



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Donna Allegra papers

1981-2002

Sc MG 792

Processed by Nora Soto, 2016-2017.

Summary

Creator: Allegra, Donna

Title: Donna Allegra papers

Date: 1981-2002

Size: 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Gift of Donna Allegra, 2002.

Abstract: Donna Allegra was an African-American lesbian writer, poet, essayist, and dancer. The Donna Allegra papers, 1981-2002, contain twenty-five published essays, short stories, and poems spanning across Allegra's writing career.

Preferred citation: [Item], Donna Allegra papers, Sc MG 792, 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 Nora Soto, 2016-2017.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Creator History

Donna Allegra was an African-American lesbian writer, poet, essayist and dancer. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Allegra studied theater at Bennington College and Hunter College, graduating from New York University, in 1977, with a Bachelor's degree in dramatic literature, theater history, and cinema. She worked as a construction electrician to support her writing and dancing; reviewed dance, theatre and film productions as a freelance cultural journalist; and produced lesbian and feminist-oriented radio programming for WBAI from 1975-1981.

Allegra was an early member of the Jemima Writers Collective, the first Black lesbian writing group in

New York City. The collective grew out of the Salsa Soul Sisters, the oldest Black lesbian organization in the United States, and was founded to encourage Black women writers to share their creative work with each other in a supportive environment. Fellow members of Jemima included Candace Boyce, Georgia Brooks, Linda Brown, Robin Christian, Yvonne Flowers (Maua), Chirlane McCray, Irare Sabasu, and Sapphire. Allegra later joined the Gap-Toothed Girlfriends Writers Workshop.

A prolific writer of poetry, short stories, and biographical essays, Allegra has been published in over thirty lesbian and feminist anthologies and numerous Black and lesbian journals and magazines. In 2001, she published her first book, *Witness to the League of Blonde Hip Hop Dancers*, a collection of twelve short stories and a novella about Black lesbian dancers. In addition to her writing career, Allegra was an accomplished African folklore and jazz dancer. Allegra passed away January 13, 2020.

Scope and Content Note

The Donna Allegra papers, 1981-2002, contain twenty-five published essays, short stories, and poems spanning across Allegra's writing career. Prominent subjects include race and anti-Black racism, feminism, social class, and butch gender identity. Allegra draws on her experiences as a construction electrician and a dancer in her fictional work, and her memoir writing explores her strained relationship with her mother and her travels in Guinea studying dance.

The Donna Allegra papers are organized into two series. The Biographical series, approximately 2000-2001, contains bibliographies of her published essays, short stories and poems; short biographies; and various material related to public appearances. The Writings series, 1981-2002, consists of twenty-two photocopied biographical essays and short fiction centered on the Black lesbian experience and organized chronologically by date of publication in gay and lesbian anthologies, including excerpts of an unpublished novel, *The Secrets of Light and Power*. Also included are four poems published in two lesbian poetry anthologies.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American dancers
African American lesbians
African American women authors
African American women critics
African American women journalists
African American women poets
African Americans -- Race identity
African Americans -- Social conditions
Black author
Dancers -- New York (State) -- New York
Erotic literature writers
Essayists -- New York (State) -- New York
Feminism -- United States
Folk dancers -- New York (State) -- New York
Identity politics -- United States
Lesbian authors
Politics and culture -- United States
Sex role -- United States

Women dancers -- New York (State) -- New York
Working class authors

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Essays
Fiction
Poetry

Geographic Names

United States -- Race relations

Names

Allegra, Donna
Jemima Writers Collective (New York, N.Y.)
Salsa Soul Sisters (Organization : New York, N.Y.)

Container List

b. 1 f. 1 Biographical 2000-2001

Writings 1981-2002

Arranged chronologically.

b. 1 f. 2 *"Notes on Racism Among the Women", Out the Other Side: Contemporary Lesbian Writing* 1988

b. 1 f. 3 *"One Mirror, Three Reflections: A Movement in Dance", Finding the Lesbians: Personal Accounts from around the World* 1990

b. 1 f. 4 *"Butch on the Streets", The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* 1992

b. 1 f. 5 *"Top of the Morning: A Love Song, a Vow", Woman in the Window* 1993

b. 1 f. 6 *"Buddies", 40 Contemporary Lesbian and Gay Short Stories* 1994

b. 1 f. 7 *"Comparing Class Notes", Out of the Class Closet: Lesbians Speak* 1994

b. 1 f. 8 *"Between the Sheets: My Sex Life in Literature", Lesbian Erotics* 1995

b. 1 f. 9 *"She Tickles with a Hammer", Dyke Life* 1995

b. 1 f. 10 *"Snatched", Queer View Mirror* 1995

b. 1 f. 11 *"Bread from a Stone", Best Lesbian Erotica* 1997 1996

b. 1 f. 12 *"Carson", Countering the Myths: Lesbians Write about the Men in Their Lives* 1996

b. 1 f. 13 *"Salt", Lesbian Short Fiction* 1996

b. 1 f. 14 *"Inconspicuous Assumptions", Queerly Classed: Gay Men and Lesbians Write about Class* 1997

b. 1 f. 15 *"Kenya's Family Visit", Girls: An Anthology* 1997

b. 1 f. 16 *"Strapped", Queer View Mirror 2* 1997

b. 1 f. 17 *"Dancing Home a Stranger", Lesbian Travels: A Literary Companion* 1998

b. 1 f. 18 *"Don't Pick at Yourself, Dear", Mom* 1998

b. 1 f. 19 *"On Scent as Memory's Keepsake", Hot and Bothered: Short Short Fiction on Lesbian Desire* 1998

b. 1 f. 20 *"Fire Alarm Theory", Hot and Bothered 2: Short Short Fiction on Lesbian Desire* 1999

b. 1 f. 21 *"Me and Mrs. Jones", Best Lesbian Erotica* 1999 1999

b. 1 f. 22 *"Foreword: Rhomboid Pegs for Oblong Hearts", The Lesbian Polyamory Reader: Open Relationships, Non-Monogamy, and Casual Sex* 1999

b. 1 f. 23 *"Darrin", Blithe House Quarterly* 2002

b. 1 f. 24 Poems 1981-1999

Includes "A Rape Poem for Men" and "When People Ask", *Lesbian Poetry: An Anthology*, 1981; and "Looking Back" and "Pretty in the Dark Morning", *My Lover Is a Woman: Contemporary Lesbian Love Poems*, 1991-1999.