



WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Walter P. Reuther Library

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Walter P. Reuther Library

5401 Cass Avenue

Detroit, MI 48202

URL: <https://reuther.wayne.edu>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Walter P. Reuther Library
Creator:	Rattner, Bonnie Lee Moss
Title:	Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers
ID:	UP001725
Date [inclusive]:	1961-1997
Physical Description:	6.5 Linear Feet (5 SB, 1 OS)
Language of the Material:	English
Language of the Material:	Materials entirely in English.
Abstract:	Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner wrote a stage adaptation of Zora Neale Hurston's novel, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> , as her master's thesis while earning a Master of Arts degree in English at Wayne State University. After obtaining the stage rights for the novel, the play "To Glean It Around, To Show My Shine" was first performed in 1983 at Wayne State's Hilberry Theater. Rattner worked as an advocate for African-American literature, particularly the work of Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes and Phillip Hayes Dean. Rattner's papers reflect her efforts as an advocate of African-American culture and provide insight into the process of writing and producing theatrical productions.

<h3>Citation Style</h3>

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History

Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner, born in 1940 in Detroit, earned a bachelor's degree in English education from Wayne State University in 1962 and then studied briefly at Paris's Sorbonne University and at the University of Michigan before beginning a career as a secondary school English teacher and mother. She returned to Wayne State University in 1965 to undertake graduate studies, which culminated with a Master of Arts degree in English in 1979.

In 1978, Rattner discovered Zora Neale Hurston's novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God," which she described as a life-changing experience. She decided to write an adaptation of the novel, which she initially titled "Eatonville," as her master's thesis project under the guidance of Wayne State University Professor L. Todd Duncan.

Rattner then spent several years in an effort to obtain the stage rights for the novel. Re-titled "To Glean It Around, To Show My Shine," the play was first performed for the public in 1983 at Wayne State University's Hilberry Theater.

Rattner devoted herself to convincing producers across the country to stage the play, which she referred to as her "second child," and she met with resounding success. "To Glean It Around, To Show My Shine" was staged in New York at the Richard Allen Center in 1985, at Harlem's Center for Cultural Research and at the Alliance Theater for the Atlanta New Play Project in 1986. Rattner's play received an award from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Fund for New American Plays in 1987, resulting in a 1988 production at the Crossroads Theater in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Along with "Their Eyes Were Watching God," Rattner obtained the rights to Hurston's "Of Mules and Men," which she adapted as "Light of Diamonds." A portion of that adaptation was performed in 1983 at Howard University by Ruby Dee.

Throughout her career as a writer, Rattner was deeply involved with seeing that worthy African-American literature obtained wider recognition. Rattner co-wrote an adaptation of Langston Hughes's "Not Without Laughter." She also became co-producer of "Asinamali," a musical that opened on Broadway in 1987, and she sought wider recognition for the work of Phillip Hayes Dean, whose plays "Robeson" and "Freedman" obtained international success. In the 1990s, Rattner and Duncan began working on a book about the life of former Michigan Supreme Court Justice Otis M. Smith, the state's first Black Supreme Court Justice. She also worked as a freelance writer, writing numerous articles for publications such as "The Michigan Alumnus," "Michigan Magazine" and "The Detroit News."

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Scope and Content

The Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Collection contains clippings, correspondence, articles, address lists, scripts and miscellaneous material pertaining primarily to Rattner's "To Glean It Around, To Show My Shine," a two-act play based on the novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God," by Zora Neale Hurston. Among the subjects covered in the collection are African-American literature, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, grant proposals, production rights, Wayne State University, playwriting and productions for the stage.

Important subjects in the collection: Adaptation of Previously Published Literature. African-American Literature. Stage Production. Copyright and Publishing Rights. Grant Writing. Music. Screenplays. Women's Literature.

Important correspondents in the collection: Phillip Hayes Dean. Ruby Dee. Robert Nederlander. Otis M. Smith.

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Arrangement of the Records

Files are arranged alphabetically by subject.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Acquisition

The papers of Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in 1998 by Ms. Rattner.

Processing History

Finding aid written by Walter P. Reuther Library in 2006.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Use

Refer to Walter P. Reuther Library Rules for Use of Archival Materials.

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Controlled Access Headings

- African Americans
- Women
- Theater

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
African-American literature; articles, 1978-1990	1	folder 1
Amelon, Debbie; articles, notes	1	folder 2
"Asinamali," 1987	1	folder 3
Black Prima Donnas concert, 1989	1	folder 4
Chennault, Steve; correspondence, 1981-1984	1	folder 5
Contracts, 1982-1984	1	folder 6
Correspondence, 1977-1981	1	folder 7
Correspondence, 1982	1	folder 8
Correspondence, 1983	1	Folders 9
Correspondence , 1983	1	Folders 10
Correspondence , 1984	1	Folders 11
Correspondence , 1984	1	Folders 12
Correspondence, 1985	1	folder 13
Correspondence, 1986	1	folder 14
Correspondence, 1987	1	folder 15
Correspondence, 1988	1	folder 16
Correspondence, 1989	1	folder 17
Correspondence, 1990	1	folder 18
Correspondence, 1991	1	folder 19
Correspondence, 1992	1	folder 20

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Correspondence, 1993	1	folder 21
Correspondence, 1994	1	folder 22
Correspondence, 1995	1	folder 23
Correspondence, 1996	1	folder 24
Correspondence, 1997	1	folder 25
Correspondence, 1998-1999	1	folder 26
Crossroads Academy, 1993-1995	1	folder 27
Crossroads Theatre production of "To Gleam," 1988	1	folder 28
Dean, Phillip Hayes, 1986-1988	1	folder 29
Dee, Ruby, 1982-1984	1	folder 30
"Eatonville"; M.A. thesis, 1977	1	folder 31
Engagement calendar, 1982	1	folder 32
Hilberry Theatre production of "To Gleam," 1983	2	folder 1
Hurston, Zora Neale; articles about, 1975-1997	2	folder 2
"Light of Diamonds"; scripts, set, songs , 1983-1984, 1997	2	Folders 3
"Light of Diamonds"; scripts, set, songs , 1983-1984, 1997	2	Folders 4
McGregor Memorial Conference Center; report, 1990	2	folder 5
Metro Detroit Youth Foundation, 1979-1985	2	folder 6
"Not Without Laughter," adaptation, 1982-1988	2	folder 7
"To Gleam It Around"; notes	2	folder 8
"To Gleam It Around"; problems of adaptation	2	folder 9
Guggenheim Fellowship, 1987	2	folder 10
Rattner, Bonnie Lee Moss; academic papers, 1961-1974	2	Folders 11
Rattner, Bonnie Lee Moss; academic papers, 1961-1974	2	Folders 12
Rattner, Bonnie Lee Moss; photographs	2	folder 13
Rattner, Bonnie Lee Moss; resumes, academic transcript	2	folder 14
Rattner, Bonnie Lee Moss; writings, 1979	2	folder 15
Smith, Otis; correspondence, magazine profile, notes, 1986-1996	2	folder 16
"Their Eyes Were Watching God"; playwright's notations	2	folder 17
"Their Eyes Were Watching God"; synopsis	2	folder 18
"Their Eyes Were Watching God" and Zora Neale Hurston; notes	2	folder 19
"To Gleam It Around"; edits, 1983	2	folder 20

"Eatonville" and "To Glean It Around"; scripts, 1977-1998	3
"To Glean It Around"; scripts, posters	4
