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## Collection Summary

**Repository:** Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries

**Creator:** Vassar College. Africana Studies Program

**Title:** Vassar College 1969 Black Studies Sit-in Records

**Dates:** 1966-1974

**Quantity:** 0.8 cubic feet (2 boxes)

**Abstract:** Materials related to the early years of the Vassar College Black Studies Program and the student sit-in staged in 1969 for improvements to the program along with other demands relating to the African-American community both on campus and off.

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## Administrative History

Vassar College's Black Studies Program was established in the Fall of 1969, one of a number of similar programs established at colleges and universities across the country in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement. With recommendations and urging from the Students' Afro-American Society (SAS), a multidisciplinary program in Black Studies was approved by the Board of Trustees in February, 1969. The Urban Black Studies Center was also established and opened off-campus that year to provide educational opportunities in Black studies and Black history for Poughkeepsie residents and Vassar students. However, both initiatives were considered experimental and not assured of permanent funding.

On October 22, 1969, the SAS presented the College's administration with a list of demands related to the Black Studies Program, the Urban Center, and student services. Among their concerns were: the inability of the Black Studies Program to grant degrees; a lack of Black faculty; a lack of funding for the program; a lack of transportation between campus and the Urban Center; and a lack of contiguous housing for the exclusive use of African-American students. Dissatisfied with the administration's response to these demands, 32-35 Black students occupied the first floor of Main Building early in the morning of October 30 and barricaded themselves inside. Occupied areas included administrative offices, the mail room, and the campus switchboard. They remained until November 1, when the College and Trustees agreed to most of the protesters' demands. The occupation drew substantial national publicity. The Catlin Report, formally the report of the Joint Ad-Hoc Committee on the Education of Minority Students, recommended increasing the number of Black students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees; a larger proportion of financial aid to Black students; a commitment to the Black Studies concentration equal to others in the Vassar curriculum; a commitment to the Urban Center as part of the academic Black studies program; separate housing as an option available to Black students (but no dormitory assigned exclusively to Black students for legal reasons), and a cultural center for Black students. The Board of Trustees approved the report in December, 1970.

Renamed the Africana Studies Program in 1976, the program is the oldest of Vassar's multi-disciplinary programs.

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## Scope and Content Note

The collection contains materials related to the early years of the Vassar College Black Studies Program and the Black student sit-in staged in October 1969 for improvements to the program along with other demands relating to the African-American community both on campus and off. Included are faculty, trustee, administration, and student reports and correspondence documenting the establishment and early growth of the program. Also included are student handouts, administrative correspondence and reports, and press clippings recording the extensive coverage of the 1969 occupation of Main Building, which played a significant role in the development of the Africana Studies Program.

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## Arrangement

This collection is organized into seven series by type of material. [Top](#)

## Access and Use

### Access

This collection is open for research according to the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#) without any additional restrictions.

### Restrictions on Use

Permission to quote (publish) from unpublished or previously published material must be obtained as described in the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#).

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## Related Material

### Related Materials

- [The Vassar College Africana Studies Records, Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library.](#)
- [Folders 76.11-76.28 - Black Students Sit-in, Office of the President Records - Alan Simpson Files, Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library.](#)
- [Sanders, Joshunda VC '00. "Making History: 40 years of Africana Studies at Vassar." \*Vassar, The Alumnae/I Quarterly\*, Spring, 2007.](#)

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## Subject Headings

### Organizations:

- Vassar College--Administration
- Vassar College--Students

**Subjects:**

- African American students--New York (State)
- African Americans--Study and teaching
- Black people--Study and teaching
- College students, Black--New York (State)
- Student movements
- Student protesters

**Document Types:**

- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Correspondence
- Fliers (printed matter)
- Photographs
- Reports

**VCL Categories:**

- Vassar College Events and Issues

[Top](#)**Encoding Information**

Encoded by Jessica Kemm, October 2009. Updated by Emma Gronbeck, February 2025.

[Top](#)**Administrative Information****Preferred Citation**

Vassar College 1969 Black Studies Sit-in Records, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

**Processing Information**

Date of original processing unknown.

**Acquisition Information**

Materials were transferred from several Vassar College offices.

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[Series I.](#) **Articles and Clippings, 1966-1974**

[Series II.](#) **Flyers and Handouts, 1969**

[Series III.](#) **News Releases, 1969-1972**

[Series IV.](#) **Reports, 1969-1974**

[Series V.](#) **Correspondence, 1968-1974**

[Series VI.](#) **Black Studies Program, 1969-1971**

[Series VII.](#) **Miscellaneous, 1969-1974**

**Container List**

**SERIES I. ARTICLES & CLIPPINGS**

- Folder 1.1 Pre Sit-In: Articles on Black Studies & Housing, 1968 May - 1969 Nov
- Folder 1.2 Pre Sit-In: Miscellaneous Articles & Clippings, 1966 Nov - 1969 Nov
- Folders 1.3 Sit-In: Clippings, 1969 Oct 30 - Nov 1
- Folders 1.4 Sit-In: Clippings - Miscellany News and Vassar Alumnae Magazine, 1969 Oct - 1970 Apr
- Folder 1.5 End of Sit-In: Clippings, 1969 Nov
- Folder 1.6 Post Sit-In: Articles & Clippings, 1969 Nov - 1974 Feb
- Folder 1.7 Editorial Comments, 1969 Nov-Dec

**SERIES II. FLYERS & HANDOUTS**

- Folder 1.8 Flyers & Handouts, 1969 Oct-Nov

**SERIES III. NEWS RELEASES**

- Folder 2.1 News Releases from Vassar, 1969-1972
- Folder 2.2 Media Contacts 1969 Oct-Nov
- Folder 2.3 Summary of Media Coverage / B.H. Hevenor, 1969 Nov 26

## **SERIES IV. REPORTS**

- Folder 2.4 Demands, Proposals, and Actions, 1969 May - 1973 Mar, undated
- Folder 2.5 Reports and Minutes, 1969
- Folder 2.6 Reports and Minutes, 1970
- Folder 2.7 Reports and Minutes, 1972-1974

## **SERIES V. CORRESPONDENCE**

- Folder 3.1 Inter-departmental Communications, 1968 Nov - 1969 Oct
- Folder 3.2 Inter-departmental Communications, 1969 Nov
- Folder 3.3 Inter-departmental Communications, 1970 Jan-Sep
- Folder 3.4 Inter-departmental Communications, 1972 Mar-Dec
- Folder 3.5 Inter-departmental Communications, 1973
- Folder 3.6 Correspondence, 1969 Apr-Nov
- Folder 3.7 Correspondence, 1970 Jan - 1974 Jun

## **SERIES VI. VASSAR COLLEGE BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM**

- Folders 4.1-4.2 Curriculum, 1969-1971
- Folder 4.3 Urban Center for Black Studies, Proposal for Tutorial, 1969 Jul-Aug
- Folder 4.4 Proposals for Outside Funding, 1969 Jun-Sep
- Folder 4.5 Africa-Study Field Trip Fund Raising, 1970 Oct-Nov

## **SERIES VII. MISCELLANEOUS**

- Folder 4.6 Black Students Enrolled at Vassar College, 1969-1972
- Folder 4.7 Harvard College Admission and Scholarship Newsletter, vol. 22, no. 3, 1974 May
- Folder 4.8 New York State Education Department, "Minority Access to and Participation in Post-Secondary Education," revised draft, 1972 May
- Folder 4.9 Photographs, 1969 Oct 30

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