



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Timothy Leary letters to Joanna Harcourt-Smith

1973-1976

MssCol 24619

Processed by Susan M. Kline, 2018.

Summary

Creator: Leary, Timothy, 1920-1996

Title: Timothy Leary letters to Joanna Harcourt-Smith

Date: 1973-1976

Size: 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Purchased from William Channing, 2018.

Abstract: Timothy Leary and Joanna Harcourt-Smith were partners in a common law marriage. The Timothy Leary letters to Joanna Harcourt-Smith consist of correspondence sent by Leary to Harcourt-Smith while he was in Folsom prison. Dating from 1973 to 1976, the collection documents Leary's time in prison, thoughts and ideas, and his feelings towards Harcourt-Smith.

Preferred citation: Timothy Leary letters to Joanna Harcourt-Smith, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Susan M. Kline, 2018.

Scope and Content Note

Leary sent these letters to Harcourt-Smith while incarcerated at Folsom prison in California, including his time in solitary confinement; they were written between 1973 and 1976 (many are undated). In these very personal pieces of correspondence, the reader is exposed to Leary's mindset while serving his sentence. The letters include passages on the history of the 1960s counterculture movement including Leary's thoughts on the Beatles, the decade's assassinations, the Nixon administration, popular psychology, and science fiction. Leary referenced a wide range of historical and contemporary legal and philosophical ideas and mentions Carl Jung, George Gurdjieff, Aleister Crowley, John Dee, Paracelsus, Arthur C. Clarke, L. Ron Hubbard, Carl Sagan, John Lennon, and Yoko Ono.

In his frequent letters to Joanna, Leary communicated his thoughts, theories, and some of his day to day activities in prison, such as who visited and what he was reading, and commented on Joanna's

media appearances. Addressing her by a number of terms of endearment such as beloved wise woman, sparkling magic woman, and infinity swirl, Leary often described Joanna through erotic and vivid flower metaphors. He used metaphysical language to express his love for her as he referenced their psychic connection, including his daily "teleportation" to her.

Leary's pamphlet *Neurologic* and eight-circuit model of consciousness are described at length. Harcourt-Smith published *Neurologic* and Leary refined his ideas while imprisoned, sending her revisions and insertions. Several letters contain drawings of his eight circuit model. The letters also document the evolution of Leary's plans regarding Starseed and Terra II.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Diagrams
Letters (correspondence)
Love letters
Writings (documents)

Titles

Neurologic

Subjects

Neuropsychology
Prisoners -- Correspondence

Names

Harcourt-Smith, Joanna
Leary, Timothy, 1920-1996

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Correspondence 1973-1976
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence 1973-1975
- b. 1 f. 3 Correspondence 1973-1975