



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

Guide to the

Ira Jeffries papers

1950-2000

Sc MG 794

Processed by Steven G. Fullwood, June 2015.

Summary

Creator: Jeffries, Ira, 1932-2010

Title: Ira Jeffries papers

Date: 1950-2000

Size: 6.42 linear feet (7 boxes)

Source: Gift of Ira Jeffries, 2005.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: Ira L. Jeffries author, playwright and journalist, had a productive career in New York City's off-off Broadway Theater and African American communities. The Ira Jeffries papers consist of biographical material including correspondence, memoirs, notebooks, and journals.

Preferred citation: [Item], Ira Jeffries papers, Sc MG 794, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Steven G. Fullwood, June 2015.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the General Research and Reference Division: books and magazines

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: audio and moving image materials. For more information, please contact the division at schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org or 212-491-2270.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Related Materials:

In the Life Archive (ITLA) miscellaneous collections, Sc MG 736, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare

Creator History

Ira L. Jeffries (b. March 20, 1932, New York, N.Y.-d. July 16, 2010, New York, N.Y.) author, playwright and journalist, had a productive career in New York City's off-off Broadway Theater and African American communities. The author of almost two dozen one-act and full-length plays as well as short stories, poems, essays and articles, Jeffries also tried her hand at producing plays through Kaleidoscope Theater Company, a company she founded in 1992 in association with the WOW Café Theater Company Collective. As a journalist, Jeffries wrote articles for several African American and lesbian publications including *BG Magazine*, *The New Amsterdam News*, *The New Harlem Magazine*, *Sappho's Isle*, and *Womanews*.

Scope and Content Note

The Ira Jeffries papers consist of biographical material including correspondence, memoirs, notebooks, and journals. Jeffries's unpublished memoir, "Sugar's Blues", is represented in the collection in draft form along with preliminary notes.

The most significant part of the collection consists of her writings, chiefly almost two dozen one-act and full length plays, many of which saw production in New York City's Off-Off Broadway stage. The file contains drafts, synopses, and several scripts, in addition to uncompleted plays. Additional material relating to Jeffries's productions includes several theater reviews. Manuscripts of her short stories include preliminary notes and a draft. Other writings include poetry, speeches, and journal articles written for African American and lesbian newspapers and magazines. Jeffries appeared in the film, *Watermelon Woman*, directed by Cheryl Dunye, and the script, notes, and related materials are included in the collection.

Arrangement: Organized into 4 series: I. Biographical information; II. Writing; III. Research files; and IV. Professional files.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American actresses
African American theater
African American women authors
African American women dramatists
African American women journalists
American drama -- 20th century
American drama -- African American authors
Authors, Black
Women in the theater -- United States

Names

Dunye, Cheryl
Jeffries, Ira, 1932-2010
Wati, Jaso

Kaleidoscope Theatre (New York, N.Y.)
Theater for the New City (New York, N.Y.)
WOW Cafe Theatre (New York, N.Y.)

Container List

Biographical information ca. 1957-2008

This series contains a file of Jeffries's correspondence, both personal and professional; journals and notebooks; two biographical writings, *Midlife Crisis* and *On Turning Fifty*, and a draft and notes for the memoir in-progress, "Sugar's Blues."

- b. 1 f. 1 Resumes
- b. 1 f. 2 Memoir
- b. 1 f. 3-4 "Sugar's Blues"
Includes notes.
- b. 1 f. 5 Correspondence 1984-2008
- b. 1 f. 6-7 Journals and notebooks
- b. 1 f. 8 Awards and certificates
- b. 1 f. 9 Business cards

Writing ca. 1958-1998

The most substantive series, Writing, consists of the playscripts of Jeffries's 22 plays, including preliminary drafts, revisions, and synopses. Other writings include several short stories, college papers, a small collection of poetry, numerous newspapers and magazine articles, and speeches. Also included are "miscellaneous story concepts"; excerpts from a potential book, tentatively entitled, "Legacy of Pain"; and notes for an uncompleted new play. The poetry file contains typed drafts, as well as early efforts in longhand..

Arranged into 7 subseries: (1) Playscripts; (2) Theater productions; (3) Short stories; (4) Poetry; (5) Speeches; (6) Articles; and (7) Miscellaneous.

Playscripts

- b. 1 f. 10-11 *Bag Lady and Ole Becky* 1988
 - b. 1 f. 12 *The Break*
- b. 1 f. 13-21 *The Cactus and the Rose*
- b. 1 f. 22-23 *The Christian and the Jewess*
- b. 1 f. 24-25 *Clotel*
- b. 1 f. 26-29 *The Denial*
 - b. 1 f. 30 *Different Strokes*
- b. 1 f. 31-33 *Glory*
 - b. 1 f. 34 *Images, Impression, and Such*
 - b. 1 f. 35 *Mabel and Martha Redding*
- b. 1 f. 36-38 *Manchild*
 - b. 2 f. 1-5 *Odessa*
 - b. 7 f. 1
 - b. 2 f. 6-9 *The Peachtree*
- b. 2 f. 10-14 *Pipe Dreams*
 - b. 2 f. 15 *Promotion of Fools*
- b. 2 f. 16-17 *Ragtime*
 - b. 7 f. 2
- b. 2 f. 18 *The Rev*
- b. 2 f. 19 *The Residents*
- b. 2 f. 20 *The Roommates*

Writing (cont.)

Playscripts (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 21-26 *Sampson and Delilah Brown*
- b. 2 f. 27 *Satina*
- b. 7 f. 3
- b. 2 f. 28-31 *Willi and Her Friends*
- b. 2 f. 32-36 *The Women of Sheriff Street*
- b. 2 f. 37 "Love Cancelled Out" (unfinished)
- b. 3 f. 1 Various

Theater productions

- b. 3 f. 2 Kaleidoscope Theater Productions
- b. 3 f. 3 Other productions of Jeffries's work
- b. 3 f. 4 Productions with Jeffries as actor or director

Short stories

- b. 3 f. 5-8 "The Cactus and the Rose"
- b. 3 f. 9-13 "The Glass Dome"
- b. 3 f. 14 "Cockatrice Legend"
- b. 3 f. 15 "Loose Change"
- b. 3 f. 16 "Murder in the Basement"
- b. 3 f. 17-18 "The Pool"
- b. 3 f. 19 "Willi and Her Friends"
- b. 3 f. 20 Notes
- b. 3 f. 21 Poetry
- b. 3 f. 22 Speeches

Includes "So You Want to be a Playwright".

Articles

- b. 3 f. 23 Miscellaneous
- b. 3 f. 24 Drafts
- b. 3 f. 25 *B&G Magazine*
- b. 3 f. 26 *The Campus*
- b. 3 f. 27 *New Harlem Magazine*
- b. 3 f. 28 *Sappho's Isle*
- b. 3 f. 29 *Womanews*
- b. 3 f. 30 *New York Amsterdam News*

Miscellaneous

- b. 3 f. 31-32 New and original material
- b. 3 f. 33 Story concepts
- b. 3 f. 34 "The District" notes and concepts

Research files ca. 1976-2010

This series includes a large selection of magazine issues and newsletters (chiefly gay, lesbian and/or Black-oriented) that Jeffries collected, along with miscellaneous research materials which she may have used in her writing. Jeffries's notes and a complete script for the 1996 Cheryl Dunne film, *Watermelon Woman*, in which she appeared, are also included here. Manuscripts of plays and poetry by Jaso Wati (née Jasper Watson) are included with Jeffries's papers, as well.

- b. 4 f. 1 Adams, Major Charity

Research files (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 2 Black dance
- b. 4 f. 3 Black history
- Theater
- b. 4 f. 4 Black theater
- b. 4 f. 5 Off Broadway
- b. 7 f. 4
- b. 4 f. 6 History
- b. 4 f. 7 Bryant, Joyce
- b. 4 f. 8 Dodson, Owen
- b. 4 f. 9 Film and television
- b. 4 f. 10 Garbo
- b. 4 f. 11 Gay games
- b. 4 f. 12 Grants and funding
- b. 4 f. 13 Jazz
- b. 4 f. 14-18 Gay and lesbian files
- b. 4 f. 19 Screenplay notes
- b. 4 f. 20 Literature
- b. 4 f. 21 Lorde, Audre
- b. 4 f. 22 Mayor David Dinkins Administration memorabilia
- b. 4 f. 23 Hall, Marjorie J
- b. 4 f. 24 Schomburg documents
- b. 4 f. 25 Sampson, Deborah
- b. 4 f. 26 The Museum of the City of New York photo exhibit
- b. 4 f. 27 Murray Hill
- b. 4 f. 28 Music and dance
- b. 4 f. 29 Obituaries
- b. 4 f. 30 Transgender article
- b. 4 f. 31 Waters, Ethel
- b. 7 f. 5 Wati, Jaso
- b. 4 f. 32 Wright, Harold
- b. 4 f. 33 Woman in the military
- b. 4 f. 34 Miscellaneous
- b. 4 f. 35 90th Annual Beaux Arts Ball
- b. 4 f. 36 Black history
- Events
- b. 4 f. 37 Audelco
- b. 4 f. 38 Cook, Susan
- b. 4 f. 39 Davis, Scottie
- b. 4 f. 40-41 Lesbian and gay
- b. 4 f. 42 Literature
- b. 4 f. 43 Music and dance
- b. 4 f. 44-47 Theater

Research files (cont.)

Events (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 48 Women's events
- b. 5 f. 1-2 *Watermelon Woman*
Includes script.

Magazines

- b. 6 f. 4 A-C
- b. 6 f. 5 *B&G*
- b. 6 f. 6 *BLK*
- b. 6 f. 7 E-G
- b. 6 f. 8 H-M
- b. 6 f. 9 N
- b. 6 f. 10 O-Ou
- b. 6 f. 11 Ov-Z

Newsletters

- b. 6 f. 12 A-BI
- b. 6 f. 13 Bo-G
- b. 6 f. 14 I-R
- b. 6 f. 15 *Sappho's Isle*
- b. 6 f. 16 So-W
- b. 6 f. 17 *Womanews*

Professional files ca. 1970s-2008

This series contains an extensive collection of material related to Off-Off Broadway, primarily programs and playbills, which includes programs from productions of Jeffries's own plays. Other materials document her volunteer work and association with organizations such as SAGE, the Lesbian Herstory Archive, Sisters on Stage, and Acting Out: Lesbian Theater Conference and Festival.

- b. 5 f. 3-4 Playbills
- b. 5 f. 5-6 Theater programs
 - b. 5 f. 7 Playwriting notes
 - b. 5 f. 8 Fax
 - b. 5 f. 9 AALLV
 - b. 5 f. 10 Cloister Library
 - b. 5 f. 11 Griot Circle
 - b. 5 f. 12 Lowe, Sandy
 - b. 5 f. 13 SAGE
 - b. 5 f. 14 Innovative women lesbian material
 - b. 5 f. 15 Lesbian Herstory archive material
 - b. 5 f. 16 Associations
- b. 5 f. 17-18 Riverside Church
Includes gospel readings.
 - b. 5 f. 19 Lesbian conference and Sisters on Stage
 - b. 5 f. 20 Other media
- b. 6 f. 1-2 Copyright
- b. 6 f. 3 Dramatists Guild