



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

Guide to the

Léon-Gontran Damas papers

1949-1978

Sc MG 302

Summary

Creator: Damas, Léon-Gontran, 1912-1978

Title: Léon-Gontran Damas papers

Date: 1949-1978

Size: 28 linear feet (28 record cartons)

Source: Gift, de Campos Vieira, Virginia, 11/29/1989

Abstract: Personal papers, professional and literary correspondence, office files, research notes and printed matter documenting the professional and literary activities of Léon-Gontran Damas, an author, lecturer and acting-chairman of the department of African Studies and Research Program at Howard University (1975-1976). Smaller bodies of materials document his earlier career as representative of French Guiana to the French National Assembly in the 1950s. Damas's research notes and printed matter include a voluminous compilation of writings and biographical sketches of Brazilian authors of African descent from the 18th century to the 1950s. The Négritude movement is documented throughout the collection with published and unpublished essays, biographical and bibliographical articles, student papers from Howard University and the Federal City College in Washington, D.C., conference materials, and selected records of the Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation.

Access: Advance notice required.

Conditions Governing Access:

Office files and printed matter. use of these materials requires advance notice.

Preferred citation: Léon-Gontran Damas papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Born in Cayenne, French Guiana, in 1912, Léon-Gontran Damas was a poet, journalist, educator and statesman who co-founded the Négritude literary movement in the 1930s with the Martinique born poet

Aimé Césaire and the Senegalese author and statesman Léopold Sédar Senghor. Damas studied modern oriental languages, literature, history and ethnology, and began his career in journalism and literature in Paris in the 1930s. His first volume of poems, *Pigments*, appeared in 1937. He served briefly in the French army during the Second World War, and joined the French Resistance after his demobilization. Elected representative of Guiana to the French Parliament after the war, he was appointed to the High Court of Justice and served as Rapporteur of a parliamentary commission to the Ivory Coast in 1949. During the 1950s and 1960s, he lectured and traveled extensively in the Caribbean and Latin America, where he studied the influence of African culture in the New World. Appointed Distinguished Visiting Professor at Howard University in 1970, he lectured extensively at colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada until his death in 1978.

Damas's other works include: *Retour de Guyane* (1938), *Veilleés Noires* (1944), *Poèmes Nègres sur des Airs Africains* (1947), *Graffiti* (1952), *Black Label* (1956) and *Névralgies* (1966). He also edited two volumes of poetry: *Poètes Noirs d'Expression Française* (1947) and *Nouvelle Somme de Poésie du Monde Noir* (1966). His work has been translated in English, German, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. He was awarded the Prix Carai_bes in 1970. He died in Washington, D.C. in 1978.

Scope and Content Note

Personal papers, professional and literary correspondence, office files, research notes and printed matter documenting the professional and literary activities of Léon-Gontran Damas, an author, lecturer and acting-chairman of the department of African Studies and Research Program at Howard University (1975-1976). Smaller bodies of materials document his earlier career as representative of French Guiana to the French National Assembly in the 1950s. Damas's research notes and printed matter include a voluminous compilation of writings and biographical sketches of Brazilian authors of African descent from the 18th century to the 1950s. The Négritude movement is documented throughout the collection with published and unpublished essays, biographical and bibliographical articles, student papers from Howard University and the Federal City College in Washington, D.C., conference materials, and selected records of the Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation.

Arrangement: I. Biographical; II. Correspondence, 1949-1978; III Writings by and about León-Gontran Damas; IV. French Guiana; V. Research notes and printed matter; VI. Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation; VII. Writings by other authors; VIII. Office files; IX. Printed matter

Key Terms

Subjects

African literature (French) -- Studies and teaching -- United States
Authors and publishers
Blacks -- West Indies, French -- Race identity
Blacks in literature
Brazilian poetry -- History and criticism
Caribbean literature (French) -- History and criticism
Creole dialects, French -- Haiti -- Texts
French poetry -- Black authors -- Translation into English
Latin American literature -- History and criticism
Literature -- Black authors -- History and criticism
Negritude (Literary movement)

Race awareness in literature

Geographic Names

French Guiana

Titles

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Names

Damas, Le_on-Gontran, 1912-1978
Anyanwu, K. C. (K. Chukwulozie)
Ashanti, B. J. (Baron James)
Atly, Lionel
Baghio'o, Jean-Louis, 1910-1994
Bambara, Toni Cade
Botchway, Francis A.
Brachfeld, George
Candiff, Julien
Ce_saire, Aime_
Dadie_, Bernard Binlin, 1916-
Dodson, Owen, 1914-1983
Dogbeh-David, Richard
Dorsinville, Roger
Du Prey, Pierre
Fall, Kine_ Kirama
Gauthier, Monique, 1950-
Hazoume_, Paul
Hodge, Merle, 1944-
John, Gisele
Juminer, Berte_ne
Kanié, Anoma
Kuoh-Moukoury, Manga
Léro, Etienne
Ligny, Michel
Lomami-Tshibamba, Paul, 1914-1985
Malonga, Jean
Miatlev, Adrian, 1910-1964
Morisseau-Leroy, Fe_lix, 1912-1998
Nascimento, Abdias do, 1914-
Nnolim, Charles E.
Pedroso, Regino, 1898-
Phillips, Lucie Colvin, 1943-
Picott, J. Rupert
Pobbi-Asamani, Kwadwo O
Poller, Nidra
Rey, Edmonde
Rigaud, Milo, 1904-
Rouil, Marie-The_re_se
Senghor, Le_opold Se_dar, 1906-2001
Sibide, Mamby
Stephenson, Elie, 1944-
Thomas, Clive Yolande
Troupe, Quincy
Warner, Keith Q.
Colloque culture et developpement (1976 : Dakar)
Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation