

Guide to the Catherine Roraback Collection of Ericka Huggins Papers

JWJ MSS 96



by Afua Ferdnance

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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 96

CREATOR: Roraback, Catherine, 1920-2007

TITLE: Catherine Roraback Collection of Ericka Huggins Papers

DATES: 1961-2000

BULK DATES: 1969-1971

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.67 linear feet (10 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Catherine Roraback Collection of Ericka Huggins papers consists of materials compiled by attorney Catherine Roraback during the New Haven trial of Black Panther Party leader Ericka Huggins. Included in the collection are Huggins' legal files, prison writings, clippings, correspondence and other documentation of the trial and Huggins' imprisonment.

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

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.rorabackc>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Bolerium Books on the Elizabeth Wakeman Dwight Memorial Fund, 2012.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Access

Box 10 contains restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Use

The Catherine Roraback Collection of Ericka Huggins Papers 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.

Preferred Citation

Catherine Roraback Collection of Ericka Huggins Papers. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Catherine Roraback (1920-2007)

Catherine Roraback was a Connecticut civil rights attorney who served as lead defense counsel for Ericka Huggins during her trial for the kidnapping and murder of Alex Rackley. Roraback was born on September 17, 1920 in Brooklyn, New York City, New York. She graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 1941 and was the only woman to graduate from Yale University Law School in 1948. Upon graduation, Roraback took over her family's law practice in Canaan, Connecticut. From 1969 to 1971, Roraback defended Ericka Huggins, a leader in the New Haven chapter of the Black Panther Party who was charged with conspiracy in the murder of Alex Rackley, a member of the Black Panther Party. On May 25 1971, the trial ended in a hung jury and was declared a mistrial. After the trial, Roraback continued to practice law and participated in organizations such as the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union, an organization she co-founded, and became president of the National Lawyers Guild. Roraback died on October 17, 2007 in Salisbury, Connecticut.

Ericka Huggins (1948-)

Ericka Jenkins Huggins was born in Washington D.C. on January 5, 1948. Huggins attended Lincoln University where she met her husband, John Huggins, and together they moved to California to join the Black Panther Party. John Huggins was murdered by members of the rival black nationalist US Organization on the University of California, Los Angeles campus in 1969. After his death, Huggins relocated to New Haven, Connecticut with their daughter Mai and became a leader in the New Haven chapter of the Black Panther Party. On May 22, 1969, Huggins, along with Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale, faced charges that stemmed from the kidnapping and murder of Black Panther Party member Alex Rackley. The trial, which lasted from October 1970 to May 1971, ended in a mistrial and dismissal of all charges. Huggins was released on May 25, 1971. After the trial, Huggins remained in the Black Panther Party and became the director of the Oakland Community School in Oakland, California until 1981. She also became the first black woman and first woman to be appointed to the Alameda County Board of Education. Huggins also worked as a professor of sociology and African American studies in the Peralta Community College District.

Scope and Contents

Materials in the Catherine Roraback collection of Ericka Huggins papers document the activities of both Catherine Roraback and Ericka Huggins during the New Haven Black Panther trials. A majority of the collection contains Catherine Roraback's legal files related to Ericka Huggins's trial, including memoranda on prison conditions, statements, depositions, affidavits, and FBI reports. Materials belonging to Ericka Huggins includes poems, correspondence, and other writings created during her imprisonment. Communist reading material requested by Huggins such as *The Selected Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (1968) are also included.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Ericka Huggins Trial Proceedings (1961-2000). II. Correspondence (1969-1972). III. Ericka Huggins Personal Papers (1969-1975).

Collection Contents

Series I: Ericka Huggins Trial Proceedings, 1961-2000

The series consists of Catherine Roraback's legal files documentating the trial of New Haven Black Panther Party leader Ericka Huggins. Trial statements made by members of the Black Panther Party include those from Ericka Huggins, George Sams, and Loretta Luckes. Copies of FBI files documenting the movements of the Black Panther party including a statement by former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover are contained within this series. The series also contains media covering the New Haven Black Panther Party Trial including press from the *Panther Trial News*, the *Liberation News Service*, and clippings from various news outlets such as *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *The New Haven Register*. A petition to free Ericka Huggins as well as memoranda and correspondence from lawyers and Yale Officials regarding the trial and Yale May Day protests are also included.

Arranged alphabetically.

b. 1, f. 1	Access to clients cuid0	1969
b. 1, f. 2	Affidavit: State of Connecticut Vs. Ericka Huggins cuid1	1969
b. 1, f. 3	Autopsy report and examination of Alex Rackley's body cuid2	1969-1970
b. 1, f. 4	Bail and appeal on bail law cuid3	Circa 1970
b. 1, f. 5	Bail fund cuid4	1970-1971
b. 1, f. 6	"Black Against Black: The Agony of Panthermania" article by Gail Sheehy with criticisms by Harry S. Huggins. cuid5	1970-1971
b. 1, f. 7	Black Panther Party depositions on Alex Rackley cuid6	1970
b. 1, f. 8-9	Bobby Seale motions and memorandum cuid7	1969-1971
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 128	Bobby Seale cuid8	1969
b. 1, f. 10	Capital punishment cuid9	1961-1969
b. 1, f. 11-13	Challenge to array memorandum of facts, law and statistical information cuid10	Circa 1968-1974
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 129-130	Clippings cuid11	Circa 1969-1973
b. 2, f. 14	Companion cases, pleadings cuid12	1968-1969

b. 2, f. 15	Competency of witnesses cuid13	Circa 1969
b. 2, f. 16	Complaint to the U.S. District Court cuid14	Circa 1970-1971
b. 2, f. 17	Connecticut Correctional Commission: mail and reading policy in prison cuid15	1969-1971
b. 2, f. 18	Conspiracy Law cuid16	1969-1971
b. 2, f. 19	Court bills cuid17	1969-1971
b. 2, f. 20	Cumulative due process cuid18	Circa 1965-1971
b. 2, f. 21	Current legal research problems cuid19	1970-1971
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 131	Current legal research problems cuid20	1971
b. 2, f. 22	Death penalty cuid21	Circa 1968-1971
b. 2, f. 23	Dismissal of material witnesses cuid22	Circa 1970
b. 2, f. 24-25	Ericka Huggins's seized materials in May 22, 1969 search cuid23	1969
b. 2, f. 26	Ericka Huggins's trial notes cuid24	Circa 1969-1971
b. 2, f. 27	Evidence questions cuid25	1964-1971
b. 2, f. 28	False arrests cuid26	Circa 1962-1971
b. 2, f. 29	FBI et al suit pleadings cuid27	1971
b. 3, f. 30	FBI memos cuid28	1969-2000
b. 3, f. 31	FBI personnel and materials cuid29	1968-1971
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 132	FBI personnel and materials cuid30	Circa 1968-1971
b. 3, f. 32	FBI wiretap and surveillance pleadings, and memoranda cuid31	Circa 1965-2000
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 133	FBI wiretap and surveillance pleadings, and memoranda cuid32	Circa 1965-2000

b. 3, f. 33	Final argument notes cuid33	Circa 1970-1971
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 134	Frank Hawley case cuid34	1970
b. 3, f. 34-35	George Sams legal documents and statements cuid35	1969-1970
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 135	George Sams legal documents and statements cuid36	1971
b. 3, f. 36	Grand jury proceedings and indictments cuid37	1970-1971
b. 3, f. 37	Grand jury selection cuid38	1969-1970
b. 3, f. 38	Huggins-Seale trial summaries cuid39	1970-1971
b. 3, f. 39	Jail conditions pleadings cuid40	1970-1971
b. 4, f. 40	Jail conditions: reading materials cuid41	1970
b. 4, f. 41-42	Jail conditions and prisoner's rights cuid42	1970-1971
b. 4, f. 43	John J. Huggins, Jr. cuid43	Circa 1969
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 136	John J. Huggins, Jr. cuid44	Circa 1969
b. 4, f. 44	Jury challenge cuid45	Circa 1970-1971
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 137	Jury challenge cuid46	Circa 1970-1971
b. 4, f. 45	Jury challenge Amicus Brief cuid47	1970
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 138	Jury challenge computer print-outs cuid48	Circa 1970
b. 4, f. 46	Jury challenge exhibits cuid49	Circa 1971
b. 4, f. 47	Jury challenge expert witness cuid50	1968-1970
b. 4, f. 48-49	Jury challenge legal materials and memoranda cuid51	Circa 1970-1971
b. 5, f. 50	Jury challenge State v. David papers and other cases cuid52	1961-1970

b. 5, f. 51	Jury challenge subpoenas and witnesses Roraback cuid53	1970
b. 5, f. 52	Jury materials cuid54	1970–1971
b. 5, f. 53	Kidnapping cuid55	1969
b. 5, f. 54	Liberation News Service by John Bancroft cuid56	1970
b. 5, f. 55	Lonnie McClucas complaints, and motion to dismiss cuid57	1970–1971
b. 5, f. 56	Loretta Luckes statement cuid58	1969
b. 5, f. 57	Motion for mental exam cuid59	1970–1973
b. 5, f. 58	Motion for production of body and coroner's inquest cuid60	1969–1970
b. 6, f. 59-60	Motion to dismiss publicity cuid61	1970–1971
b. 6, f. 61	Motion to dismiss publicity subpoenas cuid62	1970–1971
b. 6, f. 62	Motion to suppress—Ahern transcripts cuid63	Circa 1969-1971
b. 6, f. 63	Motion to vacate security order cuid64	1969
b. 6, f. 64	Nature and History of the Black Panther Party cuid65	Circa 1969
b. 6, f. 65	Panther cases: the tapes cuid66 Transcripts of tapes made during the interrogation of Alex Rackley with related notes and correspondence.	1969–1971
b. 6, f. 66	"The Panthers and the Police: A Pattern of Genocide?" New Yorker article by Edward Jay Epstein cuid67	1971
b. 6, f. 67	Petition to free Ericka cuid68	1970
b. 6, f. 68	Pleadings cuid69	1969–1971
b. 6, f. 69	Pleadings (temporary restraining order) cuid70	1970–1971
b. 6, f. 70	Pre-trial detention conditions cuid71	1969–1971

b. 7, f. 71-72	Pre-trial detention documents cuid72	1968–1971
b. 7, f. 73	Request to charge the jury cuid73	1971
b. 7, f. 74-75	Requested readings cuid74	Circa 1969-1970
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 139	Requested readings cuid75	
b. 7, f. 76	Research assistants information cuid76	1970–1971
b. 7, f. 77	Rory Hithe and Landon Williams Denver proceedings cuid77	1969–1972
b. 7, f. 78	Search and seizure standing cuid78	Circa 1970
b. 7, f. 79	State’s Attorney—appointment and powers cuid79	1969–1970
b. 7, f. 80	Statement on Warren Kimbro by Ericka Huggins cuid80	Circa 1969
b. 7, f. 81	Suppression hearings, FBI subpoenas and motion to quash cuid81	1969–1971
b. 8, f. 82	Time schedule charts cuid82	Circa 1970
b. 8, f. 83	Trial exhibit: Transcript of Bobby Seale’s speech delivered at Battel Chapel Yale University cuid83	1969
b. 8, f. 84	Voir dire cuid84	1970–1971
b. 8, f. 85	Warren Kimbro testimonial cuid85	Circa 1959-1971
b. 8, f. 86	Yale and May Day cuid86 Includes letters from Yale officials including Yale President Kingman Brewster, secretary Reuben A. Holden and dean of Yale Law School Louis H. Pollak to alumni and parents on issues relating to the Black Panther trials. A memorandum to the Yale community from the trial report committee providing a summary of the of the case is also included.	1970

Series II: Correspondence, 1969-1972

The series includes letters to and from Catherine Roraback and Ericka Huggins. Letters received by Ericka Huggins while she was imprisoned include one from Angela Davis. Letters to Black Panthers Landon Williams and Rory Hithe from Ericka Huggins are also included. Correspondence to and from Catherine Roraback documents interests in the trial and includes letters from lawyers such as Charles Garry, who defended Bobby Seale during the New Haven Black Panther trial.

Arranged alphabetically.

Correspondence to and from Ericka Huggins

b. 8, f. 87	Davis, Angela	1971
b. 8, f. 88	Roraback, Catherine	1969-1971
b. 8, f. 89	Williams, Landon	1969
b. 8, f. 90	Unidentified Includes letter to Michael (Mikel), a friend of Ericka Huggins.	1969-1971

Correspondence to and from Catherine Roraback

b. 8, f. 91	Avery, Mike	1971
b. 8, f. 92	"B" general	1971
b. 8, f. 93	Bass, Stanley	1970-1971
b. 8, f. 94	Bramhall, Jennifer	1971
b. 8, f. 95	Caplan, Jerome	1970-1972
b. 8, f. 96	Capron, Barbara	1970
b. 8, f. 97	Cerruti, Gene	Circa 1969-1971
b. 8, f. 98	Circuit Court of Connecticut	1969
b. 8, f. 99	Colfax, David	1970
b. 8, f. 100	Dreyfus, Benjamin	1969
b. 8, f. 101	Eaton, Wade	1971
b. 8, f. 102	Everitt, Charles	1969
b. 8, f. 103	Fitchtenbaum, Leo and Myrna	1971
b. 8, f. 104	Foner, Moe	1971
b. 8, f. 105	Garry, Charles	1969
b. 8, f. 106	Glen, Kristin Booth	1971
b. 8, f. 107	Goldring, Jack	1970
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 140	Goldring, Jack	1970

Correspondence to and from Catherine Roraback (continued)

b. 8, f. 108	Guggenheim, Martin	1969–1970
b. 8, f. 109	Hanson, Bruce	1971
b. 8, f. 110	Johnson, George A.	1969
b. 8, f. 111	"K" general	1971
b. 8, f. 112	Kinoy, Arthur	1971
b. 8, f. 113	Lach, Helen	1971
b. 8, f. 114	Moore, Vernon	1970
b. 8, f. 115	Olds, Bill	Circa 1971
b. 8, f. 116	"P" general	1971
b. 8, f. 117	Price, Hugh	1969–1970
b. 8, f. 118	Psarakis, Emanuel	1969
b. 8, f. 119	Schwartz, Helene E.	1971
b. 8, f. 120	Smith, Edwin	1971
b. 8, f. 121	Tyler, Cheever	1971–1972
b. 8, f. 122	Weinglass, Leonard I.	1971
b. 8, f. 123	Wolff, Rick	1971
b. 8, f. 124	Unidentified	1969

Series III: Personal Papers, 1969-1975

The series includes the personal papers of Ericka Huggins and Catherine Roraback. Ericka Huggins papers document her time in prison. Poems and other writings written by Huggins about her imprisonment and the Black Panther Party are included. Requested reading materials include communist publications such as *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (1967). The series also contains documents related to the possible publishing of a book of poems by Ericka Huggins and Angela Davis. Catherine Roraback's personal papers consist of a painting entitled "Niantic" from Nancy Schulman.

Ericka Huggins		
b. 8, f. 125	Prison writings	1969
b. 8, f. 126	Poems book negotiations	1971-1972
b. 8, f. 127	Receipts	1969-1971
Catherine Roraback		
b. 9 (Oversize), f. 141	"Niantic" watercolor painting from Nancy Schulman	1975

Restricted Fragile Material, Circa 1969–1971

Box 10 contains restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files.
For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 1, folder 13
f. 142

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 128
f. 143

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folders 129 and 130
f. 144

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 131
f. 145

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 2, folder 28
f. 146

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 132
f. 147

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 133
f. 148

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 3, folder 37
f. 149

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 134
f. 150

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 136
f. 151

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 137
f. 152

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 4, folder 45
f. 153

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 4, folder 47
f. 154

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 6, folder 61
f. 155

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 6, folder 66
f. 156

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 139
f. 157

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 7, folder 77
f. 158

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 7, folder 79
f. 159

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 8, folder 85
f. 160

b. 10 (Oversize), Box 9, folder 140
f. 161

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.

Subjects

African American political activists
African Americans -- Connecticut -- New Haven
Black militant organizations -- Connecticut -- New Haven
Black power -- Connecticut -- New Haven
Lawyers -- United States
Political activists -- United States
Trials (Conspiracy) -- Connecticut -- New Haven
Trials (Kidnapping) -- Connecticut -- New Haven
Trials (Murder) -- Connecticut -- New Haven

Geographic Names

New Haven (Conn.) -- Race relations

Occupations

Lawyers -- United States -- 20th Century
Political activists -- United States -- 20th Century

Names

Huggins, Ericka
Roraback, Catherine, 1920-2007

Corporate Body

Black Panther Party

Contributors

Roraback, Catherine, 1920-2007
Huggins, Ericka