



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Reginald Harris papers**

1970-2016

Sc MG 805

Compiled by Heather Halliday, 2016.

## Summary

**Creator:** Harris, Reginald, 1960-

**Title:** Reginald Harris papers

**Date:** 1970-2016

**Size:** 13.65 linear feet (34 boxes); 307.5 kb (9 computer files)

**Source:** Donated by Reginald Harris in 2015.

**Abstract:** Reginald Harris (1960-) is an African American poet, author, editor, and library administrator. Harris's experience as a gay man is a frequent subject of his writing. His papers date from 1970 to 2016 and document Harris's creative work, professional career and personal life through journals, correspondence, and files of his writing and public poetry readings.

### Conditions Governing Access:

All reproduction requests subject to limitations noted in divisional policies.

**Preferred citation:** Reginald Harris papers, Sc MG 805, Schomburg Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Heather Halliday, 2016.

## Creator History

Reginald M. Harris was born in Annapolis, Maryland in 1960 and grew up in Baltimore, Maryland. Harris graduated from Randolph-Macon College with a bachelor's degree in political science in 1982. He served in the United States Coast Guard from 1983 to 1987. After being honorably discharged from the Coast Guard, Harris received a library and information science graduate degree from Catholic University of America in Virginia. He then joined the staff of the Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore, where he held various positions throughout the 1990s and 2000s. In 2010, Harris accepted a position at Poets House in New York City and currently (2016) serves there as director of Library and Outreach Services.

Harris's experience as an African American gay man is the primary focus of his poems and fiction. He has published two volumes of poetry, *10 Tongues* (2002) and *Autogeography* (2013), the latter of which won the Cave Canem Northwestern University Press Poetry Prize. His poems have also appeared in numerous anthologies and literary journals. He served as an editor of periodicals including *Kuumba*, which showcased the work of African American gay and lesbian poets, and *The Lambda Book Report*, where his literary criticism is also frequently published. Harris's influence upon both African American gay and lesbian poets and the broader poetry community is felt through his support of other authors' work, his frequent performances at poetry readings, and his service as a judge on juried poetry competitions.

## Scope and Content Note

The collection reflects the personal, creative, and professional life and career of Reginald Harris through journals; diaries; drafts and manuscripts of his written work; correspondence; and files on public poetry readings where Harris performed or which he organized.

Personal files include several boxes of journals and diaries dating from 1977 through the 2010s. Content and frequency of diary and journal entries vary. Most journal volumes are functional notebooks, focusing on routine matters and recording daily observations, while the diaries tend to describe intimate personal circumstances and emotions in more depth and also include notes for his writing. Evidence of Harris's involvement in the Black gay leather fetish community, especially with the group ONYX, is found in this section. Files on Black Pride celebrations and comic zines with African American gay themes are also present. Incoming personal correspondence, in the form of letters and cards from family and friends, as well as printed email, is included. A file titled "obituaries," dated 1988 to 2007, intersperses funeral and memorial service programs of older family members together with those of young friends who died of AIDS. Other personal files relate to Harris's military service and family reunions.

Harris's creative work is reflected in the writing files, which encompass his published and unpublished poems, fiction, and journalistic essays; his literary criticism of others' work, including his reviews published in *Kuumba* and *The Lambda Book Report*; and his student work. Sex and sexuality are frequent themes throughout all genres of Harris's work. Files of erotica, which he often publishes under the pseudonym Marvin Richmond, are included. Journalism files include Harris's work for various gay and general interest publications in the Baltimore area from the 1980s through the 2000s. Evidence of Harris's creative process can be seen through numerous drafts of each poem, short story, or essay. Files also contain correspondence with publishers; manuscripts; and published versions of works.

The professional files document Harris's activities as an author and his employment at Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore and Poet's House. Files of public programs he organized at both institutions and elsewhere are found in this section, as are materials promoting Harris's published writings. Evidence of Harris's participation in several writers' groups, such as Cave Canem Foundation for African American Poets; Fire & Ink, an advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) writers of African descent; and Baltimore Writers' Alliance is present. Writers' group files include information on workshops, fellowships, and conferences organized by these groups. Awards files show prizes applied for and won, including a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award in 2000 and the People's Poetry award in 2003, and awards competitions judged by Harris, including the Lambda Literary Awards and Act-So, a poetry competition for teenagers. Professional files on Harris's editing work for the literary journal *Kuumba* include both accepted and rejected submissions of poems written by other authors. Several boxes holding files on poetry readings demonstrate Harris's prolific performances of his own

work, as well as his support and advocacy of other poets through the organizing of these events. Files on an African American Gay and Lesbian Literature class dating from 1987 to 1998, document a course Harris taught at the Baltimore Gay Center, and include syllabi and bibliographies. Professional correspondence files illustrate Harris's interaction with publishers and fellow authors, notably Lisa C. Moore of Redbone Press and author John R. Keene.

**Arrangement:** The Reginald Harris papers are divided into the following categories: Personal, Writing, and Professional.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American gays -- Poetry  
Gay erotica  
Leather lifestyle  
Poetry

### **Occupations**

Authors  
Editors  
Librarians  
Minority authors  
Poets, American

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence  
Diaries  
Fanzines  
Writings (documents)

## Container List

### Personal

- b. 1 f. 1 Address Book 1999-2000
- b. 1 f. 2 Autographs 1981-1997
- b. 1 f. 3 Black Gay and Lesbian Periodicals 1996-2011
- Black Gay Zines
- b. 1 f. 4 1995-2001
- b. 1 f. 5 Victor Hodge 1996, undated

### Black Leather Community

Includes ONYX

- b. 1 f. 6-10 1997-2009
- b. 2 f. 1-4 2008-2015
- b. 2 f. 5 Black Pride 1988-2003
- b. 2 f. 6-9 Calendars 1999-2013
- b. 2 f. 10 Charity 2006

### Correspondence

- b. 2 f. 11-12 1990s-2000s
- b. 3 f. 1-8 2000-2014
- b. 3 f. 9 Mark undated

### Diaries

- b. 3 f. 10-11 1977-1983
- b. 4 f. 1-6 1983-1995
- b. 5 f. 1-5 1995-2007, 2011
- b. 6 f. 1-2 2007-2009, 2013
- b. 6 f. 3 Family 1990-1997, 2007  
Includes family reunion booklets.
- b. 6 f. 4 Gay Men of African Decent 1996

### Journals

- b. 6 f. 5 Coast Guard 1982-1987
- b. 6 f. 6 Sigma Phi Epsilon 1979
- b. 6 f. 7-9 1980s-1990, undated
- b. 7 f. 1-7 1998-2002
- b. 8 f. 1-4 2004-2008
- b. 8 f. 5-10 Military Records U.S. Coast Guard 1983-1987
- b. 9 f. 1 Obituaries 1988-2007  
Includes Essex Hemphill memorial.
- b. 9 f. 2 Travel 2010  
Includes trip to Italy.

### Writing

#### Poems

- b. 9 f. 3 Cave Canem Manuscripts 1997-2003

Writing (cont.)

Poems (cont.)

- b. 9 f. 4-8 *Ten Tongues* 2002-2007  
Includes manuscripts, correspondence, reviews, and awards.
- b. 10 f. 1-2 *Autogeography* 2012  
Includes galley proof and manuscripts.  
Published
- b. 10 f. 3-8 2000-2010
- b. 10 f. 9-10 Anthologies 1992-2011
- b. 10 f. 11 *Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review* 1997-2010
- b. 10 f. 12 Journals 1998-2010
- b. 10 f. 13 Online 1997-2011
- b. 11 f. 1 Periodicals 1997-2008
- b. 11 f. 2 Redbone Press 2006
- b. 11 f. 3 Translations 2008
- b. 11 f. 4-5 Unpublished 1977, 1998-2004

Fiction

Published

- b. 11 f. 6-7 "Billy" 1997-2000
- b. 11 f. 8 "The Black Shirt" 1992-1997
- b. 11 f. 9 "The Gift" 1997-2001
- b. 12 f. 1 "Haram" 1996-1999
- b. 12 f. 2 *Men On Men: Best New Gay Male Fiction 7* 1997-1999
- b. 12 f. 3 "A Short Trip" circa 1997
- b. 12 f. 4 "Smooth" 1996-1999
- b. 12 f. 5 "A Tour of the Collection" 1996
- b. 12 f. 6 "The Visit" 1994

Unpublished

- b. 12 f. 7 "At the Club: Portraits" 1994-1996
- b. 12 f. 8 "Cast Party" 1978
- b. 12 f. 9 "Homecoming" undated
- b. 12 f. 10 "Men's Secrets" 1995-1997
- b. 12 f. 11 "Sights/Sites/Cites/Sighs:Cities" undated
- b. 12 f. 12 "South/Not South" undated
- b. 12 f. 13 "Uniforms" undated
- b. 12 f. 14 "When the Whip Comes Down" undated

Erotica

Published

- b. 13 f. 1 1994-2003, 2010
- b. 13 f. 2 "After Hours" 1998
- b. 13 f. 3 "Almond Eyes" undated
- b. 13 f. 4 *Black Silk Anthology* 2001
- b. 13 f. 5 *Brown Sugar Anthologies* 2000-2002
- b. 13 f. 6 "The Dream" 1996-2000

Writing (cont.)

Erotica (cont.)

Published (cont.)

- b. 13 f. 7 "Easy" 2001-2005
- b. 13 f. 8 "Fetishes (Soap/Stores/Sleep)" undated
- b. 13 f. 9 "Keeping Up With the Joneses" 2009
- b. 13 f. 10 "Learning the Life" undated
- b. 13 f. 11 "Men At Work" 1997
- b. 13 f. 12 "Ode To the Back of the Head" 1997-2008
- b. 14 f. 1 "Service Call" 1997-2009
- b. 14 f. 2 "The Shower" 2000
- b. 14 f. 3 "'Twas the Night Before Christmas..." 2010-2011
- b. 14 f. 4 "Video Store Pick UP" undated

Unpublished

- b. 14 f. 5 "The Photograph" undated
- b. 14 f. 6 "Underway" undated

Non-Fiction and Journalism

Published

Gay Press

- b. 14 f. 7 1985-1992  
Includes copies of *BUGLE News*, newsletter of Blacks United for Gay and Lesbian Equality.
- b. 14 f. 8 1998-2000  
Includes Harris' articles in *Baltimore Gay Paper* and *Mid-Atlantic Gay Life*.
- b. 14 f. 9-16 1996-2011
- b. 15 f. 1-6 2005-2013

Unpublished

- b. 15 f. 7-11 1996-2013
- b. 16 f. 1-7 Reviews 1986, 1993-2014  
Includes literary criticism written by Harris about other authors' work appearing in *The Gay and Lesbian Review*, *The James White Review*, *The Lambda Book Report*, *Mosaic*, and *Oyster Boy Review*.
- b. 16 f. 8-9 Student Work 1975-1982, 1992
- b. 16 f. 10 Notes 1997, undated

Professional

- b. 17 f. 1-2 African American Gay and Lesbian Literature Class 1987-1998  
Taught by Harris at the Baltimore Gay Community Center.

Awards

- b. 17 f. 3 2000-2014
- b. 17 f. 4 Act-So Competition 2003-2006  
Harris served as a judge of this poetry competition for teenagers.
- b. 17 f. 5 Baltimore Review Contest 2013  
Harris served as judge.
- b. 17 f. 6 Black Infinity Awards 2008-2010
- b. 17 f. 7 Lambda Literary Awards 2003-2015
- b. 17 f. 8-9 Maryland State Arts Council 1999-2001, 2009
- b. 17 f. 10 People's Poetry Awards 2003

Professional (cont.)

- b. 17 f. 11 Baltimore Writers' Alliance 2002
- b. 17 f. 12 Beam, Joe circa 1985-2014
- b. 17 f. 13 Biographical 2000s-2010s
  - Black Classic Press
    - er. 1 2004-2005  
(202.1 Kilobytes (8 computer files))
  - b. 23 f. 7 Website Construction 2004-2005
    - Cave Canem Foundation
    - Workshop and retreat for African American Writers.
- b. 18 f. 1-6 1998-2001, undated
- b. 19 f. 1-5 2002-2014
- b. 19 f. 6-7 Form Essay 1997, 2001-2009
- b. 19 f. 8-12 Photographs
  - b. 19 f. 13 Prize 2010-2014
- b. 19 f. 14-18 Readings 2001-2011
  - b. 20 f. 1 Reunion 2006
  - b. 20 f. 2 Website Construction 2001-2009
- Conferences
  - b. 20 f. 15 Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum 1994
  - b. 20 f. 3-14 1996-2016
- Correspondence
  - b. 21 f. 1-8 1993-2014
    - b. 22 f. 1 Glave, Thomas 1998
  - b. 22 f. 2-6 Keene, John R 1996-2013
    - b. 22 f. 7 Shepherd, Reginald 1998-2001
    - b. 22 f. 8 Submission Rejections 1989, 2009-2012
  - b. 23 f. 1 Creative Process 1988-2010, undated
- Employment
  - b. 23 f. 2-5 Enoch Pratt Free Library 2005-2010
  - b. 23 f. 6 Poet's House 2010-2011
  - b. 23 f. 8 Fire & Ink / Redbone Press 2000-2006
  - b. 23 f. 9 Interviews
    - Includes interviews with and articles about Harris.
    - Kuumba Editorial Work*
    - Poetry journal showcasing African American authors.
- b. 24 f. 1-2 1991-2002
  - er. 2 circa 1995
  - b. 24 f. 3 Bell, Alan 1998-2001
  - b. 24 f. 4 Prospects 1999-2001
  - Submitted Manuscripts
    - b. 24 f. 5-6 Accepted 1997-2001
    - Rejected

Professional (cont.)  
Kuumba Editorial Work (cont.)  
Submitted Manuscripts (cont.)  
Rejected (cont.)

- b. 24 f. 7-8 1984, 1989, 1992-1997  
b. 25 f. 1-4 1998-2002

Other Authors' Work

- b. 26 f. 1 2000-2015  
b. 26 f. 2 Bashir, Samiya 2008  
b. 26 f. 3 Beam, Jeffrey 2012  
b. 26 f. 4 *Bittersweet Anthology* 2003  
b. 26 f. 5 Craig, Andrew M undated  
b. 26 f. 6 Delaney, Samuel R circa 1984  
b. 26 f. 7 Dixon, Melvin 2000  
b. 26 f. 8 Erotica 1996-1998  
b. 26 f. 9 Glave, Thomas circa 1996  
b. 26 f. 10 Gomez, Jewelle circa 1991  
b. 26 f. 11 Herron, Carolivia 1995  
b. 26 f. 12 Hill, Sean undated  
b. 26 f. 13 Kearney, Douglas undated  
b. 26 f. 14 Keene, John R. Jr circa 1996 - circa 2014  
b. 26 f. 15 Kenan, Randall circa 1996  
b. 26 f. 16 McFarlane, Nicole 2004  
b. 26 f. 17 White, Marvin K undated

Promotional Material

- b. 27 f. 1-2 2001-2013  
er. 2 2002  
(105.4 Kilobytes (1 computer file))

Programs

- b. 27 f. 3 2015  
b. 27 f. 4 Clifton, Lucille 2010-2012  
Held at Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore.  
b. 27 f. 5 Gathering Ground 2006  
b. 27 f. 6 Harlem Academy 2014  
b. 27 f. 7 Melville and Civil War Poetry 2010  
Held at Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore.  
b. 27 f. 8 New York City Annual Water Resources Art and Poetry Contest 2015

- b. 27 f. 7 Radio Appearances 2011  
Documents concerning appearances on "Out FM" on WBAI and "On the Margin" on WPFW

Readings

- b. 28 f. 1-12 1996-2004  
b. 29 f. 1-30 2004-2008  
Includes Fire & Ink reading at Lambda Rising Bookstore in Washington, D.C.  
b. 30 f. 1-32 2008-2010  
b. 31 f. 1-20 2011-2015

Research



Professional (cont.)  
Research (cont.)

- b. 31 f. 21-23 1970-2010
- b. 32 f. 1 2007-2010
- b. 32 f. 2 African Canadian Writers 2004-2005  
"Artist" Project
- b. 32 f. 3-5 1994-2007
- b. 32 f. 6 HIV/AIDS 2004-2007
- b. 32 f. 7 Jazz 2000+2001
- b. 32 f. 8 Periodicals 2001-2013
- b. 33 f. 1 Reviews of Harris's Work 1999-2011
- b. 33 f. 2 Schomburg Center / Archives 1987-2007
- b. 33 f. 3 Submission Venues 2003-2006
- b. 33 f. 4-5 Workshops 2003-2008
- b. 33 f. 6 Writers' Room Baltimore 2008