



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

Guide to the

**Maxwell T. Cohen letters to Miriam Makeba and Stokely Carmichael**

1966-1969

Sc MG 835

## Summary

**Creator:** Cohen, Maxwell T., 1908-2000

**Title:** Maxwell T. Cohen letters to Miriam Makeba and Stokely Carmichael

**Date:** 1966-1969

**Size:** 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

**Source:** Gift of Barbara Cohen-Stratynier and Rachel Val Cohen, 2008.

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

**Abstract:** Maxwell T. Cohen was an attorney who represented South African singer, Miriam Makeba (1932-2008) in the late 1950s, when she was married to musician Hugh Masekela. By 1966, Cohen no longer represented Makeba, but remained friendly and continued to correspond with the family. Makeba separated from Masekela and later married Stokely Carmichael, the former head of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The collection consists of copies of 35 letters and items written primarily by Maxwell Cohen to Miriam Makeba, Sibongile "Bongi" Makeba, her only daughter from a previous union, and her two former husbands, Stokely Carmichael (aka Kwame Ture) and musician Hugh Masekela. Subjects of the letters are business-oriented in nature, but there are a few personal letters Cohen penned to Makeba's daughter, "Bongi," urging her to stay in school. The majority of the letters refer to Makeba's business interests in Nassau, The Bahamas, and consist of exchanges between the lawyers and suppliers who were working with her to open a boutique. In response to Carmichael's anti-Zionist rhetoric (reportedly in 1967, Carmichael publicly proclaimed that "the only good Zionist is a dead Zionist" when Israel was attacked by the armies of several Arab nations), Cohen wrote a three-page letter to Carmichael specifically addressing a clipping (not in the collection) featuring an anti-Jewish Carmichael quote on the involvement of Jewish people in the Civil Rights movement and other human rights struggles. In addition, Cohen wrote letters of a general nature to Masekela, whom he also managed at one point. This collection contains no letters written by Makeba, her daughter, or Carmichael or Masekela.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Maxwell T. Cohen letters to Miriam Makeba and Stokely Carmichael, Sc MG 835, 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 Steven G. Fullwood, November 2010.

## **Creator History**

Maxwell T. Cohen was an attorney who represented South African singer, Miriam Makeba (1932-2008) in the late 1950s, when she was married to musician Hugh Masekela. By 1966, Cohen no longer represented Makeba, but remained friendly and continued to correspond with the family. Makeba separated from Masekela and later married Stokely Carmichael, the former head of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

## **Scope and Content Note**

The collection consists of copies of 35 letters and items written primarily by Maxwell Cohen to Miriam Makeba, Sibongile "Bongi" Makeba, her only daughter from a previous union, and her two former husbands, Stokely Carmichael (aka Kwame Ture) and musician Hugh Masekela. Subjects of the letters are business-oriented in nature, but there are a few personal letters Cohen penned to Makeba's daughter, "Bongi," urging her to stay in school. The majority of the letters refer to Makeba's business interests in Nassau, The Bahamas, and consist of exchanges between the lawyers and suppliers who were working with her to open a boutique. In response to Carmichael's anti-Zionist rhetoric (reportedly in 1967, Carmichael publicly proclaimed that "the only good Zionist is a dead Zionist" when Israel was attacked by the armies of several Arab nations), Cohen wrote a three-page letter to Carmichael specifically addressing a clipping (not in the collection) featuring an anti-Jewish Carmichael quote on the involvement of Jewish people in the Civil Rights movement and other human rights struggles. In addition, Cohen wrote letters of a general nature to Masekela, whom he also managed at one point. This collection contains no letters written by Makeba, her daughter, or Carmichael or Masekela.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Antisemitism

Civil rights -- United States

Women singers -- South Africa

### **Names**

Carmichael, Stokely, 1941-1998

Cohen, Maxwell T., 1908-2000

Makeba, Bongi

Makeba, Miriam