

MERIWETHER, LOUISE.
Louise Meriwether papers, 1968-2013

Emory University
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Meriwether, Louise.
Title: Louise Meriwether papers, 1968-2013
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 1310
Extent: 5 linear ft. (5 boxes) and 3 oversized papers (OP)
Abstract: Papers of African American activist and author Louise Meriwether including writings, correspondence, professional papers, photographs, and printed material.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Source

Purchase, 2014.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Louise Meriwether papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Unprocessed collection.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Louise Meriwether (1923-) was born Marion Louise Jenkins on May 8, 1923 to Julia Lenkins and Marion Lloyd Jenkins, the third of five children and only daughter. The family lived in Haverstraw, New York, until the economic crash of 1929 when they relocated to Brooklyn. Louise's father worked as a janitor and her mother as a domestic, and the family eventually moved to Harlem. Louise graduated from Central Commercial High School in Manhattan and worked for many years as a secretary and bookkeeper. She attended night school at New York University and earned her Bachelor of Arts in English in 1949. In 1950 she married Angelo Meriwether, and the couple moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, and then to Los Angeles, California.

In Los Angeles, Louise continued to work in offices while she also began to write and get involved with political organizations. In 1961, she became a reporter for the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and also occasionally wrote for the *Los Angeles Times*. In 1962, she met Malcolm X and became part of a small group of activists who regularly participated in "fireside chats" with him whenever he was in Los Angeles. Meriwether was also active in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and in 1964 traveled to Mississippi to report on Freedom Summer. The next year she went to work for Universal Studios as the first African American story analyst, a position she held for two years. Around this time, she also joined the Watts Writers' Workshop (California).

In 1970 Meriwether published her first novel, *Daddy Was a Number Runner*, a fictionalized account of the Depression's effect on Harlem. She published several children's books in the years that followed, and eventually published her second novel, *Fragments of the Ark* in 1994. *Shadow Dancing* followed in 2000. She continued to be politically active and is a member of the Organization of Women Writers of Africa, Inc., the Black Radical Congress, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She also taught creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College and the University of Houston (Texas).

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of the papers of Louise Meriwether from circa 1963-2013 and includes her writings, correspondence, professional papers, photographs, and printed material. Writings contain drafts of her novels *Daddy Was a Number Runner*, *Fragments of the Ark*, and *Shadow Dancing*, as well as screenplays, speeches, and articles. Correspondence relates primarily to her publishing and includes letters from Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Professional files document her activism and involvement with organizations such as the Women's International League for Peace and the Committee for Concerned Blacks.

Arrangement Note

Unprocessed collection.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	-	Activist organization files and correspondence
2	-	Writings by Meriwether: <i>Fragments of the Ark</i> research files and <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> (screenplay)
3	-	Writings by Meriwether: <i>Shadow Dancing</i> (screenplay) and <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i>
4	-	Printed material by Meriwether: short stories, articles and book excerpts
5	-	Writings by Meriwether: <i>Daddy Was a Number Runner</i> and <i>Fragments of the Ark</i>
OP1	-	Photograph: <i>Daddy Was a Number Runner</i> cover
OP2	-	Poster featuring Meriwether and other African American women writers
OP3	-	Invitation to Oprah Winfrey cruise
