The records of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in August and September of 2001 by President William Lucy and the CBTU Executive Council and were opened for research in March of 2002.

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists was founded at a conference in Chicago on September 23-24, 1972 attended by more than 1,200 black union officials and rank-and-file members. The meeting was called by a steering committee of five black union leaders who hoped to galvanize outrage at the AFL-CIO Executive Council's neutrality in the 1972 presidential election into support for an independent organization which would give voice to the concerns of blacks and other minority constituencies in the labor movement — American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy, United Auto Workers Vice President Nelson Jack Edwards, Washington Teachers' Union President William Simons, Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen Vice President Charles Hayes and District 65 Distributive Workers President Cleveland Robinson. Robinson, A. Philip Randolph's successor as head of the Negro American Labor Council, pledged NALC's resources to the fledgling organization.

In 1973, at a constitutional conference in January and its first convention in May, both held in Washington, D.C., the CBTU formalized its structure (the steering committee was expanded to twenty) and created organizing committees for chapters in Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Columbus, Ohio. By 2001, CBTU counted more than fifty chapters, including one in Ontario, Canada. The organization committed itself to using political action and union organizing campaigns to increase black participation and influence in the labor movement and insure social and economic progress for working people and the poor.

CBTU has sponsored regional and national conferences and workshops around the issues of voter registration and education, women's rights, job training and occupational safety, environmental justice, health care for the disadvantaged and opposition to apartheid and NAFTA. It has cooperated with like-minded organizations to advocate for government policies supportive of minority workers and their communities and an end to racial oppression in southern Africa.
The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Collection contains correspondence, meeting minutes, reports, convention material, speeches, publicity and other items documenting the national CBTU's and its chapters' lobbying activity for labor and civil rights issues, support for strikes, involvement in the anti-apartheid movement and sponsorship of projects to develop leadership and improve the quality of life within the African American community.

**Important Subjects in the Collection:**

Affirmative action programs  
African American labor leaders  
African Americans--Health and hygiene  
African Americans--Politics and government  
African Americans--Suffrage  
African Americans--Training of  
Africare  
Apartheid  
Charles A. Hayes  
NAFTA  
National Coalition on Black Voter Participation  
South Africa  
Trade-unions--African American membership  
TransAfrica

**Important Correspondents in the Collection:**

Willie L. Baker, Jr.  
Leonard L. Ball  
James Bell  
Wilburn (Wil) Duncan  
Sherryl Gordon  
Geraldine Johnson  
Henry Lancaster  
William Lucy  
Lew Moye  
Anita Patterson  
Horace Sheffield  
Irene D. Thomas

**Transfers**

A large number of photographs and some convention memorabilia received with the collection have been transferred to the Archives Audiovisual Department.
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Series I, Executive Council, 1976-1995, Boxes 1-2:
Minutes, financial statements, attendance rosters, correspondence, reports and other material distributed for discussion at CBTU executive council meetings. Files are arranged chronologically.

Series II, Convention, Conferences, 1973-1995, Boxes 2-4:
Programs, executive council reports, correspondence, elections material, position papers, resolutions, constitutions, bylaws, speeches, publicity and other material from the CBTU annual convention and other programs sponsored by the organization. Files are arranged alphabetically and then chronologically.

Series III, Correspondence, Publications, Speeches, 1972-1995, Boxes 4-6:
Correspondence and memoranda of William Lucy and his assistants, Leonard Ball and Wil Duncan; articles, testimony and speeches by William Lucy; CBTU publications; and publicity about the organization and its president. CBTU's involvement in the anti-apartheid movement is well documented. Files are arranged alphabetically with correspondence first, followed by publications, publicity, speeches and testimony.

Series IV, Chapters, Regions, National Committees, 1975-1995, Boxes 6-10:
Correspondence, activity reports, meeting minutes, membership information and publicity for chapter-sponsored events. The series also contains the files of the CBTU National Women's Committee and the conference it sponsors at the annual convention. Chapter files are arranged alphabetically by state and then by city and are followed by regional and national committee files.

Series V, Organizations, 1981-1995, Boxes 10-11:
Correspondence, reports, reference material and promotional literature of organizations to which the CBTU belonged or whose projects it sponsored. Especially well documented is the work of TransAfrica, the principal black American lobby with Congress and the Administration for African and Caribbean affairs. Files are arranged alphabetically.
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