

Federal Surveillance of African Americans, 1920-1984

This collection increases access to primary documents essential for research and analysis of African American radicalism in the 20th century.

- Date Range: 1920-1984
- Content: 88,021 pages
- Source Library: Federal Bureau of Investigation Library

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- SOURCE: FBI File on the Reverend Jesse Jackson
- DATE: N/A 1970s
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- TITLE: FBI File 100-30932; A; Enclosure Behind File 47
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For more than six decades, the Justice Department and the FBI engaged in widespread investigation of individuals deemed politically suspect. African Americans were prominent targets of this coordinated surveillance effort.

African Americans of all political persuasions were subject to federal scrutiny, harassment and prosecution. The FBI enlisted "confidential special informants" to infiltrate a variety of organizations. Their documents detail Black radicals, their organizations and their motivations.

A new view of the 20th century

Federal Surveillance of African Americans, 1920-1984 is a treasure of largely untapped source materials for the major social movements and key figures in 20th-century Black history.

These primary sources open a window into the development of America's first systematic domestic surveillance apparatus. But just as important, the collection illuminates the enduring conflict in American history between the need of society to protect basic freedoms and the equally legitimate need to protect itself from genuine threats to its security and existence.

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