

“Our Founder”

On October 26 and 27, 2023, the Frederick Douglass Papers convened an international symposium of scholars to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the project’s founding at Yale University. On the afternoon of the second day, a plenary session was held to reminisce about the project’s founder, John Wesley Blassingame (1939–2000). The three principal speakers were Lawrence N. Powell, John R. Kaufman-McKivigan, and Peter P. Hinks, all colleagues of Blassingame on the Douglass Papers at various times in its years at Yale University (1973–1994). The following are excerpts from the addresses of the three scholars remembering fondly their acquaintance with Blassingame and praising his pioneering contributions to African American history.