



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

Guide to the

Janet McDonald papers

1960-2007

Sc MG 907

Processed by Dalena Hunter and Nora Soto, 2015-2016.

Summary

Creator: McDonald, Janet, 1953-2007

Title: Janet McDonald papers

Date: 1960-2007

Size: 2.92 linear feet (7 boxes)

Source: Gift of Katherine "Kokie" Andrews, 2012.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: Janet Arnedo McDonald was an African American novelist, journalist, and lawyer. The Janet McDonald papers, 1960-2007, document her personal experiences as an African American lesbian throughout her education, legal career, and professional accomplishments as a writer and novelist.

Preferred citation: [Item], Janet McDonald papers, Sc MG 907, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English Some material in French.

Processing note: Processed by Dalena Hunter and Nora Soto, 2015-2016.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: moving image material. For more information, please contact the division at schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org or 212-491-2270.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

Creator History

Janet Arnedo McDonald was an African American novelist, journalist, and lawyer. A member of MENSA, McDonald was a gifted student who earned degrees from Vassar College, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, and New York University School of Law. She majored in

French Literature at Vassar and studied abroad in Paris. After graduating in 1977, McDonald attended Cornell Law School, eventually earning a law degree years later at New York University School of Law in 1986.

McDonald practiced law in New York, Seattle, and Paris. An avid writer throughout her life, she published her first book in 1999, the memoir *Project Girl*, which was inspired by personal experiences growing up in the Brooklyn projects. She would continue to publish young adult novels, until her death from colon cancer in 2007, including *Spellbound* (2001), *Chill Wind* (2002), *Twists and Turns* (2003), *Brother Hood* (2004), *Harlem Hustle* (2006), and *Off-Color* (2007).

Scope and Content Note

The Janet McDonald papers, 1960-2007, document her personal experiences as an African American lesbian throughout her education, legal career, and professional accomplishments as a writer and novelist. The collection contains personal correspondence, identification cards, school records and course work, medical records, employment records, published manuscripts and articles, interviews and publicity appearances, reviews, awards, unpublished manuscripts, and notebooks. The bulk of the collection is dated 1985-2007 and includes both English and French material.

Arrangement: Organized into two series: (1) Personal and (2) Writing.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American lesbians
African American women -- France -- Paris -- Biography
African American women authors
African American women in the professions
African American women journalists
African American women lawyers
African American women novelists
Authors, Black
Gay lawyers

Names

McDonald, Janet, 1953-2007

Container List

Personal 1960-2007

The Personal series contains biographical material about McDonald's personal life, education, and legal career. The Biographical subseries includes correspondence with various colleges, therapists, and employers; letters to family and friends; passports and identification cards; business cards; resumes detailing McDonald's legal and writing careers in English and French; employment records; and obituaries and funeral materials from McDonald's death in April 2007. The Education subseries consists of school records and course work from Sands Junior High, the Harlem Preparatory School, Vassar College, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Cornell Law School, and New York University School of Law.

Arranged into two subseries: (1) Biographical and (2) Education.

Biographical 1972-2007

- b. 1 f. 1 Personal correspondence ca. 1972-2001
- b. 1 f. 2-3 Identification cards
- b. 1 f. 4 Resumes
- b. 1 f. 5 Legal career
- b. 1 f. 6 Obituaries

Education 1960-1989

- b. 1 f. 7 Sands Junior High School
- b. 7 f. 1 Harlem Preparatory School
Box 7, folder 1, replaces box 1, folder 8.
- Vassar College
 - b. 1 f. 9 English 1973-1975
 - b. 1 f. 10 French 1974-1977
 - b. 1 f. 11 Psychology 1974-1975
 - b. 1 f. 12 Sociology, Philosophy, and Religion 1976-1977
 - b. 2 f. 1 Miscellaneous notes
 - b. 2 f. 2 French thesis
- b. 2 f. 3-6 Columbia University
- b. 7 f. 2-4 Law school

Writing ca. 1972-2007

The Writing series features four manuscripts of McDonald's published books and various clippings of her articles in English and French, as well as other material related to her published works. Also included are seven unpublished manuscripts, various notebooks, loose sheets of diary entries, and writing notes. There is scant information about McDonald's life as a lesbian except for in an unpublished manuscript from 2000, "Undoings in Amsterdam".

Arranged into 8 series: (1) Published; (2) Publicity; (3) Interviews; (4) Reviews; (5) Correspondence; (6) Awards and appearances; (7) Unpublished; and (8) Notebooks.

Published 1976-2007

This subseries features annotated manuscripts and drafts of four of McDonald's published books: *Project Girl*, under the title *Brooklyn in the House: Memoir of a Project Girl*, dated 1995; *Brother Hood* (2004); *Harlem Hustle* (2006); and *Off-Color* (2007). Also included are articles written by McDonald in English and French for publications such as *Small Business Opportunities*, *The Seattle Times*, *Essence*, *Salon Magazine*, *The Village Voice*, *Newsday*, and *Paris Voice*.

Writing (cont.)

Published (cont.)

Books

b. 3 f. 1 *Brooklyn in the House: Memoir of a Project Girl* ca. 1995

b. 3 f. 2 *Brother Hood* ca. 2004

Harlem Hustle ca. 2006

b. 3 f. 3 Manuscript

b. 3 f. 4 First-pass master pages

Off-Color ca. 2007

b. 3 f. 5 Manuscript

b. 3 f. 6 First-pass master pages

b. 4 f. 1 Second-pass master pages

b. 4 f. 2 Edited master pages

Articles

b. 4 f. 3 1976-1999

b. 4 f. 4 "A dime bag for the school girl", excerpt from *Project Girl*, for *Salon* 1999

b. 4 f. 5 2000-2005

b. 4 f. 6 Articles in French

b. 4 f. 7 Publicity ca. 2006-2007

This subseries includes press packets and publisher's material for *Harlem Hustle* and *Off-Color*.

b. 4 f. 8 Interviews ca. 2000-2006

This subseries consists of several interviews in English and French with McDonald about her published work.

Reviews 1999-2005

This subseries contains reviews in English and French, as well as book evaluations and reader reviews of McDonald's books from American schools and libraries. Also included is the *Project Girl* scrapbook, which contains clippings, reviews, and promotional material related to McDonald's 1999 memoir.

b. 5 f. 1 1999-2001

b. 5 f. 2 2002-2005

b. 5 f. 3 Book evaluations

b. 5 f. 4 *Project Girl* scrapbook

Correspondence 1992-2007

This subseries includes correspondence with literary agents and book publishers; reader fan mail; comments on McDonald's books and articles; publishing contracts; and royalty invoices.

b. 5 f. 5-6 Regarding publications 1992-2007

b. 5 f. 7 Reader correspondence ca. 1999-2006

b. 7 f. 6 Contracts and invoices

Box 7, folder 6 replaces box 5, folder 8.

b. 5 f. 9 Awards and appearances 2000-2006

This subseries consists of awards and clippings about McDonald's various promotional appearances in schools, libraries, and bookstores across the United States and France.

Unpublished 2000-2007

This subseries includes seven unpublished manuscripts.

Writing (cont.)

Unpublished (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 1 "Undoings in Amsterdam" ca. 2000
 - b. 6 f. 2 "Saving New York" ca. 2001
 - b. 6 f. 3 "Starcrossed" ca. 2002
 - b. 6 f. 4 "The Caroline Burkey Haters Club" (written as Jesse Perdu)
 - b. 6 f. 5 "Double Blind" ca. 2007
 - b. 6 f. 6 "Class Action" undated
 - b. 6 f. 7 "Undertow" undated
 - b. 6 f. 8-10 **Notebooks** ca. 1972-2007
 - b. 7 f. 5
- This subseries contains three notebooks, five legal pads, various loose sheets and clippings of diary entries, writing notes, and story outlines.