

Guide to the Julia P. Cooper Mack papers

GEN MSS 2155



Elizabeth Nosari

May 2025

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 2155

CREATOR: Cooper, Julia P., 1920- , author

TITLE: Julia P. Cooper Mack papers

DATES: 1937–1998

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.25 linear feet (3 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English (Latin script)

SUMMARY: This collection documents the life and career of Julia Cooper Mack, the first African American woman to serve on a state-equivalent court of last resort in the United States. Collection materials include correspondence, ephemera, and personnel documents related to her work as a government attorney for the United States Department of Justice and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as well as her judgeship on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. Also included are materials related to speech writing, personal mementos, correspondence, press, and photographs.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.mackjpc>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.mackjpc>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Inez Smith Reid, 2024.

Custodial History

Julia Cooper Mack gave her papers to Inez Smith Reid with the understanding Smith Reid would gift them to an archival repository.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Julia P. Cooper Mack papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Julia P. Cooper Mack Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Julia P. Cooper Mack's papers were removed from the Inez Smith Reid papers (GEN MSS 2154) during processing in May 2025.

Processing Information

Most folder titles have been transcribed directly from folder titles likely authored by Julia Cooper Mack. Devised folder titles and additions to existing folder titles have been enclosed in brackets.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

Related Materials

[Inez Smith Reid papers](#) (GEN MSS 2154). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Biographical / Historical

Julia Cooper Mack (1920–2014) was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina, on July 17, 1920, to public school teacher Emily Perry (née McCoy) and pharmacist and pharmaceutical chemist Dallas Leary Perry, Jr. She grew up in segregation in North Carolina and attended the Fayetteville Normal School and E. C. Smith High School. She earned a BS from the Hampton Institute in Virginia in 1940 and worked as a teacher in North Carolina and Maryland, 1940–1942, before becoming an assistant registrar at Fayetteville State Teachers College in North Carolina, 1942–1946. Mack later worked as an admissions clerk in the Office of

the Registrar at Howard University, Washington, D.C., 1946–1948, and went on to matriculate and earn an LLB from Howard University in 1951. She was admitted to the District of Columbia Bar in 1952.

Mack worked as Attorney Adviser at the Office of Price Stabilization, 1951–1953; Attorney at the Office of General Counsel, General Services Administration, 1953–1954; Trial Attorney at the Criminal Division, Department of Justice, 1954–1968; and Deputy General Counsel at Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 1968–1975, where she worked to eradicate discriminatory practices against Black employees at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Mack was appointed by President Gerald R. Ford to the District of Columbia Court of Appeals in 1975 and later served as a Senior Judge from 1989 to 2001.

According to Inez Smith Reid's 2004 article "Historical Links: The Remarkable Legacy and Legal Journey of the Honorable Julia Cooper Mack," Mack was the first African American woman to serve as judge on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals—and the first to serve on a state-equivalent court of last resort in the United States. Prior to her judgeship, Mack was the first Black lawyer hired by the General Services Administration. She was also the first Black woman hired by the Justice Department and the first Black woman to represent the federal government in an argument before the United States Supreme Court.

During her lifetime, in 1971, Mack was recognized with the EEOC Award for Distinguished Service for enforcing anti-discrimination laws in the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1974, she was awarded the Justice Tom C. Clark Award for enforcing anti-discrimination laws at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Mack was the Howard University Alumnus of the Year in 1975 and was inducted as an Honorary Member of the Alpha Kappa Sorority in 1976.

Mack's first marriage to Jerry S. Cooper ended in divorce; they had one daughter, Cheryl Cooper Pleasants (1944–2023). Mack married Clifford J. Mack in 1957, and he died in 1971.

Scope and Contents

This collection documents the life and career of Julia Cooper Mack. Personal papers are comprised of correspondence, including with mentor A. Mercer Daniel, as well as ephemera related to Mack's education at the Hampton Institute, 1940, and Howard University School of Law, 1950s. It is also comprised of press and news clippings, certificates, ephemera, and awards related to Mack's career achievements. Professional papers consist of materials such as correspondence, personnel documentation, news clippings, photographs, and a photocopy of Department of Housing and Urban Development proceedings related to Mack's roles as trial attorney at the Department of Justice, 1954–1968, and Deputy General Counsel at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 1968–1975. This collection also includes materials, 1975–1983, related to Mack's role as judge on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, including press, correspondence, and investiture and nomination materials (e.g., notes, a completed personal data questionnaire, a biography, and a signed oath of office). Also present are typescripts, holograph manuscripts, notes, research, and event ephemera related to Mack's speech writing.

Arrangement

Organized in two series: I. Personal papers, 1937–1998. II. Professional papers, 1961–1993.

Collection Contents

Series I: Personal papers, 1937–1998

This series is comprised of mementos, including ephemera and correspondence relating to Fayetteville State Normal School, Fayetteville, North Carolina, 1937; Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), Virginia, 1940; Fayetteville State Teachers' College, Fayetteville, North Carolina, 1955; and the Howard University School of Law, 1950s. Also present is personal correspondence related to significant life events, including with mentor A. Mercer Daniel, 1971; photographs of Mack; and a photograph of a residential street labeled, "Perry Property." This series also contains transcriptions of poems and clippings with personal meaning for Mack. Examples of early writing include an autobiographical sketch from Mack's 1948 Howard University School of Law application and a poem by Mack titled "The Lipstick."

This series is also composed of press related to Mack's professional accomplishments, 1950s–1980s, including in *Jet* magazine, the *Hampton Alumni Newsletter*, *Daily Washington Law Reporter*, *Jurist* (Howard University), *Washington Afro-American*, *Washington Informer*, *Washington Post Metro*, and *Observer Picture Newspaper*. Also present are professional certificates issued by the American Bar Association, 1957, the United States Court of Appeals, 1965 and 1971, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1970. Additionally, this series includes clippings, correspondence, and ephemera related to the Tom Clark Award, 1974, and honorary Alpha Kappa Alpha membership, 1976.

Organized chronologically.

b. 1, f. 1-3	Mementos	1937-1998, undated
b. 1, f. 4-5	Press - Personal, Family, Friends	1940-1988, undated
b. 1, f. 6-7	Inspiration, Cards, Poems, Writings	1948-1991, undated
b. 1, f. 8	Certificates	1957-1980, undated
b. 1, f. 9-10	Tom Clark Award - congratulatory messages	1974
b. 1, f. 11	AKA [Alpha Kappa Alpha] Honors	1976
b. 1, f. 12	[Press - Distinguished Postgraduate Achievement Award]	1981

Series II: Professional papers, 1961–1993

This series documents Mack's professional experiences, including her roles as trial attorney at the Department of Justice, 1954–1968, and as Deputy General Counsel at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 1968–1975. Materials related to her federal government roles include personnel documentation such as pay slips, a resignation letter, promotion, a resume, job application, and press releases. Also included are memos, correspondence, a photocopy of Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) legal proceedings, and news clippings as well as photographs of Mack and correspondence with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Oral History Project.

This series is also comprised of material related to Mack's investiture and position as judge on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. These materials, 1975–1983, include correspondence, press (*Daily Washington Law Reporter*, 1975), and nomination materials (e.g., notes, a completed personal data questionnaire, a biography, and a signed oath of office). Also included are related government document publications (e.g., *Nominations to D.C. Court of Appeals* and *Superior Court Hearing before the Committee on the District of Columbia US Senate*, July 28, 1975).

Finally, this series includes materials related to Mack's speech writing, 1976–1993, such as typescripts and holograph manuscripts of speeches as well as research materials, notes, and event programs and other ephemera. Hosting organizations and institutions include Howard University Law School, 1981; the National Association of Black Women Attorneys, 1989; NAACP of Washington, Pennsylvania, 1989; and the Charlotte E. Ray Award of the Greater Washington Area Chapter of the National Bar Association, 1990.

Organized chronologically.

b. 2, f. 1	[Department of] Justice	1961–1970
b. 2, f. 2-7	EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission]	1967-1995, undated
b. 2, f. 8-9	HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development]	1971-1975, undated
b. 2, f. 10-11	Investiture	1975
b. 2, f. 12-13	Judgeship	1975-1983, undated
b. 3, f. 1-5	Speech Writing	1976-1993, undated

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

African American women judges
Civil Rights movements -- United States -- 20th
Century
Government attorneys -- United States
Judges
Women judges

Geographic Names

Washington (D.C.) -- Politics and government

Genres / Formats

Photographs

Acquired From

Reid, Inez Smith, donor