

### **New York Research Trip & Fellowship**

In October of 2023, I was fortunate enough to be awarded the Rob Kroes Travel Grant as well as a fellowship from the New York Public Library in order to be able to conduct research at the Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, located in Harlem, New York. Not only was this visit crucial for the gathering and consulting of primary and secondary sources relevant for my dissertation, but it was also a memorable and emotional research trip.

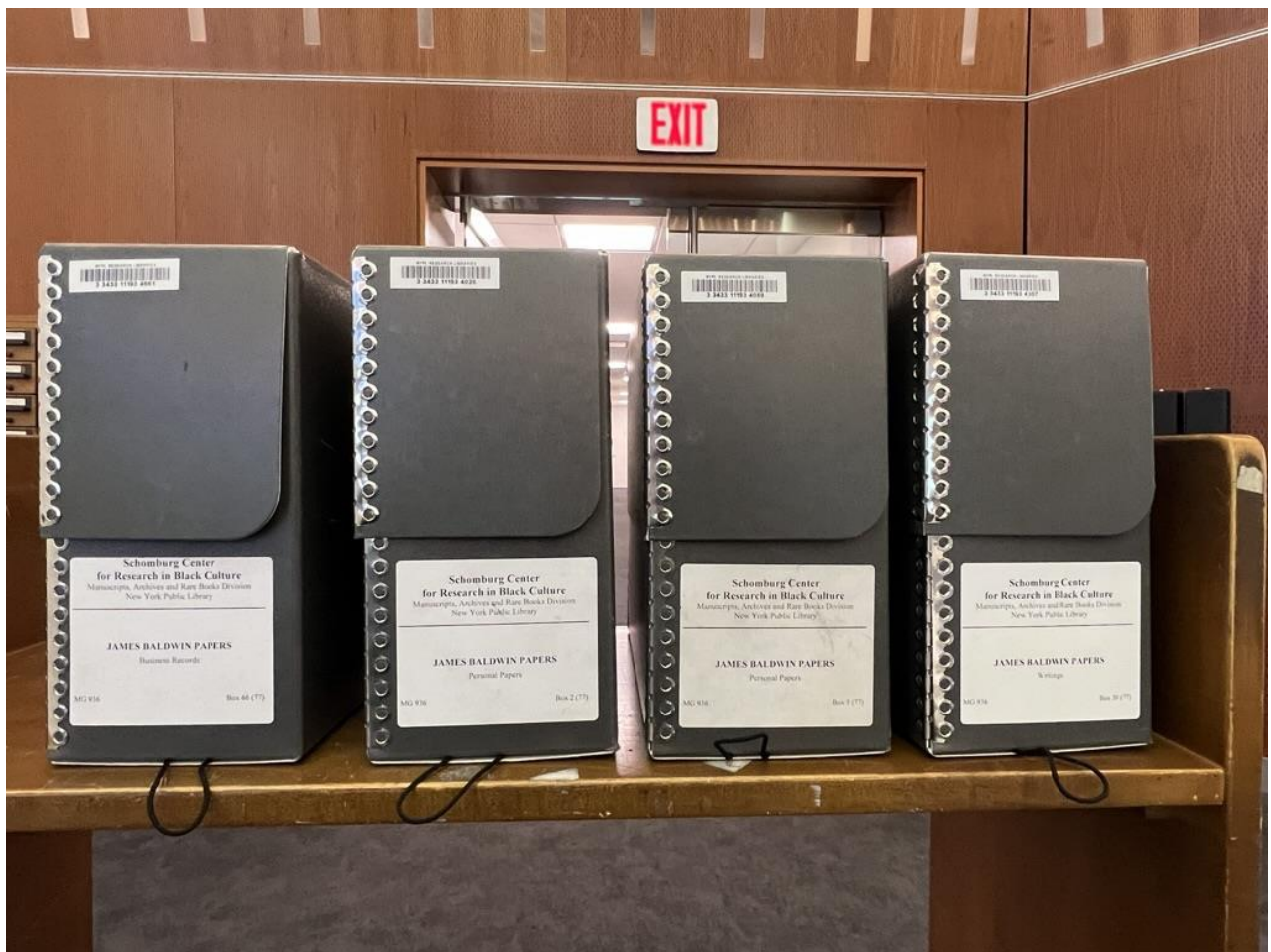
My dissertation titled *Paying the Dues: Early Black Documentary Film and the Quest for Truth* examines Black documentary film practices in the 1960s produced between 1963 and 1969. The aim of the trip was to consult the special collections available at the Schomburg such as the James Baldwin Papers, oral history interviews with the filmmakers from my case studies, the Malcolm X papers, as well as several interviews and film materials. Access to the NYPL collections was necessary for the composition of the necessary primary sources needed to contextualize and analyze the case studies specifically in the third and final chapter of my project. Apart from the NYPL collections, I had also planned to visit the Columbia University Libraries as they hold the Ronald Hobbs Agency Papers containing relevant and rare information about one my case studies: *The New Ark* (1969) by Amiri Baraka.

Due to the large number of materials I needed to consult, the main challenge was to be able to fit all requested materials into the timeframe of my visit in an efficient manner. My strategy was to prioritize what is most urgently needed to the completion of my chapters and make sure to take copies and pictures of materials that might be relevant to consult later. Given the copyright restrictions on some of the materials such as the James Baldwin and Malcom X papers, I was unfortunately not able to make any copies of these files, which made the process of noting down all relevant information very time-consuming and challenging, but I was still able to obtain all the necessary information. The staff at the Columbia Libraries was kind enough to provide me with scans of certain materials following my visit.

Being able to hold some of these rare materials detailed above, among which personal and handwritten items by the people to which I owe my dissertation as well as intellectual development, was at best a surreal experience. I could also not help but feel immense gratitude for the possibility of being able to consult these materials and include them in my research. During my trip I was also lucky to be able to meet and exchange ideas with scholars and filmmakers relevant to my topic. I was also able to come into contact with Malcom X's daughter, Illyasah Shabazz. Although we were not able to meet in person, I was able to ask her about her father's involvement in one of my film case studies. My time at the Schomburg also made it possible to explore a part of New York I had not had the time to get to know in

prior visits to the city, namely, Harlem. Following some recommendations by the Schomburg staff, I was able to explore that part of the city and was surprised to find many fellow Egyptians, who made sure I feel very much at home. During my breaks I made sure visit the Masjid Malcolm Shabazz on 116<sup>th</sup> St., a mosque founded by Malcom X (El Hajj Malik Shabazz). The volunteers at the mosque, especially the women volunteers, were beyond helpful and welcoming making me feel part of the community. The communal Friday prayer at the mosque is and will remain one of the most memorable experiences throughout my PhD trajectory.

I am grateful and delighted to have been able to complete this successful research trip, made possible by the Rob Kroes Travel Grant. It was an enriching experience both on the personal and professional level.



Consulting the 'James Baldwin Papers' at Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Division at the Schomburg



The Malcolm Shabazz Masjid in Harlem



The New York Public Library: Schwarzman Building