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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Olivia Pearl Stokes papers

1934-1991

Sc MG 432

Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project funded by the Lilly Endowment

Processed by Francesca Pitaro, June 1992.

Summary

Creator: Stokes, Olivia Pearl, 1916-

Title: Olivia Pearl Stokes papers

Date: 1934-1991

Size: 4.58 linear feet (11 boxes)

Source: Gift of Olivia Pearl Stokes, June 1991.06/--/1991

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: Educator, lecturer, author and administrator, Olivia Pearl Stokes was an ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches and was well known as a religious educator. The Olivia Pearl Stokes papers document many aspects of her life and career. The papers include correspondence, writings, files related to her professional activities and private affiliations, printed matter, and miscellaneous files.

Preferred citation: [Item], Olivia Pearl Stokes papers, Sc MG 432, 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 Francesca Pitaro, June 1992.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Art and Artifacts Division: postcards.

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: audio 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:

Also found in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture:

Abyssinian Baptist Church Oral History Project, Sc MG 671

Black Women Oral History Project transcripts, Sc MG 45

Olivia Pearl Stokes papers: additions, Sc MG 432

Creator History

Olivia Pearl Stokes, educator, lecturer, author, and administrator, was born on January 1, 1916, in Middlesex, North Carolina, and raised in New York City. She received her B.S. and her M.A. in Education from New York University. In 1952, Stokes completed her Ed.D. at Teacher's College, Columbia University. She was an ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches and was well known as a religious educator.

Stokes began her professional career as the Associate Director of the Baptist Educational Center in Harlem. From 1953 to 1966, she served as Director of the Department of Religious Education for the Massachusetts Council of Churches. Her affiliation with the National Council of Churches included her work as an Urban Educational Consultant to their Department of Educational Development, 1966-1973, and as a consultant to the Division of Education and Ministry, 1975-1976. During her teaching career, Stokes was an associate professor at City University of New York (Lehman College and City College) and New York University. She also taught at the Colgate Rochester Theological School and the Andover-Newton Theological Seminary.

Stokes was a founder of the Greater Harlem Comprehensive Guidance Center in 1979, and served as its executive director from 1979 to 1990. The Center serves minority adolescent students through counseling, career guidance, and cultural enrichment programs. In 1986, as a Fulbright Fellow, she studied Yoruba civilization at the University of Ife, Nigeria. In 1990, Dr. Stokes was a fellow at the Mary Bunting Institute of Radcliffe/Harvard University.

As a lecturer, Stokes used her experiences as an educator and traveler to speak about religious topics, educational issues, and African society and culture. She published two books for children, *Why the Spider Lives in Corners* and *The Beauty of Being Black*. She also contributed to many religious and educational publications.

Among the honors awarded Dr. Stokes are the National Bethune Achievement Award of the National Council of Negro Women in 1976, and the International Award from the Business and Professional Women's Association in 1979. She was one of fifty-five Black women profiled in the 1981 Radcliffe College book *Women of Courage*. In 1987, she was awarded the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa* from Marymount Manhattan College.

Scope and Content Note

The Olivia Pearl Stokes papers document many aspects of her life and career, including as an educator, writer, lecturer, and community activist. The papers include correspondence, writings, files related to her professional activities and private affiliations, printed matter, and miscellaneous files. Correspondence includes letters from friends and relatives as well as letters regarding her professional

pursuits and speaking engagements. Among the personal correspondence, the most extensive group of letters is from Beatrice Seymour-Wilson, Stokes's sister who lived in Sierra Leone for many years. Also included are several letters from friends in Africa and from scholarship students and missionaries who received aid from Stokes personally or from organizations with which she was affiliated. Writings include typed and handwritten manuscripts, and research files for both published and unpublished works. Of particular interest is Stokes's manuscript on African women, "The Women of Africa". Although the book was never published, the manuscript and research files document the lives of many prominent African and African American women living in Africa. The book was begun during the period of national liberation for many former colonies, and it was intended to educate Americans about the role of African women and their organizations in the process of rebuilding post-colonial Africa. The files include research material, correspondence, and a typed manuscript. Writings also include a typed copy of Stokes's dissertation, "An Evaluation of the Leadership Training Program of the Baptist Educational Center and Recommendation for Its Improvement", as well as miscellaneous articles and papers, particularly on the subject of Christian education. The Organization files include material on Stokes's professional and private affiliations. Among the organizations represented are: Lehman College, the Greater Harlem Comprehensive Guidance Center (of which Stokes was a founder), the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, the Abyssinian Baptist Church, Berea College, and Delta Sigma Theta sorority. Programs include printed matter and planning material relating to Stokes's role as a participant or a speaker at various conferences, workshops, prayer services, and seminars. The Tours files relate to tours to Africa and the Holy Land organized by Stokes. Printed matter includes clippings, articles, brochures, programs, and miscellaneous publications. Among the Miscellaneous papers are biographical materials, awards and honors, and prayer services and sermons.

Arrangement: Organized into seven series: I. Correspondence; II. Writing; III. Organizations; IV. Programs; V. Tours; VI. Printed matter; and VII. Miscellaneous.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American churches
 African American college teachers
 African American women -- Education
 African American women clergy
 African American women college teachers
 African American women educators
 Authors, Black
 Religious educators

Names

Stokes, Olivia Pearl, 1916-
 Abyssinian Baptist Church (New York, N.Y.)
 Baptist Educational Center (New York, N.Y.)
 Berea College
 Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
 Greater Harlem Comprehensive Guidance Center
 Massachusetts Council of Churches
 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America

Container List

Correspondence 1936-1991

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- b. 1 f. 2 1954-1959
- b. 1 f. 3 1960-1968
- b. 1 f. 4 1970-1972
- b. 1 f. 5 1973-1975
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- b. 1 f. 10-11 1978
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Employment 1974-1979

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Writing

- b. 3 f. 1 Black heritage
- b. 3 f. 2-3 Black hymnal
- b. 3 f. 4-5 "An Evaluation of the Leadership Training Program of the Baptist Educational Center and Recommendation for Its Improvement"
- b. 3 f. 6 "The New Generation in Africa"
- b. 3 f. 7-11 Urban Church Development Plan
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"Women of Africa"

Correspondence

- b. 4 f. 1 1961-1963
- b. 4 f. 2 1964-1971
- b. 4 f. 3 Preface
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- b. 4 f. 5 Chapter 2
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- b. 4 f. 10 Notes and outlines
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 - Abyssinian Baptist Church
 - b. 5 f. 7 1962-1972
 - b. 5 f. 8 1976-1991
 - b. 5 f. 9-11 Miscellaneous
 - b. 6 f. 1 Baptist Educational Center 1947-1950
 - Berea College
 - b. 6 f. 2 1972-1978
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 - b. 6 f. 4 1981-1982
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 - b. 6 f. 7-8 Printed matter
 - b. 6 f. 9 Bronx Council on the Arts 1976-1981
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 - Greater Harlem Comprehensive Guidance Center
 - b. 7 f. 1 Correspondence 1982-1989
 - b. 7 f. 2 Program and personnel
 - b. 7 f. 3 Clippings 1977-1984
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 - b. 7 f. 5 Miscellaneous
 - b. 7 f. 6 Human Freedom Scholarship Fund 1966-1972
 - b. 7 f. 7-8 Lehman College 1973-1977
 - b. 7 f. 9 Massachusetts Council of Churches ca. 1958-1966
 - b. 7 f. 10-12 National Council of Churches, Division of Education and Ministry 1976-1978
 - b. 8 f. 1 Parent Preparation, Inc 1979
 - b. 8 f. 2 Sentinel Baptist Camp 1982-1983
 - b. 8 f. 3 Miscellaneous
- Programs 1934-1991
 - b. 8 f. 4-8 1945-1991
 - b. 8 f. 9 ABE Institute, Howard University 1971
 - b. 8 f. 10 Christian Youth Conferences ca. 1934-1944
 - b. 9 f. 1-2 Dynamism of International Relations 1980
 - b. 9 f. 3-4 MBO Institute 1976
 - b. 9 f. 5 Parish Education Consultation 1973
 - b. 9 f. 6 Religious Education Association 1980
- Tours 1963-1987
 - b. 9 f. 7-8 Art Tour to Africa 1978

Tours (cont.)

- b. 9 f. 9 Discovering Our Roots 1979
- b. 9 f. 10 West Africa (Phi Delta Kappa) 1980
- b. 9 f. 11 Miscellaneous 1963-1987
- Printed matter 1938-1990
- b. 10 f. 1-2 Africa ca. 1959-1976
- b. 10 f. 3-5 Articles and reprints ca. 1938-1990
- b. 10 f. 6-8 Brochures and programs
- Clippings
- b. 10 f. 9 On Stokes 1946-1987
- b. 10 f. 10 Miscellaneous 1938-1985
- b. 11 f. 1-4 Miscellaneous titles
- Miscellaneous 1938-1990
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