



The New York Public Library
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Guide to the

Claudia Zaslavsky papers

1969-1981

Sc MG 231

Summary

Creator: Zaslavsky, Claudia

Title: Claudia Zaslavsky papers

Date: 1969-1981

Size: 0.83 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Gift of Claudia Zaslavsky, September-November 1986.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: The Claudia Zaslavsky papers consist of typescripts and research material, such as notes, correspondence, and annotated printed matter, pertaining to Zaslavsky's book *Africa Counts: Number and Patter in African Culture*, 1973. Additionally, there is a reprint of an article by Zaslavsky entitled "Mathematics of the Yoruba People and of their Neighbors in Southern Nigeria," published in *The Two Years College Mathematics Journal*, 1970, as well as other articles and reviews by Zaslavsky dealing with African mathematics. A subject index at the beginning of the collection lists (by author) the various sources used in the writing of *Africa Counts*. Also included are a bibliography, reference and biographical notes, captions, and illustrations.

Preferred citation: [Item], Claudia Zaslavsky papers, Sc MG 231, 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: Accessioned by Andre Elizee, September 1986, and Diana Lachatanere, December 1986. Two accessions consolidated into one collection.

Creator History

Claudia Zaslavsky (born Cohen) was born in New York City in 1917. She studied mathematics at Hunter College and statistics at the University of Michigan. Her interest in mathematics in African culture developed when she was a teacher at Woodlands High School in Hartsdale, New York, and sought materials that would encourage her African American students to regard mathematics as part of

their cultural heritage. She found that little of what was known about this topic was available in accessible sources. Thus began a years-long project of assembling, organizing, and interpreting a vast amount of little-known material on expressions of mathematics in diverse African cultures. She conducted field work in East Africa and Nigeria. In 1973, she published her major work, *Africa Counts: Number and Pattern in African Culture*, which remains the classic reference on this topic and has been translated into French and Hungarian.

After publication of this work, Zaslavsky continued to publish articles in professional journals on African mathematics, multicultural mathematics, and mathematics education. She also wrote three children's books (including *Count on Your Fingers, African Style*, and *Zero: Is It Something? Is It Nothing?*) and four resource books for teachers and parents (including *Math Games and Activities from Around the World*). She also wrote books for adults: *Fear of Math: How to Get over It*, *Get on With Your Life*, and *Preparing Young Children for Math: A Book of Games*.

Zaslavsky's efforts found a home in the field of ethnomathematics, the study of the ways in which mathematical concepts are expressed and used in the everyday life of diverse cultures. She was a mentor to many younger scholars and activists in this field. As such, she always kept foremost the importance of recognizing the mathematical accomplishments of groups who are underrepresented in the world of mathematics, including women and people of diverse cultures. She was also a lifelong activist in movements for civil rights, peace, and social justice. She passed away in 2006.

Scope and Content Note

The Claudia Zaslavsky papers consist of typescripts and research material, such as notes, correspondence, and annotated printed matter, pertaining to Zaslavsky's book *Africa Counts: Number and Pattern in African Culture*, 1973. Additionally, there is a reprint of an article by Zaslavsky entitled "Mathematics of the Yoruba People and of their Neighbors in Southern Nigeria," published in *The Two Years College Mathematics Journal*, 1970, as well as other articles and reviews by Zaslavsky dealing with African mathematics. A subject index at the beginning of the collection lists (by author) the various sources used in the writing of *Africa Counts*. Also included are a bibliography, reference and biographical notes, captions, and illustrations.

Arrangement: Arranged into two series: I. Writing and II. Research notes and printed matter.

Key Terms

Subjects

Ethnomathematics
Women mathematics teachers
Yoruba (African people)

Occupations

Mathematicians.

Names

Zaslavsky, Claudia

Container List

Writing 1969-1973

- b. 1 f. 1 "Mathematics of the Yoruba People and of Their Neighbors in Southern Nigeria"
Africa Counts: Number and Pattern in African Culture
- b. 1 f. 2 Index of sources
- b. 1 f. 3 Correspondence 1969-1973
- b. 1 f. 4-6 Typescript
- b. 1 f. 7 Page inserts
- b. 1 f. 8 Bibliography
- b. 1 f. 9 Index
- b. 1 f. 10 Tables
- b. 1 f. 11 Reference notes
- b. 1 f. 12 Biographical notes
- b. 1 f. 13 Captions
- b. 1 f. 14 Illustrations
- b. 1 f. 15 Reviews

Research notes and printed matter 1969-1981

- b. 2 f. 1 *Correspondence regarding Africa Counts* 1969-1981
- b. 2 f. 2 Raum, O. F
- b. 2 f. 3 Seidenberg, A
- b. 2 f. 4 Lagercrantz, Sture
- b. 2 f. 5 Johnson, Marion
- b. 2 f. 6 Idehen, Peter
- b. 2 f. 7 Herskovits, Melville
- b. 2 f. 8 Abel, H
- b. 2 f. 9 Materials on Routledge, Levy-Bruhl, and Kenyatta
- b. 2 f. 10 A-L
- b. 2 f. 11 M-R
- b. 2 f. 12 S-Z
- b. 2 f. 13 Miscellaneous
- b. 2 f. 14 Other articles by Zaslavsky