



# **Guide to the Pearl Primus Collection, 1920-1994**

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American Dance Festival Archives

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Some materials and descriptions may include offensive content. [More info](#)

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## Summary

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**Collection Title:**

Pearl Primus collection, 1920-1994

**Creator:**

Primus, Pearl

**Abstract:**

Pearl Primus (1919-1994) was an African-American dancer, choreographer, anthropologist, and teacher. Collection includes materials created or collected by Primus and by others dating from circa 1920 to 1994, including correspondence, writings, legal documents, research and teaching materials, clippings, programs, printed materials, photographs, sound recordings, films, videos, and artifacts.

**Extent:**

20.4 Linear Feet  
20650 Items

**Location:**

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the ADF Archives.

**Language:**

Material in English

**Mixed Materials [D01145939W] [box]:**

16

**Collection ID:**

ADF.012

**Permalink:**

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1rg66>

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Pearl Primus Collection, American Dance Festival Archives.

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## Background

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### Scope and Content

Collection includes materials created or collected by Primus and by others dating from circa 1920 to 1994, including correspondence, writings, legal documents, research and teaching materials, clippings, programs, printed materials, photographs, sound recordings, films, videos, and artifacts.

### Biographical/Historical

Pearl Primus (1919-1994) was an African-American dancer, choreographer, anthropologist, and teacher. She was born in Trinidad in 1919 and raised in New York City, where she attended Hunter High School from 1933 to 1937. Primus received her BA in biology from Hunter College in 1940, where she had been preparing for a career in medicine. Her career goals changed, however, when she began dancing with the New Dance Group, an integrated, politically progressive dance collective. Primus made her professional dance debut in New York City in 1943. She began performing at the Café Society, an integrated nightclub, and in 1944 she gave her first solo recital, performing to poetry and the music of folksinger Josh White. Later that year she traveled the American South, where she worked as a cotton-picker in order to learn more about the plight of African-Americans in the region, an experience that later inspired several dances.

In 1946 Primus took graduate classes in education at Columbia University and performed professionally with her own company and with the New York revival of Showboat and the Chicago Civic Opera production of *The Emperor Jones*. In 1949, Primus traveled to Africa on a grant from the Julius Rosenwald Foundation. She lived with tribes in Nigeria and the Belgian Congo, among others, observing and recording African dances, ceremonies, and other cultural activities and aspects of society.

In August 1950 Primus married Yael Woll and formally enrolled at Columbia University. She toured internationally with her company and as a solo artist, performing in England for King George IV and Queen Mary in 1951, at the inauguration of Liberian President William V. S. Tubman in 1952, and with her company in Israel and France in 1952.

In early 1953 Primus separated from Woll. The following summer, Primus continued her studies of dance in Trinidad and met dancer and choreographer Percival Borde. They married in 1954, and Primus gave birth to their son, Onwin, in January 1955. Primus and Borde continued to perform and teach together until Borde's death in 1979.

Primus received her MA in educational sociology from New York University and was awarded a grant from the Rebecca Harkness Foundation to study in Africa in 1959. Upon her return to the U.S. in 1963, Primus founded the Primus-Borde School of Dance, where she developed methods of cross-cultural education through dance. Primus tested these methods in New York City elementary schools from 1965 through 1968 and published her findings for the U.S. Department of Education in 1968. Her phonograph record, Pearl Primus' Africa , was recorded to assist teachers in elementary and high schools.

In 1969, while pursuing a doctorate in anthropology at NYU, Primus was appointed professor at Hunter College. In asserting that dance was an international language, Primus became the first NYU student to use dance to fulfill the language requirement. After completing her dissertation on the use of sculpture to acculturate children in the Mano tribe of Liberia, Primus received her PhD in anthropology in 1978. She began the Pearl Primus Dance Language Institute to promote her blending of African-American, Caribbean, and African influences with modern dance and ballet techniques. Percival Borde died on August 31, 1979 in New York.

Primus was appointed director of the Cora P. Maloney College at State University of New York-Buffalo in 1982, where she taught for two years. From 1984 to 1990, Primus served as a professor of ethnic studies and artist-in-residence at the Five College Consortium in Massachusetts. In the following years, Primus was in residency at Howard University, taught at NYU, and worked towards the founding of the Pearl Primus Dance Arts Foundation.

Primus received many awards, including a Star of Africa decoration from the Liberian government and the Scroll of Honor from the National Council of Negro Women. In 1991, President George H. W. Bush awarded Primus the National Medal of Arts for "outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support and availability of the arts in the United States." Primus' other awards include the Distinguished Service Award from the Association of American Anthropologists in 1985, an honorary doctorate from Spelman College in 1988, the American Dance Festival's first Balasaraswati/Joy Anne Dewey Beinecke Endowed Chair for Distinguished Teaching in 1991 and, posthumously, the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for lifetime achievement in choreography. Primus died in New Rochelle, NY, in 1994.

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## **Arrangement**

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The Pearl Primus Collection is organized into eight series: Correspondence, Subject Files, Dissertation Materials, Printed Materials, Photographs, Moving Images, Sound Recordings, and Artifacts.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Statement**

American Dance Festival Archives

### **Access Restrictions**

Collection is open for research.

Please contact the American Dance Festival Archives (adf@americandancefestival.org) to arrange for use of these materials.

Researchers must register and agree to copyright and privacy laws before using this collection.

Access to film, videotapes, or audiotapes in this collection requires the use of reference copies. To arrange for the creation of reference copies, if none exist, please contact American Dance Festival Archives.

### **Use Restrictions**

Copyright is retained by the authors of items in these papers, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law.

### **Acquisition Information**

The Pearl Primus Collection was received by the American Dance Festival Archives as gifts in 2000.

### **Processing Information**

Processed by American Dance Festival Archives Staff, October 2004

Encoded by Dean Jeffrey, November 2007

Accessions were merged into one collection, described in this finding aid.

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## Names and Subjects

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- Choreographers -- United States
- African American dance
- Ethnology -- Africa
- Dance -- United States
- Modern Dance -- United States
- Primus, Pearl

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## Collection Inventory

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### Correspondence, 1937-1994 and undated

Pearl Primus, 1937-1938, 1947-1994 and undated

Box 1

**Physical Description:** 0.75 Linear Feet

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes letters to Primus from family, friends, fans, and academic colleagues, and letters from Primus to company members, government officials, educators, and funding organizations, among others. Writings, project proposals, invitations, and printed materials are also present. There is extensive correspondence from 1949 documenting her experience in Africa, especially in Liberia. Other significant correspondence includes letters written in 1953 to Primus from her future husband, Percival Borde. Correspondence from the 1980s reflects Primus' professional activities as a faculty member at SUNY-Albany, SUNY-Buffalo, and the Five College Dance Department.

Arranged chronologically

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Onwin Primus-Borde, 1987

Box 1

**Physical Description:** 1 folders

Percival Borde, 1956, 1962-1964	Box 1
<b>Physical Description:</b> 1 folders	

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### **Subject Files, 1934-1994 and undated**

**Physical Description:** 4 Linear Feet

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Contains materials created or collected by Primus (and occasionally Borde) including correspondence, printed materials, notes, writings, and other materials. Prevalent are materials from Primus' second trip to Africa, including receipts, expense lists, notes, writings, poetry, project proposals, and memorabilia. Borde's activities in Africa during this time are documented by similar materials, as well as diaries, travel documents, and permits. Materials related to Primus' academic career, from high school student to college professor, are in the Notebooks and Notes subject folders. Course materials primarily date to Primus' tenure on the faculty of the Five College Dance Department and at SUNY-Buffalo's Cora P. Maloney College. Primus' daily life is characterized by personal notes, schedules, itineraries, and six diaries, which contain Primus' daily "to do" lists as well as shopping and correspondence lists and some financial information. Occasionally they contain brief musings or phrases of poetry she composed.

Arranged alphabetically

Africa, 1949, 1960 and undated	Box 1
Africa, Liberia: Invitations and Programs, Presidential Events, 1949, 1952	Box OS1
Africa, Liberia: Liberian Cultural Affairs Committee, 1960	Box 1
Africa, Nigeria: International Club Brochure, 1949	Box 1
Africa, Printed Materials: The Liberian Age (11 issues), 1948-1949	Box OS1
Africa, Printed Materials: New York Times supplement on Liberia, July 25, 1965	Box OS1

Africa, Printed Materials: New York Times Magazine , March 14, 1965	Box OS1
Africa, Printed Materials: Sierra Leone Trade Industry & Travel , 1959	Box OS1
Africa, Printed Materials: Weekend Telegraph (U.K.), 1964	Box OS1
Alma John Workshops, 1984	Box 1
American Dance Festival (Black Tradition in American Modern Dance project), 1988	Box 1
Artwork by Primus, circa 1955	Box OS3
Artwork of Primus (illegible signature), undated	Box OS3
Awards and Certificates, circa 1935, 1970-1988	Box 1
Awards and Certificates, 1985	Box OS2
Barbados Dance Theatre and Five College Dance Department Exchange, 1985-1988	Box 1
Barbados Workshops, 1986-1988	Box 1
Biographical Information and Resumes, 1968-1990 and undated	Box 1
Borde, Onwin: Awards and Certificates, 1980	Box 1
Borde, Percival: Dorothea Towles, 1962	Box 1
Borde, Percival: Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Society, 1962	Box OS1
Borde, Percival: Writings, circa 1962	Box 1
Borde, Percival: Writings, Diaries, 1962	Box OS1
Children's Theatre Company, 1984	Box 1
Contact Information (address lists and business cards), undated	Box 1
Contact Information (address lists), undated	Box OS1

Contracts and Correspondence, Lordly and Dame, 1986-1989	Box OS1
Course Materials, circa 1963-1987	Box 1
Course Materials: Student Papers, 1988, 1992	Box 1
Course Materials: Syllabi, 1984-1994	Box 1
Course Materials: Syllabus, 1985	Box OS1
Course Materials: Test and Lecture Notes, 1987, 1991 and undated	Box 1
The Dance Project (WNET), 1987-1990	Box 1
Everybody's Creative Arts Center (CitiCentre Dance Theatre), 1984-1986	Box 1
Restricted: Greeting card by Primus, 1934	Box 5
Reference Copy: Greeting card by Primus, 1934	Box 1
Howard University Residency, 1992	Box 1
Hunter College Employment, 1969-1973	Box 1
Italy, Oct.-Dec. 1956	Box 1
Kwanzaa Speech Notes, 1986	Box 1
Kwanzaa Student Project, 1983	Box OS1
Ledger, 1963	Box 1
Legal Affairs: Contracts, 1951-1989	Box 1
Legal Documents: Eviction Proceedings, 1963, 1984	Box 1
Legal Documents: Immigration, 1937, 1957-1958	Box 1
Legal Documents: Marriage Certificate and Divorce Decrees, 1961	Box OS1
Legal Documents: Onwin Borde, 1955, 1978	Box 2

Legal Documents: Permits and Licenses, 1951, 1960-1961	Box 2
Memorabilia, 1940-1976 and undated	Box 2
Memorabilia: Postcards, undated	Box 2
Miscellaneous, 1948-1986 and undated	Box 2
National Council for Culture and Art, 1980	Box 2
National Endowment for the Arts, 1985-1994	Box 2
New York University, Fifth International Festival, 1964	Box 2
Notebook, circa 1951	Box 2
Notebooks: Africa, circa 1958-1963	Box 2
Notebook, circa 1965	Box 2
Notebook, 1977-1981	Box 2
Notebook, circa 1987-1988	Box 2
Notebook, circa 1992	Box 2
Notes: Africa, circa 1949-1960	Box 2
Notes: Africa, Bushongo and Watusi, undated	Box 2
Notes: African-American History and Heritage, undated	Box 2
Notes: African-American Women, undated	Box 2
Notes: African Art, undated	Box 2
Notes: Anthropology, undated	Box OS1
Notes: Caribbean, undated	Box 2
Notes: Choreography, Dance, circa 1950-1959	Box OS1
Notes: Choreography, Dance, undated	Box 2
Notes: Cora P. Maloney College, undated	Box 2

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Notes: Dance Presentation for Children Study, undated	Box 2
Notes: First African Performing Arts Center (Konoma Kende), undated	Box 2
Notes: First African Performing Arts Center (Konoma Kende), undated	Box OS1
Notes: Personal, undated	Box OS1
Notes: Personal and Professional (2 folders), circa 1950-1980	Box 2
Pearl Primus-Percival Borde School of Dance, 1968	Box OS1
Poetry, Music, Lyrics by Primus Project Proposals: African-Caribbean-American Dance-Arts Center, circa 1955	Box OS1
Project Proposals: African-Caribbean-American Dance-Arts Center, 1957-1958	Box 2
Project Proposals: First African Dance Theatre, circa 1958	Box 2
Project Proposals: Pearl Primus Dance Language Institute, undated	Box 2
Project Proposals by Primus, 1955-1989 and undated	Box 2
Project Proposals by Others, 1987 and undated	Box 2
Publishing Correspondence, 1950-1951	Box 2
Rebekah Harkness Foundation Tour of Africa: Financial, 1961-1962	Box 2
Rebekah Harkness Foundation Tour of Africa: Primus, 1961-1962	Box 2
Rebekah Harkness Foundation Tour of Africa: Borde, 1961-1962	Box 2

Rebekah Harkness Foundation Tour of Africa: Proposal and Description, 1962 and undated	Box OS1
Receipts, 1952-1957 and undated	Box 2
Receipts: Nigeria, Dec. 1948-Apr. 1949	Box 2
Receipts: Belgian Congo, May-Aug. 1949	Box 2
Schedules and Itineraries, 1949-circa 1992 and undated	Box 2
School Essays, 1935-circa 1940 and undated	Box 2
School Notes: Biology, undated	Box 2
School Notes: Biology, Botany, 1938 and undated	Box 2
School Notes: Dance, undated	Box 2
School Notes: English Literature, undated	Box 2
School Notes: Physical Education, 1938 and undated	Box 2
School Notes: Primitive Art, 1953	Box 2
School Notes: Psychology, undated	Box 2
School Notes: Roman History, undated	Box 2
SISA (Sisterhood in Support of Sisters in South Africa), 1986-1987	Box 2
Spelman College Inauguration and Symposium, 1988	Box 2
Spiritual Baptists, Granville Williams, 1984-1988	Box 2
Symposium: The Struggle for Liberation in Southern Africa, 1983	Box 2
Travel Documents (including passports and permits), 1948-1963	Box 2

White, Josh, 1983-1984 and undated	Box 2
Writings, undated	Box 2
Writings: Africa, 1962	Box OS1
Writings: Africa, undated	Box 2
Writings: "African Dance" , 1963	Box 2
Writings: "An Evaluation Report on Cultural Enrichment Through the Dance" , 1967	Box 2
Writings: Dance, undated	Box 2
Restricted: Writings: Diary, circa 1943-1949	Box 5
Reference Copy: Writings: Diary, circa 1943-1949	Box 2
Writings: Diary, 1944	Box 3
Writings: Diary, 1949	Box 3
Restricted: Writings: Diary, circa 1956	Box 5
Reference Copy: Writings: Diary, circa 1956	Box 3
Writings: Diary, 1957	Box 3
Writings: Diary, circa 1960	Box 3
Writings: Poetry, Lyrics, and Music, undated	Box 3
Restricted: Writings: "Tree Worship" , 1934	Box 5
Reference Copy: Writings: "Tree Worship" , 1934	Box 3
Restricted: Writings: Diary by M. Hull, 1979	Box 5
Writings: By Others, 1960-1991 and undated	Box 3
Writings: By Others about Primus, 1979, 1982 and undated	Box 3
Writings: Poetry, Lyrics, and Music by Others, 1928, 1965, and undated	Box 3

Writings: Woll, Yael, English Composition  
notebook, 1938

Box 3

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### **Dissertation Materials, 1959-1977 and undated**

**Physical Description:** .5 linear foot, 21 folders

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Contains various drafts of Primus' doctoral dissertation at New York University entitled "A Study of Sculpture-Dance as a Factor in the Enculturation of the Mano People of Liberia, West Africa, Between 1948 and 1963." The final version of the dissertation is not included. Also included are photocopies of research materials and illustrations used in the dissertation. Primus began her research in Liberia during the tour sponsored by Rosenwald Foundation in 1949, continued it during a brief visit to Liberia in 1952, and continued it again from 1959 to 1963. Primus' dissertation proposal, begun in 1959, was approved in 1975. Her doctorate was awarded in 1978 upon completion of the dissertation.

Proposal drafts are followed by drafts of chapters or sections, followed by folders devoted to illustrations, bibliographies, research materials, and correspondence. Drafts of chapters and sections are presented in the same order as the table of contents of the most complete draft of the dissertation. The identification of some materials as part of Primus' dissertation proposal is sometimes uncertain; likewise, some materials filed as a draft of a chapter of the dissertation may possibly be a draft of proposal chapters or sections.

Proposal Drafts, 1959, 1975 and undated	Box 3
Drafts, Chapters 1 and 2	Box 3
Drafts, Chapters 1-4, 1975	Box 3
Drafts, Foreword, Preface, Dedication	Box 3
"Through the Eyes of the Investigator"	Box 3
"The Republic of Liberia, West Africa"	Box 3
"Africa"	Box 3
"Methodology" (Chapter 3)	Box 3
"Ethnography" (Chapter 4)	Box 3

"Dance" (Chapter 4 of final dissertation)	Box 3
"The Enculturation Process Among the Mano People" (Chapter 5)	Box 3
"When Sculpture-Danced Danced" (Chapter 6)	Box 3
"Implications of the Study" (Chapter 7)	Box 3
"Related Studies"	Box 3
Drafts, sections unidentified	Box 3
Illustrations	Box 3
Bibliography	Box 3
Rosenwald Fellowship Correspondence, 1948-1960	Box 3
Dissertation-Related Correspondence, 1975-1977 and undated	Box 3
Research Materials	Box 3
Handwritten Notes and Drafts	Box 3

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### **Printed Materials, circa 1935-1995**

**Physical Description:** 4.3 Linear Feet

Arranged chronologically in two subseries: printed materials pertaining to Primus or her family members, and printed materials collected by Primus that do not specifically mention her or her family.

### **Primus and Family, circa 1940-1994**

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Contains programs, clippings, promotional materials, reviews, publications, announcements, flyers, press releases, and other items that specifically mention Primus or her immediate family, including Percival Borde and Onwin Primus-Borde, as well as performances of students Primus advised, groups

she directed, dances she choreographed, and shows she lent costumes. Also included are articles and publications that Primus authored.

Program Drafts, circa 1940-1959	Box OS1
1941-1960 (20 folders)	Box 3
1944-1985 (3 folders)	Box OS2
1961-1994 (32 folders)	Box 4

### **Collected by Primus, circa 1935-1994**

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Contains printed materials that Primus collected but that do not specifically mention her or her family, including popular periodicals, newspaper clippings, programs, and brochures.

circa 1935-1994 (16 folders)	Box 4
Rat newspaper, 1968	Box OS2
"Master Class" poster, 1974 or 1985	Box OS3

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### **Photographs, circa 1920-1992 and undated**

#### **Prints, circa 1920-1992 and undated**

Prints are arranged into four subseries: Portraits, Publicity, Performance, and Snapshots. Folder titles identify either the subject of the photo or the title of the dance depicted, followed by the date. When known, the photographer's name appears in parentheses.

#### **Portraits, circa 1920-1992**

##### **Portraits of Primus, circa 1920-1992**

**Physical Description:** 15 folders

Arranged chronologically

Primus, circa 1920	Box 6
Primus, circa 1930-1949 (2 folders)	Box 6

Primus, circa 1940-1949	Box 6
Primus (Cris Alexander), circa 1940-1945 (3 folders)	Box 6
Primus (Cris Alexander), circa 1940-1945	Box OS2
Primus (Gerda Peterich), circa 1940-1949	Box 6
Primus (Carl Van Vechten), circa 1940-1949	Box 6
Primus (photograph of painting by Robert G. Thomkins), 1950	Box 6
Primus (photograph of bust by Ben Karp), circa 1950-1959	Box 6
Primus, Percival, and Onwin Borde passport photos, circa 1961	Box 6
Primus, Afro-American Studies Department, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 1992	Box 6

### **Portraits of Others, circa 1940-1969**

**Physical Description:** 2 folders

Others, signed or identified, circa 1940-1959	Box 6
Others, unidentified, circa 1940-1969	Box 6

### **Publicity, circa 1940-1969**

#### **Primus in Performance, circa 1940-1959**

**Physical Description:** 25 folders

**Scope and Contents note**

Contains publicity shots of Primus (sometimes with her company or family), depicting scenes from dance performances, taken by professional photographers for promotional purposes.

Arranged alphabetically by title of dance

African Ceremonial (Gerda Peterich), circa 1944 (2 folders)	Box 6
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Afro-Haitian Play Dance (Gerda Peterich), circa 1940-1949	Box 6
Hard Times Blues , 1940	Box OS2
Dance of the Watusi , 1951	Box 6
Folk Dance, PM Daily Picture Magazine (Morris Gordon), 1944	Box 6
Folk Dance (Gerda Peterich), circa 1944	Box 6
Folk Dance (Jay Florian Mitchell), circa 1950-1959	Box 6
Folk Dance (Gerda Peterich), 1950-1959	Box 6
Negro Speaks of Rivers , circa 1940-1949 (3 folders)	Box 6
Negro Speaks of Rivers , circa 1940-1949	Box OS2
Negro Speaks of Rivers (Gerda Peterich), circa 1940-1949 (2 folders)	Box 6
Spirituals , circa 1940-1949	Box 6
Unidentified Dances, circa 1940-1959 (9 folders)	Box 7
Unidentified Dances (Barbara Morgan), circa 1950-1959	Box 7
Unidentified Dances, with Joe Nash (Gerda Peterich), circa 1947	Box 7

**Primus Company, circa 1940-1959**

**Physical Description:** 11 folders

**Scope and Contents note**

Contains publicity shots of Primus company members in performance and in rehearsal.

Arranged chronologically

Primus Company, circa 1940-1949 (2 folders)	Box 7
Primus Company (Barry), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Primus Company (Barry), circa 1940-1949	Box OS2
Primus Company (Scurlock Studio), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Primus Company, Caribbean Conga (Gjon Mili), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Primus Company, Caribbean Conga (Jay Florian Mitchell), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Primus Company, Caribbean Conga (Jay Florian Mitchell), circa 1940-1949	Box OS2
Primus Company, Four Male Dancers (Marvin Smith), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Primus Company, Rehearsal (Gazelle Szabo), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Primus Company with Joe Nash and Jacqueline Hairston (Marvin Smith), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Primus Company, donkey costume (Jay Florian Mitchell), circa 1950-1955	Box 7
Primus Company, circa 1950-1959	Box 7

**Public Appearances by Primus, circa 1940-1969**

**Physical Description:** 40 folders

**Scope and Contents note**

Contains publicity shots taken at public appearances and events.

Arranged chronologically

Radio appearance, circa 1940-1949	Box 7
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Radio appearance, NBC (Dennis Stock), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Radio appearance, WHN (Irving Kaufman), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Saks Fifth Avenue Store Window (Worsinger), circa 1940-1949	Box 7
Appearances, circa 1940-1989	Box 7
War Effort, with CIO member/veterans, circa 1942-1944	Box 7
Cafe Society, circa 1943	Box 7
Emperor Jones , 1947	Box 7
Packing for Africa (Rosenwald Grant) (Rosalie Gwathmey), 1949	Box 7
Signing Autographs (Beckman), 1947	Box 7
Belgian Congo, 1949	Box 7
Primus with Family (Rosalie Gwathmey), 1949	Box 7
Women Dancers in Nigeria, 1949	Box 7
Jacob's Pillow, 1950	Box 7
Primus with Percival Borde, circa 1950-1959	Box 7
Primus with Francis Day, Jack Hylton reading program of Primus' royal performance, Oct. 29, 1951	Box 7
Appearance in U.K., (Keystone Press Agency), Oct. 1951	Box 7
Appearance In U.K (Daily Express), circa 1951	Box 7
Israeli tour (Hans Kaufmann), Jan. 1952	Box 7

Trieste, Italy, Oct.-Nov. 1956	Box 7
Primus with Percival Borde and Curtis J. Perkins (R. Walker), circa 1956	Box 7
Appearance with Onwin Borde, circa 1960	Box 7
Appearance, circa 1960-1969	Box 7
Appearance at Detroit Institute of the Arts, circa 1960-1969	Box 7
Primus with Percival Borde and Nun, circa 1960-1969	Box 7
Primus teaching children, circa 1960-1969	Box OS2
Primus with Nigerian Cultural Leaders, circa 1961	Box 8
Percival Borde presenting award, circa 1962	Box 8
Percival Borde with Miss Trinidad and Tobago Independence, Sept. 1962	Box 8
Press clipping: "Everyman's African Roots" , Dance Magazine , Oct. 1964	Box 8
"Dancing Masks of Africa" Exhibit Opening, Sept. 1974	Box 8
Spelman College Repertory Workshop, Swing Low (Reeves Studios), 1976	Box 8
Primus (Sigrid Estrada), circa 1982	Box 8
Contact Magazine shoot (Stephen Long), 1984	Box 8
Lecture Demonstration at Amherst (Frank Ward), circa 1986	Box 8
American Dance Festival Master Class (Jay Anderson), 1988	Box 8
Primus with Kim Bears, circa 1988	Box 8

Lecture Demonstration (Andre Richardson), circa 1980-1989	Box 8
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National Medal of Arts (Vivian Ronay), 1991	Box 8
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**Photographs of Others, circa 1940-1969**

**Physical Description:** 2 folders

Photographs of others, identified, circa 1940-1969	Box 8
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Photographs of others, unidentified, circa 1940-1969	Box 8
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**Performance, circa 1940-1969**

**Physical Description:** 45 folders

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes photographs of Primus, her family, and her company taken by a professional photographer at live performances.

Arranged chronologically

Performances, circa 1940-1979	Box 8
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Prayer of Thanksgiving , Belgian Congo (A. Da Cruz), 1949	Box 8
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Belgian Congo (A. Da Cruz), circa May-Aug. 1949	Box 8
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Dance of Lightning , Belgian Congo (A. Da Cruz), circa May-Aug. 1949	Box 8
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Jacob's Pillow, 1950	Box 8
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Cleveland Performance (Bill Wingfield), circa 1950-1959	Box 8
--	-------

International Festival, circa 1950-1959	Box 8
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English Tour, 1951	Box 8
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Primus Company, circa 1951	Box 8
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Italian tour (Foto Florio), 1956	Box 8
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Italian tour (E. Constantine), 1956	Box 8
Italian tour (L. de Rota), circa Oct.-Nov. 1956	Box 8
Primus with Percival Borde, NYU-TV (Irwin Gooen), 1957	Box 8
Percival Borde, circa 1960-1969	Box 8
Primus Company, circa 1960-1969	Box 8
NYU (William Simmons), 1962	Box 8
Appearance (Bro. David McAdams), June 25, 1964	Box 8
Alphonse Cimber, Primus Company drummer (E. Pen Stevens), Oct. 11, 1969	Box 8
Percival Borde, Primus Company, Lincoln Center Out-Of-Doors Festival (Dan Brinzac), Aug. 20, 1979	Box 8
Percival Borde, circa 1970-1979	Box 8
Percival Borde, Impinyuza , circa 1970-1979	Box 8
Primus with Onwin Borde, circa 1970-1979	Box 8
Performance, circa 1980-1989 (3 folders)	Box 8
Unidentified Performers, circa 1980-1989	Box 8
Excerpts from an African Journey , Five College Faculty Dance Concert, 1984	Box 8
Mary François Brooks and Co., 1986	Box 8
Primus Company, undated	Box 8
Primus Company (Costas), undated	Box 8
Primus Company, Initiation , undated	Box 8
Primus Company, Bushasche , undated	Box 8

**Snapshots, circa 1930-1992**

**Physical Description:** 40 folders

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes photographs taken by non-professional, unidentified photographers. The images document Primus' family and friends, as well as some performances and appearances.

Arranged chronologically

Emily and Edward Primus (parents), circa 1930-1939	Box 9
Others, circa 1930-1959	Box 9
Hunter College, Friends, circa 1937	Box 9
Primus, circa 1937-1950	Box 9
Primus with Family and Friends, circa 1937-1960	Box 9
Albums, including Father and Hunter College friend, 1938-1939	Box 9
Primus' Brothers and Sisters-in-Law, circa 1940-1949	Box 9
Others, signed, 1949	Box 9
Others, unidentified, 1949, 1959-1963	Box 9
Primus in Africa, circa 1949	Box 9
Watusi (Rwanda), circa 1949	Box 9
Primus at Café Society Downtown, 1950	Box 9
Yael Woll, circa 1950-1953	Box 9
Album, circa 1952	Box 9
Trinidad, circa 1953	Box 9
Trinidad albums, circa 1953 (5 folders)	Box 9
Onwin Borde (with Primus and Percival Borde), 1955	Box 9

Africa, circa 1959-1963 (2 folders)	Box 9
Liberia, circa 1959-1963	Box 9
Onwin Borde, 1961	Box 9
Liberia, 1961	Box 9
Classes, circa 1965	Box 9
Percival Borde, Lagos, Nigeria, 1971	Box 9
Onwin Borde drumming, circa 1980-1989	Box 9
Lecture Demonstration, Emory University, Atlanta, circa 1980-1989	Box 9
Panel Discussion, circa 1980-1989	Box 9
Primus with Marilyn Middleton, circa 1980-1989	Box 9
Primus at White Plains High School, circa 1980-1989	Box 9
Shango de Ima , circa 1980-1989	Box 9
Unidentified, circa 1980-1994	Box 9
Primus at Murray and Peggy Schwartz's home, 1983	Box 9
Students, Dance Workshop, Apr. 6, 1984	Box 9
Primus with Maya Angelou and Onwin Borde, 1987	Box 10
Primus and Shepard Roderick, Barbados, circa 1987	Box 10
Primus at Murray and Peggy Schwartz's home, 1989	Box 10
Tokunaga Dance Kompany, Boston, circa 1992	Box 10

**Contact Sheets, circa 1940-1984**

**Physical Description:** 8 folders

**Scope and Contents note**

None of the contact sheets in this series has its accompanying negatives. There are, however, a few contact sheets with their accompanying negatives in the Negatives series.

Arranged chronologically within three subseries: Publicity, Performance, and Snapshots.

**Publicity, circa 1940-1959**

Primus and Company (or students), circa 1940-1949 Box 10

Primus Company Rehearsal, circa 1950-1959 Box 10

**Performance, circa 1940-1984**

Primus, circa 1940-1949 Box 10

Primus at Jacob's Pillow, 1950 Box 10

Onwin Borde, circa 1965 Box 10

Primus with unidentified company, 1984 Box 10

**Snapshots, circa 1950-1959**

Primus, circa 1950-1959 Box 10

Primus, Percival Borde, Onwin Borde, circa 1958 Box 10

**Negatives, circa 1930-1988 and undated**

**Physical Description:** 14 folders

**Scope and Contents note**

Contains some of the negatives of prints found in the Photographic Prints subseries. There are also numerous negatives of snapshots of family members with Onwin Borde, primarily during his infant and toddler years, 1955-1957. Other negatives include performances of Primus and other well-known modern dancers such as Jose Limon and Helen Tamiris at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in 1950.

Arranged chronologically within the series of Portraits, Publicity, Performance, and Snapshots. Primus' negatives from her trips to Africa are arranged in a separate, following series.

**Portraits, circa 1945**

Primus, circa 1945 Box 10

**Publicity, circa 1945-1988**

Spirituals , circa 1945 Box 10

Primus, circa 1945-1988 Box 10

**Performance, 1949-1950**

Dance of Lightning and Prayer of Thanksgiving , 1949 Box 10

Limon, Ide, Helen, Cimber, Lindquist, Rivera, Jacob's Pillow, 1950 Box 10

Dance of Lightning and The Negro Speaks of Rivers , 1950 Box 10

Primus, Jacob's Pillow, 1950 Box 10

**Snapshots, circa 1930-1965 and undated**

Unidentified, circa 1930-1949 Box 10

Primus and family, 1955-1957 Box 10

Children, including Onwin Borde, circa 1955-1959 Box 10

Percival Borde and Onwin Borde, circa 1960 Box 10

Onwin Borde, circa 1960 Box 10

Onwin Borde, circa 1965 Box 10

Primus and Percival Borde, undated Box 10

**Primus' Ethnographic Studies from Africa, 1949, 1960-1963**

**Scope and Contents note**

This subseries consists of negatives and transparencies taken by Primus in Africa in 1949 and 1960-1963. They document the people, landscapes, vegetation, habitats, crafts, instruments, dance, dress, and rituals of the African tribes she visited.

**Negatives Identified by Primus, 1949, 1960-1963**

**Physical Description:** 16 folders

The negatives in this subseries were contained in an index card box and identified by Primus according to city or subject, although they were not arranged in their current alphabetical order.

Aba (Nigeria)	Box 10
Benin (Nigeria)	Box 10
Boma (Belgian Congo)	Box 10
Bonny (Nigeria)	Box 10
Duala (Cameroon)	Box 10
Ife (Nigeria)	Box 10
Jos (Nigeria)	Box 11
Kalabar (Nigeria)	Box 11
Kano (Nigeria)	Box 11
Lagos (Nigeria)	Box 11
Missions	Box 11
Oron (Nigeria)	Box 11
Ship	Box 11
Usumbura (Burundi)	Box 11
Warri (Nigeria)	Box 11
Zaria (Nigeria)	Box 11

**Negatives not Identified by Primus, 1949**

**Physical Description: 13 folders**

**Scope and Contents note**

The majority of these negatives likely date to Primus' 1949 Rosenwald Foundation grant tour.

The negatives in this subseries were tentatively identified or categorized by ADF Archives staff and arranged alphabetically by tribe or subject.

Ashanti [?] (Ghana)	Box 11
Bakuba (Belgian Congo) (4 folders)	Box 11
Flora and Fauna	Box 11
Ife [?] (Nigeria)	Box 11
Kampo [?] (Senegal)	Box 11
Mano (Liberia) (3 folders)	Box 11
Material Culture (2 folders)	Box 11
Primus	Box 11
Watusi (Rwanda) (4 folders)	Box 11
Unidentified Children	Box 11
Unidentified People (4 folders)	Box 11

**Transparencies not Identified by Primus, 1949, 1960-1963**

**Physical Description: 2 folders**

The transparencies in this subseries were tentatively identified or categorized by ADF Archives staff and arranged alphabetically by tribe or subject.

Accra (Ghana), circa 1962	Box 11
Bakuba (Belgian Congo)	Box 11

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**Moving Images, circa 1949-1992**

**Physical Description:** 22 items

**Access Restrictions:**

Viewing of these materials requires the use of reference copies. When a reference copy exists, it is noted in the finding aid. Originals are restricted.

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes 15 reels of 8mm film, primarily containing images of Africa shot by Primus in either 1949 or 1960 to 1963. This series also contains amateur VHS footage of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre rehearsing Primus' Impinyuza and of a speech Primus presented at Howard University in 1992. Also present is an interview with Primus conducted for the Standifer Oral History Archive in 1989, as well as a 1981 feature on Primus by Schenectady PBS affiliate WMHT. Titles are transcribed from the original label on each item.

Arranged by format and then by item number, as assigned by the staff of Free to Dance.

**8 mm Film, circa 1949-1969**

**Scope and Contents note**

Films marked with an asterisk\* are also represented on Reference Copy DVD #4781 (Box 16), Preservation Copy Betacam SP #4781 (Box 13), and Preservation Copy DigiBeta #4781 (Box 13). Originals and preservation copies are restricted.

051-01-5 "50' B/W Bullfight" *	Box 12
051-03-5 "dancing outside, in front of two doors-very light"	Box 12
051-04-5 "Great Wall, Donkeys, Looks like more African dancing, 1960s" *	Box 12
051-05-5 "Native Guitar, Street in Lagos"	Box 12
051-06-5 "Pearl at Jacob's Pillow"	Box 12
051-07-5 "Bullfight, color" *	Box 12
051-08-5 "50' B/W, good exposure. Probably not Africa-people coming out of buildings"	Box 12
051-09-5 "50' color Bullfight" *	Box 12

051-10-5 "looks like female African standing, then dancing in road. Full roll"	Box 12
051-11-5 "dancing, color. Soloist in white skirt" *	Box 12
051-14-5 "sheep or cow under a tree" *	Box 12
051-15-5 "color-very light" *	Box 12
051-16-5 "the road, shot from inside a car, color" *	Box 12
051-17-5 "date: 1958 house/hut/tent color" *	Box 12
051-18-5 "person standing in front of stairs" *	Box 12

### **VHS Videocassettes, circa 1989-1992 and undated**

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Videocassettes marked with an asterisk\* are represented on individual reference copy DVDs (Box 16) and individual preservation copy Betacam SP videocassettes (Box 13). Originals and preservation copies are restricted.

051-12-4 "Pearl Primus in Africa" *	Box 13
051-13-4 "Sathi Ailey Impinyuza-Sun. 10/21 TRT: 23:22 5/21/92" *	Box 13
051-14-4 "Luncheon at Howard University 1992" *	Box 13
051-15-4 "Impinyuza Rehearsal 8/7/90"	Box 13
051-16-4 "Dr. Pearl Primus Interviewed by James Standifer, Feb. 16, 1989"	Box 13

### **U-Matic Videocassettes, 1981**

#### **Scope and Contents note**

These two tapes are represented on a single reference copy DVD (Box 16) and two individual preservation copy Betacam SP videocassettes (Box 13). Originals and preservation copies are restricted.

"Pearl Primus, Mon. 4/20/81" , WMHT-NY (2 videocassettes)	Box 13
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## Sound Recordings, 1950-1989 and undated

**Physical Description:** 68 items

### Access Restrictions:

Listening to these materials requires the use of reference copies. Sound recordings marked with an asterisk\* are also represented on individual reference copy audio CDs (Box 16). Originals are restricted.

### Scope and Contents note

Contains 1/4-inch reel-to-reel audiotapes and audiocassettes belonging to Primus, including interviews with Primus in 1950 and 1956 and a lecture-demonstration on "Dance and Life Crisis" . This series also contains a copy of Pearl Primus' Africa , a set of three phonograph records of African stories, proverbs, and songs that Primus narrated, as well as copies of four other native music LPs. Also included are recordings of chants, drumming, and singing likely used to accompany rehearsals, or perhaps made to preserve native songs and rhythms for future study, although these are largely unidentified. Home recordings and duplicates of popular music, including Josh White, Miles Davis, Langston Hughes, and Billie Holiday, are also included.

Titles are copied from the original labels on the boxes of the sound reels and audiocassettes. Additional notes appear in brackets, including spelled-out abbreviations and uncertain readings of illegible titles.

Arranged by format and by identifying numbers assigned by ADF staff.

### 1/4-Inch Reel-to-Reel Audiotapes, 1950-1988 and undated

PPCAud1 "Fanti + Group/Fanga" *	Box 14
PPCAud2 "Shango Songs" *	Box 14
PPCAud3 "Priorities" *	Box 14
PPCAud4 "Hard Times Blues 6/88"	Box 14
PPCAud5 "Fanga" *	Box 14
PPCAud6 "P. Primus Lecture Coldstream" *	Box 14
PPCAud8 Unidentified	Box 14

PPCAud9 Unidentified	Box 14
PPCAud10 Unidentified	Box 14
PPCAud11 "Aug-Sept 1955, Music and Talk-Pearl, Percy, Hada[mar?] Nul[tor?], 1st part Carr[icecon] [Sonny, Arnette]-Sept. 22/55, Belle pique, Cocoa oh Cocoa, Rock Daniel, Rattle" *	Box 14
PPCAud11 "Aug-Sept 1955, Music and Talk-Pearl, Percy, Hada[mar?] Nul[tor?], 1st part Carr[icecon] [Sonny, Arnette]-Sept. 22/55, Belle pique, Cocoa oh Cocoa, Rock Daniel, Rattle" *	Box 14
PPCAud12 "Newark 7/9/57" *	Box 14
PPCAud13 "Round Table Discussion, African Theater Arts, P.P. and P.B. [Pearl Primus and Percival Borde], [Ezra Koli?], P. Reynolds, W. Edwards, L. Jones, 11/2/73" *	Box 14
PPCAud14 "St. Marks 1/hour 5 weeks 9/23 to 10/26, Bondi + Company, Primus Guest Artist" *	Box 14
PPCAud15 "Records of [James and ?] with K. [Heldek?] Shango" *	Box 14
PPCAud16 Unidentified*	Box 14
PPCAud17 "Nights in Latin America-Rumba"	Box 14
PPCAud18 Unidentified*	Box 14
PPCAud19 "Jack Lathrop 1951, Pearl Primus, Conn. Coll., Aug. 1950" *	Box 14
PPCAud20 "Radio Interview P. Primus, Callinda Drumming, Sam and [Tiny?], Pearl Primus, 17 W. 24th Studio, Sun. April 8, 1956" *	Box 14
PPCAud21 "Recording of Drums and Singing By K. Ablack" *	Box 14

PPCAud22 Unlabeled\* Box 14

**Scope and Contents note**

Letter from Koko to Primus identifies reel as recordings by Koko given to Primus. Original letter is in Correspondence, undated

PPCAud23 "May 56 Speed Slow, Blue Sands-Buddy Collet [Collette], June 12 56, 'Dance off Buddy Fantaloon Dance Off' Onwin Primus, 'Big Foot Mary' Drumming by Onwin, Onwin on drums 1 yr later July 1 '57 age 2 1/2" \* Box 14

PPCAud24 Unidentified\* Box 14

**Audiocassettes, 1973-1989 and undated**

PPCAud25 Sides 1 and 2: "321X Class 3/13/73" \* Box 15

PPCAud26 Sides 1 and 2: "Lecture" \* Box 15

PPCAud27 Side 1: "For transcript, Dance Studies" ; Side 2: "African Dance Studies for transcription 7/9/75, Fanga" \* Box 15

PPCAud28 Side 1: "Explaining Talking Drum by Timi of [Cede] 8/5/73" ; Side 2: Blank\* Box 15

PPCAud29 Side 1: "The Gay Flamingoes, Secrets of the Pan, 4 Selections" ; Side 2: Unidentified\* Box 15

PPCAud30 Sides 1 and 2: "Spring 74 Lect[ure] at Sus Valley School" \* Box 15

PPCAud31 Side 1: "Praise Song 8/17/73 Osun" ; Side 2: Blank\* Box 15

PPCAud32 Side 1: "Notes on Artifacts, BOCES Stamford NY" ; Side 2: Blank\* Box 15

PPCAud33 Sides 1 and 2: "Others " [Side 2 only on reference CD]\* Box 15

PPCAud34 Sides 1 and 2: "Summer Institute in Ethnic Studies Through the Arts" \* Box 15

PPCAud35 Sides 1 and 2: "Festac 77 " [2nd World Black and African Festival of Art and Culture, Jan. 1977]*	Box 15
PPCAud36 Side 1: "Arabo's Younger Brother 8/10/75" ; Side 2: "Lagos 1st Bata Narrative" *	Box 15
PPCAud37 Side 1: "1-216 WA 107 Caribbean-137"	Box 15
PPCAud38 Side 1: "Discipline Bai T. Moon 8/12, Cultural Center 'in the Bush' 8/13" ; Side 2: "Cultural Center 8/13 Lect[ure] Demo[nstration]"	Box 15
PPCAud39 Sides 1 and 2: "Hi Life and JuJu Music"	Box 15
PPCAud40 Side 1: "8/9 5[?]-1st Part, Egon Gun-2nd part" ; Side 2: "Egon Gun Lagos, Low Battery-8/9/75"	Box 15
PPCAud41 Side 1: "Italian-B and B Fall 1973 project" ; Side 2: Blank	Box 15
PPCAud42 Side 1: "Wisconsin #1-Superior" ; Side 2: "Superior Wisc 1971"	Box 15
PPCAud43 Side 1: "Why Mosquitoes Buzz"	Box 15
PPCAud44 Side 1: "Lect[ure] 292, 1st pt of Report, W.A., 71" ; Side 2: "Report 1971 (cont)"	Box 15
PPCAud45 Side 1: "African Rhythms" ; Side 2: "Lecture Caribbean Music-4/18/79 M101 Blank"	Box 15
PPCAud46 Side 1: "Paraverbal Meeting 11/3/89"	Box 15
PPCAud47 Side 1: "292B Black Theatre" ; Side 2: "292B Africa Theatre"	Box 15
PPCAud48 Side 1: "Drama/Dance Nigeria Dundun Set" ; Side 2: "Yoruba Class 8/1/73"	Box 15

PPCAud49 Side 1: "5/8/74 [A Allvelty?]" ; Side 2: "French Class"	Box 15
PPCAud50 Side 1: "Borroff"	Box 15
PPCAud51 Unidentified	Box 15
PPCAud52 Unidentified	Box 15
PPCAud53 Side 1: "Lect at Chicago [?] Forks-10/16/75" ; Side 2: "Cheougo Forks Lect 10/21/75"	Box 15
PPCAud54 Side 1: "Seminar on Report 11/22"	Box 15
PPCAud55 Side 1: "African Article Report 11/17" ; Side 2: "Asleiti Conference 11/17"	Box 15
PPCAud56 Side 1: "PSU Lect Oregon 6/21" ; Side 2: "Lect-P.S.U."	Box 15
PPCAud57 Sides 1 and 2: "Radical Liberal Arts May 1988"	Box 15
PPCAud58 Side 1: "AA/Thea 137 and 207 c/w 5/8/74"	Box 15
PPCAud59 Side 1: "Tue Dije 8/9/73" ; Side 2: "Tue Dije 8/9/73"	Box 15

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### **Artifacts, 1974-1991 and undated**

**Physical Description:** 2.92 Linear Feet

**Access Restrictions:**

Costumes (Box 18) are restricted.

**Scope and Contents note**

Contains seven plaques, awarded for achievement in modern dance, anthropology, and teaching, and the 1991 Medal of Arts, awarded by President George H. W. Bush. This series also contains three female and one male ballet slippers, assumed to have belonged to Primus and her husband, Percival, and three dance costumes presumably worn by Primus. Notable is the one

identifiable costume, worn by Primus during performances of *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* and *Strange Fruit* in the mid-1940s.

Appreciation presented by African Heritage Class and African-American Heritage Dance Club, 1974	Box 17
Outstanding Pioneer Award presented by Audelco, 1977	Box 17
Ernest Melby Award presented by NYU Alumni Association, 1986	Box 17
Honorary Citizen of Atlanta, 1989	Box 17
Distinguished Achievement Award presented by Association of Black Anthropologists, 1991	Box 17
National Medal of Arts, 1991	Box 17
Olaudah Equiano Award of Excellence, University of Utah, 1994	Box 17
Ballet shoes (three women's and one men's)	Box 17
Brown woven circle	Box 17
P. Borde name Tag	Box 17
Rosary	Box 17
Woodblock stamp of image from African Ceremonial	Box 17
Wooden comb	Box 17
Restricted: Black striped skirt with pink trim, from <i>Negro Speaks of Rivers</i> and <i>Strange Fruit</i>	Box 18
Restricted: Blue and purple velvet dress with leaves	Box 18
Restricted: Purple dress	Box 18

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