



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

Guide to the

Alma John papers

1955 - 1980

Sc MG 135

Summary

Creator: John, Alma, 1906-1986

Title: Alma John papers

Date: 1955 - 1980

Size: 5.1 linear feet (4 record cartons; 1 shoe box; and 3 archival boxes)

Source: Gift, Alma John Estate, August 1990.

Abstract: Alma John was a radio talk show producer, registered nurse, and newspaper columnist. She was the first African-American female director of a school of practical nursing in New York State. As Executive Director of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, she hosted and wrote the scripts for the radio program, *Brown Women in White*. The collection consists of personal papers; correspondence; radio scripts; typescripts and news clippings of her columns; and printed matter and newsletters.

Access: Some collections held by the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. To request access to materials in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, please visit: http://archives.nypl.org/scm/request_access

Preferred citation: [Item], Alma John papers, Sc MG 135, 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 Karen Clark on August 9, 1993.

Creator History

Alma John was born in 1906, in Philadelphia, the eldest of nine children from a poor family. After graduating from high school, she used the money she had earned to move to New York to study nursing. She graduated from New York University and the Harlem Hospital School of Nursing and

became a registered nurse in 1929. She then worked as a staff nurse at Harlem Hospital until 1939 when she was dismissed from her job for trying to organize workers around a demand for better working conditions and higher wages. She went on to become the director of the School for Practical Nurses at the Upper Manhattan YWCA. Alma John was the first African-American woman to become a director of a school of practical nursing in New York State.

In 1946 she accepted a position with the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses as executive director, traveling the country in search of educational employment opportunities for African-American professional nurses. As part of her efforts, she persuaded NBC to grant her a half hour time slot for a program discussing problems encountered by African-American nurses. She wrote the script for the program, *Brown Women in White*, which was aired on sixty-nine stations. In 1952, she got her first radio program on station WWRL, covering everything from religion to teen-agers. Among her many awards was the *McCall's* Magazine Golden Microphone award.

In addition to being a nurse and radio personality, Alma John wrote regular columns, and hosted and eventually produced the television program *Black Pride*. She also created Alma John Workshop, Inc., with a program geared toward improving public health, education, and community involvement.

In all of her endeavors, she sought to increase awareness of the importance of education and community participation. Thus, she lived by the credo she espoused, "If you know teach, if you don't know learn. Each one reach one. Each one teach one."

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of personal papers, including diaries and datebooks, from 1950 - 1980; correspondence from the 1930s - 1980s; radio scripts from Alma John's various shows on WWRL; typescripts and news clippings of her columns; and printed matter and newsletters from the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, the Black Nurse Association, and other African-American nursing organizations. Additionally, there is material on the Alma John Workshop, which was a program geared toward improving public health, education, and community involvement; this material includes newsletters, clippings, and administrative records.

Arrangement: Papers organized into three series: I. Personal papers; II. Correspondence; and III. Professional and community activities.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American nurses -- United States
African American women
African Americans and mass media
African Americans in radio broadcasting
Nursing -- United States
Radio programs -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Diaries
Radio scripts

Geographic Names

Harlem (New York, N.Y.) -- Social life and customs
United States -- Social life and customs

Names

John, Alma, 1906-1986
Alma John Workshops Association
Black Nurse Association
National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses

Container List

Personal papers

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical information
- b. 1 f. 2 Academic writing
- b. 1 f. 3 Certificates
- b. 1 f. 4-11 Scrapbooks
- b. 1 f. 12 Scrapbook by Victor Infante
- b. 1 f. 13 Poems to Alma John
- b. 1 f. 14 Cornwall Lislely John
 - b. 2 Diaries and datebooks 1950 - 1980
 - b. 3 Guest book 1950 - 1960

Correspondence

- b. 4 f. 1 1930s
- b. 4 f. 2 1940s
- b. 4 f. 3 1950s
- b. 4 f. 4-7 1960s
- b. 4 f. 8-18 1970s
- b. 5 f. 1-3 1980s
- b. 5 f. 4 undated

Telegrams

- b. 5 f. 5 1950s
- b. 5 f. 6 1960s
- b. 5 f. 7 1970s
- b. 5 f. 8 undated
- b. 5 f. 9 Student thank you letters undated
- b. 5 f. 10 Stationery
- b. 6 Fan mail 1970s

Professional and community activities

Nursing

- b. 7 f. 1-2 Black Nurses Association
 - Includes printed matter and newsletters.
- b. 7 f. 3 Harlem Hospital School of Nursing
- b. 7 f. 4-5 National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses
 - Includes printed matter and newsletters.
- b. 7 f. 6-7 African-American nurses
 - Includes printed matter and clippings.

Columns

- b. 7 f. 8-9 "Alma John Says" typescripts and clippings
- b. 7 f. 10-11 "Essence of Living" typescripts and clippings
- b. 7 f. 12 "Beauty Wise" clippings

Radio and television

Professional and community activities (cont.)

Radio and television (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 13 Miscellaneous radio typescripts
- b. 7 f. 14-15 Show schedules
- b. 7 f. 16 Radio scripts
- b. 7 f. 17-18 "Alma John Talks To Teens"
Includes scripts and background information.
- b. 7 f. 19 "The Homemaker's Club" scripts
- b. 7 f. 20 Radio series proposals
- b. 7 f. 21 WWRL
- b. 7 f. 22 *Black Pride printed matter*
- b. 7 f. 23 *Helen in Paris printed matter*
- Alma John Workshop
- b. 7 f. 24 Administrative material
- b. 7 f. 25 Proposal for Metric Education Funds
- b. 7 f. 26 Printed matter
- b. 7 f. 27 Newsletters
- b. 7 f. 28 Flyers
- b. 7 f. 29 Clippings
- b. 7 f. 30 Itineraries
- b. 7 f. 31 Ephemera
- b. 7 f. 32-33 Clippings about Alma John
- Community projects
- b. 7 f. 34 Printed matter
- b. 8 Journals and newsletters
- b. 8 Flyers
- b. 8 Programs
- b. 8 Ephemera
- b. 8 o. Flat file A Certificates
- b. 8 Mailing lists