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

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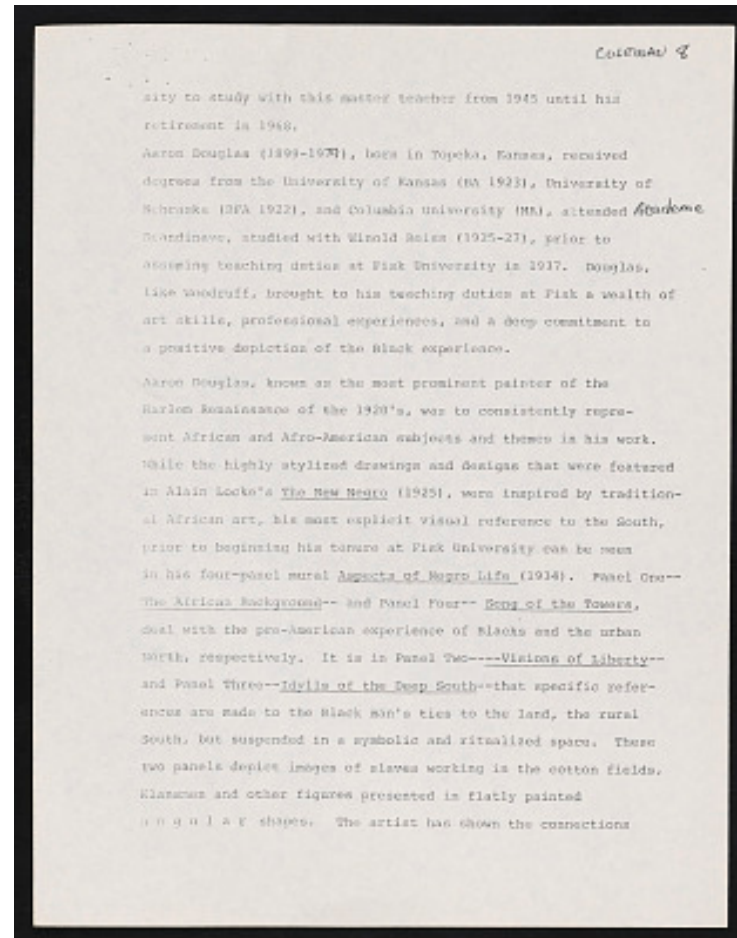
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to study with this master teacher from 1945 until his retirement in 1968. Aaron Douglas (1899-1979), born in Topeka, Kansas, received degrees from the University of Kansas (BA 1923), University of Nebraska (BFA 1922), and Columbia University (MA), attended Academe Scandinave, studied with Winold Reiss (1925-27), prior to assuming teaching duties at Fisk University in 1937. Douglas, like Woodruff, brought to his teaching duties at Fisk a wealth of art skills, professional experiences, and a deep commitment to a positive depiction of the Black experience.

Aaron Douglas, known as the most prominent painter of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's, was to consistently represent African and Afro-American subjects and themes in his work. While the highly stylized drawings and designs that were featured in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925), were inspired by traditional African art, his most explicit visual reference to the South, prior to beginning his tenure at Fisk University can be seen in his four-panel mural *Aspects of Negro Life* (1934). Panel One-- *The African Background*-- and Panel Four-- *Song of the Towers*, deal with the pre-American experience of Blacks and the urban North, respectively. It is in Panel Two--*Visions of Liberty*-- and Panel Three--*Idylls of the Deep South*--that specific references are made to the Black man's ties to the land, the rural South, but suspended in a symbolic and ritualized space. These two panels depict images of slaves working in the cotton fields, Klansmen and other figures presented in flatly painted angular shapes. The artist has shown the connections



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