

Guide to the Amiri Baraka Papers

JWJ MSS 198



Compiled by Camila Zorrilla Tessler

September, 2023

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: JWJ MSS 198

CREATOR: Baraka, Amiri, 1934-2014

TITLE: Amiri Baraka papers

DATES: 1953-1982

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 4.46 linear feet (3 boxes + one flat folder)

LANGUAGE: English (Latin script)

SUMMARY: The Amiri Baraka Papers contains poetry, pamphlet publications, scripts, interviews, photographs, correspondence, and posters of work written or edited by Amiri Baraka, both under the name Amiri Baraka as well as LeRoi Jones. This material mostly documents his professional work between 1965 and 1982 and reflects his work as a playwright and poet.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of John S. Baker, 2008

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research. Box 2 and 4 contain audio visual material and are restricted due to fragility. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

Conditions Governing Use

The Amiri Baraka is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

Biographical / Historical

Amiri Baraka, born Everett Leroy Jones, (1934-2014) was a Black American poet, playwright, teacher, and political activist. Baraka attended Rutgers University, and then Howard University, where he changed his name to LeRoi Jones in honor of Black American journalist, Roi Ottley.

Baraka founded the literary magazine *Yungen*, with his wife, Hettie Cohen, and in 1961 founded Totem Press, a publishing company. These ventures focused on beat poetry. From 1960 to 1965 Baraka also worked as the editor and critic for the magazine *The Floating Bear*. In 1961 he published his first book, *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note*.

In 1964, Baraka wrote the play *Dutchman*, which won the Obie Award for Best American Play. The play was adapted into a film in 1967.

In 1965 Baraka moved to Harlem where he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School, starting the Black Arts Movement. In the late sixties he converted to Islam and changed his name to Imamu Ameer Baraka, which later became Amiri Baraka.

In 1979 Baraka was employed as a Lecturer at State University of New York at Stony Brook, and took a tenured position there in 1980. He also taught at Columbia University and Yale University.

In 2002 he was named Poet Laureate of New Jersey, and was stripped of the title two years later under accusations of anti-semitism.

Baraka won several awards for his contributions to American literature, including the American Book Award, the PEN/Faulkner Award, and the Rockefeller Foundation Award for Drama. He was also inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Scope and Contents

The Amiri Baraka Papers contains poetry, pamphlet publications, scripts, interviews, photographs, correspondence, and posters of work written or edited by Amiri Baraka, both under the name Amiri Baraka as well as LeRoi Jones. This material mostly documents his professional work between 1965 and 1982 and reflects his work as a playwright and poet.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged chronologically.

Collection Contents

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----------------|
| b. 1, f. 1 | LeRoi mentions | 1953–1969 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | The Nation magazine | 1961 October 14 |
| b. 1, f. 3 | The Floating Bear (a newsletter) | 1961 |
| b. 1, f. 4 | The Slave and Dutchman correspondence | 1964 |
| b. 1, f. 5 | Publication order correspondence | 1964 |
| b. 1, f. 6 | LeRoi Jones interview transcript | 1965 December 5 |
| b. 2 | <p>“Interview with LeRoi James” reel <i>1 Audiotape Reel; 1/4 inch; diameter 7 inches 00:07:52 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> The program is distorted at times. [Aviary] jwjms019839002099229891.u.mp3 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p> | 1965 December 5 |
| b. 1, f. 7 | Slave Ship script | 1966 |
| b. 1, f. 8 | Dutchman film photographs | 1966 |
| b. 1, f. 9 | A Traffic of Love poem photocopy | 1967 |
| b. 1, f. 10 | Mercatre Rivist Di Cultura Contemporanea | 1968 |
| b. 1, f. 11 | Portrait and contemporary Black artists show catalog | 1968 |
| b. 1, f. 12 | Broadside Press broadside series portfolio | 1968 |
| b. 3 | Blackbird poem and Dutchman posters | 1968 |
| b. 1, f. 13 | Jihad Productions catalog | 1970 |
| b. 1, f. 14 | The Studio museum | 1971 |
| b. 1, f. 15 | Morning Edition KSJR-FM Minnesota Public Radio interview transcript | 1982 July 2 |
| b. 4 | <p>Morning Edition #820702, Amiri Baraka interview audio cassette Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p> | 1982 July 2 |

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Occupations

African American poets -- United States -- 20th
Century

Subjects

African American dramatists
Beat generation
Black Arts movement
Black nationalism

Genres / Formats

Audiocassettes
Scripts
Tape reels -- United States -- 20th Century

Acquired From

Baker, John S. , donor