would be financed by advance subscriptions from libraries around the country. The entire proposal was approved and welcomed by the Board as an unprecedented opportunity to dramatize, through the medium of libraries, assaults on First Amendment rights. The OIF Director asked for and received permission to send out a promotional letter from the Board over my signature as President. The idea of producing a film on this subject, as stated in the promotional letter, met with widespread approval, as evidenced by the willingness of one hundred and sixty libraries to subscribe without benefit of preview. The film would be released for distribution after final approval by the Board.

Skipping over the events of the year following the approval to produce the film, the Board viewed the completed film at its quarterly meeting in April 1977. We had received copies of the film script only two weeks before the meeting. Board approval was required before the film could be released for
distribution, yet this was our first opportunity to see any part of it. Before reading the script, we had not known that the agreed subject and setting had been changed, much less removed from the library field to another discipline dealing with an entirely different subject. All of this was a great shock, and the added negative racial aspects of the film created a kind of paralyzing awkwardness. Even with the basic good will of the Board members, emotions were highly charged. In searching for a solution, we discussed the possibility of releasing the film without the ALA “imprimatur.” A Board member objected, saying that would be censorship. The effect of the word “censorship” was electrifying. Attention was turned away from consideration of the merits of the film and was subsumed by this new threatening idea. The eventual resolution was to delegate authority to the ALA membership for approval or disapproval at the Membership meeting during the upcoming annual Conference in Detroit.

Shortly after the Board meeting, there was a telephone conference call in which the Board was advised by legal counsel that the two-month delay (from April to the June Conference) in releasing the film could be interpreted as a breach of promise. Consequently, the Board decided to release *The Speaker* at once. In the meantime, word had leaked out about the issue of censorship, and the effect was the same shocked reaction as during the Board meeting. At the Membership meeting, discussion centered in great measure on censorship rather than on the quality and suitability of the film for library use. After a very stormy meeting, the vote was almost evenly divided, with a difference of only four votes deciding acceptance of *The Speaker*.

Following the momentous Detroit Membership meeting, E. J. and I, and others who were vitally interested, discussed every aspect of *The Speaker* controversy. For the remainder of the Conference, discussion of the charge of censorship vis-à-vis ALA and the film took precedence over all other topics. Many people coming to both E. J. and me to talk over their grave concerns were saying, in effect, “I don’t really approve of *The Speaker*, but librarians must never practice censorship!” E. J. made the observation that censorship is a nightmare threat to a profession in which the First Amend-
The story line begins with the Current Events Committee and its faculty adviser, Victoria Dunn, in the throes of considering a Dr. Boyd as the final speaker in a year-long series of lectures for the full student body. Boyd, like Shockley, asserts the mental inferiority of Black people. The students’ motivating desire is to climax their successful lecture series season with an exciting, challenging speaker. There have been news accounts of Boyd’s lectures in the area, and some of the Committee members are attracted by the controversial nature of his point of view as a way to stimulate interest. The Committee votes six to two to invite Boyd, over the strong objections of one White boy and, especially, one Black girl who considers it a “personal insult that we’re even considering it.”

When word of the contemplated invitation spreads throughout the school community, intense controversy breaks out. There are student protest demonstrations: the principal, the PTA and community leaders are against it, the faculty divided. Eventually, the Board of Education cancels the invitation. The effect on the school is a depressing change from openness to a climate of intimidation where people are reticent to exercise their First Amendment right of free speech. That change would seem to be the reason for the original title of the film, “The Death of Freedom.”

In support of inviting Dr. Boyd, the axiom is often repeated in the film that all Americans have a right to speak their minds and that no one should be denied this First Amendment right. The persistent effort in the film to apply the First Amendment to the Committee’s deliberations on inviting Dr. Boyd cannot be justly established. He has come to their attention precisely because he has been publicly exercising his First Amendment rights to the fullest by lecturing to various groups in the vicinity. In keeping with the letter and spirit of the law, Boyd has been free to speak to as many audiences as he could attract or engage, and to speak, write or publish his views on any subject whether controversial or not. No one is required to invite him or to listen to him, nor are publishers required to publish his writings. The First Amendment states: “Congress shall make no law . . . abridging freedom of speech, or of the press.” This is a pledge to protect freedom of speech but not to supply an audience. Boyd’s right of free speech has not been abridged, nor would it be endangered by the Committee’s decision to invite him or not. There is no connection here with the First Amendment; the film story is not valid because it is constructed on a false basic assumption.

As a history teacher and adviser to the Current Events Committee, Dunn should have understood the correct application of the First Amendment. The opening scene unintentionally introduces a dramatization of an experience in poor program planning. Dunn should have taught the students that it is perfectly acceptable to select a controversial subject provided the speaker has proper qualifications and presents authoritative and sufficiently comprehensive information. (Boyd is a scientist but not a geneticist or anthropologist or psychologist.) A one-sided promotion of any controversial subject cannot satisfy educational standards. These are the kinds of considerations that should have been used to appraise Boyd as a possible auditorium speaker. Dunn did not understand this.

A second major flaw is the insensitivity to human dignity and feeling woven throughout the story. The most outrageous example is that in order to prove their loyalty to the First Amendment, Black members of the student body, faculty and the community would have to agree to a one-sided lecture advocating their inferiority and denying their status as full-fledged human beings. This unspeakable humiliation would be legitimized by school sponsorship. Would Victoria Dunn have had the temerity to treat in like manner other ethnic groups that have also suffered discrimination and stereotyping, such as Jews, Native Americans, Poles, Arabs, Irish, Italians, Chinese, Eastern Europeans, Vietnamese, Hispanics, and others? Was not the resentful reaction of African Americans (and of many Whites) predictable, both in the film and in ALA?

Although it is understandable that Black librarians would be on the front line, The Speaker episode was not a struggle for Black librarians alone, and certainly not a struggle between Black and White. It was an historic struggle over principles in a film that has gone forth as a representative work of the
American Library Association. There is many a good story in the experiences of librarianship that would have made a far better contribution to the understanding and support of the First Amendment.

Not much has been written about The Speaker, although the controversy hit the Association like a typhoon striking without warning. Perhaps some day a definitive account will be written of the whole experience. It is historically important (though not remembered with pleasure), and a full chronicle and analysis of it should be in the ALA annals. The project was launched with enthusiasm and high hope in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. It was trust in the word of the American Library Association and its reputation for excellence that was the security which brought advance subscriptions from one hundred and fifty libraries. Certain widespread criticisms of the film venture cut across attitudes about acceptance or rejection of the film itself. The fact that neither the advance subscribers nor the Executive Board were consulted about the major change of subject and setting is widely judged as a serious violation of trust. It was shocking to learn that the new subject was not about libraries, but changed to another discipline (education) in which librarians were not trained or experienced. Also, the two librarians appearing very briefly in the film are the old stereotypes from which the profession has suffered. Libraries obviously missed a rare opportunity to focus the attention of a large audience on a vital issue dramatized through the medium of libraries.

E. J. was a major figure in the searching discussions about the quality of The Speaker, and was passionately against seeing the film represent ALA's understanding of either intellectual freedom or racial attitudes. Others who helped to sustain balance by their wisdom and forthright expression of their convictions are too numerous to list, but mention must be made of the late Annette Phinazee and of Avery Williams, then President of the Black Caucus.

In most ALA matters, by far, the issue of race is not involved. Discussion of race is threatening to people, and the charge has been made that “E. J. sees race in everything, and can never leave the subject alone!” To balance this reaction, I can recall a scene that is often repeated at both Midwinter and June conferences. E. J. and I chanced to meet at the close of a session, and we walked out into the crowded hallway talking. Immediately, people began spotting him and crossing over from the line moving toward us to speak to him or shake his hand, or to call out greetings in passing. We were stopped so often that our conversation became impossible, and we darted into a cafe in order to quickly finish our business. At times when there were no throngs of people in the hallways, individuals approached E. J., one after another, to discuss projects or ideas and concerns, or to thank him for help on some specific undertaking. As ALA members, surely they are familiar with his positions on important and sometimes controversial issues, but they obviously feel very positive toward him, not threatened. One answer to the charge about E. J.'s seeing “race in everything” and being unable to leave the subject alone is that it is not race he sees, but injustice and violation of “respect and concern for the dignity and welfare of all people.” In that sense, people are right in saying, “He cannot leave it alone!”

A Festschrift is a well-chosen form of tribute to E. J. Josey. In boyhood, his joy of reading became a motivating force in his becoming a serious student early in life. His original ambition to become a teacher and writer foreshadowed a career that would be spent in the world of books. Interestingly, he entered Howard University in Washington, D.C. as a music major, but was soon drawn to the study of history. However, he has retained his love of music that his music teacher mother taught him as a boy. It is obvious to all who know him professionally that his eventual choice of a career, librarianship, was most felicitous. He has loved his work and has risen to the top of his profession.

E. J. is unique in some special ways that have made a significant impact on the American Library Association. His versatility is the cause of his being drawn into many aspects of the complex organization ALA has become. He is so knowledgeable about its issues and organization, and known to be so dependable, that members far and wide call upon him. His participation in the Association has been constructive and exciting, though certainly rocky at times. He is known as an
innovator, wise and courageous, and not given to silence when he sees the need to speak out. Hopefully, some of the challenges E. J. has made to ALA are helping to communicate the desperate need underlying all of our problems if mankind is to survive on our “global village” planet: genuine respect and concern for the dignity and welfare of all people.

This “festival (or feast) of writing” by E. J.’s colleagues is offered with loving appreciation and profound respect. It gives a view of an era of upheaval, change and hope portrayed through the personality and experience of an historic American library leader, scholar and activist: E. J. Josey. For all that he has done, we thank him and are proud to be part of his being honored.

In June 1983 Dr. E. J. Josey was rewarded for many years of active membership in the American Library Association (ALA), including serving as chair of numerous committees and many years on Council and Executive Board. He was elected vice-president/president-elect of the oldest and largest library association in the world. The results of the election marked the first time an African-American male would serve at the helm of this prestigious organization.

Josey’s many years of academic preparation, experience in leadership positions and as an activist prepared him well for the presidency. His trademark is meticulous planning and prompt execution of those plans.

In true E. J. Josey style, immediately following his election he convened a planning committee and began outlining activities for his presidential year. Using the theme “Forging Coalitions for the Public Good,” he launched an ambitious program. The establishment of coalitions which would last over a period of time for effective action was his objective.

Because E. J.’s planning process and program design were so effective, I am including in-depth details here. His model may be useful for other candidates in the future. For the development of the theme “Forging Coalitions for the Public Good,” strategies were outlined by E. J. and the planning committee. The mission was to reaffirm the concept of the public good and to develop coalitions with other organizations to foster public sector support of libraries and their institutions. One of the major activities selected to further