



WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Walter P. Reuther Library

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on December 09, 2020.

English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Walter P. Reuther Library

5401 Cass Avenue

Detroit, MI 48202

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

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Summary Information | 3 |
| History | 3 |
| Scope and Content | 4 |
| Arrangement of the Records | 5 |
| Administrative Information | 5 |
| Controlled Access Headings | 6 |
| Collection Inventory | 6 |

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: | 4.5 Linear Feet (3 SB, 1 OS) |
| Physical Location: | 2W-M-1(1), 4S-F-13(10) |
| 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. |

Citation Style

"Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers, Box [#], Folder [#], Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University"

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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."

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement of the Records

Files are arranged alphabetically by subject.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Walter P. Reuther Library

5401 Cass Avenue

Detroit, MI 48202

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

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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- African Americans
- Women
- Theater
- Wayne State University
- Hurston, Zora Neale, 1891-1960

Collection Inventory

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|--|-----------|------------|
| African-American literature; articles, 1978-1990 | 1 | folder 1 |
| Amelon, Debbie; articles, notes | 1 | folder 2 |
| "Asinamali": program, correspondence, various documents, 1986-1987 | 1 | folder 3 |
| Black Prima Donnas concert: program, documents , 1989 | 1 | folder 4 |
| Chennault, Steve; correspondence; paper by Rattner; various documents, 1981-1984 | 1 | folder 5 |
| Contracts, correspondence, 1982-1985 | 1 | folder 6 |
| Correspondence, 1977-1981 | 1 | folder 7 |
| Correspondence, 1982 | 1 | folder 8 |
| Correspondence, 1983 January-March | 1 | Folders 9 |
| Correspondence, producers and general, 1983 April-December | 1 | Folders 10 |
| Correspondence, documents re "To Gleam," "Light of Diamonds," 1984 January-June | 1 | Folders 11 |
| Correspondence, producers and general , 1984 July-December | 1 | Folders 12 |
| Correspondence, 1985 | 1 | folder 13 |
| Correspondence, 1986 | 1 | folder 14 |

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

| | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| Correspondence, 1987 | 1 | folder 15 |
| Correspondence, documents, 1988 | 1 | folder 16 |
| Correspondence, 1989 | 1 | folder 17 |
| Correspondence, 1990 | 1 | folder 18 |
| Correspondence, 1991 | 1 | folder 19 |
| Correspondence, 1992 | 1 | folder 20 |
| 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, correspondence, 1993-1995 | 1 | folder 27 |
| Crossroads Theatre Company, production of "To Gleam": programs, photo, correspondence, clippings, 1988 | 1 | folder 28 |
| Dean, Phillip Hayes, "Paul Robeson"; correspondence, scripts, 1986-1988 | 1 | folder 29 |
| Dee, Ruby; correspondence, various documents, 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": documents, photos, clippings, 1983 | 2 | folder 1 |
| Hurston, Zora Neale; articles, clippings, 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, Wayne State University; progress report by Rattner, 1990 | 2 | folder 5 |
| Metro Detroit Youth Foundation; personnel manual, various documents, 1979-1985 | 2 | folder 6 |
| "Not Without Laughter," adaptation; script, proposal, correspondence, 1982-1988 | 2 | folder 7 |
| "To Gleam It Around"; notes, undated and 1985 | 2 | folder 8 |
| "To Gleam It Around"; problems of adaptation, undated | 2 | folder 9 |
| Guggenheim Fellowship, application materials, 1986-1987 | 2 | folder 10 |
| Rattner, three academic papers, undated and 1989 | | |

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

| | | |
|---|---|------------------|
| | 2 | Folders 11 |
| Rattner, six academic papers, 1961-1974 | 2 | Folders 12 |
| Rattner, various personal photographs, most undated | 2 | folder 13 |
| Rattner, resumes, academic transcripts, wedding announcement, various dates | 2 | folder 14 |
| Rattner, various writings, 1966-1985 | 2 | folder 15 |
| Smith, Otis M.; correspondence, articles, clippings, notes, 1986-1996 | 2 | folder 16 |
| "Their Eyes Were Watching God"; playwright's notations, undated | 2 | folder 17 |
| "Their Eyes Were Watching God"; synopsis, undated | 2 | folder 18 |
| "Their Eyes Were Watching God," Zora Neale Hurston; notes, undated | 2 | folder 19 |
| "To Gleam It Around"; script edits, correspondence, 1983 | 2 | folder 20 |
| Script: possibly " Zora is my name," possibly 1983 | 3 | Folder 1 |
| Script: "Eatonville," 1977 | 3 | Folder 2-3 |
| Script: "Eatonville," with notations, 1981 | 3 | Folder 4-5 |
| Script: "Eatonville," bound volume, 1981; outline of scenes, 1996 | 3 | Folder 6 |
| Script: "Eatonville," 1982 | 3 | Folder 7 |
| Script: "To Gleam It Around," marked: "old copy, before revisions," 1982 | 3 | Folder 8 |
| Script: "To Gleam," marked: "Pre-Hilberry production-one of my work copies," bound volume, 1982 | 3 | Folder 9 |
| Script: "To Gleam," with cast list, sketches, notations, probably 1983 | 3 | Folder 10-11 |
| Script: "To Gleam," working script for Hilberry production, 1983 | 3 | Folder 12 |
| Script: "To Gleam," with re-writes after Hilberry production, bound volume, 1983 | 3 | Folder 13 |
| Script: "To Gleam," Negro Ensemble Company copy, 1983 | 3 | Folder 14 |
| Script: "To Gleam," Alliance edition, 1985 September | 3 | Folder 15 |
| Script: "To Gleam," Crossroads Theatre production, 1988 | 3 | Folder 16 |
| Script: "To Gleam," marked: "script that went into Crossroads rehearsals," 1988 September | 3 | Folder 17 |
| Script: "To Gleam," marked: "the most final version," 1988 | 3 | Folder 18 |
| Multiple oversize script and text pages, loose and stapled, with editing, undated | 4 | Oversized Item 1 |
| Scene sketch: "The Everglades," undated | | |

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

| | | |
|---|---|---------------------|
| | 4 | Oversized Item 2 |
| Scene sketch: "Eatonville 1920s," undated | 4 | Oversized Item 3 |
| Poster: "To Glean It Around," Hilberry Theatre, Wayne State University, oversize paper, 2 copies, probably 1983 | 4 | Oversized Item 4 |