



WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Walter P. Reuther Library

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on February 01, 2021.

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]:	1961-2015
Physical Description:	6 Linear Feet (4 SB, 1 OS)
Language of the Material:	Materials entirely in English.
Abstract:	Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner wrote a stage adaptation of Zora Neale Hurston's novel, "Their Eyes Were Watching God," 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. "To Glean" and other works by Rattner have been produced in several theaters, mostly on the East Coast. Rattner worked as an advocate for African-American literature, particularly the work of Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes and Phillip Hayes Dean. Her papers include multiple versions of her plays' scripts, as well as material reflecting her efforts as an advocate of African-American culture and providing insight into the process of writing and producing theatrical productions. Rattner's other journalistic and academic writings are included as well.

<h3>Citation Style</h3>

[^ 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 teacher and freelance writer, writing numerous articles for publications such as "The Michigan Alumnus," "Michigan Magazine" and "The Detroit News." In 2001, Rattner was commissioned by the Michigan Opera Theater to write the libretto for an opera commemorating the 300th anniversary of the founding of Detroit.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Content

The Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers contain 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. Scripts from other plays by Rattner are included. Personal materials include resumes, awards, articles and writings. 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

The collection is made up of two parts. Folders are listed by their location within each box, so any given subject may be dispersed throughout the collection.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

Addition of Part 2 (Box 5) 2021-01-28

Acquisition

The papers of Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in 1998 by Bonnie Rattner. Materials comprising Part 2 were donated by Rattner in February 2019.

Processing History

Finding aid written by Walter P. Reuther Library in 2006. Edited and revised to include Part 2 in 2021.

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

Part 1

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

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

Correspondence, producers and general , 1984 July-December	1	Folders 12
Correspondence, 1985	1	folder 13
Correspondence, 1986	1	folder 14
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, documents, 1993-1995	1	folder 27
Crossroads Theatre Company, production of "To Glean": programs, photo, correspondence, clippings, 1987-1988	1	folder 28
Dean, Phillip Hayes, "Paul Robeson"; correspondence, scripts, 1986-1989	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 Glean": 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 Glean It Around"; notes, undated and 1985		

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

	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	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	2	Folder 21
Script: "Eatonville," 1977	2	Folder 22-23
Script: "Eatonville," with notations, 1981	2	Folder 24-25
Script: "Eatonville," bound volume, 1981; outline of scenes, 1996	2	Folder 26
Script: "Eatonville," 1982	2	Folder 27
Script: "To Gleam It Around," marked: "old copy, before revisions," 1982	3	Folder 1
Script: "To Gleam," marked: "Pre-Hilberry production-one of my work copies," bound volume, 1982	3	Folder 2
Script: "To Gleam," with cast list, sketches, notations, probably 1983	3	Folder 3-4
Script: "To Gleam," working script for Hilberry production, 1983	3	Folder 5
Script: "To Gleam," with re-writes after Hilberry production, bound volume, 1983	3	Folder 6
Script: "To Gleam," Negro Ensemble Company copy, 1983	3	Folder 7
Script: "To Gleam," Alliance edition, 1985 September	3	Folder 8
Script: "To Gleam," with notes, corrections, music, for Crossroads Theatre production, 1988 July	3	Folder 9
Script: "To Gleam," with corrections, notes, 1988 August	3	Folder 10

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

Script: "To Gleam," marked: "script that went into Crossroads rehearsals," 1988 September	3	Folder 11
Script: "To Gleam," marked: "Changes made in California," Crossroads Theatre version, 1999 September	3	Folder 12
Script: "To Gleam," marked: "the most final version," with pages of notes following text, 1988	3	Folder 13
Script: "To Gleam," with Crossroads Theatre cast list, newspaper reviews, 1988 October	3	Folder 14
Script: "To Gleam," marked: "Long Wharf Theatre reading copy," 1996 February	3	Folder 15
Script: "To Gleam," new version, 1997	3	Folder 16
Script: "To Gleam," Hudson Guild Theatre, Los Angeles, 1998 March	3	Folder 17
Script: "To Gleam," marked "version without Logan Killicks...Sheldon Epps changes," 1998 June 25	3	Folder 18
Script: "To Gleam," marked "The Oz Scott changes," 1998 May-September	3	Folder 19-20
Multiple oversize script and text pages, loose and stapled, with editing, undated	4	Oversized Item 1
Scene sketch: "The Everglades," undated	4	Oversized Item 2
Scene sketch: "Eatonville 1920s," undated	4	Oversized Item 3
Poster: "To Gleam It Around," Hilberry Theatre, Wayne State University, oversize paper, 2 copies, probably 1983	4	Oversized Item 4
Part 2		
Personal materials; resumes, personal statements, various years	Box 5	Folder 1
Arts Achievement Award, Wayne State University; correspondence, documents, 1999	Box 5	Folder 2
"Broadway Bonnie," article, Wayne State Magazine, 2000 Fall	Box 5	Folder 3
Clippings, 1980s-2000s	Box 5	Folder 4
Publicity, articles, clippings, 2011-2015	Box 5	Folder 5
Various documents, articles, photo, various dates	Box 5	Folder 6
Teaching; correspondence, various documents, undated, 1999, 2005-2011	Box 5	Folder 7
Essay on Dorothy Parker, handwritten manuscript, undated	Box 5	Folder 8
Harriet Arnow, interview by Rattner, undated	Box 5	Folder 9
English 230, Wayne State University; notes, exams, 1961	Box 5	Folder 10

Guide to the Bonnie Lee Moss Rattner Papers UP001725

English 574, Wayne State University; notes, 1961	Box 5	Folder 11
English 402, Wayne State University; notes, exams, 1961	Box 5	Folder 12
English 403, Wayne State University; notes, 1962	Box 5	Folder 13
Various course documents, speech, education, Wayne State University, 1960s	Box 5	Folder 14
Three academic papers by Rattner, 1960, 1961, 1975	Box 5	Folder 15
Correspondence, 1960s, 1984-2000	Box 5	Folder 16
Correspondence, 2001-2009	Box 5	Folder 17
Correspondence, 2010-2015	Box 5	Folder 18
Correspondence, undated	Box 5	Folder 19
Correspondence; Jerry Kalman, 2007-2008	Box 5	Folder 20
Correspondence; Bernard Finifter, 2007 March	Box 5	Folder 21
Correspondence; re Otis M. Smith, 2007	Box 5	Folder 22
Otis M. Smith, biography project; various documents, 2007	Box 5	Folder 23
"American Vernacular, Detroit Style: The Work of Steve Chennault"; article, correspondence, 1982	Box 5	Folder 24
Hurston material; various legal documents, 1993, 1999	Box 5	Folder 25
"Dorothy and Red"; summary, essay, undated	Box 5	Folder 26
"Sunnie's Tune"; outline for screenplay, undated	Box 5	Folder 27
"Gleam," Centerstage version; various documents, clippings, 2012	Box 5	Folder 28
Script: "To Gleam," 2005	Box 5	Folder 29
"To Gleam"; various script pages, various dates	Box 5	Folder 30
"To Gleam"; various statements, documents, various dates	Box 5	Folder 31
"To Gleam," Kennedy Center; correspondence, reviews, 2003-2009	Box 5	Folder 32
"To Gleam"; history of, notes, various documents, various dates	Box 5	Folder 33
"Eatonville," proposal packet, Amas Musical Theatre; various documents, 2003	Box 5	Folder 34
Script: "Eatonville," for Manhattan Theater Club Reading, 2002	Box 5	Folder 35
Script: "Light of Diamonds," Act II, with notations, music, undated	Box 5	Folder 36
Various documents, notes, re Rattner plays, undated	Box 5	Folder 37
Scripts: loose pages, with notations, undated and 2005	Box 5	Folder 38
"Mule Bone," by Hughes and Hurston, Playbill program, 1991	Box 5	Folder 39

Personal materials; resumes, personal statements, various years

Box 5