Finding Aid for the
Dennis Brutus,
University of Pittsburgh Papers

Created by Ross Griffiths, August 17, 2018
Updated, January 15, 2019

Archives and Special Collections
Worcester State University Library
Worcester State University
486 Chandler Street
Worcester, MA 01602
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COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Call Number        SPC.0002
Repository         Worcester State University Special Collections
Location           Learning Resource Center, L-328A
Title              Dennis Brutus University of Pittsburgh Papers
Date Range         1947-2000; Bulk, 1985-1995
Extent             54 linear feet; 71 boxes, 1 oversize folder.
Creator            Dennis Brutus (1924-2009)
Language(s)        English with some materials in Afrikaans and German.
Abstract           Address books, appointment books, and calendars; articles, papers, and other writings; awards; biographical material; brochures, fliers, pamphlets, etc.; business cards; membership cards; clippings; conference and symposium material; correspondence; curriculum vitae/resumes; ephemera; financial records; itineraries; interviews; legal documents; notes and notebooks; organizational records; photographic material; poetry; cards and postcards; press releases; printed material; speeches; stationery; travel literature; reflecting the personal, social, and professional life of poet, educator, and social activist Dennis Brutus.

ACCESS AND USE INFORMATION

Physical access    Materials are available for use only in the Archives Reading Room. Users must handle materials carefully with clean hands. Some materials are fragile and must be handled with care. Obsolete digital formats are currently inaccessible.
Copyright and ownership

Materials created by Brutus are copyright to the estate of Dennis Brutus. Copyright inquires should be made to

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Materials created by other authors are copyright to their creators. Researchers are responsible for determining and obtaining copyright before republishing any materials from this collection.

Citation format

Dennis Brutus University of Pittsburgh Papers, Worcester State University (Worcester, MA).

ACQUISITION AND PROCESSING INFORMATION

Accession Number

ACC.2015.002

Provenance

This collection was assembled by Dennis Brutus in the course of his role as professor at the University of Pittsburgh from 1986-1999. Included are materials from previous academic appointments as well personal photographs and correspondence. The collection was initially gathered and placed into containers by staff of the University Pittsburgh Archives Service Center. In 2014, the collection was acquired by the Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) at Worcester State University. Between 2015 and 2016, the collection was formally transferred to the WSU Archives and Special Collections department at Worcester State University.
In 2016, processing was initiated by Project Archivist Bridgette A. Woodall with the assistance of Breanna Barney, Elizabeth Boutilette, and Linda Hixon. Additional assistance was provided by Erika Briesacher, Assistant Professor of History/Political Science, WSU independent study student, Yolanda Sullivan, and volunteer, Zach Washburn. In 2018, processing was completed by Ross Griffiths, Archivist.

Dennis Vincent Fredrick Brutus (pseudonym, John Bruin), son of South African parents Francis Henry and Margaret Winifred (Bloemetjie) Brutus, was born in Harare, Zimbabwe (formerly Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia) on November 8, 1924. At age four, Brutus and his family returned to South Africa and settled in Port Elizabeth. One of four children, Brutus had three sisters: Wilfred, Helena, and Dolly. On May 14, 1950, Brutus married May Jaggers in South Africa; they had eight children: Jacinta, Marc, Julian, Anthony, Justina, Cornelia, Gregory, and Paula (the only child not born in South Africa). Under South Africa’s apartheid government, Brutus was classified as “coloured;” as a non-native and a coloured man, Brutus was afforded few legal rights. Fueled by his experience of segregation and racism, Brutus became a leader in the fight against Apartheid and was an outspoken voice in the movement to have South Africa banned from the Olympic Games. Due to his anti-apartheid activities throughout the 1950s, Brutus was banned from teaching, writing, publishing, attending political meetings, publicly socializing with more than two individuals, and pursuing his legal studies in South Africa. Refusing to abide by the ban, Brutus was arrested in 1963 and sentenced to an eighteen-month jail term. Fleeing into Mozambique, Brutus was subsequently arrested and returned to South African authorities. Attempting a second escape, Brutus was shot in the back and remanded to sixteen months on Robben Island where he shared a cell next to South African revolutionary Nelson
Mandela (1918-2013). During his imprisonment, news of South Africa’s suspension from the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan was announced; until 1992, South Africa was officially expelled from the Olympic Games, due in part to continuous pressure brought by Brutus on the International Olympic Committee. Following his release from Robben Island, Brutus fled to England and later the United States where he was granted asylum as a political refugee in 1983. In 1990, Brutus was reinstated as a South African citizen and died on December 26, 2009, in Cape Town at the age of eighty-five.

See Appendix A. for a chronology of Brutus’ life and work.

SCOPE AND CONTENT
The Dennis Brutus University of Pittsburgh papers reflect the personal, social, political, and educational activities of Dennis Brutus during his career at the University of Pittsburgh. The collection is arranged in nineteen series. Note: fragments, drafts, and original/unpublished works of Brutus’ poetry may be found throughout the collection.

Background:
In 2014, the Dennis Brutus/Merrill Goldwyn Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) at Worcester State University received thirty-four cartons of Brutus material from the Archives Service Center at the University of Pittsburgh, (Pittsburgh, PA). Materials were intermingled and no original order was apparent.

Processing:
Processing was made possible through a 2015-2016 grant from the Worcester State University Strategic Planning Implementation Fund (SPIF) committee. The processing team surveyed the collection; sorted materials and brought like items together; and imposed an arrangement scheme. Folder titles were created by the processing team. Preservation issues were identified and basic preservation methods were applied, including the removal of metal fasteners and the notation of fragile or damaged items. Photocopies were made of some damaged materials. Items were removed from envelopes, unfolded, flattened, and related pages were noted and/or placed in
appropriate enclosures. Objects, oversize material, photographic material, audiovisual material, electronic/digital material, and books were rehoused appropriately. The collection was rehoused in acid-free folders and boxes, numbered, labeled, and stored; restrictions were noted; related collections were researched and noted; and biographical researched was engaged. A draft finding aid was created. The SPIF grant ended in 2016 and work was temporarily suspended. A full-time archivist, Ross Griffiths, was hired in the summer of 2016 and completed processing by following the basic schema created by the SPIF Archivist and added new or revised arrangement and series headings as necessary. The complete finding aid was published online in the summer of 2018.

ARRANGEMENT

This collection is arranged into 16 series all of which include undated (“n.d.”) materials. Three series are described as “Subject files” and are arranged by topic.

Series I  
**Biographical Personal and Related, 1947-1998, n.d.**

This series contains autobiographical and biographical material including address books; appointment books/planners; notebooks; curriculum vitae and resumes; interview material; awards and honors; press releases; speeches; business cards, membership cards, and personalized stationery; travel, teaching, and event itineraries; inventories; correspondences; photographs; clippings; other family papers; and related material. Calendars and appointment books highlight Brutus’ active appointment schedule and reflect his avid note jotting, poetry writing, and private thoughts. Also contained are the names and contact information of family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. The articles and clippings contain information on or about Brutus. Among the awards are proclamations, certificates, and citations reflecting civic and leadership roles and various memberships. The speeches are a mix of introductions, honor addresses, and personal acceptance speeches, which include Brutus as the recipient of the Paul Robeson Award and the Sean MacBride Award. The series is
arranged alphabetically by record type, then by topic (as applicable), and then chronologically.

Series II  **Colleges and Universities, 1974-1998, n.d.**
Contains awards, correspondence; course materials by Brutus and others; documents related to events and programs; information and promotional literature; and records of organizations in U.S. and International Colleges and Universities. Correspondence details Brutus’ international reach as a scholar and activist and provides insight into his relationships with colleagues and his activities with various programs, events, and organizations around the globe. The series is organized by record type and then chronologically.

Series III  **Colleges and Universities; U. Pitt, 1975-1998**
Contains correspondence; course materials by Brutus and others; departmental information, documents related to events and programs and records of organizations. The bulk of records detail Brutus’ scholarship and service as a faculty member. Of note is organization information that details Brutus’ work with Afrinet, Program on African Writing in Africa and the Diaspora (PAWAD), and The Union of the Writers of the African Peoples (UWAP). Some conferences, symposia, and events are included in this series. The series is organized alphabetically by record type and then chronologically.

Series IV  **Conferences and Symposia, 1968-1993, n.d.**
Contains agendas; announcements; brochures, fliers, and posters; budget reports and expense sheets; event calendars; correspondence; itineraries; lists of attendees and speakers; minutes; newsletters; notes; outlines; paper proposals and conference papers; participant biographies; planning material; press releases; proceeding reports; program guides and booklets; schedules; and related material. The majority of the conference material is focused on the African Literature Association (ALA), with particular emphasis on the organization’s thirteenth annual meeting. Conference correspondence, noted under
the heading “Other conferences,” may or may not relate to the named conferences within in the subseries. Notes, and correspondence written by Brutus may be found throughout the series. Some conferences and symposia are also included in series III. The series is arranged alphabetically by named conference, then by record type (as applicable), and then chronologically.

**Series V**  
**Correspondence, 1972-1998, n.d.**  
Series includes personal and professional correspondence in various formats including cards and postcards, letters, and printed-out electronic communications. Among these are Brutus’ correspondence with family members, notes and letters related to scholarly or literary events, and extensive listserv messages in which Brutus was involved. Series is organized alphabetically by record type with printed electronic messages organized roughly by listserv name. Personal and selected professional correspondence is closed for 75 years from date of creation.

**Series VI**  
**Events, 1955-2000, n.d.**  
Series includes fliers, postcards, and other promotional materials related to events in which Brutus participation or in subjects of interest to him. Included are art, poetry, and film/theater events, sporting events, programs related to human rights and social justice issues, forums, lectures, workshops, and protests. The collection details Brutus’ interests as a scholar and activist as well as the larger landscape of art and social issues in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

**Series VII**  
Series includes correspondence, financial statements, tax forms, and legal documents related to Brutus’ professional and personal affairs as well as his immigration issues. Included are heavily redacted copies of his FBI files. Legal records related to living individuals are closed for 75 years from the date of creation.

**Series VIII**  
**Organizations, 1972-1998, n.d.**  
Series includes administrative materials, correspondence,
press materials, promotional literature, and scholarly works related to organizations in which Brutus was a founder or a member as well as those dedicated to issues in which he was interested. Included are documents related to Brutus' involvement with the South African Council of Sport (SACOS), the South African Non-racial Olympic Committee (SAN-ROC) as well as his work with Amnesty International, and various Anti-Apartheid organizations. There are connections to Series III including some materials related to scholarly organizations such as PAWAD as well as some Pittsburgh-centered organizations.

**Series IX**  
**Papers, 1967-1995, n.d.**  
Series includes papers written by others on a wide variety of topics including African countries, Brutus in prison, and African literature and art. Included are also student papers turned in as part of courses taught by Brutus and often graded or annotated by Brutus. All student papers are closed for 75 years from the date of creation.

**Series X**  
Series includes poetry by Brutus and others including original and photocopied manuscripts, printed materials, and both published and unpublished works. Series is organized alphabetically by Author and then by title of poem when available. The bulk of Brutus poems are organized by date.

**Series XI**  
**Publishers Speeches, and Writings, 1961-1997, n.d.**  
Series includes materials related to various publishers with which Brutus worked including correspondence, promotional, and licensing as well as speeches and writings by Brutus. Included are extensive files of Brutus' notes, most lacking dates or clear subject matters. Some notes include fragments of poetry and verse.

**Series XII**  
**Subject Files: Clippings, 1976-1997, n.d.**  
Series includes clippings collected by Brutus related to topics of interest including political and social issues as well as art, literature, and poetry. Series is organized chronologically.
Series includes Brutus’ extensive library of periodicals that encompasses a wide array of social justice, art, and current events-related topics. Included are dissident publications from Apartheid-era South Africa and Southern African countries, newsletters published by activist organizations, and local or regional newspapers. Materials are organized alphabetically by title when two or more volumes are represented and, for one title only, alphabetically from A-Z.

Series includes articles; biographical information; clippings, correspondence; scholarly works; and other information about people prominently represented in the Brutus collection or prominent in literature or politics. Of note are scholarly works by African and American poets and writers; correspondence with poet Lamont Steptoe; biographical information about political activists including South African political prisoners; and with close colleagues of Brutus’. Series is organized alphabetically by name.

Series XV  Subject Files: Reference, 1973-1997
Series consists of reference materials Brutus collected as part of his scholarship and writing and includes clippings; fliers; newsletters; and scholarly works related largely to African and African-American subjects such as literature and criticism, geography, politics, and issues of divestment from Apartheid-era South Africa. Included are bibliographies Brutus assembled on various topics. Series is organized alphabetically by subject.

Series XVI  Subject Files: Travel, 1992, n.d.
Series consists of brochures, promotional fliers, and related ephemera documenting Brutus’ travels in Europe, Russia, the UK and the United States.

ACCESS POINTS
Terms below correspond to Library of Congress subject headings.

Organizations  African Literature Association; Northwestern University; Ohio State University; South African Council on Sport;
South African non-Racial Olympic Committee; United Nations; University of Colorado Boulder; University of Durban-Westville; University of Oxford; University of Pittsburgh; Worcester State University; World Constitution and Parliament Association

**People**
- Brutus, Dennis, 1924-2009;
- Achebe, Albert Chinua;
- Berrian, Brenda;
- Bility, Khalipha M, Mandela, Nelson, 1918-2013;
- Nagan, Winston P.; Ngugi, va Thiong’o, 1938-;
- Saro-Wiwa, Ken, 1941-1995;
- Steptoe, Lamont B., 1949-.

**Places**
- England;
- Liberia;
- Pittsburgh;
- South Africa;

**General**
- Activists 1980-1990;
- African Literature;
- African Poetry;
- African Studies;
- Anti-apartheid activists;
- Apartheid;
- Curricula (Courses of study);
- Divestment, corporate;
- Expatriates;
- Poets;
- Poets, South African;
- Poetry;
- Poetry—African American authors;
- Political prisoners;
- Protest movements;
- Racism;
- South African poets;
- South African poetry;

**RELATED COLLECTIONS**
DESCRIPTIVE INVENTORY


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1.4  Awards and Honors: 1986-1998
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1.6  Bio: “Contemporary Authors,” 1992
1.7  Bio: “Contemporary Authors,” 1995
1.10 Bio: Jan Mohamed paper, n.d.
1.11 Bio: “Monitor” write-ups, 1987
1.14 Bio: PA Writers Collection, n.d.
1.15 Bio: “Poetry Society,” 1993
6.4  Business cards: Brutus [Includes membership cards]
6.5  Business cards: other people
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6.7  Calendars: 1987-1989
OS 1.2 Calendar: 1997
OS 2.3 Calendar: 1992
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OS.7.3 Computer disks: [3.5"], n.d.
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2.2  CVs: 1993-1998
2.3  Interviews: 1978
2.4  Interviews: 1988-1989
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2.6  Interviews: n.d.
OS.7.1 Interview: NPR-SF Chronicle, [reel to reel tape] n.d.
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9.1 U.S. Colleges: courses; Brutus; African Literature, 1994-1996
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10.4 U.S. Colleges: Northwestern University; correspondence, 1995-1996
10.6 U.S. Colleges: Oberlin College; Conference, 1976
10.7 U.S. Colleges: Ohio State University; Black Studies, 1988
10.8 U.S. Colleges: Ohio State University; Black Studies research, n.d.
10.9 U.S. Colleges: Ohio State University; correspondence, 1988-1990
11.2 U.S. Colleges: U. Colorado Boulder; correspondence, 1992
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18.1 U.S. Colleges: U. of Pittsburgh; PAWAD; Brutus notes, 1989
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Appendix A.

**CHRONOLOGY**

Activities/Events:

- **1950s**: Organized community, sport, and teacher organizations

- **1950s**: Published early poems

- **1961**: First banning order due to anti-racist sports activities and journalism

- **1963**: Shot in the back trying to escape police in Johannesburg, South Africa
- **1964-1965**: Political prisoner (tortured), Robben Island (18 months), South Africa
- **1965-1966**: House Arrest, Port Elizabeth, South Africa
- **1966**: Exiled from South Africa on an Exit Permit; deported to Britain; his family soon followed
- **1968**: Persuaded third world Olympics teams to boycott Olympics in Mexico if white South African team played
- **1972**: Achieved formal expulsion of South Africa from Olympics
- **1998**: Worked with South African independent leftists and church activists, including Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, to found Jubilee South Africa
- **2000**: Chaired successful campaign against U.S. Navy test bombing at Vieques, Puerto Rico
- **2008**: Announced opposition to South Africa hosting the 2010 World Cup

**Awards:**
- **1962**: Mbari Poetry Prize
- **1979**: Kenneth Kaunda Award for Humanism, PanAfrican Association
- **1981**: Freedom Writers Award
- **1982**: Achievement Award, International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa
- **1986**: Special tribute, Africa Network
- **1987**: Langston Hughes Award, City College of New York, New York City, New York
- **1987**: Premier Outstanding Teacher Award, Washington School
- **1988**: James H. Robinson Award, Department of Black Community and Education Research and Development, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- **1989**: Charter Member, National Civil Rights Museum and Hall of Fame, Washington, D.C.
• 1989: Fellow, Sciences and Technologies, African Academy of Arts
• 1989: Paul Robeson Award for Excellence, Political Consciousness and Integrity, Moonstone
• 1992: Achievement Award, Council of the City of Pittsburgh
• 1994: Who’s Who Among Black Americans
• 1996: Editor’s Choice Award, National Library of Poetry
• 1996: Bennett Award for Peace and Social Justice, Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell, Pennsylvania
• 1996: Centennial Award, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies
• 1997: Distinguished Scholar Award, Black Action Society
• 1999: Certificate of Appreciation, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections
• 1999: Peace and Justice Award, Resistance in Brooklyn
• 2000: Certificate of Appreciation, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections
• 2002: Wall of Tolerance Award, National Campaign for Tolerance
• 2003: International Writer of the Year Nomination, International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England, United Kingdom
• 2003: Certificate of Appreciation, Islamic Center of Pittsburgh
• 2004: Tribute issue, Illuminations, international magazine of contemporary writing, volume 20
• 2005: Dennis Brutus Poetry Day, Johannesburg, South Africa
• 2005: Peoples’ Poetry Award, The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective
• 2005: Top 100 Writers of 2005, International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England,
United Kingdom

- **2008**: Lifetime Achievement Award, South African Department of Arts and Culture
- **2009**: War Resisters Peace Award

**Education:**

- **1939-1941**
  - Junior Certificate with Municipal Merit Scholarship, Paterson High School, Port Elizabeth, South Africa
- **1941-1943**
  - Senior Certificate with Municipal Merit Scholarship, Paterson High School, Port Elizabeth, South Africa
- **1944-1947**
  - B.A. in English and Psychology (graduated with distinction), University of Fort Hare, Alice, Eastern Cape, South Africa
- **1947**
  - College Education Diploma, University of Fort Hare, Alice, Eastern Cape, South Africa
- **1962-1963**
  - Studied for LL.B. Degree (awarded Scholarship from Leeds University, England), University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

**Honorary Degrees:**

- **1982**
  - Doctor of Humane Letters, Worcester State College, Worcester, Massachusetts
- **1985**
  - MA, Doctor of Humane Letters, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, Massachusetts
- **1990**
  - MA, Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts
- **1994**
- **1997**
  - Doctor of Humane Letters, Franklin Pierce College, Rindge, New Hampshire
- **1997**
  - Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy, University of Durban-Westville, Westville, South Africa
- **2009**
- Honorary Literature Doctorate, Rhodes University and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Grahamstown, South Africa

Memberships/Organizations:
- **1958:** Founding Secretary, South African Sports Association
- **1963:** Founding President, South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
- **1970:** Founding Member, Troubadour Press
- **1974:** Vice President, Union of Writers of the African Peoples
- **1975:** Founding Chairperson, African Literature Association
- **1984:** Founding Member, Africa Network
- **1988:** Honorary Member, Phi Beta Kappa
- **1988:** Member, Advisory Board, National Writers Union
- **1988:** Member, Artistic Advisory Board, American Poetry Center
- **1990:** Patron, Congress of South African Writers
- **1990:** Advisory Board Member, Global Exchange
- **1990:** International Vice President, World Constitution and Parliament Association
- **1991:** Honorary Centenary Committee Member, Walt Whitman Birthplace Association
- **1991:** Sponsor, Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa
- **1992:** Sports Ethics Fellow, Institute for International Sport, University of Rhode Island, Kingston Rhode Island

Published works:
- **1963:** *Sirens, Knuckles, Boots*
- **1968:** *Letters to Martha and Other Poems from a South African Prison*
- **1970:** *Poems from Algiers*
• 1970:  *Thoughts Abroad* (pseudonym John Bruin)

• 1973:  *A Simple Lust: Selected Poems*

• 1975:  *The American-South African Connection* (sound recording)

• 1975:  *China Poems*

• 1975:  *Informal Discussion in Third World Culture Class* (sound recording)


• 1982:  *Strains*

• 1984; 1985:  *Salutes and Censures*

• 1989:  *Airs and Tributes*

• 1991:  *Stubborn Hope: New Poems and Selections from China Poems and Strains*

• 1993:  *Still the Streets*

**Teaching:**

• 1948-1949
  - English Master, St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

• 1949-1961
  - English Master, Paterson High School, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

• 1962-1963
  - English Master, Central High School, Johannesburg, South Africa

• 1970
  - University of Denver, Denver, CO, Visiting Professor, Department of English

• 1971-1985
  - Professor of African Literature, English Department, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois

• 1974-1975
  - Visiting Professor, Department of English and African and Afro-American Studies Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas

• 1981-1982
  - Visiting Professor, Department of English, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts

• 1985
• Visiting Professor, Program of African and African-American Studies, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire

• 1985-1986
  • Cornell Professor, Department of English Literature, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

• 1986-1991
  • Chairman, Department of Black Community Education Research and Development, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

• 1986-1999
  • Professor of African Literature, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

• 1990
  • Professor of African Literature, International Summer School, Oxford, England

• 1991
  • Interport Lecturer, Institute for Shipboard Education, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

• 1992-1993
  • Visiting Distinguished Humanist, English Department, University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, Colorado

• 1999
  • Professor Emeritus, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania