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Celebrating 175: Research File, Coleman, Floyd, circa 1975-1991

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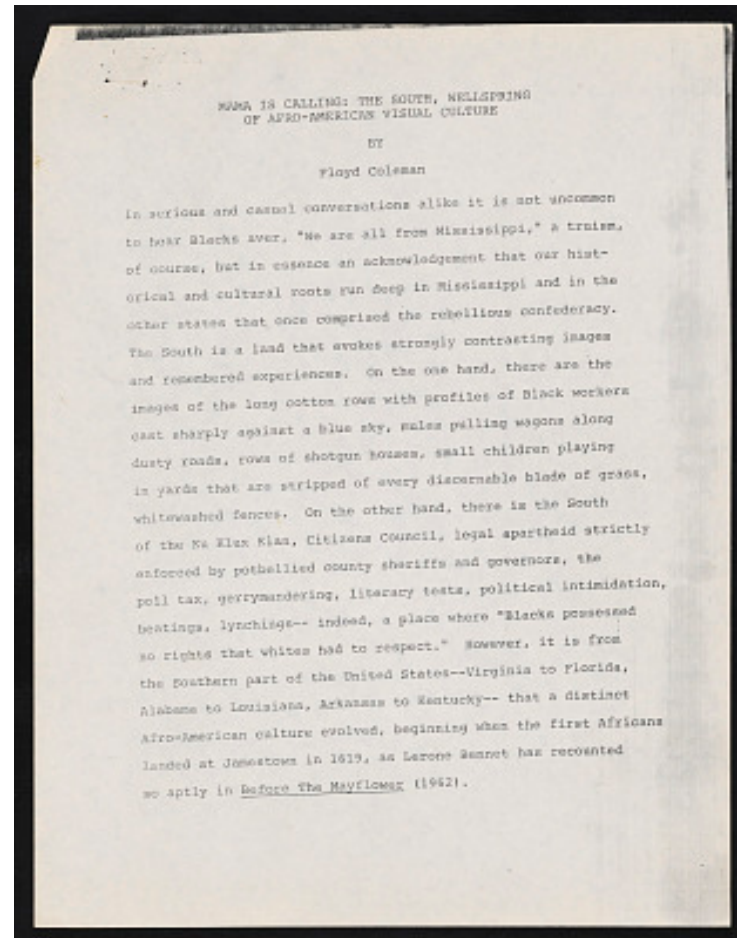
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MAMA IS CALLING: THE SOUTH, WELLSPRING OF AFRO-
AMERICAN VISUAL CULTURE
BY
Floyd Coleman

In serious and casual conversations alike it is not uncommon to hear Blacks aver, "We are all from Mississippi," a truism, of course, but in essence an acknowledgement that our historical and cultural roots run deep in Mississippi and in the other states that once comprised the rebellious confederacy. The South is a land that evokes strongly contrasting images and remembered experiences. On the one hand, there are the images of the long cotton rows with profiles of Black workers cast sharply against a blue sky, mules pulling wagons along dusty roads, rows of shotgun houses, small children playing in yards that are stripped of every discernable blade of grass, whitewashed fences. On the other hand, there is the South of the Ku Klux Klan, Citizens Council, legal apartheid strictly enforced by potbellied county sheriffs and governors, the poll tax, gerrymandering, literacy tests, political intimidation, beatings, lynchings-- indeed, a place where "Blacks possessed no rights that whites had to respect." However, it is from the Southern part of the United States-- Virginia to Florida, Alabama to Louisiana, Arkansas to Kentucky-- that a distinct Afro-American culture evolved, beginning when the first Africans landed at Jamestown in 1619, as Lerone Bennet has recounted so aptly in *Before The Mayflower* (1962).



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