

**MG
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**EUGENE GORDON
PAPERS**

**The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture
515 Malcolm Blvd.
New York, New York 10037**

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EUGENE GORDON (1891-1974). PAPERS, 1925-1972.

4.2 linear feet

Biographical Sketch

The African-American journalist and fiction writer Eugene Gordon was born in Oviedo, Florida in 1891, but was raised in the waterfront section of New Orleans. He studied English and journalism at Howard and Boston Universities and served in World War I in Europe, before joining the staff of the Boston Daily Post as an assistant feature writer in 1919. From 1924 to 1927, he conducted annual surveys of the black press for Opportunity magazine. His short story "Game" was awarded first and second prizes in Opportunity magazine's 1927 literary contest. His work, both fiction and nonfiction, appeared in that early period in American Mercury, Plain Talk, Scribner's, the Nation magazine and the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Along with Helene Johnson and Dorothy West, he founded the Saturday Evening Quill Club of non-professional writers, and for three years edited its annual, The Saturday Evening Quill (1928-1930). He was also a co-founder of the Boston John Reed Club, and was the first editor of its magazine Leftward.

A member of the American Communist party since 1931, Gordon co-authored with Cyril Briggs a pamphlet, The Position of Negro Women, and lived for a time in the Soviet Union where he worked as a reporter for the Moscow Daily News. He worked as a feature editor, reporter and writer for the Worker from 1938 to 1946. In the 1950s, he was on the staff of the National Guardian newspaper and, as a correspondent for that publication, attended the historic 1955 Afro-Asian Bandung Conference in Indonesia, which gave birth to the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, he wrote a column, "Another Side of the Story," for the African-American press from 1958 to 1959. Gordon was also an artist whose paintings were shown at the Hudson Guild Gallery, the District 65 union hall and the Countee Cullen branch of the New York Public Library.

Also an author, Gordon's first wife, Edythe Mae, wrote short stories and verses and was featured in the Saturday Evening Quill. A compilation of her work was published in 1996 (Selected Works of Edythe Mae Gordon, New York: G.K. Hall). His second wife, June Kroll, organized textile and millinery workers in the 1930s, and was executive director of the Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs at her death in 1967. By an earlier marriage, she had been the daughter-in-law of Ella Reeve Bloor, the widely known "Mother Bloor" of Communist Party politics. At his own death in 1974, Eugene Gordon was praised by Communist Party Chairman Henry Winston as a longtime activist in literary affairs and "a dedicated partisan in the fight on many fronts for Democracy and Socialism."

Scope and Content

The Eugene Gordon Papers range from 1927 to 1972 and are organized into six series: **PERSONAL, CORRESPONDENCE, ORGANIZATIONS, WRITINGS, the BANDUNG AFRO-ASIAN CONFERENCE and PRINTED MATTER AND FRAGMENTS.** They

consist for the most part of occasional correspondence, manuscripts and memorabilia. The last series, relevant only to a detailed study of the author's work, is in offsite storage.

Gordon's letters to the editor written in the 1950s and 1960s were usually in the defense of the Soviet Union. His Nancy Cunard file in the **CORRESPONDENCE** series includes an exchange with Julius Lester who reviewed the 1969 reprint of Cunard's anthology Negro, and an essay "The Green Hat Comes to Chambers Street" written for Hugh Ford's memorial book, Nancy Cunard: Brave Poet, Indomitable Rebel. Gordon contributed an article "Blacks Turn Red" to Cunard's 1933 Negro anthology.

Much like his correspondence, only fragments of the author's political papers have survived. They form part of the **ORGANIZATIONS** series. A one-page statement tantalizingly discusses the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the context of the 1955 Bandung Conference, and challenges a sacred cow of Communist Party orthodoxy, the so-called "Negro-Labor Alliance." The file for the Chelsea Minority Action Organization includes material Gordon developed for a course on "the Negro's Contribution to U.S. Civilization and Culture," and a detailed memorandum to Roland Hayes on "whether the Negro's organizations should be open to whites."

Gordon's **WRITINGS**, the bulk of the collection, are organized into five subseries: **Autobiographical, Fiction, Nonfiction, Research Material** and **Other Authors**. The latter is a compilation of mostly published writings the author collected for the Saturday Evening Quill and for a proposed anthology of short stories. Much of Gordon's **Autobiographical** works are presumed to be fictionalized narratives, as his brother Buddy (handwritten note in the collection) did not recognize them as factual. They range from stories of growing up in New Orleans and rural Georgia, with scenes of racial violence and lynchings, to an enemy encounter during World War I in France. There is also a detailed diary of a writing retreat in the New Hampshire White Mountains in 1933.

The **Fiction** subseries includes a compilation of short stories arranged alphabetically, stories written under the pseudonym Egor Don, skits written in the 1930s while on the staff of the Moscow Daily News, a radio script about Crispus Attucks and the American Revolution, a screenplay set in 1940 occupied Paris, featuring General Charles de Gaulle and French colonial administrator Félix Eboué, and a complete draft of his novel "Picnic in Court House Square." Of the latter, Gordon wrote that he rewrote the novel completely on a suggestion from a publisher, but that he never resubmitted it for publication.

Organized by title, the author's **Nonfiction** work ranges from his 1920s articles on the Black Press published in American Mercury and Opportunity, to a series of travel articles written in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, and to his later, mostly non-published articles and essays on integration, the columnist Georges Schuyler and the civil rights movement. "Another Side of the Story" is a non-syndicated weekly column the author wrote for the black press in 1958-1959. "Black Women's Long Tough Course: from 'dat gal' Carline to This Woman Angela," written in defense of Angela Davis in 1973 was his last major essay. Gordon also wrote under several pseudonyms in the late 1950s and 1960s, perhaps to circumvent the effect of being blacklisted.

The **Research Material** subseries is a small but rich sampling of primary source documents related to racial discrimination in the military and in New York City housing during World War II; the abduction and rape of a 24 year-old Alabama African-American woman, Recy Taylor, by a gang of white youth; and the extradition from New York of a Florida chain gang fugitive, Willie Reid. Reid's case is documented by a writ of habeas corpus his sister filed on his behalf, challenging the validity of his conviction and alleging he would be lynched upon his return to Florida. The housing incident involves Lawrence and Anita Patterson, an interracial couple a white friend had helped move into an apartment in the complex where she lived in the summer of 1943. All three tenants were soon ordered to vacate the premises, but a successful campaign organized with the help of the Communist Party prevented their eviction. Three months later, Lawrence Patterson would write of the World War II Louisiana labor battalion where he was conscripted, as "a prison without walls," and of his fellow soldiers as "coolie labor" assigned to the most demeaning tasks: "There isn't much patriotism here, and no love or respect for the country." Also included are a 1944 letter to Philadelphia Communist Party leader James Ford, providing eyewitness accounts of the frame-up of a South Carolina field hand, Arthur Middleton, on rape charges, and two reports by an African-American woman identified only as "Lilyan," addressed to the New York Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, charging that the phasing out of her title as Secretary to the National Director, Irving Adler, in 1953, in the midst of a labor dispute, was due to racial discrimination. These documents presumably laid the basis for articles Gordon wrote for the Daily Worker.

BANDUNG AFRO-ASIAN CONFERENCE, 1955-1965. Included in this series is an exchange of letters between Gordon and the editor of the National Guardian newspaper, and a draft of the article the newspaper refused to publish on both a "policy and journalism standpoint". Gordon who referred in his article to the African contribution to the Conference as incidental or minor, attributed his difference with the newspaper to white chauvinism and "blindness." The Bandung files also comprise several draft articles on Indonesian grassroots organizations; notes of an interview with Moses Kotane, the South African trade-unionist and Communist Party leader who attended the conference as an observer; an account of the author's negative encounter with Richard Wright at the Conference; and an essay, "Before – and Seven Years After," on the antecedents, origins and aftermath of Bandung. Also included are eight copious travel diaries, voluminous background notes, and a notebook discussing Richard Wright's Color Curtain and Carl T. Rowan's The Pitiful and the Proud. Gordon's work was generally consumed with Jim Crow racism and the defense of the Soviet Union, but at Bandung, the author looked beyond the East-West divide at issue of grassroots organizing and social justice in the post-colonial world. In that particular instance, he was perhaps ahead of his time.

Provenance

SCM 77-79; SCM 05-39

Purchased from Bolerium Books, which acquired the papers from Gordon's granddaughter, Chiwe Gordon.

Processed by Andre Elizee, 2006

Container List

Box Folder

1	PERSONAL	
	1	Biographical
	2	Autobiographical
	3	Diary, Telephone and Appointment Books
	4	Military Record
	5	Financial
	6	Art, Exhibitions
	7	Sketchbooks
	8	Pertaining to Gordon's Death
	9	Gordon, Edythe Mae - First Wife
	10	Gordon, June - Second Wife
	11	Pertaining to June Gordon's Death
	12	Gordon, Gene - Son
	13	Miscellaneous
		CORRESPONDENCE
	14	1930-1973
	15	Letters to the Editor
	16	Letter to <u>Daily Worker</u> Editor on the "War Effort," n.d.
	17	Cunard, Nancy
2	1	Harper, Solomon
	2	Hudson, Hosea
	3	Jefferson School of Science, 1953
	4	Wright, Bruce
	5	Memorandum re: Maude White Katz's "The Negro Woman, Her Heritage and Her Potential."
		ORGANIZATIONS
	6	Communist Party - U.S.A.
	7	<u>Daily Worker</u> Newspaper
	8	League of Struggle for Negro Rights – Borden Branch (Boston)
	9	John Reed Club of Boston, 1932
	10	<u>National Guardian</u> Newspaper
	11	Chelsea Minority Organization
	12	ILGWU Cooperative Houses
	13	Miscellaneous

Container List

Box Folder

2		WRITINGS
		Autobiographical
	14	"Once I Was Afraid" (Early Childhood)
	15	"Georgia Country" (Fragment)
	16-17	"Southern Boyhood" - Outlines
	18	"Southern Boyhood Nightmares," <u>International Literature</u> , 1934 (Missing Pages)
	19	"Southern Boyhood Nightmares" - Robert Charles Vignette
	20	"Negro in New Orleans"
	21	"Jim Peters' Black Boy"
	22	"Playing Hide and Seek with Jerry"
	23	"Integration"
3	1	Diary - Writing Retreat, New Hampshire White Mountains, 1933
	2	Fragments
	3	Poetry
		Fiction
	4	Short Stories, A - H
	5	Short Stories, K - Z
	6	<u>Opportunity Magazine</u> , 1927
		Egor Don (Pseudonym)
	7	"Angel Had Madelina"
	8	"Game"
	9	"Golden Eggs - Scrambled"
	10	Short Short Stories
	11	Clark Hall (Pseudonym) - "Killer at Large"
	12	Frank Lynn (Pseudonym) - "Robert Charles, Cop Killer of New Orleans"
	13	Skits - <u>Moscow Daily News</u>
	14	Screenplay - The Fall of France to the Nazis (Featuring Charles de Gaulle, Félix Eboué)
	15	Radio Script - "Man Against Oppression"
4	1-2	Story Ideas
	3-4	Notebooks
	5	Notes for Article on Charles Burroughs
	6	Notes for Various Stories
	7	Miscellaneous Notes
		Novel: "The Picnic in Court House Square"
	8	Book I

Container List**Box Folder**

4	9	Book II
	10	Book III
	11	Book IV
5	1	Book V
	2	Book VI
	3	Book VII
	4	Letters and Notes
		Non-Fiction
	5	The African and His Descendants in U.S. History"
	6	"Agnew's Odious Remarks," 1972
	7-8	"Another Side of the Story," 1958-1959
	9	"Black Women's Long Tough Course: from 'dat gal' Carline to This Woman Angela"
	10-11	"Black Women's Long Tough Course" - Drafts and Notes
	12	Boston May Day Article. <u>The Worker</u> , 1933*
	13	Notes for a Review of <u>Crisis of the Negro Intellectual</u>
	14	"Christianity and the Negro," <u>The Lantern</u> , 1929
6	1	"Civil Rights Movement Plus Voting Equals: Instrument of Political Change"
	2	"Cult of the White Woman," n.d.
	3	"From Gorky to Astrakhan on the Volga"
	4	"Happy Birthday to You" (Central Park)
	5	"Genuine vs. Bogus Democracy"
	6	"George Samuel Schuyler"
	7	"How Prostitution Has Been Fought and Almost Completely Eliminated in the USSR," <u>Moscow News</u> , 1937*
	8	"Integration: Irrelevant or Inevitable"
	9	"Liberals in Boston," <u>Plain Talk</u> , 1930
	10	<u>Moscow Daily News</u> Articles
	11	Draft, "Nazi Fascism in Madison Square Garden"
	12	Comments and Notes on Negro Economics
	13	"Negro Fictionists in America"
	14	"The Negro Grows Up," <u>Plain Talk</u> , 1929
	15	Negro History Class, Boston, 1934 *
	16	"Negro Labor Advances," <u>Jewish Life</u> , 1953

* See Oversize Box 9

Container List

Box Folder

6	17	"The Negro's Newspapers"
	18	"Negro Novelists and the Negro Masses," <u>New Masses</u> , 1933
	19	"The Negro Press," <u>American Mercury</u> , 1925
	20-21	"New York City: Juvenile Delinquents' First Refuge," 1958. Written as Frank Lynn.
	22	Scrapbook of Printed Articles by Edmond Gordon, 1930*
7	1	"Stopover at Karachi"
	2	"The Thirteen Most Interesting Negroes in the United States"
	3	"The Thirteen Most Important Negroes in the United States"
	4	"Uncle Tom's Cabin to Stevedore," <u>New Theatre</u> , 1935
	5	Untitled. New York State's Public Welfare Law and Black Immigrants from the South.
	6	"Vietnam" - Speech Notes
	7	"You May Be a Criminal" (Smith-McCarran Act)
		Research Material
	8	Anita and Lawrence Patterson, 1943
	9	Recy Taylor and Willie Reid Cases, 1947, 1955
	10	James Ford Letter - Arthur Middleton Case, 1944
	11	New York Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, 1953
		Other Authors
	12	<u>Saturday Evening Quill</u> . (Bound Volume)
	13	Introduction for an Anthology of Short Stories
	14	Bennett, Gwendolyn. "The Wedding"
	15	Blue, Cecil. "The Flyer" (From <u>Opportunity</u>)
	16	Fauset, Arthur Huff. "Symphoensque" and "Jumby"
	17	Hughes, Langston. "Luani of the Jungles"
	18	Hurston, Zora Neale. "Sweat" (From <u>Fire!</u>)
	19	Matthews, John F. "Clay," "Swamp Mocassin"
	20	Schalk, Gertrude. "The Red Cape"
	21	West, Dorothy. "Prologue to a Life," "The Typewriter" and "An Unimportant Man"
		BANDUNG CONFERENCE, 1955
	22	<u>National Guardian</u> - Correspondence
	23	Notes on North Africa
	24	Interview with Indonesian Peasant Leader
	25	"Background of the Afro-Asian Conference"

* See Oversize Box 9

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
7	26	Outline of Article on Dutch-Indonesian Dispute Over West Irian
8	1	Notebook on Bandung, Alice Childress and Mayor Wagner's Visit to Harlem
	2	Draft Article on Indonesian Elections
	3	"The Coming Government of Indonesia" - Outlines and Notes
	4	"The Coming Government of Indonesia" - Draft Article *
	4	Outline of Remarks at Forum on Bandung
	5	"Before--and Seven Years After - Bandung"
	6	Bandung Notebooks
	7	Miscellaneous
9		Oversize Material
10		PRINTED MATTER, FRAGMENTS AND NOTES

* See Oversize Box 9

**SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH
IN BLACK CULTURE
MANUSCRIPTS, ARCHIVES AND RARE BOOKS DIVISION
SEPARATION RECORD**

The following items were removed from:

Name of Collection/Papers: Eugene Gordon papers

Accession Number: SCM 05-39

Date received: 2005

Date transferred: April 2006

The item(s) listed below have been sent to the division indicated, either to be retained or disposed of there. Any items that should receive special disposition are clearly marked.

Schomburg Photographs and Print Division:

1 box of photographs: Mostly portraits and family snapshots.

Art and Artifacts Division:

Tri-dimensional Jim Crow sign reading “White” on one side and “Colored” on another.

Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division:

-- One vinyl LP record: 1953 anniversary of National Guardian newspapers. With W.E.B. DuBois, Shirley Graham DuBois and Eugene Gordon.

-- 14 reel-to-reel audio tapes: Interviews with Moses Kotane, Mohammed Munir of the SOBSI federation of trade-unions, and Indonesian peasant and youth organizations. Also Indonesian music and Bandung songs. (Some duplication)

Accessioned by: A. Elizee

Date: April 2006