

# Poetry as Activism

## Festival

**SPECIAL COLLECTIONS OPEN HOUSE  
MAY 9, 2024**

*Selected by Arline Wilson, Senior Assistant Librarian  
and Digital Humanities and Africana Scholar*

Photograph of Claymont High School and sign commemorating the school as the first in any of seventeen segregated states in the United States to desegregate

**VIRGINIA TRYIN SMILACK COLLECTION RELATING TO THE DESEGREGATION OF CLAYMONT, DE, MSS 0855**

The Virginia Tryin Smilack collection documents the background and commemoration of events before, during, and after the desegregation (in 1952, two years before *Brown vs. Board of Education*) of Claymont High School, 1995–2004.

*Protest against Bank of America and Chase for Involvement in South Africa; Stand with Wounded Knee; Legalize Pot; Who Owns the Parks; and End War Now*

**SIR JOSEPH GOLD POLITICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS EPHEMERA COLLECTION, MSS 0472**

The Sir Joseph Gold political and miscellaneous ephemera collection comprises .67 linear feet—not only posters such as the ones displayed, but also newsletters, pamphlets, blank letterhead, and typescripts from the 1960s through the 1990s. The bulk of the collection is from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s with strength in Civil Rights and political activity 1960–1970; including Black Panthers; campaign/elections, prison rights/activism, and more.

Handbills, flyers, and broadsides

**WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE COLLECTION, MSS: 0477**

The Woman Suffrage collection comprises ephemera, pamphlets, books, and re-alia that relate to the campaign for women's voting rights. Most of the materials are propagandistic in nature, including literature explaining the rationale behind the idea of female suffrage, and date from the 1910s, documenting the years before the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified. The collection also contains various

pieces that represent the material culture of the movement, such as buttons, pennants, and other objects, such as a fan and a watchband.

*Gender Fairness 1995*

**JUNE D. MACARTOR PAPERS, MSS 0886**

MacArtor (1930–2013) was one of the first twenty-five women admitted to the Delaware bar, later becoming the Attorney General of Delaware's Department of Natural Resources. Her work as a community activist on environmental and women's issues is well represented in this substantial archive.

*Negro Digest*. Chicago, 1968; *Freedomways: A Quarterly Journal of the Freedom Movement*. New York, 1972

**PAULINE A. YOUNG COLLECTION, MSS 0256**

In building this archive Pauline A. Young (1900–1991) primarily sought to bring attention to, and preserve information about, her aunt, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, and her aunt's first husband, Paul Laurence Dunbar, but it also includes a mass of materials connected with Young's own activities as an educator, librarian, and activist based in Wilmington, Delaware. The collection contains correspondence, clippings, photographs, ephemera, and periodicals.

Items related to the Week of the Angry Arts Against the War in Vietnam

**WEEK OF THE ANGRY ARTS AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM EPHEMERA COLLECTION, MSS 0099 F0962**

The Week of the Angry Arts Against the War in Vietnam took place in New York City from January 29 through February 5, 1967. The events are recorded in this collection through posters, schedules, correspondence, newspapers proofs, press releases, information sheets, and other ephemera.

*The Black Panther*. Oakland, Calif., 1970 and 1972; and examples of zines

**NEW ACQUISITIONS, IN PROCESS**

*Selected by Mark Samuels Lasner  
Senior Research Fellow*

*"I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few. William Morris"*

**MARK SAMUELS LASNER COLLECTION**

This quotation from the Victorian poet, artist, and radical socialist was printed by hand on Morris's original Kelmscott Press, now at Rochester Institute of Technology. Illustrated with an engraving by Steve Lee-Davis, the broadside was issued in a limited edition for the William Morris Society in the United States.

*The Torch: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism*. London, 1895

**MARK SAMUELS LASNER COLLECTION**

Produced by Helen and Olivia Rossetti—teenage rebels and nieces of the poet Christina Rossetti and her brother, Pre-Raphaelite poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti—the *Torch* published in this issue a defense of Oscar Wilde at the time of his conviction for "gross indecency."

*Selection of materials digitized  
for the Poetry as Activism Project,  
chosen and described by Poet-in-Residence, Dr. Traci Currie*

June Jordan (1936–2002), letter to Walter Lowenfels, January 24, 1973, with manuscript of “Poem: To My Sister, Ethel Ennis, Who Sang ‘The Star Spangled Banner,’” dated January 20, 1973

UNIVERSITY PLACE BOOK SHOP PAPERS, MSS 0207

June Jordan’s poetry profoundly and unabashedly questions one’s actions, intentionality, words and mere presence within the context of a volatile history symbolized through songs of patriotism in the United States. This poem is one of many by Jordan that speak to everyday activism. Born to Caribbean parents, Jordan navigated a harsh cultural upbringing in an American society that focused on a racial dichotomy. Her work spans over 30+ years of writing, teaching and speaking to audiences, and her activism is grounded in feminism and civil rights.

Amiri Baraka (1934–2014), *Sketchbook 1 “Holograph Eye…”* and *Sketchbook 3 “New Africa”*

AMIRI BARAKA PAPERS, MSS 0699

Amiri Baraka speaks in poetry, plays, and rhythmic recitations. He is a music lover, a jazz enthusiast. His work scats and sings and taps to music that others may or may not hear. We also know this to be true from Baraka’s 1963 study, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. Special Collection’s selection of Baraka’s works includes materials that speak to his musical interests. In particular, his sketchbooks are poetic and active visual art messagings that remind us of a dark history in the United States. Even in the visual representation, there is a musicality to hiss chalk and scribble and abstractions. It’s as if his mind is constantly running — a sense that something needs to get out of his body and onto another surface.

CUBA, *Superstition Freeway: A Brooklyn Collaboration*. Brooklyn, N.Y., 2019

NEW ACQUISITION, IN PROGRESS

Founder of “wild-style” Graffiti lettering, CUBA’s work is about style and craftsmanship. He creatively manipulates a spray can to produce more than colorful works of art. It’s social commentary. It’s messaging. It’s presence. It’s identity. Given the history of graffiti being considered a menace or rebellion to society, CUBA makes it clear that his craft is an art, working towards expressive freedom. His artistry and poetry offer a model to generations of younger artists expressing themselves in spaces and with media sometimes considered unsanctioned or socially untouchable.

Toni Morrison (1931–2019), *Five Poems: Silhouettes by Kara E. Walker*. Las Vegas, 2002

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS [NOT DIGITIZED]

*For more information about the Special Collections and Museums Division of the University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press visit [library.udel.edu](http://library.udel.edu).*

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**OLYMPICS 1972:  
RACIST RHODESIA  
OUSTED**  
WORLDWIDE BLACK PROTEST EXPELS RHODESIA  
FROM OLYMPIC GAMES

SEE ARTICLE INSIDE PAGE 3 ALSO, SEE SUPPLEMENT  
OAKLAND-A BASE OF OPERATION PART VI PAGES A, B, & C

SURVIVAL TICKET -  
VOTE FOR  
SURVIVAL

**BOBBY SEALE FOR MAYOR OF OAKLAND  
ELAINE BROWN FOR COUNCILWOMAN**