Summary

Creator: Damas, Léon-Gontran, 1912-1978

Title: Léon-Gontran Damas papers

Date: 1949-1978

Size: 26.46 linear feet (29 boxes)


Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: This collection consists of personal papers, professional and literary correspondence, office files, research notes, and printed matter documenting the professional and literary activities of Léon-Gontran Damas, an author, lecturer, and acting-chairman of the department of African Studies and Research Program at Howard University (1975-1976).

Conditions Governing Access:

Offsite material is currently closed.

Preferred citation: [Item], Léon-Gontran Damas papers, Sc MG 302, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English Some material in French.


Separated Materials:
Transferred to the Art and Artifacts Division: artwork and posters.

Transferred to the General Research and Reference Division: books and periodicals.
Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: audio and moving image materials. For more information, please contact the division at schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org or 212-491-2270.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

Creator History

Born in Cayenne, French Guiana, in 1912, Léon-Gontran Damas was a poet, journalist, educator, and statesman who co-founded the Négritude literary movement in the 1930s with the Martinique born poet Aimé Césaire and the Senegalese author and statesman Léopold Sédar Senghor. Damas studied languages, literature, history, and ethnology, and began his career in journalism and literature in Paris in the 1930s. His first volume of poems, *Pigments*, appeared in 1937. He served briefly in the French army during the Second World War, and joined the French Resistance after his demobilization. Elected representative of Guiana to the French Parliament after the war, he was appointed to the High Court of Justice and served as Rapporteur of a parliamentary commission to the Ivory Coast in 1949. During the 1950s and 1960s, he lectured and traveled extensively in the Caribbean and Latin America, where he studied the influence of African culture in the New World. Appointed Distinguished Visiting Professor at Howard University in 1970, he lectured extensively at colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada until his death in 1978.


Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of personal papers, professional and literary correspondence, office files, research notes, and printed matter documenting the professional and literary activities of Léon-Gontran Damas. Smaller bodies of materials document his earlier career as representative of French Guiana to the French National Assembly in the 1950s. Damas's research notes and printed matter include a voluminous compilation of writings and biographical sketches of Brazilian authors of African descent from the 18th century to the 1950s. The Négritude movement is documented throughout the collection with published and unpublished essays, biographical and bibliographical articles, student papers from Howard University and the Federal City College in Washington, D.C., conference materials, and selected records of the Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation.

**Arrangement:** Arranged into 10 series: I. Biographical; II. Correspondence; III. French Guiana; IV. Writings by and about Léon-Gontran Damas; V. Conferences; VI. Research material; VII. Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation; VIII. Writings by other authors; IX. Office files; and X. Printed matter.

Key Terms

Subjects
Authors, Black
Authors, French Guianese
Blacks -- Race identity
Blacks -- West Indies -- History
Brazilian poetry -- History and criticism
Caribbean literature (French) -- History and criticism
Creole dialects, French -- Haiti
French poetry -- Black authors
Latin American literature -- History and criticism
Negritude (Literary movement)
Poets, French Guianese
Race awareness in literature

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Ce_saire, Aime_
Damas, Le_on-Gontran, 1912-1978
Dodson, Owen, 1914-1983
Senghor, Le_opold Se_dar, 1906-2001
Troupe, Quincy
Fondation Léopold Sédar Senghor
Guide to the
Léon-Gontran Damas papers

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