Descriptive Summary
Title: Jewel Plummer Cobb Collection
Dates: 1964-1995
Collection Number: 2015.012
Creator/Collector: Jewel Plummer Cobb
Extent: 16.25 linear ft.
Repository: California State University, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California 90032-8300
Abstract: Jewel Plummer Cobb (1924- ), a distinguished African American biologist and academic administrator, is widely credited for her contributions to the scientific community, both through her cancer research and her commitment to equal access to educational and professional opportunities for women and minorities.
Language of Material: English
Access
Access is available by appointment for Cal State LA student and faculty researchers as well as independent researchers.
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Preferred Citation
Jewel Plummer Cobb Collection. California State University, Los Angeles
Biography/Administrative History
Jewel Plummer Cobb (1924- ), a distinguished African American biologist and academic administrator, is widely credited for her contributions to the scientific community, both through her cancer research and her commitment to equal access to educational and professional opportunities for women and minorities. The daughter of a physician and school teacher, Cobb developed interested in a science career as a high school student. She began her undergraduate career at University of Michigan but transferred to a historically black college after encountering a campus climate plagued by racial discrimination. After earning a PhD in Cell Physiology from NYU in 1950, she became a fellow at the National Cancer Institute. After directing the Tissue Culture Laboratory at the University of Illinois, in 1967 she was appointed Dean and Professor of Zoology at Connecticut College. There she instituted and funded recruitment and retention programs for women and under-represented minorities who sought to enter traditionally white male-dominated fields. When she left Connecticut College in 1975 to become Dean at Douglass College, the women's division within Rutgers University, she continued her work to improve the access of women and minorities to science and mathematics fields. She worked to attract more women to the sciences with new programs. Her 1979 publication “Filters for Women in Science,” is included in this collection. In this article, she exposed how educational systems and other “filters” discouraged women from careers in science and math, ultimately affecting their university tenure and equal pay. In 1981, she was appointed president of California State University, Fullerton, becoming the first black president of a major public university in the western United States. During her tenure, the university grew in enrollment, prestige and recognition. There she developed both a president’s opportunity and mathematics tutoring program for minority students. She retired in 1991 and received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Science. The Center for Excellence selected her to receive the Achievement in Excellence Award in 1999 and, in 2001, she was the first recipient of the Reginald Wilson Award for noteworthy accomplishments in diversifying higher education. Throughout her career, Jewel Plummer Cobb worked to promote opportunities for young women and minorities in the sciences and other traditionally white male-dominated fields. When faced with a shortage of public funds, she turned to private sources and remained committed to her belief that education was the key to a life of success and independence.
Scope and Content of Collection
Our collection contains a wide variety of publications, pamphlets, newsletters, research reports, program proposals, newspaper and magazine clippings, conference materials and a series of academic articles. The collection includes Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb’s personal notes and speech transcripts.
Indexing Terms
African American
Women and minorities
Education
Jewel Plummer Cobb Collection Finding Aid