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Access Amplified

Saving and Sharing a 1968 Detroit Audio Collection

ABSTRACT This article focuses on a 1968 documentary radio series titled *Seeds of Discontent* and a recently established archival collection that centers on it. Created by Hartford Smith Jr., a Black social worker and professor in Detroit, and distributed by the National Educational Radio Network, *Seeds of Discontent* started with his concern over mass media's coverage of riots and the social problems that caused them. Through interviews with college student activists, families living in poverty, teachers frustrated by the failings of the education system, middle-class workers, incarcerated youth, and many others, Smith used the series to explore the roots of social problems facing the United States, with frequent attention to the challenges and experiences of Black people living in Detroit, as well as possible solutions. By speaking to the people affected by social problems instead of the experts usually consulted in mass media, Smith's ethos of access emphasizes the idea that the distance between media organizations and media professionals and the public whose circumstances and histories are being mediated is limiting, exacerbating the impact of the already-sown seeds of discontent at the core of societal structural issues. More than 50 years later, this commitment to access continued as Smith requested that the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research (WCFTR) make his collection broadly accessible. This article outlines Smith's approach in *Seeds of Discontent* and the story of the collection as a case study on the possibilities and challenges of access in contemporary archives. **KEYWORDS** radio, archives, race, access

INTRODUCTION

In the final episode of *Seeds of Discontent*, Hartford Smith Jr. narrates thematic findings from across the interviews he conducted in the preceding 25 episodes of the program. The series aired in 1968 on WDET in Detroit, Michigan, in a period when the city saw extensive signs of societal unrest. During the summer of 1967 in particular, some of the largest race-related uprisings in the history of the nation¹ took place in the Midwestern city, then one of the largest cities in the country.² Commonly agreed-upon factors that contributed to the uprisings included economic strife, since the previously booming local automobile industry was moving out of the city center and taking thousands of jobs to other areas, as well as social tensions related to the “white flight” that followed the significant influx of African Americans who relocated to the area from the South over the preceding decades (starting around 1910 and continuing over the next several decades).³ In summarizing the radio series that Smith produced in this context, he emphasizes the interconnectedness of different facets of society, and how the seeds of discontent in one given subcommunity have an impact on the experiences of other demographic groups.

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The interlocking causes of societal discontent, according to Smith, underscore how similar human needs are across difference: he cites “alienation, meaningless existence, economic deprivation and unemployment, racism, large population shifts and social upheaval, impersonality and indifference, injustice” as the results of a “civilization bent on material progress and expansion without due reverence to the human element involved.”⁴ After listing these manifestations, he explains the corresponding human needs he identified as increasingly denied to the people of Detroit through his interviews: “acceptance, respect, security, dignity, shelter, and food.” Smith’s emphasis on narrativizing the totality of societal discontent across a range of groups, as opposed to articulating findings of a more granular research analysis, underscores his prioritization of accessibility to insights for many different groups; as Smith explains in the final episode, the project of addressing the identified seeds of societal discontent is urgent and demands attention for the improvement of circumstances for the collective population of the nation, not just the most vulnerable demographic groups. Part of the work of the radio program, then, was similar to national, legacy media in the sense that it sought to highlight the urgency of the social, political, and racial troubles of the time. However, it importantly presented an alternative method of framing contemporary challenges: with the program, Smith suggested possible solutions to address the sources of tension as identified by the people experiencing the most strife and discontent across a range of demographic groups, including delinquent youth, families living in poverty, frustrated educators, and Black community organizers—all in an accessible, public-facing format.

The initial idea for the radio program began as Smith witnessed firsthand a disconnect between social problems he saw unfolding in Detroit, where he served local communities as a social worker and professor, and mass media’s coverage of those same problems. As mass media told the stories of widespread social unrest, he was concerned about the lack of consideration given to the basis of the unrest. In national coverage of protests and riots in cities across the country, Smith saw media outlets focusing more on images of the disruption and violence than the root causes, the foundational issues that precipitated discord in communities that the outlets otherwise largely ignored. As a direct result of his career as a social worker and educator, which allowed him the chance to connect directly with some of the people who were most maligned in national coverage of disruptions in the area, Smith understood that the challenges facing youth in Detroit related to housing, employment, education, and policing were all factors that resulted in some of the outward manifestations of violence and unrest. He also recognized that, since the contributing factors exacerbating delinquent behavior were intertwined with fundamental societal needs, illuminating and explaining them had the potential to foster a greater sense of understanding and possibly connection across different groups. In talking with colleagues and friends about his perspectives and concerns, one of them recommended he produce a radio series to share his views more broadly.

Fifty-three years after its initial broadcast, *Seeds of Discontent* was publicly shared again in 2021 via RSS and online streaming as part of Unlocking the Airwaves (unlockingtheairwaves.org). A National Endowment for the Humanities–funded initiative, Unlocking the Airwaves sought to reunify the paper and audio collections of the

National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) and reactivate them in new ways. Decades earlier, the NAEB's papers and audio had been split into separate collections at the Wisconsin Historical Society and the University of Maryland, respectively. Unlocking the Airwaves made both the papers and audio available in an online environment that allows users to access hundreds of educational radio series (primarily from the 1950s through the 1970s) and contextual documents that illuminate their production and circulation, as well as the institutions involved in those processes, from local radio stations to the NAEB itself.

The Unlocking the Airwaves website contains features and resources designed for a wide range of users. The site has been productively utilized by broadcasting historians who have located primary sources for their research and tools for their teaching, such as the timeline of public broadcasting history and geospatial visualization of NAEB affiliated organizations. However, the website is equally valuable for domain specialists outside of media studies, with programs chronicling the Cold War, the environmental movement, and adult education initiatives (such as music and art appreciation). To provide entry points for these different groups of users—many or most of whom may not be familiar with the NAEB—Unlocking the Airwaves contains over a dozen exhibits curated by humanities scholars on topics such as children's media, poetry programming, and women's history in the NAEB collections. Additionally, the audio series are all available to freely download via RSS feeds, enabling users to listen to the 1967 NAEB series *Dwight MacDonald on Film* within the same app they use to listen to contemporary podcasts about movies and culture.

One of the Unlocking the Airwaves exhibits focused on “Programs for the Disadvantaged”—a group of radio series categorized by the NAEB in the late 1960s that included *Seeds of Discontent*. After finding and reading an early version of the exhibit, the Smith family contacted the project team. For decades, Hartford Smith Jr. kept audio tapes from *Seeds of Discontent*, including full episodes and interview recordings, and papers related to its production. Professor Smith ultimately decided to donate his personal collection, related to both his social work career and the *Seeds of Discontent* radio program, to an archive. In donating an archival collection to the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research (WCFTR) in 2021, Smith and his family were specific about why they wanted to hand the materials over to an archive: they wanted to further expand access to the findings of the program, which, over 50 years later, continue to be worth examining in the contemporary sociocultural landscape.

The prioritization of access became particularly evident when Smith requested changes to the WCFTR's standard deed of gift template. Traditionally, the language states that the collection's materials will be “available to scholars” who are in “pursuit of an active program of research.” It was important to Smith that the document be amended to reflect the original ethos of his program; that is, toward expanding interaction and collaboration between media and the ordinary folks who comprise the public. This ethos of access emphasizes the idea that the distance between media and media professionals and the public whose circumstances and histories are being mediated is limiting and exacerbates the impact of the already-sown seeds of discontent at the core of societal structural issues.

In collaboration with Smith, the WCFTR revised the deed to include more expansive language, making it clear that access should extend beyond the scholarly community and encompass “any member of the public interested in the historical events and issues covered in the series.” The revised deed also granted the WCFTR the “non-exclusive rights in perpetuity to freely share digitized versions of the above-mentioned materials online,” enabling the open-access digitization and curation work that we report on in this article.

The problems of access in media that concerned Smith in the 1960s persist, and the challenges of making archives accessible to the many communities that could use their collections also continue today. Just as *Seeds of Discontent* grew from Smith’s goal of providing the public with access to points of view typically obscured or denied by mainstream news, his donation of the collection was contingent upon a commitment to access beyond assumed scholarly users. WCFTR’s Hartford Smith Jr. collection offers a case study on the possibilities and challenges of access in contemporary archives. From collaborating with the Smith family on establishing the collection to later digitizing and curating the materials for greater access, the work of WCFTR and other colleagues on this collection show the importance and utility of considering media creators’ goals, not only in donating their work to film and media archives but also in creating their work in the first place. In this case, Smith’s priorities for the series, evident in the ethos of access throughout the original creation and distribution of *Seeds of Discontent*, helped motivate the sharing of the collection for broader use again, decades later.

AUDIO HISTORIES, ARCHIVES, AND ACCESS

Seeds of Discontent and Smith’s archival collection suggest questions about sound media, its changing formats, and the process and importance of preserving and creating access to the materials. As sound studies has developed as a field in its own right, there has been increased recognition of sound as a potentially generative method of thinking through familiar questions around “subjectivity, rationality, and governance.”⁵ The Hartford Smith Jr. collection and the radio series, specifically, exemplify a site of study that opens pathways to reconsidering notions of subjectivity and governance during a particular time in a particular place. A key motivation Smith cites for creating the series—serious concern with the disconnect between media coverage of turmoil in Detroit and the accounts of those living and working in Detroit—is tended to through the utilization of orally conveyed first-person descriptions of reasons for discontent and discord in the city during the 1960s. The auditory conveyance of these accounts offers affective insights about the situation in Detroit in this period that would not be evident in written accounts, underscoring sound media’s ability to facilitate new approaches to historical analysis.

In digitizing the radio series and making it freshly available to contemporary audiences through an online archive with contextual materials, opportunities for reflection about the possibilities and limitations of the digital turn in sound-based media present themselves. Scholars such as Tanya Clement have considered the limitations of conventional digital humanities approaches to sound, like linking transcripts with audio items. She

writes, “It is also our inability to conceive of and to express what we want to do with sound—what Jerome McGann (2001) calls ‘imagining what you don’t know’—that precludes us from leveraging existing computational resources and profoundly inhibits DH technical and theoretical development in sound studies.”⁶ We hope that such challenges lead researchers to explore the opportunities offered by recordings like Smith’s, which feature complex audio environments beyond just the speech present in the documentary recordings. In the preface to their recent edited collection *Digital Sound Studies*, Mary Caton Lingold, Darren Mueller, and Whitney Trettien also ponder the opportunities of digital sound, articulating their belief that digital sound studies as a field ultimately creates “possibility for new kinds of understanding that can do justice to forms of sonic knowledge: the ancient, the fledgling, the yet-to-be imagined.”⁷ One possibility the editors highlight is that digital access to materials results in increased spreadability of digitized copies of recordings than is immediately available with analog counterparts; this potential spread is multiplied when digital sound is uploaded to an internet repository, particularly if said repository is stable and widely accessible.⁸ The Smith collection’s online availability provides this spreadability that is not possible with analog copies, increasing the opportunity for a broader audience to learn of and explore *Seeds of Discontent* and Smith’s other work, especially through the materials that extend beyond the series itself.

Broadcasting historians and archivists have highlighted the importance of digitizing both sound materials and accompanying papers that document the production and circulation of radio series, while emphasizing the need to prioritize underrepresented histories. In their study of radio dramas and a major paper archive from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Greg M. Nielsen and Mircea Mandache argue for broadcasting media’s status as “a fundamental component of culture” that communicates “heritage values, beliefs and identities,” with digitization offering a form of preservation as well as new ways of researching and understanding the materials.⁹ Shawn VanCour’s analysis of the Radio Preservation Task Force foregrounds the value of researching and archiving local and noncommercial radio, and, in explaining the National Recording Preservation Board’s preservation plan, he describes the centrality of paper documents to understanding radio history.¹⁰ He writes, “While the oft-cited wisdom that objects are meaningless without metadata is an accepted truism, objects without contextualizing documents are equally meaningless, and archivists have too often underestimated the importance of paper records that circulate around media objects.”¹¹ In keeping with the lessons from these case studies and analyses, the WCFTR has preserved and shared Smith’s papers alongside the audio in his collection, offering researchers the chance to make connections from Smith’s notes, scripts, and other documents.

Additionally, while the archive serves as a repository for the polished, edited versions of the program, it also contains several unedited recordings of Smith’s full conversations and interviews from the production of the radio program. Like the papers, this audio also serves as a way to contextualize the final episodes. Through comparison and analysis of the broadcast episodes and the unedited recordings, users can access new insights: about the process of creating a cohesive narrative from in-person conversations that feature

complex and sometimes contradictory perspectives, which details seemed most salient to Smith, which conversations unfolded in ways that seem to go beyond the planned questions, which lines of questioning fostered excitable and enthusiastic conversations compared with those that elicited long pauses and careful phrasing. Indeed, the process of discovery modeled through the interviews included in the collection can be replicated in comparing the different versions. Such comparisons can reveal additional information about the subjects of the interviews but also about Smith himself, reinforcing the need to maintain contextualizing materials in the archiving process, not just to preserve the finished products.

HARTFORD SMITH JR. AND *SEEDS OF DISCONTENT*

The background, format, and style of *Seeds of Discontent* help illuminate the collection's importance as a rare example of 1960s broadcast media produced by a Black creator, who used an approach that contrasted with most educational radio, and details from Smith's biography demonstrate how his educational and professional experiences connected him with the communities and problems that would later become the focus of the radio series. According to resumes and personal profiles in the WCFTR collection, he was born in Fayette, Alabama, in 1937, where he graduated from Fayette County Training School in 1955.¹² He took classes at Morehouse College in Atlanta for one year before moving to Detroit in 1956 and enrolling at Wayne State University. After graduating with a master's degree in social work in 1965, he worked with institutions including the Wayne County Juvenile Court's Youth Home and the Jewish Community Center. His social-work experience continued to deal with challenges facing youth in Detroit, particularly in the development of a program called the Screening and Intake Unit. This project helped coordinate staff in addressing problems between the county's juvenile court and the state's social services in offering support to delinquent youth. Beginning in 1967, he also taught part time in Wayne State's School of Social Work.

After growing up in the South and starting his career as a social worker and educator in Detroit, Smith became concerned with mass media's coverage of social problems in the United States.¹³ He was particularly troubled by coverage of riots in American cities that did not address foundational issues like policing, housing, employment, and education that affected people's lives and led to unrest:

Living in Detroit, we were going through what was considered to be one of the most violent civil eruptions in the country at that time. Because of the position that I held as a worker in the state childcare area, dealing with kids who were part of the conflict who were neglected or abused, I became very aware and concerned about the competency of American media, in terms of really getting at the root causes of what was going on. The news characterization of the people involved was out of touch with reality. There were considerable stereotypes. And I had the fortune of being at the juvenile court, where many of the kids who were involved in various acts and the riots, their behavior, their attitude, their feelings, the condition that they were facing, did not match the description that the media was portraying.¹⁴

Concerned by American media's stereotypes about the people he came into contact with, particularly those most directly connected with ongoing civil unrest in Detroit, Smith expressed frustration with the disconnect between news and lived reality. Smith described being part of a group of writers and artists who were having informal gatherings and dialogues about these issues outside of the context of academia, during which he was encouraged to formalize his perspective and concerns in a more public forum. One of the members of this group, David Lewis, had connections with Wayne State's radio station WDET, and recommended that Smith write up a proposal to produce a radio series in order to share his views more widely. Lewis helped Smith successfully pitch the series *Seeds of Discontent* to the station's director, who enthusiastically supported the concept, saying that he "felt it would be great material to promote further discussion, and to make a contribution to really dealing with the situation in Detroit."¹⁵ In the evenings, Smith worked on the series without pay and produced 26 episodes, which were broadcast by WDET. It also aired throughout the United States on the National Educational Radio Network, an early distribution model overseen by the NAEB, which is the reason the series became available online through Unlocking the Airwaves.

Smith believed you could not understand a problem without speaking to the people suffering from it, and this idea helped determine his structure for the series. The episodes balanced his commentary as a professional social worker with giving a platform to underrepresented voices, a key part of the ethos of access that appears in Smith's ideas for the series and his vision for the archival collection that eventually grew from it. Smith's commentary from the beginning of the first episode outlines his goals and concept for the series. He states:

As the title indicates, the concern and purpose of this weekly series will be to look at, examine, and analyze the current wave of discontent being expressed throughout the many urban areas of our country. We intend to talk with and listen to those involved in today's social problems, conflicts, and crises. This will include both the participant, the ordinary observer, and the trained observer, the spokesman and the follower.¹⁶

In keeping with this introduction, the series involves a wide range of interviewees, emphasizing perspectives usually left out of mass media, particularly youth and Black people from various economic and professional backgrounds.

Beyond the general overview of his concept for the series, Smith also previews the planned three parts of *Seeds of Discontent* in the first episode. He describes part one as dealing "with the question of causation and identification of stress forces" through "the voices of the rebel."¹⁷ Smith explains that term in this context, saying "By 'rebel,' I mean individuals who have some gripe with the present order of things, and who as individuals or groups try to do something about it, in either constructive or destructive ways." The planned second part of the series would explore "what is being done and what is not in the way of governmental, private, and self-help programs," while the third and final section would "deal with the pulling together of these varied opinions, attitudes, feelings, and proposals into some working statements and principles, which we hope will lead to social changes that will allow for greater creativity, human growth, and dignity." The

series addresses each of the topics and perspectives planned for the three sections, yet *Seeds of Discontent* ultimately focused heavily on “the voices of the rebel,” the intended first section, in the interview subjects and topics across the episodes. Throughout the series Smith and his interviewees sometimes mention official programs that seek to address social problems, but only a couple episodes at the end highlight these programs specifically, and the final episode pulls the findings together.

Closer consideration of some episodes focusing on “individuals who have some gripe with the present order of things” demonstrates how Smith tackled the question of “discontent” as a phenomenon in contemporary American society, by selecting individuals and groups who experienced problems that led them to push for changes in policies and entire systems. These episodes feature a wide range of subjects. Smith interviews college student activists, families living in poverty, teachers frustrated by the failings of the education system, Black middle-class workers, Black entertainers, and incarcerated youth who have been labeled delinquent by social systems. His commentary frames each episode at the introduction and conclusion, and he offers brief context and summary at various points in most episodes, but the series predominantly consists of interviews with people in Detroit, which were mostly recorded in lived-in environments instead of professional studios—a mode of production that connects with Smith’s dedication to access.

As a result of recording in such environments, *Seeds of Discontent* documents soundscapes that would be impossible to replicate in a studio, offering a type of historical record beyond just the interviews themselves, and the choice to record in these spaces also underlines Smith’s dedication to providing access to voices usually left out of mass media, as he meets his interview subjects where they live and work. In addition to the greater number of “voices of the rebel” episodes in the series, compared to the planned sections on official programs and pulling together the findings, these episodes also represent the thrust of Smith’s project. For *Seeds of Discontent*, Smith was motivated by examining situations and experiences for which reality did not fit the media’s portrayal, and he went directly to the source in his decision to speak with people who actually experienced problems and were often stereotyped in mass media, rather than relying on commentators and journalists.

Episode 18, which focuses on Black-led advocacy organizations, provides an example of the types of interviews and soundscapes that Smith captured in his efforts to represent the people of Detroit from their point of view, rather than the in-studio experts typically featured in mass media. In this episode, Smith interviews Rennie Freeman, director of the West Central Organization, which helped inner-city Detroit residents organize. Early in the episode, Smith states, “We will open the program with his point of view about the July riots, its causes and consequences,” in a clean recording of his measured speech, presumably from the WDET studio.¹⁸ The episode then cuts to a different soundscape with ambient noise, where Smith begins his interview with Freeman. As the men speak, we hear music in the background, doors opening and closing, and other sounds like the thuds of items dropping. Such sonic environments appear throughout the series, as Smith interviews people in their homes, offices, schools, and other spaces around Detroit, providing the core material for his analysis: “They provided me with the tape recorder,

and I took it from there. I knew that there were discussions in barbershops where important points were being made, and I had access to those groups.”¹⁹ Through engagement with the combination of Smith’s contextualization and the episodes themselves, it becomes apparent that Smith recognized the relevance of place in eliciting responses to his interview questions that were grounded in the communities he sought to center; through integrating interviews in lived-in environments that his subjects knew well, affective insights related to their positionalities and points of view are also more directly presented to listeners in each episode.

The three episodes of *Seeds of Discontent* that explore the subculture of poverty also illustrate the effects of Smith’s approach, in both his philosophy and aesthetic choices. For these episodes, Smith interviewed families around Detroit, including African American families and white families who had moved to Michigan from the South. He introduces this subset of the series with a discussion of poverty as a systemic issue that is not based on individual choices, then explains that interviews will address how people living in poverty are meeting their basic needs. This framing bolsters the goal of uncovering larger systemic issues through their effects on individual experiences, without blaming the ordinary people who live under these systems. Recorded in various apartment buildings and houses, the episodes about poverty showcase the effects of Smith’s documentary recording style, like the interview with Rennie Freeman. In episode 3 of *Seeds of Discontent* (the first to focus on poverty), a man explains the problem of a rat infestation in his family’s apartment building and the unwillingness of their landlord to help with this problem, while his young child speaks quietly in the background. Other interviews in this episode and throughout the program feature ambient noise in the environment, from commercials playing on televisions to conversations taking place in the same room, highlighting Smith’s documentary approach that captured soundscapes that would be lost with studio recording.

This documentary format of the series also contrasted with the historically typical style of mass media overall and educational radio specifically, in addition to the content intentionally highlighting underrepresented voices. As a series distributed by the National Educational Radio Network, *Seeds of Discontent* offered an atypical example of audio recorded outside of a studio and capturing interview subjects where they lived and worked. While the genre contained some variety, educational radio tended to prioritize lectures and in-studio interviews with experts throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, with narrative series sometimes experimenting with aesthetic strategies more than other categories. The less controlled style of documentary recording demonstrated in this series, which grew from Smith’s dedication to interviewing people directly experiencing the problems usually only described by experts in a studio environment, illustrated that alternate formats were possible in nonfiction projects, if still uncommon.

Throughout the series, Smith explicates the interwoven nature of manifestations of societal and political discontent across different social groups. As previously noted, the series frequently centers the “voices of the rebel”—a category that, for Smith, sometimes includes people who are typically constructed in legacy media as productive members of society without connections to the unrest in the United States. This allows Smith to find

examples of discontented groups even within official systems. In the twenty-second episode of the series, Smith spoke with public school teachers about their frustration with public education. Through the conversations, it comes to light that there are shared frustrations across aspirational groups and social groups that were more commonly denigrated in legacy media; furthermore, the conversations reveal that the youths who are maligned as delinquent by mainstream media outlets are underserved in systemic ways by those responsible for their education.

Smith makes these connections across social groups through the interviews in the series, as well as in the final episode that pulls together the various findings of the program, and he had initially hoped to expand the project—an idea revealed through the archival collection that was donated to the WCFTR. Beyond the content of the series, which counters hegemonic media's neglect of ordinary people, from delinquent youth to educators, Smith's documents and other audio offer further evidence of his perspective on social problems in the United States and how to overcome them. The archival collection contextualizes *Seeds of Discontent* through its production as well as Smith's teaching and social work career, and it reinforces the ethos of access that underpins the series through the content of the materials and Smith's goals for the collection.

ESTABLISHING AND CREATING ACCESS TO WCFTR'S SMITH COLLECTION

Before the collection of Smith's tapes and papers was donated to the WCFTR, *Seeds of Discontent* was available through Unlocking the Airwaves, the project created to reunify the NAEB's papers and audio, and this availability ultimately led to the establishment of Smith's separate archival collection. In the fall of 2020, the Unlocking the Airwaves website was in "soft launch" or beta mode, as the project team tested various aspects of its functionality and conducted feedback sessions with select users. The site's visibility was not publicized, yet Hartford Smith Jr.'s daughter, Chana Smith, happened upon it while conducting an online search about her father, in an example of the discoverability that the Unlocking the Airwaves team hoped the website would generate. One particularly resonant fact at this time was that Ms. Smith had been informed by Wayne State University that the WDET archives (including their audio collections) had been destroyed in a fire. Thus, she was particularly excited to discover that *Seeds of Discontent* had been digitized and was available in streaming form on the Airwaves website, as it was likely the only extant version of the series in good condition. She contacted the Airwaves project team and informed them that her father was still alive in Detroit, and was still a tireless advocate for social justice.

When Chana Smith put her father in touch with the team to conduct an interview about the genesis of the show, he revealed that he had retained all the original, uncut quarter-inch reel to reel audio tapes in his basement for the past 40 years. The team then worked with Smith to coordinate the terms of his willingness to donate the materials to the WCFTR and to draw up a deed of gift. By July 2021, the deed was finalized and signed, and Airwaves Project Director Stephanie Sapienza flew to Detroit to gather, organize, and inventory the collection before delivering it to Wisconsin. She spent two

days with the Smith family, unearthing the materials and working with Smith to create an inventory and make some temporary access scans of select folders he wanted copies of before the materials left his home. She then drove the boxes of audio tapes and paper materials to Wisconsin, where they were accessioned and eventually digitized and transcribed.

The audio in the collection comprises 61 quarter-inch tapes and two CDs, including the 26 episodes (with some duplicates) of *Seeds of Discontent*, raw interviews used for the series, and a few recordings related to Smith's career and personal interests. These other recordings contain music—specifically, copies of popular albums and recordings from the jazz station WJZZ in Detroit—and professional workshops for social workers in Michigan addressing the common challenges they face at work, with role-playing sessions followed by feedback and discussion. While 25 episodes of *Seeds of Discontent* were available through the launch of the Unlocking the Airwaves project, the first episode was missing from the University of Maryland's collection, making the recording of the first episode donated by Smith the only known copy. In describing the goals and plans for the series in this episode, he outlines a broad strategy for exploring the complex questions about inequalities and their effects before spending most of the episode on his first interview. This interview, with a group of delinquent boys at a juvenile detention center, focuses on problems like employment and policing that come up throughout the series, and the attention to a group of people typically unable to share their perspectives with a broad audience, incarcerated youth, helps establish the ethos of the series. The raw interviews for *Seeds of Discontent* were also unavailable before the donation of the collection, and they provide users with more context for the interviews heard in the final episodes.

These unedited interviews function as contextual documentation, like the papers about the series, as they provide additional information about many of the episodes, with conversations or explanations that did not make the final edits. One of the consistent elements that only appears in the raw interviews is Smith opening up a dialogue with his interview subjects. In these initial comments, he often frames the conversation, pointing out the importance of his interviewees' perspectives for understanding the complex social issues at the center of the project. For example, at the beginning of the interview recording with the delinquent boys from the first episode, Smith says:

With me today are six young men who have been in difficulty of one sort or another. These young men were picked because they do have verbal abilities. Aside from that, one particular reason they were not picked is because they were worse or anything different from any other youngster outside today. These youngsters have been into difficulty and we feel it is most important to hear their point of view, to hear what they feel about recent disturbances in our country.²⁰

Like the introductory comments in almost all of the unedited interviews, this audio is missing from the final episode, but it offers a sense of how Smith started the conversation with his interview subjects and highlighted the value of hearing about their experiences. In this case, he also underscores that the behavior and choices of the individuals do not

make them “worse” than others, describing the boys as “young men who have been in difficulty.” Such moments, which are replaced by studio-recorded introductions in the final episodes, show Smith’s care in approaching the interview subjects for *Seeds of Discontent*, giving a different perspective on his production process that is not available in the broadcast versions of the interviews.

In addition to the audio, the collection features 18 folders of papers and photographs. The majority involve the radio series or other media projects planned by Smith and his collaborators, with a few related to his teaching career and news publications focused on Black history and current events in the United States, like the *New York Times* 1619 Project. The papers provide context for *Seeds of Discontent*, with various drafts of proposals for the radio series and a planned television series that would continue exploring some of the foundational ideas for the project. These proposals focus most heavily on the problem that mass media does not consult with or feature the groups that it often describes and profiles in times of unrest, specifically minority communities, and they reveal that Smith hoped to continue responding to that idea with media productions of his own after the completion of the radio series. Researchers can also trace the influence of this framework on Smith’s teaching career, through documents like syllabi and assignments. While the papers predominantly deal with *Seeds of Discontent* and potential subsequent media projects, they also have traces of other parts of Smith’s professional life that reinforce the perspective conveyed by the series.

In keeping with Hartford Smith Jr.’s goal of increasing access to the collection beyond the scholarly community that is typically stated in a deed of gift, WCFTR digitized and published the audio and paper materials related to *Seeds of Discontent* and Smith’s career. The majority of the collection was created with public broadcast in mind, particularly the interviews recorded for the series and its completed episodes, but a small number of items in the collection were not digitized because of privacy concerns or copyright, like music recordings for which the archive does not hold the copyright. Similarly, two folders with news publications and materials from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities could not be digitized because of copyright, and two other short folders were not digitized because they contained student work from Smith’s teaching career. The remaining 14 folders of paper materials make up the bulk of the collection, with the documents related to *Seeds of Discontent* and some from Smith’s teaching career, and they were all scanned. The digitized audio and papers were posted to the WCFTR’s Internet Archive page.

While uploading the digitized materials to the Internet Archive provides one way for the public to read and listen to the collection, the WCFTR wanted to provide resources with some of the context and connections that motivated Smith’s creation of the series, with the goal of offering multiple points of access to the material. To help users understand the specific conditions around *Seeds of Discontent*, WCFTR project assistants created an Omeka website with exhibits highlighting the social, cultural, and institutional contexts (wcftr.commarts.wisc.edu/seeds/). An exhibit on Detroit during the 1960s highlights the problems that produced the social unrest confronted by Smith throughout the series, and one focusing on media created by African Americans in the United States stresses the legacy of and connections with Black public television. Another exhibit

outlines the educational broadcasting system that allowed the series to reach listeners around the United States, as well as the differences in format, style, and content that make the series stand out in educational radio. As *Seeds of Discontent* addresses complex and ongoing problems, not only in Detroit but in the United States more broadly, one resource can only begin to introduce the topics raised by the interviews and Smith's commentary, but the Omeka website provides a starting point for users who may be interested in further pursuing research about the vital moment in history uncovered by the series.

CONCLUSION

The Hartford Smith Jr. collection provided WCFTR with an opportunity to consider how best to offer access in ways that align with the goals and priorities of donors, bringing into question the assumptions posed by standard documents like a deed of gift. Scholars will utilize the collection for its evidence about African American life, documentary radio, social work, and a host of other topics, but the value of such materials for communities outside of academia must be considered. Working with the Smith family emphasized the continuities between the ethos of access evident in the original radio series and its recently digitized iteration: as an archival institution aimed to preserve the materials produced by an independent media creator, it also worked to provide them to a broader audience, in accordance with the mission of their creator. Even as technological tools have made it easier to digitize materials and publish them online, reaching audiences beyond those traditionally served by archives remains a challenge, but creating multiple ways of accessing and contextualizing collections is a key step. As inequality, racism, police brutality, and other pressing issues from the 1960s raised in *Seeds of Discontent* continue to face Detroit and other cities across the United States, archives should center the dedication to access modeled by Hartford Smith Jr. and others who seek to understand and rectify injustices through their media production and distribution. ■

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