Berta Green Langston papers HLL.2019.002

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Berta Green Langston was born July 22, 1926, on the Lower East Side of New York City. She joined the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) at age 19 or 20. For a brief time in the 1960s she was a member of the Party's National Committee. She remained active in the SWP until 1983, when she was expelled along with numerous other long time members. She immediately went on to help form Socialist Action, to which she belonged for several years.

In 1957-1958, she moved to Detroit and began working for the SWP full time. Her Party name was Berta Graham. One of her first tasks was to help organize a tour in Michigan for Harold Davies, a British Labour Party Member of Parliament, who was on a speaking tour of the United States and Canada in September 1958.

At this time, the SWP was deeply involved in "regroupment," in which the Party's work was oriented toward connecting with Communist Party (CP) members following the Twentieth Congress and Khrushchev revelations. Langston was a member of a small minority that believed the CP members might abandon politics following recent changes in their party, and that participation in the growing civil rights movement would offer them greater opportunities. In an effort to encourage CP members to join the SWP, Langston volunteered to work on the Committee to Combat Racial Injustice's nine-day tour of Michigan led by Robert F. Williams, President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), following the "kissing case" in North Carolina in December of 1958. During this time, she worked under the name Berta Green. Langston later moved back to New York City, where she participated in Cuban defense activity and was elected Secretary of the New York branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC). Later she became the de-facto National Executive Secretary of the national group.

When the SWP national office decided to move away from Cuba activism, which Langston protested, she was re-assigned from the FPCC to the Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants (CAMD), where in her role as secretary she corresponded with Robert F. Williams regarding the Monroe legal cases as well as Williams' exile in Cuba.

In the late 1960s, Langston became involved in organizing activities with the Alexander Defense Committee (ADC), which formed to aid victims of South African apartheid. Her husband, Robert Langston, was an officer of the committee. In the early 1970s, under the name Berta Langston, she was active in the Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East (CONAME) along with her husband Robert Langston.

**Scope and Contents**

The Berta Green Langston Papers 1958-2005 consist of a selection of correspondence, newsletters, newspaper articles, and other documents concerning the Alexander Defense Committee, Committee to Combat Racial Injustice, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC), the Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants (CAMD), and the Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East (CONAME), organizations in which the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) was active in the United States during
the 1960's and 1970's. Correspondents of note in the collection include James Baldwin, Robert F. Williams, Albert Perry, Dave Dellinger, William Worthy, Pete Seeger, Noam Chomsky, and Arie Bober, as well as officials in the United States Department of Justice, Congress, and the Attorney General's office. Publications in the collection include issues of the CAMD newsletter The Crusader and the FPCC newsletters Fair Play, Student Council, and Cuban Press Survey. Some legal papers concerning the trial of the Monroe Defendants are included, as is one black and white photograph of the defendants. A draft of Van Gosse's 1993 book *Where the Boys Are*, newspaper clippings, press releases, event announcements, conference and symposia documents, and benefit concert information are also included.

**Custodial History**
The Berta Green Langston papers were donated to the Holt Labor Library in San Francisco, California between 2002 and 2005, and were acquired by the Gerth Archives and Special Collections at California State University, Dominguez Hills, in 2019.

**Conditions Governing Access**
Open for use by qualified researchers.

**Arrangement**

**Conditions Governing Use**
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**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
Communism--United States--History--20th century
Cuba--History--Revolution, 1959
Anti-apartheid movements--United States
Socialism--United States--History--20th century
Socialist Workers Party--United States--20th century
Social justice--United States
Civil rights movements--North Carolina--History--20th century
Williams, Robert F. (Robert Franklin), 1925-1996

**Alexander Defense Committee Series I. 1965-1971**

**Scope and Contents**
Contains letters from Alexander Defense Committee members to various individuals, including Congressman William Ryan, Assistant Attorney General J. Walter Yeagley, and President Lyndon Johnson. Press releases, notices, and brochures relating to the committee are also included.

**Arrangement**
Arranged chronologically.

- box 1, folder 1  Press Releases, Notices, Brochures 1965-1966
- box 1, folder 2  Correspondence 1965-1971
Fair Play for Cuba Committee Series II. 1958-2002

Scope and Contents
Contains correspondence, announcements, press releases, notices, and minutes from the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and its chapters. Information about the FPCC's first national conference and their December 1960 Cuba tour is included, newsletters such as Fair Play, Student Council, and Cuban Press Survey, in addition to correspondence and documents from the Political Committee and the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Workers Party are also included. The collection contains materials relating to the Eastland Committee Hearings, newspaper clippings, and a scrapbook containing Political Committee minutes and documents as well.

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

box 1, folder 3  Newspaper Clippings 1958-1959
box 1, folder 4  Eastland Committee Hearings 1960-1961
box 1, folder 5  First National Conference and Cuba Tour 1960-1961
box 1, folder 6  Announcements, Press Releases, Advertisements, Notices, and Receipts 1960-1962
box 1, folder 7  Fair Play Newsletter 1960-1961
box 1, folder 8  Student Council Newsletter 1960-1961
box 1, folder 9  Cuban Press Survey Newsletter 1961-1963
box 1, folder 10  Socialist Workers Party 1960-1963
box 1, folder 11  Scrapbook (PC Minutes, Correspondence, and Misc.) 1960
box 2, folder 1  Correspondence 1960-2002
box 2, folder 2  Political Committee (PC) and National Executive Committee (NEC) 1961-1963
box 2, folder 3  Correspondence, Notices, and Announcements Regarding Other Chapters 1961
box 2, folder 4  Van Gosse Dissertation Draft 1991

Committee to Combat Racial Injustice Series III. 1958-1959

Scope and Contents
Contains newspaper clippings about the North Carolina "Kissing Case," in which two young African American boys were arrested for being kissed by a white girl, and the involvement of Robert F. Williams, President of the North Carolina National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) who was instrumental in garnering political support to pardon the boys. Correspondence, flyers, announcements, and press releases regarding Robert F. Williams and other Committee affairs are also included.

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

box 2, folder 5  Newspaper Clippings 1958-1959
box 2, folder 6  Correspondence and Announcements 1959
Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants Series IV. 1959-2001 1959-1964

Scope and Contents

Contains correspondence, newsletters, bulletins, financial statements, and symposium and conference information reflecting the activities of organizations that aided the African American people in Monroe, North Carolina, who defended themselves against racist attacks by the Ku Klux Klan. The series includes letters to and from Robert F. Williams, the president of the Monroe, North Carolina chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), regarding the Monroe legal cases as well as his political exile in Cuba. Other correspondents include James Baldwin, Albert Perry, Dave Dellinger, William Worthy, Mae Mallory, Conrad Lynn, and Calvin Hicks, concerning the activities of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the NAACP, as well as to the United States Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Attorney General. The collection contains The Crusader newsletter, as well as newspaper clippings concerning the Monroe Kidnap Case, Robert F. Williams, and the Monroe Defendants. Also included are song lyrics for the song "The Story of Old Monroe" by Pete Seeger and associated correspondence to and from Pete Seeger regarding a performance of the song at a benefit for the Committee.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

box 2, folder 7  
_Crusader, Monroe Non-Violent Action Committee, and Voice of Action Newsletters_  
1959-1964

box 2, folder 8  
Press Releases, Form Letters, Fact Sheets 1961-1964

box 2, folder 9  
Information Bulletins, Summary Reports, Financial Statements 1961-1964

box 2, folder 10-11  
Newspaper Clippings 1961-1969

box 2, folder 12  
Pete Seeger Music and Correspondence 1962-1963

box 2, folder 13  
Benefit Concerts and Other Events 1962-1963

box 2, folder 14  
Symposium and Conferences 1962-1963

box 3, folder 1  
Chronicles of the Monroe Riots 1962-2001

Scope and Contents

Includes one photograph.

Correspondence 1961-1987

box 3, folder 2  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) 1961-1962

box 3, folder 3  
Robert F. Williams 1961-1963

box 3, folder 4  
Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Congress of Racial Equality, and Southern Conference Educational Fund 1961-1963

box 3, folder 5  
Boston, Ohio, and California Chapters 1961-1964

box 3, folder 6  
Internal Socialist Workers Party and Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants 1961-1964

box 3, folder 7  
Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Attorney General 1961-1987

box 3, folder 8  
Dave Dellinger and William Worthy 1961-2003

box 3, folder 9  
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) 1962

box 3, folder 10  
James Baldwin 1963-1964
Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East Series V. 1969-2005

Scope and Contents
These documents primarily concern the American speaking tour of Arie Bober, an anti-Zionist Israeli and member of the Israeli Socialist Organization, which the Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East (CONAME) sponsored in spring and summer of 1970. It includes substantial correspondence with Bober, as well as letters to and from sponsors of the committee including Arthur Miller, Noam Chomsky, Pete Seeger, and various media and press outlets. Newspaper clippings, press releases, publicity materials, Bober's biography, copies of speeches, tour reports, schedules, and financial statements are also included. Of note is correspondence with Doubleday concerning publication terms of Bober's book The Other Israel. One issue of ISRAC, the Israeli Revolutionary Action Committee newsletter, is also included.

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

box 3, folder 11
Media and Press Correspondence 1970

box 3, folder 12
Newspaper Clippings, Press Releases, Publicity and Marketing 1970

box 3, folder 13-15
Arie Bober and Committee Sponsor Correspondence 1970-2005