Guide to James Baldwin correspondence Mss 329

Finding aid prepared by Beaudry Allen

UC SANTA BARBARA

Library

UC Santa Barbara Library, Department of Special Research Collections
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, California, 93106-9010
Phone: (805) 893-3062
Email: special@library.ucsb.edu; URL: http://www.library.ucsb.edu/special-collections

15 November 2016
Guide to James Baldwin correspondence

Identifier/Call Number: Mss 329
Contributing Institution: UC Santa Barbara Library, Department of Special Research Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.2 linear feet (1 box)
Date (inclusive): 1970-1987
Abstract: The collection is comprised of correspondence and photographs which provide insight into some of James Baldwin's social and political activism mainly in the 1970s.
Physical Location: UC Santa Barbara Library, Special Research Collections
Creator: Baldwin, James, 1924-1987

Access Restrictions
The collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions
Copyright has not been assigned to the Department of Special Collections, UCSB. All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the Head of Special Collections. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the Department of Special Collections as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which also must be obtained.

Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], James Baldwin correspondence, Mss 329. Department of Special Collections, UC Santa Barbara Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Biographical note
James Baldwin is one of the most renowned and influential African American writers of the twentieth century. Born on August 2, 1924, in New York City, Baldwin grew up in Harlem and developed a passion for reading and writing. His life in segregated poverty and a lifetime of discrimination was channeled into his writings. In the 1940s, Baldwin started getting essays and short stories published in national periodicals such as The Nation and Partisan Review. As an adult, his novels, poems, and essays explored the complexities and challenges of racial strife and prejudice during a pivotal moment in United States history. Baldwin embarked on the exploration of the black experience just as the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum; so his works served as achingly poignant insight into the intricacies of American culture and examination of the psychological effects of racism and segregation. Throughout the years Baldwin's work touched upon the interconnectivity of tension in race, gender, sexuality, and class. His works included Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953), Notes of a Native Son (1955), Giovanni's Room (1956), Another Country (1962), and essay, turned published book, The Fire Next Time (1963). Around the early 1960s, Baldwin became more entrenched in social and political activism and used his popularity to become a spokesperson for civil rights and advocate the cause of African Americans. For example, Baldwin aligned himself with the ideals of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and conducted a lecture tour in Southern states for CORE. Baldwin continued to be a proponent of social justice and prolific writer until his death on December 1, 1987 in Saint-Paul de Vence.

Scope and Content
The collection is comprised of the correspondence and photographs of James Baldwin, American novelist, essayist, poet, and playwright who was also a prominent activist from the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s to his death in 1987. This collection specifically contains letters to and from Baldwin regarding his support or soliciting his support for political justice organizations, Black Panthers, unions, and incarcerated activists during the 1970s. The collection notably includes description of organizations and their strategies to free incarcerated African Americans like Tony Maynard, Angela Davis, George Jackson, Amiri Baraka, Harold Rogers, and others.

Arrangement
The collection of letters are arranged chronologically. The folders are titled by subject name or correspondent.

Accruals
Purchased, 2016.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Angela Y. (Angela Yvonne), Davis, 1944-
Jackson, George, 1941-1971
King, Coretta Scott, 1927-2006
William Styron, 1925-2006
African American authors
African Americans--Civil rights
Black Panthers
Civil rights--United States
Letters (correspondence)
Soledad Brothers

**Correspondence, 1970-1980**

**Box-folder 1:1**

**William Stryron, 1970 September 20**

**Scope and Content**

John Ebson Thorne (1921-2002) was a San Jose-based attorney and activist who specialized in civil rights and constitutional law. Over the course of his career, Thorne extended his legal services to Black Panther Party member and activist George Jackson, and political activist Angela Davis. His letters to Baldwin discuss them as well as doing a film on Soledad case.

**Box-folder 1:2**

**Letters from John Thorne, 1970 December - 1971 January**

**Scope and Content**

Includes letters to and from Baldwin in reference to his support of Tony Maynard, during his incarceration, and information regarding Maynard's life after prison.

**Box-folder 1:3**

**Tony Maynard, 1970, 1975**

**Scope and Content**

Includes letters to and from Baldwin in reference to his support of Tony Maynard, during his incarceration, and information regarding Maynard's life after prison.

**Box-folder 1:4**


**Scope and Content**

Includes two letters from Coretta Scott King, as acting President, providing updates of the coalition and global events.

**Box-folder 1:5**

**Committee of the Arts to Free Angela Davis, 1972 April - June**

**Scope and Content**

Letters from Ingrid Primus, the founding member of the Committee of Arts to Free Angela Davis, extending her gratitude for Baldwin’s support.

**Box-folder 1:6**

**National Organization for Women and Labor Committee, 1974-1975**

**Scope and Content**

Letters and press releases advocating support for the Household Workers Bill and a letter from Seymour Posner, New York State assemblyman and labor legislator.

**Box-folder 1:7**

**Massachusetts Defenders Committee, 1975 July 15**

**Scope and Content**

Letter from Ms. Malvine Nathanson, Chief Appellate Attorney, of the Committee asking for Baldwin’s continued support for the appeal of Harold Rogers.

**Box-folder 1:8**

**Justice for Huey P Newton and the Black Panther Party, letter from David Dellinger, circa late 1970s**

**Scope and Content**

A letter soliciting sponsorship and/or financial donation to the Committee, who after Huey P Newton's prison release, served as a campaign to continue the support and protection for the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California.
Box-folder 1:9  **Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), 1980 August 25**  
**Scope and Content**  
Includes a letter from the People's Defense Committee in regards to Amiri Baraka's, also known as LeRoi Jones, 1979 false arrest and imprisonment. In addition, includes a statement of protest (outlining Baraka's case) and an appellate Judge petition letter.

Box-folder 1:10  **George Jackson, note from Georgina Jackson, undated**  
**Scope and Content**  
Includes a poster of a member of the Black Panthers chained in prison.

Box-folder 1:11-12  
**Portraits, black and white photographs, 1987**  
**Scope and Content**  
Includes two photographs of Baldwin signed by photographer, Willy Maywald, and three photographs of Baldwin by Simone Jaworski from April 1987.