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Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Jean Sindab papers**

1970-1995

Sc MG 610

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2015

## Summary

**Creator:** Sindab, N. Jean (Nellie Jean)

**Title:** Jean Sindab papers

**Date:** 1970-1995

**Size:** 13 linear feet (31 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by the Jean Sindab Estate, 1997.

**Abstract:** Dr. Jean Sindab (1944-1996) was an African American scholar and activist for environmental, social, and racial justice. The Jean Sindab papers date from 1970 to 1995 and contain professional files that document subjects of interest to Sindab; organizations for which she worked; conferences that she organized or attended; and local, grassroots, and governmental initiatives related to environmental and racial justice in the United States, Latin America, and Africa. The collection also holds travel diaries and appointment books.

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2015

## Creator History

Dr. Jean Sindab (1944-1996) was an African American scholar and activist for environmental, social, and racial justice. Between 1980 and 1995, through governmental and religious programs, Sindab led successful campaigns to end global and environmental racism. Central to her work were the connections between environmental, economic, racial, and sociopolitical justice within a global context,

particularly in African countries and American cities. She was an advisor to Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition from 1986 through Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign, and served as a consultant to several United Nations agencies, including the Center Against Apartheid, the Council for Namibia, and the Institute for Namibia in Lusaka, Zambia.

Born Nellie Jean Sindab in Cleveland, Ohio, Sindab was raised in Brooklyn, New York. After earning her bachelor's degree in African History from Hunter College in 1974, she completed three advanced degrees from Yale University: master's degrees in International Relations (1976) and Political Science (1977); and a Ph.D., also in Political Science. She completed her dissertation, *The Impact of Expatriates on Zambian Development*, in 1984. Among her scholarly affiliations were the African Studies Association (ASA) and the Association of Concerned African Scholars (ACAS). Throughout her studies and career, Sindab traveled extensively around Europe and to several countries in Africa, including Ghana, Nigeria, Namibia, Togo, and Zambia.

In 1980, Sindab was appointed executive director of the Washington Office on Africa and the Washington Office on Africa Education Fund. From 1986 to 1991, she was executive secretary of the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches (WCC), in Geneva, Switzerland. In the United States, her roles at the National Council of Churches (NCC), where she worked from 1992 to 1996, included program director of the Economic and Environmental Prophetic Justice Unit, the Justice/Hunger Concerns Unit, and the Eco-Justice Working Group. She served on the boards of several organizations, including the Peace Development Fund, the New World Foundation, and the Third World Women's Project for the Institute for Policy Studies.

Jean Sindab died of cancer in 1996 in New York City.

## Scope and Content Note

The Jean Sindab papers date from 1970 to 1995 and primarily consist of professional files created by Sindab throughout the course of her career. Travel diaries, appointment books, and files concerning Sindab's education at Hunter College and Yale University are also present.

The professional files document subjects of interest to Sindab; organizations for which she worked, served as a board member, or that she was otherwise involved with; conferences that she organized or attended; and local, grassroots, and governmental initiatives that furthered her efforts in environmental and racial justice in the United States, Latin America, and Eastern and Southern Africa. Subjects documented include race relations; environmental justice strategy; economic and social reform; environmental education; global and environmental racism; church statements on racism; South Africa; and African American youth. Sindab's involvement with a variety of organizations is well documented, including the National Council of Churches (NCC), the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Washington Office on Africa (WOA), the New World Foundation, the Peace Development Fund, and the National Political Congress of Black Women. Conferences, symposia, summits, and other events that are represented through the files include the Progressive National Baptist Convention; the 1985 Non-Governmental World Meeting for Women in Nairobi, Kenya; and the 1994 Environmental Grant Makers Association Fall Retreat. Education files document Sindab's studies at Hunter College and Yale University and contain essays, examinations, syllabi, and research files. Also present is an annotated draft of her dissertation, *The Impact of Expatriates on Zambian Development* (1984).

The professional files vary in terms of volume and content, and may include reports, action agendas, calls for participation, conference materials, articles, brochures, correspondence, speeches, and other writings created by Sindab. Subject files may contain documents relating to conferences or other

related projects. For example, the file for Economic and Social Reform contains a proposal for The Black Church Summit on Environmental Justice, a pamphlet for The Harvest Institute, and a report on the Voices of the Garden Project in the San Francisco area. Likewise, conference files may contain articles or reports on related subjects. Files for Jesse Jackson contain materials relating to the 1988 presidential campaign, the Rainbow Coalition, and speeches, addresses, and conference proposals.

Researchers should consult correspondence, speeches, writings, and notes files in addition to the professional files, as information on a given topic may be represented in both places. For example, while correspondence files hold incoming and outgoing letters pertaining to the WCC and other personal and professional projects, the WCC files themselves also contain correspondence. Furthermore, essays contained in a writings file may overlap with topics addressed in other places in the collection.

Appointment books and travel diaries date from 1970 to 1993 and further document Sindab's personal and professional activities, such as business travels or meetings not otherwise represented in the collection. One travel diary summarizes her experiences in Geneva, Switzerland in 1987, a period when she was particularly active in the Programme to Combat Racism for the WCC.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged by file type, with Professional Files further arranged alphabetically by subject.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

African American scholars  
Women environmentalists

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Articles  
Essays  
Proceedings  
Reports  
Research (document genres)  
Speeches (documents)  
Writings (document genre)

### **Subjects**

Church and minorities  
Environmental degradation -- Religious aspects  
Environmental justice -- Religious aspects

### **Geographic Names**

South Africa -- Race relations  
United States -- Race relations

### **Names**

Jackson, Jesse, 1941-  
Association of Concerned African Scholars  
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America  
Washington Office on Africa  
World Council of Churches. Programme to Combat Racism

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