

Smith (Damu) Papers

An inventory of Damu Smith Papers at DC Public Library

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

DCPL Special Collections - MLK Library

901 G Street NW

Washington, DC

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Summary Information

Repository:	DCPL Special Collections - MLK Library
Creator:	Smith, Damu (Leroy Wesley), 1951-2006
Title:	Damu Smith Papers
ID:	116
Date [inclusive]:	1990-1994
Physical Description:	2.5 Linear feet
Physical Description:	1 Boxes
Language of the Material:	English
Language of the Material:	English

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Biographical / Historical

LeRoy Wesley Smith was born on December 6, 1951 to Sylvester and Vernice Smith in St. Louis, Missouri. Throughout his high school years, Smith participated in a program called the administered by Jesuit priests called Sophia House, a project dedicated to developing leadership skills in young black men. At Sophia House Smith learned about civil rights struggles. When Smith was 17 years old, he attended a black solidarity rally hosted by the Black United Fund in Cairo, Illinois which began his involvement in civil rights justice at home and within the African diaspora. Smith graduated from Vashon High School in 1970 and entered St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. It was here that he started to become more organized in his activism, as head of the Organization of African American Students. He and his fellow students took over the administration building and demanded changes to the climate of hostility for black students on campus. During his college days, Smith changed his name to Damu Amiri Imara, a Swahili name meaning blood, strength and leadership. Smith moved to D.C. in 1974, and became active in community organizations. Smith was one of the first black activists to target environmental racism worked with a number of organizations including the National Alliance against Racial and Political Violence, the American Friends Service Committee, Greenpeace USA, National Black Independent Political Party, National Black Environmental Justice Network, and Black Voices for Peace for which he was the founder and co-chair. Smith passed away on May 5, 2006.

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Scope and Contents

The Damu Smith papers document Smiths' involvement in activism and community organizations. Among the records are biographical material, notes, photographs, audiocassette tapes, and research files. The research files cover Angola, South Africa, Korea, Iraq, the environment, and organizations such as the French Street Umoja Connection, Louisiana Cancer Alley, and the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression.

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Arrangement

Processed without series.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

Finding aid revised to be more evergreen. 2020-08-26

Custodial History

Gift of Lynn Moore, 2006.

Conditions Governing Use

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Processing Information

This collection is unprocessed. It was accessioned by the Library, and was placed in archival containers upon its receipt. A descriptive container listing was created to facilitate access.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

District of Columbia Africana Archives Project, DCAAP.0067, Special Collections Research Center, George Washington University, Gelman Library.

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Controlled Access Headings

- African Americans
- Community organization
- Racism
- Environmentalism
- Political activists
- Photographs
- Health

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