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Guide to the

Naomi Sims papers

1957-1981 [bulk 1970-1981]
Sc MG 136

Home to Harlem Project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Summary

Creator: Sims, Naomi, 1948-2009

Title: Naomi Sims papers

Date: 1957-1981 [bulk 1970-1981]

Size: 6.0 linear feet (6 boxes)

Source: Gift, Sims, Naomi/Findlay, Michael, 1981

Abstract: Naomi Sims was one of the top African American fashion models of the 1960s and 1970s. The Naomi Sims papers include typescripts and research materials for books written by Sims, including All About Health and Beauty for the Black Woman (1976), How To Be a Top Model (1979), All About Hair Care for the Black Woman (1982), and All About Success for the Black Woman (1982). Also, some personal and business files including contracts for television shows, records from the Ford Agency, material on speeches and panel discussions, news clippings, and fan mail.

Conditions Governing Access:

Collection stored offsite.

Preferred citation: [Item], Naomi Sims papers, Sc MG 136, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Separated Materials:
Photographs transferred to the Photographs and Prints division.

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Creator History

Naomi Sims (1948-2009) was one of the top African American fashion models of the 1960s and 1970s. Born in Oxford, Mississippi, she spent much of her childhood in Pittsburgh, then moved to New York after high school, where she studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology and New York University. While in college, she became interested in modeling and approached agencies, but was initially rejected due to her dark skin. In 1967, she was featured in the fashion supplement of *The New York Times*, which she parlayed into a deal for representation with model-turned-agent Wilhemina Cooper. She had quick success, landing a spot in an AT&T commercial and covers of *Ladies' Home Journal* (November 1968; she was the first Black model to appear on the cover) and *Life* magazine (October 1969). She also achieved success as a runway model for designers such as Halston, Teal Traina, Fernando Sanchez, and Giorgio di Sant'Angelo. In 1973, she started a business designing wigs for Black women, the Naomi Sims Collection, which eventually came to encompass cosmetics and fragrances as well. She also wrote several books on modelling, health, beauty, and business aimed at Black women. In 1972, she married Michael Findlay, a Manhattan-based art dealer (the marriage ended in divorce in 1991). They had one son, Bob. Sims died in Newark, New Jersey, in 2009.

Scope and Content Note

The Naomi Sims papers include typescripts and research materials for books written by Sims, including *All About Health and Beauty for the Black Woman* (1976), *How To Be a Top Model* (1979), *All About Hair Care for the Black Woman* (1982) and *All About Success for the Black Woman* (1982). There are also personal and business files including correspondence, contracts for television shows, records from the Ford Agency, material on speeches and panel discussions, news clippings, and fan mail.

Key Terms

Subjects
African American models
African Americans -- Health and hygiene
Black author
Modeling agencies
Models (Persons)

Names
Sims, Naomi, 1948-2009

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