

A Guide to the Cleve Overton Papers, 1851-2006

Collection #: SIM-21
Title: Cleve Overton Papers
Creator: Cleve Overton
Dates: Inclusive, 1851-2006; Bulk, 1970-2006
Extent: 2.5 linear feet
Abstract: This collection contains various materials created or collected by Cleve Overton.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Cleve Overton Collection, Archives & Special Collections, Department of the Library, College of Staten Island, CUNY, Staten Island, New York.

Acquisition

These materials were donated to the CSI Archives & Special Collections by Cleve Overton.

Processing Information

A preliminary inventory was prepared by Antonio Golan; arrangement, description and a final inventory were executed by intern Steven D'Avria. Final processing by Rachel Jirka.

Restrictions

Access

Access to this record group is unrestricted.

Copyright Notice

The researcher assumes full responsibility for compliance with laws of copyright. Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with the Coordinator of the Archives & Special Collections.

Biographical Sketch

Cleve Overton is the author of *In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty: A Memoir of a Black American*, which serves partially as a memoir and partially as a history, and which provides lessons in racial problems in Staten Island, New York, and the country as a whole. Most of his life has been devoted, in one way or another, to increasing racial equality and eliminating discrimination as much as possible, both on Staten Island and elsewhere. However, he has held many jobs and worked on several projects other than this. He served in World War II with the 933rd Battalion, and afterwards, started a job at the Bethlehem Steel company. Their discrimination against black workers led Overton and others to form a group and fight the

company, which permitted blacks to work the same jobs as whites, but which closed shortly thereafter.

Following this, he attended school using the G.I. Bill, married a Jewish woman, and joined the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). He was active in local civil rights organizations, including a local branch of the NAACP. In addition, he was a noted potter, creating pots at Historic Richmondtown for exhibit there and in Manhattan. He taught as an adjunct professor in the Arts Department at Baruch College and at Staten Island Community College. He campaigned for equality on Staten Island and encouraged fellow African Americans towards activism, but because of a lack of support from both blacks and whites, this came to a temporary halt. After traveling the world, Overton once again tried to encourage racial harmony, this time by calling for a controversial mural at Borough Hall, depicting a black slave, to be changed, an effort which was not successful.

Today, Cleve Overton continues to produce books, including *Doors of Senegal*, which highlights the unique ingenuity and imagination of Senegalese people, and *Creative Recycling: Handmade in Africa*, a photograph collection of artistic pieces created from discarded material from Africa. He also produces Mixed Media, artwork made from discarded computer equipment. His works have received many awards and have been exhibited in several locations around the country. Although a native New Yorker, he currently lives in Washington D.C., and continues to produce diverse artistic and academic works.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged by format into five series:

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|-------------|------------------------------|
| Series I. | Manuscripts |
| Series II. | Subject Files |
| Series III. | Personal Papers and Ephemera |
| Series IV. | Oral Histories |
| Series V. | Photographs |

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains materials collected by Cleve Overton over several decades dealing with multiple topics. Included is information about his books and exhibits, as well as material about his pottery, military service, and activism.

Series I, **Manuscripts**, includes hard copies of several publications Overton produced, including *Standing in the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty*, *Hidden Architecture*, and *Voices of Staten Island Blacks*. The series also includes digital first and second editions *In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty*, as well as lists of images to be used in the editions. A folder of images prepared for use in the book also resides in this series.

The series **Subject Files** contains material Overton collected over the years. Particularly significant folders include: information on the 933rd Battalion, including a soldier named Johnnie Jones; a clippings file on African Americans in the military, and information on African Americans on Staten Island, New York.

Personal Papers and Ephemera contains primary resources Overton consulted when writing *Standing in the Statue of the Statue of Liberty*. Also included are a number of awards: a City Council Citation and two plaques—one from the Sandy Ground Historical Society and one from the Staten Island African-American Political Association.

Series IV, **Oral Histories**, contains audio cassettes and transcripts of oral history interviews with African-Americans on Staten Island conducted by Overton between 2004 and 2005. The interviews cover a wide range of locally and nationally significant topics, including transportation, politics, the arts, immigration, and racism.

The series **Photographs** contains prints, slides, and digital images. The images are either personal in nature or were used by Overton in his various political and cultural projects.

Content List

[The following box/folder inventory is in the form of a table. If you are visually impaired and using a pdf reader you may need assistance and should contact the Archives at 718-982-4128.]

Series I. Manuscripts

Box	Folder	Title
1	1	<i>In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty</i>
1	2	<i>In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty</i> [administrative]
1	3	<i>In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty</i> – Book Images, 1978-1990s
1	4	<i>Hidden Infrastructure</i>
1	5	<i>Voices of Staten Island Blacks</i>

Series II. Subject Files

Box	Folder	Title
1	6	933 rd Battalion
1	7	933 rd Battalion – Personal Accounts
2	1	African-Americans in the Military – News Clippings
2	2	African-Americans on Staten Island
2	3	Congressional Black Caucus, 1997-1998
2	4	Deaths
2	5	Environmental Protection Agency
2	6	<i>Exporting Harm: the High-Tech Trashing of Asia</i> [article]
2	7	<i>From Swastika to Jim Crow</i> [documentary]
2	8	Jones, Johnnie, 1975-1979
2	9	Maurin, Pierre – Easy Essays, n.d.
2	10	A Memoir of A Black American [CSI Archives poster]
2	11	Newspaper Clippings – Miscellaneous
2	12	Pottery
2	13	Religious Organizations
2	14	Staten Island Sports Hall of Fame

Series III. Personal Papers and Ephemera

Box	Folder	Title
2	15	Family Research, 1882-1976
2	16	African Correspondence and Writings, 1987-1991, n.d.
2	17	Writings, n.d.
2	18	Awards, 2006
4	--	Awards, 1982, 2006

Series IV. Oral Histories

Box	Folder	Title
5		Oral Histories – Cassette Tapes, A-M Tiffany Adams Lillian Arrindell Reverend Baker/Raymond Buckner Dr. Victor Brown Fred Cunningham/Sue/Bill Jones/Jimmy Moody D Dickenson Dick Dickenson Dickenson 2/04 Dickenson Alpha Dicko Duane Felton Mrs. Gibson Mrs. Gibson Lucille Herring/Chas Williams/Rufus Arkoy Carol Jones (Jonsey) Edith Jones Jonsey/Newcomke/Bertta Joan Meaders/Mr. Bice Joan Meaders/Marie Marshall Sue Meaders
6		Oral Histories – Cassette Tapes, R-W Lemmie Roberts Sheila Rohan Cleve Voice/Belinda Scott Beryl Thurman/Bill Givers Beryl Thurman/Bill Givers Mr. + Mrs. West Rev Williams Charles Williams 11/2/03 Rev. Williams
3	1	Oral Histories – Transcripts, 2003

Series V. Photographs

Box	Folder	Title
3	2	Black History – Staten Island, Slides and Scans, 1963-1970
3	3	Personal Photographs, 1961-[1990s]
3	4	Personal Photographs – Borough Hall Mural Protest, 2005
3	5	Photographs of Images Used for <i>In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty</i> , n.d.
3	6	Slides [see descriptions of slides in folder], 1963-1974, n.d.
3	7	Prints of Slides, n.d.
7	--	Digital Images Used for <i>In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty</i> [TIFF format]
8	--	Digital Images Used for <i>In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty</i> [JPEG format]