



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

Guide to the

Black films collection

1939-1984 [bulk 1967-1984]

Sc MG 285

Summary

Title: Black films collection

Date: 1939-1984 [bulk 1967-1984]

Size: 3.2 linear feet

Abstract: The Black Films Collection consists of scripts, press sheets, press kits, movie stills and posters. The scope of the collection extends from the first African-American talkie "Hallelujah" to stills from movies of the early 1980's. A few of the many films for which there is information are "Birth of a Nation," "Coffy," "Cotton Comes to Harlem," "The Great White Hope," "Superfly," and "To Kill a Mockingbird." There are twenty-eight scripts including "Black Samson," "I Passed for White," "The Jesse Owens Story," "The Klansman," and "Roots."

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Black films collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

The Black Films Collection documents the marketing of African Americans in American motion pictures. The film careers of Sidney Poitier, Dorothy Dandridge, Harry Belafonte, Pam Grier, Brock Peters and Jim Brown are well represented. Production companies in the collection include Warner Brothers, Avco Embassy Pictures Corp., United Artists, American International Pictures, Columbia Pictures, Paramount, New World Pictures, National General, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, New Line Cinema and Twentieth Century-Fox. The bulk of the collection is from the "blaxploitation" era of the 1970s, and was generated by film studios and distributors to market the movies to theaters.

Scope and Content Note

The Black Films Collection consists of scripts, press sheets, press kits, movie stills and posters. The scope of the collection extends from the first African-American talkie "Hallelujah" to stills from movies of the early 1980's. A few of the many films for which there is information are "Birth of a Nation," "Coffy," "Cotton Comes to Harlem," "The Great White Hope," "Superfly," and "To Kill a Mockingbird." There are

twenty-eight scripts including "Black Samson," "I Passed for White," "The Jesse Owens Story," "The Klansman," and "Roots." The kits usually include a synopsis of the film (not for publication), articles and ads for local newspapers, biographies of the performers, photographic stills for display, lobby cards and promotional materials. Some of these have images obviously doctored to suite the sensibilities of white audiences, while some ads have directions specifying "for black audiences only."