

# WOMEN at the CENTER

**Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture  
Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library**

Issue 18, Fall 2010

## Dorothy Allison: Fresh Perspectives and Truth-Telling

In the early 1990s Ginny Daley, then director of the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture, was convinced that Duke should acquire Dorothy Allison's papers.

"I saw her as the quintessential Southern writer," Daley wrote recently. "Her personal papers and literary works fit well with Duke's collections of Southern literature and women's culture, while bringing fresh perspectives on queer culture and truth-telling to the mix."

Through campus visits and other seed-planting efforts, Ginny Daley introduced Allison to the possibility of Duke as the permanent home for her collection.

Now, after a nearly twenty-year period



**Dorothy Allison**

Photo by Brett Hall

of considering this momentous decision, Dorothy Allison, author of *Bastard Out of Carolina* and other works and renowned activist in the LGBTQ community, has selected the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library to be the repository for her papers.

Bingham Center staff and Assistant Curator of Collections, Will Hansen, collaborated on the initial acquisition of nearly 60 boxes of Allison's papers, including drafts of her writings, exten-

sive correspondence and research files, personal journals documenting her life and creative process, and more.

For Allison, a South Carolina native

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## Ladyslipper Music Plays On at Bingham Center

The mission of Ladyslipper Music "has consistently been to heighten public awareness of the achievements of women artists and musicians, and to expand the scope and availability of musical and literary recordings by women."

Ladyslipper has been in business for almost 35 years, and is well known as a women's music distributor, promoter and label. As a local organization of national significance, it seems particularly appropriate that Ladyslipper's records will be

housed in Durham at the Sallie Bingham Center.

Their records are excellent source materials for anyone seeking to understand the women's music movement. Their run of beautifully printed and comprehensive catalogs contains information about women's music as well as feminist activism in a broader sense. The records of this company, which grew along with the second wave feminist movement, document

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[library.duke.edu/specialcollections/bingham](http://library.duke.edu/specialcollections/bingham)

**SALLIE BINGHAM CENTER**  
FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY AND CULTURE

## Instruction & Outreach

Bingham Center staff are teaching a variety of instruction sessions this fall for students enrolled in the following courses:

**Art of the Book: Typography**  
(Visual Arts)

**Art of the Essay**  
(English)

**African American Women & History**  
(African and African American Studies)

**Baldwin Scholars Sophomore Seminar**

**Citizen Organizing, 1776-Present**  
(History)

**Classics of American Literature**  
(English)

**Gender and Popular Culture**  
(Visual Studies)

**Interpreting Bodies: Identity and Beyond**  
(Women's Studies)

**Social Movements**  
(History)

## Dorothy Allison *(continued from page 1)*

now living in California, it's a relief to have the papers at the RBMSCL: "All I know is that now I feel that all that . . . I saved is going to be safe and of use. Since we are entering high summer here with 90 degree temperatures and high risk of fire, I can also stop worrying that a wildfire might sweep through the redwoods and erase all that history. Safe and of use is infinitely preferable."

Sharon Holland, Associate Professor, English and African and African American Studies at Duke University, expressed her appreciation for Allison's writing and for our acquisition of Allison's papers in a recent post on *The Devil's Tale*, RBMSCL's blog:

"I first encountered Dorothy Allison's major work, *Bastard Out of Carolina*, on an overnight train (the Orient Express, no less) from Vienna to Paris... [W]hen I got

to the fateful scene in the car outside the hospital, I impulsively threw the book out of the window—it is still in a field somewhere along the train line. My reaction is a testament to the importance of the scene of violation that Allison wanted to construct for the reader—it was real, and sudden and devastating."

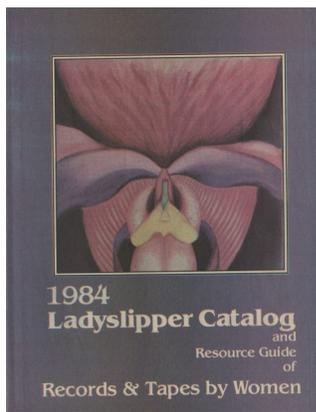
The papers will be a rich resource for those interested in Allison's life and work, as well as for researchers exploring the development of LGBT and Southern literatures, lesbian communities and families, and the history of American sexuality, among many other topics. In the coming months staff will review, process, and revise the preliminary finding aid for the collection to make it available for research. Researchers interested in using the papers should contact the Bingham Center staff to discuss their projects.

[library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/rbmscl/allisondorothy/inv](http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/rbmscl/allisondorothy/inv)

## Ladyslipper Music Plays On *(continued from page 1)*

activism in the local feminist and LGBT communities as well as the interconnectedness of feminist business organizations such as Charis Books and More, whose records are also held by the Bingham Center.

This fall, three staff members will go to Ladyslipper's office on Hillsborough Road in Durham to pack up and transfer to the archives the many boxes that have accumulated during this organization's long history. The Bingham Center is particularly glad to have technical services staff member Meghan Lyon's expertise for this project.



**Ladyslipper Catalog and Resource Guide, 1984**

Ladyslipper is a great match for the Bingham Center's collections documenting the history of the second-wave feminist movement, and builds on a foundation created by other collections such as the Bobbye Ortiz Papers and the Common Woman Chorus Records that also document the role of music in the women's movement.

We celebrate Ladyslipper's goal of "furthering new musical and artistic directions for women" and are thrilled to preserve the vast documentation of this important endeavor.

# Documenting Women's Reproductive Health

The Bingham Center acquired its first collection of clinic records, those of Choices Women's Medical Center in New York City, within the papers of clinic founder Merle Hoffman in 2000. In the subsequent decade, the Center has received collections related to a dozen clinics and a range of provider organizations as well as papers of numerous providers themselves. These collections include personal papers and administrative records documenting the work of activists, health care workers, attorneys and others involved in reproductive health in the 20th and 21st centuries. To complement this uniquely extensive collection, the Center holds and actively adds to a collection of 18th through 21st century print material documenting the full political spectrum of activity within the history of abortion. This collection includes books, pamphlets, newsletters and other periodicals as well as ephemera such as brochures, posters, buttons, and t-shirts.

The collection has been used by undergraduate and graduate students, Duke faculty, and scholars from around the country including Lori Brown, Associate Professor in the Syracuse University School of Architecture, who is writing a book examining the relationships among space, abortion,

and issues of access. About her time at the Center Professor Brown says, "My experience this past summer researching the abortion archives at the Bingham Center was highly productive for my current project examining the spaces of abortion clinics. Particularly interesting to me were clinic archives including documentation of many legislative and anti-choice impediments to limit and prevent



**Merle Hoffman speaks at prochoice rally**

Photo from the papers of Merle Hoffman, founder and director of Choices Women's Medical Center in New York City

abortion access. Two examples include what clinics would have to be able to remain open and functioning in the face of further restrictive laws and how clinics engaged with local police to enforce FACE protection. The sheer will and dedication demonstrated by these clinics, as documented through their archives, to tirelessly document and protect their patients as well as to negotiate the many legal obstacles provided rich source material and an even greater desire to finish my project."

Our holdings in this area continue to grow along with demand by researchers for material related to this deeply thought-provoking aspect of human experience. A guide to the Bingham Center's print and manuscript materials documenting the history of abortion can be found at the link below.

<http://guides.library.duke.edu/repro-rights>

## Instruction & Outreach

Writing 20 offers Duke first-year students a foundation for university-level writing through exploring a wide variety of academic topics. Bingham Center staff participated in library instruction for the following Writing 20 sections.

### Hidden Children

This class explored the lives of young people in the 19th century. We shared a variety of primers, children's fiction and etiquette manuals, diaries written by girls and boys, as well as advertisements featuring cherub-cheeked children.

### Documenting Race, Class, Gender

Photographs, advertisements, and political posters from different periods in history demonstrated for students how race, class, and gender have been portrayed in our culture.

### Writing the Self

Memoir, letters, diaries, and zines are all venues women and girls have used to express themselves privately and for readers. Examples of these writings inspired students to find their own voice.

# DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Sallie Bingham Center for  
Women's History and Culture

Rare Book, Manuscript, and  
Special Collections Library

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[library.duke.edu/specialcollections/bingham](http://library.duke.edu/specialcollections/bingham)

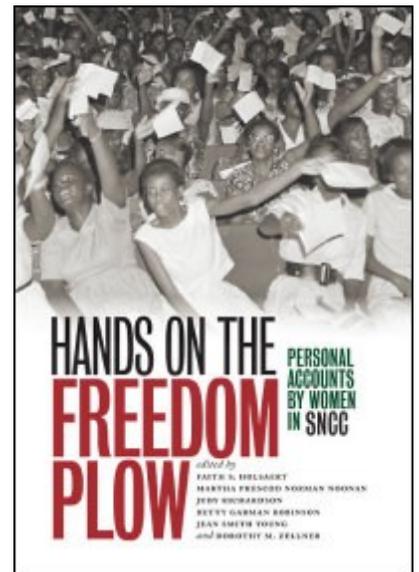
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## Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC

On Sunday, October 24, the Bingham Center, the Durham County Public Library's North Carolina Collection, and The Regulator Bookshop hosted a celebration of the publication of the essay collection, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, co-edited by Faith Holsaert whose papers are held by the Center. This anthology compiles the stories of fifty-two women from different backgrounds—northern and southern, young and old, urban and rural, black, white, and Latina—and their involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the tumultuous period of the Civil Rights movement.

Faith Holsaert and contributor Margaret Herring spoke along with Nia Wilson, Executive Director, and Mya Hunter, member of SpiritHouse, a local grassroots organization that supports the empowerment, transformation, and self-determination of marginalized communities of color. The panel was moderated by Laura Micham, director of the Bingham Center. The panelists discussed activism during the Civil Rights movement as well as today. Many of the fifty attendees at the event shared their own experiences working for social justice.

"I enjoyed being part of an event that brought RBMSCL and its collections out into a public space, and the conversation that followed the panel showed how deeply this community is engaged in preserving its history and telling its story," said Naomi Nelson, director of Duke's Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Special Collections Library. "I was impressed with the ways in which RBMSCL and the Bingham Center are preserving the history of the struggle for change and diversity in Durham."



Watch the program online: <http://vimeo.com/16221800>