



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

Guide to the

**Craig G. Harris papers**

1986-1993

Sc MG 900

Home to Harlem Project, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

## Summary

**Creator:** Harris, Craig G.

**Title:** Craig G. Harris papers

**Date:** 1986-1993

**Size:** 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Gift, Robert E. Penn, 2011

**Revision History:** This finding aid was updated by Allison Hughes.

**Abstract:** The Craig G. Harris Papers, 1986-1993, document his life as a gay, HIV-positive African-American, his work as an AIDS activist, and his prolific writing career. The collection consists of biographical information, personal correspondence, obituaries and memorial material, as well as original manuscripts of his speeches, essays, articles and poems.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Craig G. Harris papers, Sc MG 900, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

### Related Materials:

Photographs also located at Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Photographs and Print Division.

## Creator History

Craig G. Harris was a prolific gay African-American writer, poet, AIDS activist and health educator born on April 8, 1958 in the South Bronx, New York. Harris was involved in community service from an early age, serving as president of the Co-Op City Youth Branch of the NAACP from 1972 to 1976. He attended Vassar College from 1976 to 1980 where he studied English and Education. After graduation, he worked as an advertising account executive, a news reporter for the *New York Native*, and an

assistant to the executive director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.

In 1986, Harris moved to Washington, D.C. to work for the National Coalition of Black Lesbian and Gays, where he coordinated the first national conference on AIDS in the black community. He was a founding co-chair of the National Minority AIDS Council in 1987 and later became the Health Education/Media Specialist for the Spectrum AIDS Project of Washington, D.C.

Harris returned to New York in 1988 to serve as executive director of the Minority Task Force on AIDS. Shortly thereafter, he started working as a consultant to the Education Department of Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), and became Assistant Coordinator of Prevention Education in 1989. He would work at the GMHC until his death in 1991 and was responsible for developing some of the first safe sex brochures for people of color, including "Loving, Caring, Sharing" and "Brothers Loving Brothers".

In the 1980s, Harris was a prominent voice of the renaissance in black gay writing and literature. A journalist, essayist, fiction writer and poet, he was an early member of Other Countries, a New York-based black gay writer's collective founded in 1986. Harris' work was published in newspapers and magazines like *The Advocate*, *Ebony*, *Gay Community News*, *New York Native*, *Outweek*, and *The Washington Blade*, and his stories and poems were collected in anthologies such as *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology*, *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*, *Gay Life*, *New Men New Minds: Breaking Male Tradition*, *The Road Before Us: 100 Gay Black Poets*, and *Tongues Untied*, a poetry anthology. At the time of his death, Harris was working on "Hope Against Hope," an unpublished volume of poetry exploring living with HIV/AIDS.

Harris was diagnosed with pulmonary Kaposi's sarcoma in January 1991, and died on November 26, 1991 of HIV-related complications at the age of thirty-three.

## Scope and Content Note

The Craig G. Harris Papers, 1986-1993, document his life as a gay, HIV-positive African-American, his work as an AIDS activist, and his prolific writing career. The collection consists of biographical information, personal correspondence, obituaries and memorial material, as well as original manuscripts of his speeches, essays, articles and poems.

The Personal series, ca. 1988-1993, contains biographical and bibliographic information, postcards from friends that Harris kept in his cubicle at Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), and greeting cards. Also included are obituaries from Men of All Colors Together/New York (MACT/NY), the GMHC and the *New York Times*, and personal condolences and thank you cards from Harris' family, as well as material related to Harris' memorial birthday celebration on April 8, 1992.

The Writings series, ca. 1986-1991, consists of three speeches: "Coming Together in the Baths," "Celebrating African American Lesbian and Gay History, Finding Our Way to the Future," and "Homily"; the biographical essay "I'm Going to Go Out Like a Fucking Meteor!"; three articles: "A Heritage of Black Pride," "Weaving the Future of Black Gender Politics," and "Stonewall into the Future: Talking 'bout a Revolution"; and thirteen poems.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American authors  
African American gay men  
African American gays  
African American journalists  
African American poets  
African American political activists  
AIDS activists  
Black author  
Community health aides  
Gay activists  
Health reformers -- United States  
HIV-positive gay men  
Homosexuality -- Poetry  
Male feminists

**Names**

Harris, Craig G.  
Gay Men's Health Crisis, Inc.

## Container List

### Personal 1988-1993

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical Information
- b. 1 f. 2 Letters 1988-1992
- b. 1 f. 3 Obituaries
- b. 1 f. 4 Memorial 1992

### Writings 1986-1991

#### Speeches

- b. 1 f. 5 "Coming Together in the Baths" 1989
- b. 1 f. 6 "Celebrating African American Lesbian and Gay History, Finding Our Way to the Future" 1990
- b. 1 f. 7 "Homily" 1990

#### Essays

- b. 1 f. 8 "I'm Going to Go Out Like a Fucking Meteor!" 1991

#### Articles

- b. 1 f. 9 "A Heritage of Black Pride" 1986
- b. 1 f. 9 "Weaving the Future of Black Gender Politics" 1989
- b. 1 f. 9 "Stonewall into the Future: Talking 'bout a Revolution" 1989

#### Poems

- b. 1 f. 10 "Alive After His Passion"
- b. 1 f. 10 "Gold Coast"
- b. 1 f. 10 "Jailhouse Rock"
- b. 1 f. 10 "Little Girls"
- b. 1 f. 10 "The Nadir"
- b. 1 f. 10 "No Private Matter"
- b. 1 f. 10 "Paradigms of Pride"
- b. 1 f. 10 "Penis Envy"
- b. 1 f. 10 "Renewal"
- b. 1 f. 10 "Sacrificial Cock"
- b. 1 f. 10 "Seduction"
- b. 1 f. 10 "State of Grace"
- b. 1 f. 10 "The Hardening of Soft Men"