

WOMEN at the CENTER

Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture
David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

Issue 28, Fall 2015

Born to Belonging: the Mab Segrest Papers

Rachel Sanders, Bingham Center Technical Services Intern, has spent the past few months processing the papers of Dr. Mab Segrest, a leading lesbian feminist writer, activist, scholar, and speaker, who has traveled the United States and around the world fighting for social justice.

Sanders writes, "It is impossible to separate Dr. Segrest's work as an activist from her many academic accomplishments—these parts of her life have informed and shaped one another. When processing a person's papers, it is difficult not to feel connected to them in some sense. I'm moved by Dr. Segrest's enormous resolve and courage, and my time with her papers has increased my appreciation of her work and her



Mab Segrest in her home in Durham, circa 1978-80

dedication to activism and social justice."

Filling 124 boxes and spanning 1889 to the present, the materials document many aspects of Dr. Segrest's personal and professional history. In the series related to her family, there are a variety of valuable materials, including correspondence from the Panama Canal, Civil War portraits, and artifacts from her childhood in Tuskegee, Alabama. Profes-

sional materials include everything from correspondence, teaching files, and organizational records to drafts and research materials from her most famous written works, *My Mama's Dead Squirrel* (1985), *Memoir of a Race Traitor* (1994), and *Born to Belonging: Writings on Spirit* (Continued on page 3)

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Archiving and Researching LGBTQ Lives

Over the three years that Professor Jennifer Ansley has been an instructor in the Thompson Writing Program, she has drawn on the Bingham Center's collections of LGBT and queer zines and archival materials to support her Writing 101 courses, which have explored different themes related to queer theory, activism, and history. In a blog post outlining her approach to a new course, "Archiving LGBTQ Lives," she writes: "I'm particularly interested in engaging students around the question of how archival and documentary practices impact our understanding of LGBTQ identities and communities whose histories have been side-lined and untold."

This course offered students "an oppor-

tunity to explore and analyze the documents, manuscripts, and ephemera held in the special collections at Duke University, to glean what we can from them about LGBTQ life and history, but also to consider how institutional settings, collection practices, and the arrangement of materials—the composition of the collections—shapes what we think we know about LGBTQ people and communities, both past and present."

In their visit to the Rubenstein Library, students explored materials from a variety of collections including the Catherine Nicholson Papers, Dawn Langley Simmons Papers, Mandy Carter Papers, James Sears Papers,

(Continued on page 2)

Recent Acquisitions

Bonnie Lee Black Papers

Writer whose papers document her time in Gabon and Mali in Africa as a member of the Peace Corps.

Ann Lovett Papers

Photographer and artist, Professor of Art at SUNY New Paltz.

Donnamarie Mazzola Papers

Feminist activist focused on issues of domestic and sexual violence against women in Philadelphia in the 1980s-90s.

Triangle Raging Gran-nies Records

Social justice organization promoting peace and equality through song and humor.

Contraceptive Sponges

Box of "Tampons Vaginaux" circa 1900-1930. Small box containing six contraceptive sponges, with original cotton netting and cords in the original paper box.

Wishbone Stem I.U.D. Pessary

Circa 1930s. Small gold-plated wishbone stem pessary with concavo-convex disk and two prongs; in original red box with lid.

Drew Gilpin Faust Celebrates Rubenstein Re-opening

We were honored to have Harvard University President Drew Gilpin Faust as the keynote speaker for the October 3 Dedication of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Here is a selection from her address, which is available in full online:

I regard rare book and manuscript libraries as sacred spaces—spaces of transcendence where we reach beyond ourselves in the effort to discover and understand other places and other times. Now, those who use the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library will be able to do so in a physical space that does not just enable but uplifts that effort. What a rare and precious gift—it's a gift that will enhance collections that have supported scholarship and teaching for many decades.

The visionary collecting and foresight of Duke's librarians are evident throughout the larger whole. So many subjects vital to our perceptions of the world today are represented in these collections—from advertising and popular culture to human rights and fundamental questions of race, gender and sexuality.... This library is a stunning resource for Duke students and faculty and for the world.

Today we celebrate a beautiful new home for these treasures, a place designed at once to protect them and to



Drew Gilpin Faust reviews a gift from David Rubenstein

share them, to preserve them for the future and to make them readily accessible to the present.

So I am grateful to be able—more than four decades after my first visit—to say a public thank you. Thank you to Duke University, to its imaginative and knowledgeable librarians, and to David Rubenstein who has ensured that generations of students and scholars to come have the opportunity to be enchanted and enlightened by the preservation of the record of human thought, experience, and aspiration.

Rubenstein Library Dedication: youtu.be/vBjtrZ3Ixl

Archiving and Researching LGBTQ Lives continued from page 1

OutRight Records, and Southerners on New Ground Records. In addition to traditional archival research, students engaged with “new media and digital communication technologies [that] offer new means for community-based information gathering and sharing” such as the Country Queers multi-media oral history project, the Trans Oral History Project, and the Queer Zine Archive Project.

One student, Sydney Roberts, reflected on the course, “History is a troubling concept because it is so easily manipulated, and it can be incredibly disheartening not to see yourself in mainstream archival narratives. But, this course reinforces the notion that, as students, we have

the ability to create spaces for queer voices that have been drowned out in the past.”

As a final project several students participated in a community-based Durham LGBTQ History Project by helping transcribe oral histories. This project will be publicly launched in Spring 2016 in association with the Durham County Library. Ansley explains, “Working with digital community-based archives and creative documentary projects means asking students not only to analyze source material but also to be critical and self-conscious about how that information is assembled in both institutional settings and in their own writing and research projects.”

LGBT Studies at Duke Libraries: guides.library.duke.edu/lgbtstudies

Mab Segrest Papers *continued from page 1*

and *Justice* (2002).

The largest section of the papers documents Dr. Segrest's wide-ranging activism, especially her work with North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence (NCARRV), a public interest organization she co-founded in 1985 that rallied citizens against an epidemic of hate violence in this state. NCARRV files contain public communications as well as materials documenting strategy for on-the-ground activism in which she played a central role.

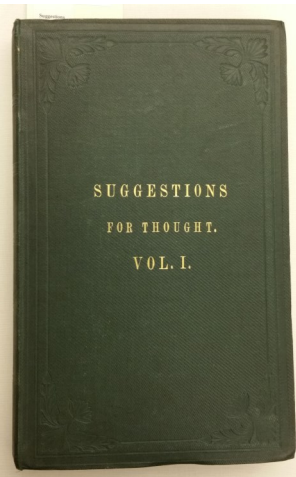
Dr. Segrest's papers are a great testament to her long-standing commitment to education. Her teaching career started in 1971 when she accepted a position at Campbell University while working on her Ph.D. dissertation (earned at Duke University in 1979). Dr. Segrest has taught courses at UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke, and at Connecticut College, where she was the Fuller-Maathai Professor of Gender and Women's Studies from 2002 to 2014. Dr. Segrest has also taught at Emory University and Georgia College while researching the history of Georgia's state mental hospital in Milledgeville.

Jaime Cantrell, Visiting Assistant Professor of English at the University of Mississippi, has recently made extensive use of this collection for her book project, *Southern Sapphisms: Sexuality and Sociality in Literary Productions 1969-1997*. In a blog post for The Devil's Tale she writes, "Vital archival work completed at the Sallie Bingham Center this past May strengthened my arguments about the formations of lesbian identity and community in the North Carolina lesbian-feminist journal *Feminary* (1969-1982)." Segrest was a founding member of this journal collective. Cantrell continues, "At a local level, *Feminary* forged and grounded a community of Durham/Triangle feminists, lesbians, and women writing and printing as a collective. At a national level, I show how the women of this journal were actually inspired by the increasingly turbulent battles over civil rights in the South."

Dr. Segrest's papers are a foundational collection for the Bingham Center and a valuable resource for the study of gender, sexuality, race, and class as well as literary theory and social movement history.

Finding Aid: library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/segrestmab/

A New Look at Florence Nightingale



**Suggestions for Thought,
Vol. I, by Florence
Nightingale**

Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, was also a tireless social reformer and women's advocate who tackled a range of issues, including suffrage, midwifery, prostitution, child marriage, and the access by women to the medical profession.

To begin and advance her various campaigns, Nightingale became a prodigious writer. She published more than 200 books, reports, and pamphlets in her quest to improve health standards. Her *Suggestions for Thought to the Searchers After Truth Among the Artizans of England* (1860) is much different than her other well-known works. This very rare three-volume work presents Nightingale's radical spiritual and feminist views. Six sets were printed and privately distributed to family members and friends.

The Bingham Center recently welcomed one of these six sets as part of the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection. Previously owned by important feminist politician and writer Ray Strachey, the volumes will be on display as part of the exhibit, *Heralding the Way to a New World: Exploring Women in Science and Medicine Through the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection*, opening in January 2016. (Details on page 4.)

Fall Instruction

**Activating the
Archive**
Documentary Studies

**Archiving LGBTQ
Lives**
Writing 101

Book Arts
Visual Arts

**Library Student
Assistants Visit**
Durham School
of the Arts

**Making Meaning
of "Madness"**
Writing 101

**Men, Women,
and Sports**
History

**Stories for
Social Change**
Theatre Studies

U.S. Feminism
UNC-Greensboro

**Women, Gender,
Sexuality in the U.S.**
History

**Women in
the Economy**
Economics

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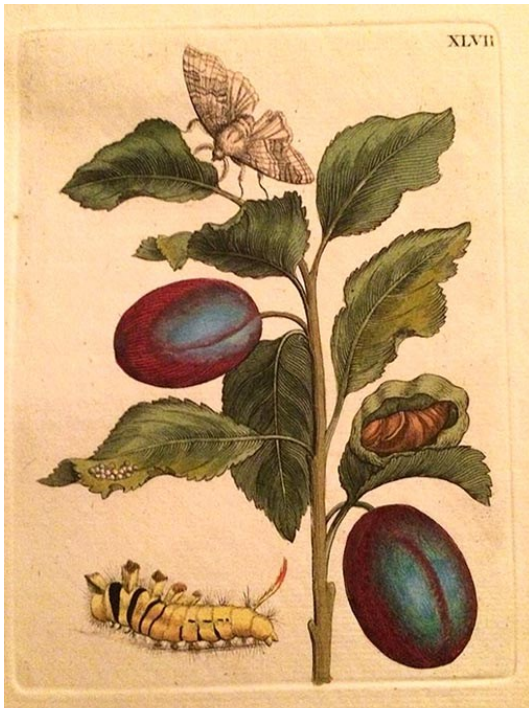
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First folio edition of Maria Sibylla Merian's
De Europische Insecten, 1730
Lisa Unger Baskin Collection

Heralding the Way to a New World: Exploring Women in Science and Medicine Through the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection

Opening January 20, 2016

Michael and Karen Stone Family Gallery
Mary Duke Biddle Suite, Rubenstein Library

In celebration of the arrival of the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection at Duke, an exhibit featuring items highlighting the achievements of pioneering women in science and medicine will be on display in the Stone Gallery during the winter and spring of 2016.

On February 9 at 4:00 p.m., Duke History Department Professor Tom Robisheaux will give a lecture in the Holsti Family Assembly Room, Rubenstein Library, on the Baskin Collection including his use of works by naturalist and artist Maria Sibylla Merian.

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/bingham/lisa-unger-baskin>