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Yolande Du Bois Scrapbook Collection

1915-1929
1 box (1.08 linear feet)
Call no.: MS 1183

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Read collection overview

Background on Nina Yolande Du Bois

Nina Yolande Du Bois (1900-1961), better known as Yolande Du Bois, was an American teacher best regarded for her contributions to the Harlem Renaissance. Her father was sociologist and civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois and her mother was Nina (née Gomer) Du Bois. She was born on October 21, 1900, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. She faced many health-related issues in her early childhood and also quarreled often with her parents. In her early adulthood, she enrolled at Fisk University in 1920 and graduated in 1924. While attending Fisk, she was in a relationship with Jimmie Lunceford, a prominent jazz musician. At her father's insistence, she ended her relationship with Lunceford and would later go on to marry acclaimed Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen on April 9, 1928. Their highly-publicized wedding was the talk of many African-American socialites at the time, with every minor detail recorded by the press. However, Yolande and Countee soon grew distant in their marriage, resorting to counseling at first and then divorce following Countee's coming out as gay to Yolande. With the divorce finalized in the spring of 1930, Yolande chose to pursue higher education and rewrite the course of her life.

After a period of illness, she began to teach English and history at Dunbar High School in Baltimore, Maryland. There, she met Arnette Franklin Williams, whom she married in September 1931 and then later divorced in 1936. She had one daughter with Williams, Yolande Du Bois Irvin Williams, whom she took care of following the divorce. However, during this period, Yolande also moved to New York City with her mother, where she began to take courses at Columbia University's Teachers College, eventually earning her master's. She then continued to work as a teacher and to raise her daughter in Baltimore until her death in March 1961. She was survived by her father and her daughter.

Scope of collection

Yolande's scrapbooks, photo albums, and other personal artifacts from her youth (approximately 1915-1929) reflect her travels, undergraduate experiences at Fisk University, outings with her family and friends, artistic pursuits, and more. These scrapbooks showcase trips to England, France, Switzerland, and elsewhere in Europe, across Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, and New York, as well as other sites of importance in her life. These scrapbooks capture snapshots of her time at Fisk University, from breakups to athletic events, and from classical music concerts to Zeta Beta Phi rush week materials. Each scrapbook showcases a different aspect of Yolande's late teenage life as well as her early adulthood, coupled with notes, sketches, and illustrations from friends, postcards and fliers from all over the United States and Europe, and her personal takes on the world around her.

Inventory

Photo Album

Note:

Photographs focusing on summer leisure activities, visits to the Potomac River, Harpers Ferry, and other sites in Virginia; photos of family members, friends, and pets; photos of parades and city scenes. Photographs showcasing winter activities.

1918-1920

Box 1: 1

Friendship Book

Note:

Friendship book featuring sketches, colored illustrations, and messages from friends. Invitations to events. Poems.

1915-1927

Box 1: 2

Small Scrapbook

Note:

Messages from friends/family. Poetry clippings. Cut-out photographs. "Loch Raven," a typewritten journal entry. Handwritten journal entries and quotes.

1928

Box 1: 3

Large Scrapbook (Volume I)

Note:

Travel sketches. Photographs of architecture and sites in Québec, the S.S. Montroyal, souvenirs from the trips. Fliers for admission to the Foyer de Grenoble and la Société des Foyers de l'Étudiante in France. S.S. Mauretania pamphlets. Sketches of trip to England (Petersfield, Bedales School, London); postcards and artifact info sheets from the British Museum. The Dickens House. Stratford-on-Avon. Kenilworth Castle. Warwick and Warwick Castle.

1926 Dec.-1927 July

Box 1: 4

Large Scrapbook (Volume II)

Note:

Sketches, postcards, illustrations, and photographs from her trip to France (Rouen, Lyon, les Alpes, Grenoble, l'Université de Grenoble, la Route des Alpes, les petites roches, les fleurs des Alpes, Avignon-Orange, les grandes Cols, le grands Goulets, Chamonix-Mont Blanc, Paris) and Switzerland (Geneva). Photos of plane from Paris to Brussels. R.M.S Mauretania.

1927 July-1927 Aug.

Box 1: 5

Large Scrapbook

Note:

Sketches, postcards, illustrations, and photographs from another trip to France (Chartres, clippings of images of historical figures and locations, Fontainebleau, family portraits, le Château de la Malmaison, le Palais de Fontainebleau, St. Germain-de-Pres, le Havre, S. S. Rochambeau, Paris, la Seine, Notre-Dame, Montparnasse, aerial photographs).

1928-1929

Box 1: 6

"My Memory Book"

Note:

Sketches, illustrations, photographs, and other scraps from her senior year at Fisk University. Photographs of family and friends. Photographs of athletic, cultural, and university events. Class photo of Fisk University 1924 graduates. Memories from summers at Fern Rock Camp. Postcards from travels around New York.

1923-1924

Box 1: 7

"My Memory Book 1922-1923."

Note:

Poetry and prose clippings. Sketches, illustrations, photographs, and other scraps. Messages from friends. Scraps from 1921-1922 and 1922-1923 academic years at Fisk University. Reflections on college life. Scraps from holidays (Valentine's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving). Photographs of athletic, cultural, and university events. Fisk University Department of Music concert materials. Maxwell Training School for Teachers Commencement Ceremony materials. Reflections on appendicitis. Zeta Beta Phi sorority materials.

1921-1923

Box 1: 8

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Brody Drake, 2023.

Processing Information

Processed by Andrew Bielecki, March 2024.

Languages:

English, French

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Search terms

Subjects

- African Americans--History--1877-1964
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963
- Du Bois, Yolande Nina, 1900-1961
- Du Bois, Yolande Nina, 1900-1961
- England
- France
- Grenoble
- Harpers Ferry
- London
- Nashville
- Paris
- Switzerland

Contributors

- Du Bois, Yolande Nina, 1900-1961 [main entry]
- Fisk University
- l'Université de Grenoble
- The British Museum

Genres and formats

- Black-and-white photographs
- Card photographs (photographs)
- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Fliers (printed matter)
- Notes(documents)
- Photograph albums
- Postcards
- Scrapbooks
- Sketches

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