

# The Kenneth F. Hoke-Witherspoon collection

Special Collections in Performing Arts  
University of Maryland Libraries

**Processed by:** Samantha Flores  
**Date Processed:** November 2016  
**Size:** 0.5 linear feet  
**Bulk dates:** 1988–1991  
**Inclusive dates:** 1988–1992  
**Collection No.:** 17-24-KFHW  
**SCPA shelf location:** E10-2-7

## Abstract

The Kenneth F. Hoke-Witherspoon Collection contains correspondence, articles, and scripts by and relating to the American playwright Kenneth F. Hoke-Witherspoon. Transferred to the University of Maryland from Johns Hopkins University, the materials in this collection cover the period 1988 to 1992. The collection has been separated into two series: Papers (including written correspondence and newspaper clippings) and scripts (published and unpublished).

## Important Information for Users of the Collection

**Restrictions:** The collection is open for research use.

**Preferred citation:** *The Kenneth F. Hoke-Witherspoon collection*, Special Collections in Performing Arts, University of Maryland Libraries.

**Publication rights:** Materials from this collection must be used in the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library's Irving and Margery Morgan Lowens Special Collections Room, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Contact the curator for an appointment:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/scpa/contact>

**Status:** This collection is PROCESSED.

## Historical Note

Kenneth F. Hoke-Witherspoon (b. 1951) is an American playwright that was born in Baltimore, Maryland to a father who was a brickmaker and a mother who worked as a domestic employee. Hoke-Witherspoon was awarded a scholarship to the Northfield Mount Hermon School — a preparatory school in Northfield, Massachusetts — and was later one of the first African-American male freshmen to attend Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. While at Vassar, Hoke-Witherspoon majored in Psychology but was also extensively involved with theater. He held a variety of jobs in fields such as special education, crisis intervention and working with abused children. He was also a senior research specialist at the Welch Medical Library of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Hoke-Witherspoon wrote ten plays in five years before entering the Catholic University of America's graduate program in playwriting in 1983. After receiving his Master's degree in 1987, Hoke-Witherspoon spent time volunteering as Playwright-In-The-School for the Young People's Theater of the Baltimore Center Stage. The Baltimore Playwrights Festival produced two of his plays: *Last Night at Ace High* (1988) and *All Partial Evil, Universal Good* (1989). Subjects of his plays range from the effects of the Vietnam War on the African-American community to the civil rights sit-ins in Baltimore in the 1950s to abortion. He frequently employed Baltimore as a setting for his plays.

## Scope and Contents of the Collection

The Kenneth F. Hoke-Witherspoon Collection covers the period 1988–1992, with the bulk of materials spanning 1988–1991. The collection contains newspaper and magazine clippings, written correspondence, and scripts for three plays: *Halloween: A Biography of an Unabashed*

*African-American Liberal, Gregory Watson: An American History, 1966–1980, and The Fool Who Cried Love at the World: A Definitive Black Play and Tract for Poets.*

## Custodial History and Acquisition Information

Transferred to the Special Collections in the Performing Arts at the University of Maryland on July 1, 2016 by Jordon Steele, University Archivist at John Hopkins University.

## Processing Information

Processed by Samantha Flores in November 2016. Materials are arranged chronologically. All physical materials have been foldered and rehoused into archival boxes. All materials are processed and described at the item level.

## Arrangement of Collection

This collection is organized into two series.

### Series 1: Papers

Subseries 1.1: Correspondence

Subseries 1.2: Newspaper/Magazine Clippings

### Series 2: Scripts

Subseries 2.1: Unpublished Scripts

Subseries 2.2: Published Scripts

## Series Descriptions

### **Series 1: Papers, 1989–1992 (4 items)**

This series consists of written correspondence and clippings from magazines and newspapers.

#### **Subseries 1.1: Correspondence, 1989 (2 items)**

This subseries contains letters from Cynthia H. Requardt and Betty Ronayne at the Milton S. Eisenhower Library.

#### **Subseries 1.2: Newspaper/Magazine Clippings, 1992 (2 items)**

This subseries contains an article from *The Baltimore Sun* on Hoke-Witherspoon's play *Babies' Breath*, and an article from *Welch Library Issues* on Hoke-Witherspoon as a recipient of FOX 45's *Champions of Courage* award.

### **Series 2: Scripts, 1991, undated (3 items)**

This series consists of scripts for three plays: *Halloween: A Biography of an Unabashed African-American Liberal, Gregory Watson: An American History, 1966–1980, and The Fool Who Cried Love at the World: A Definitive Black Play and Tract for Poets.*

**Subseries 2.1: Unpublished Scripts, 1991 (1 item)**

**Subseries 2.2: Published Scripts, 1991, undated (2 items)**

## Box Inventory

### Series 1: Papers, 1989–1991

#### **Subseries 1.1: Letters and Notes, 1989**

##### **BOX 1**

Folder 1: Letters and Notes, 1989

Item 1: Letter from Cynthia H. Requardt, manuscripts librarian at Milton S. Eisenhower Library, March 9, 1989

Item 2: Handwritten note from Betty Ronayne, September 23, 1989

#### **Subseries 1.2: Newspaper/Magazine Clippings, 1992**

##### **BOX 1**

Folder 2: Newspaper/Magazine Clippings, 1992

Item 1: J. Wynn Rousuck, "For city playwright, big issues onstage," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 3, 1992

Item 2: "Hoke-Witherspoon Wins *Champions of Courage Award*," *Welch Library Issues* Vol. 4, No. 1, Jan/Feb 1992

### Series 2: Scripts, 1989–1992

#### **Subseries 2.1: Unpublished Scripts, 1991**

##### **BOX 1**

Folder 3: *Halloween: A Biography of an Unabashed African-American Liberal*, 1991

#### **Subseries 2.2: Published Scripts, 1988–1989, undated**

##### **BOX 1**

Folder 4: *Gregory Watson: An American History, 1966–1980*, ca. 1988–89

Folder 5: *The Fool Who Cried Love at the World: A Definitive Black Play and Tract for Poets*, undated

## Subjects

African American dramatists.

African American theater--History--20th century.

African Americans--Maryland--Baltimore.

Dramatists, American--20th century.