



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

Guide to the

Josephine Baker collection

1933-1975

Sc MG 778

Summary

Creator: Baker, Josephine, 1906-1975

Title: Josephine Baker collection

Date: 1933-1975

Size: 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Gift of Sumi Kamiya, September 2007.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: Born in 1906 in St. Louis, Missouri, Josephine Baker, a dancer and singer, achieved fame in Paris in the 1920s. In the 1950s, she sought to promote racial equality by adopting twelve children of various races and nationalities to create what she called a "rainbow family". Miki Sawada was the founder and director of the Elizabeth Sanders Home in Tokyo for ostracized mixed-race children fathered by U.S. servicemen with Japanese women. She and Baker had become friends in the 1930s in Paris, where her husband, Renzo Sawada, was stationed as a diplomat. The collection consists of 25 letters and postcards written by the renowned dancer and cabaret singer Josephine Baker to her Japanese friend Miki Sawada and other parties; a scrapbook of press clippings assembled by Sawada; and material from Baker's 1952 South American tour. The latter part of Baker's correspondence with Sawada was concerned with the adoption of a Japanese boy in 1954. Other materials in the collection include three speeches from her 1952 lecture tour in Argentina and Brazil to promote "the spiritual freedom of mankind" and an end to racial discrimination, and printed matter from her 1954 tour of Japan.

Preferred citation: [Item], Josephine Baker collection, Sc MG 778, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English Some letters in French.

Processing note: Accessioned by Andre Elizee, August 2008.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Related Materials:

Josephine Baker papers, Emory University

Josephine Baker papers, Harvard University

Eugene Lerner—Josephine Baker collection, Stanford University

Josephine Baker papers, Yale University

Henry Hurford Janes-Josephine Baker collection, Yale University

Creator History

Born in 1906 in St. Louis, Missouri, Josephine Baker, a dancer and singer, achieved fame in Paris in the 1920s. In the 1950s, she sought to promote racial equality by adopting twelve children of various races and nationalities to create what she called a "rainbow family". Miki Sawada was the founder and director of the Elizabeth Sanders Home in Tokyo for ostracized mixed-race children fathered by U.S. servicemen with Japanese women. She and Baker had become friends in the 1930s in Paris, where her husband, Renzo Sawada, was stationed as a diplomat.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of 25 letters and postcards written by the renown dancer and cabaret singer Josephine Baker to her Japanese friend Miki Sawada and other parties; a scrapbook of press clippings assembled by Sawada; and material from Baker's 1952 South American tour. The latter part of Baker's correspondence with Sawada was concerned with the adoption of a Japanese boy in 1954. Other materials in the collection include three speeches from her 1952 lecture tour in Argentina and Brazil to promote "the spiritual freedom of mankind" and an end to racial discrimination, and printed matter from her 1954 tour of Japan.

Key Terms**Subjects**

African American women entertainers
African American women singers
Authors, Black
Dancers -- France
Intercountry adoption
Women dancers

Names

Abatino, Pepito
Baker, Josephine, 1906-1975
Sawada, Miki, 1901-1980

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Correspondence 1933-1969
- b. 1 f. 2 Speeches 1952
- b. 1 f. 3 Scrapbook 1952
- b. 1 f. 4-5 Printed matter