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**PAPERS OF POET, ESSAYIST, CRITIC AND ACTIVIST JUNE JORDAN
ACQUIRED BY THE SCHLESINGER LIBRARY AT THE RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE
*W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research Assists with Purchase***

Cambridge, Mass.— The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, with the generous assistance of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, has acquired the papers of June Jordan. Jordan, who died in 2002, was a prolific and prize-winning writer whose poetry and prose explored topics ranging from love, self-awareness and abuse to broader social issues raised by conflicts in Nicaragua, Africa, the Balkans and elsewhere. Her writing was often political, always literary and infused with the emotion of human experience. The large collection of June Jordan’s papers—including her correspondence with many significant artists and feminists, such as Radcliffe alumna Adrienne Rich and former Radcliffe fellow Alice Walker—will join the Schlesinger Library’s renowned holdings of print and manuscript sources covering issues, organizations and activities in which women have been central.

“We are honored that the Schlesinger Library will preserve and make accessible the record of what Toni Morrison has called Jordan’s ‘ferocious creativity,’” said Dean of the Radcliffe Institute Drew Gilpin Faust. “This is a major addition to our collection and to the record of the experience of women in America. I am deeply grateful to Skip Gates and the Du Bois Institute for their partnership in acquiring Jordan’s papers.”

“June Jordan’s papers bring to the Schlesinger Library the record of a writer of prodigious talent and a social activist of deep, compassionate commitment,” said Henry Louis Gates, Jr., W. E. B. Du Bois professor of the humanities at Harvard University and director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for Afro American Research. “We at the Du Bois Institute celebrate the acquisition of this important collection.”

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Born in 1936, Jordan was the child of West Indian immigrant parents. In her 1999 memoir, *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood*, she described a childhood full of verbal and physical violence. In her teens she left home in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn to attend the Northfield School for Girls in Massachusetts, where she began writing poetry. In 1953, Jordan enrolled at Barnard College. Two years later, she married a white student despite little public tolerance for interracial marriages. They divorced in 1965 after having one child. In 1967, she began her teaching career at the City College of New York, the first of a series of positions, including jobs at Yale University and Sarah Lawrence College, that led eventually to her appointment as a tenured professor at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She left that campus in 1989 for a post at the University of California at Berkeley.

Called the most published African American writer in history, Jordan was the author of more than twenty-five major works. Her books of poetry include the collections *Kissing God Goodbye: Poems, 1991–1997* (1997), *Haruko/Love Poems* (1994), *Naming Our Destiny* (1989), *Living Room: New Poems 1980-1984* (1985), and *Things That I Do in the Dark* (1981). Her essay collections include *Affirmative Acts: Political Essays* (1998), *June Jordan's Poetry for the People: A Revolutionary Blueprint* (1995), *Technical Difficulties* (1992), and *Civil Wars: Selected Essays 1963–1980* (1980). Jordan also wrote the libretto for *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky* (1995), an opera with music by John Adams.

Jordan earned numerous honors and awards, including a 1969–1970 Rockefeller grant for creative writing, a Yaddo residency (1979), a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship (1982) and the Achievement Award for International Reporting from the National Association of Black Journalists (1984). Jordan also won the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Writers Award (1995–1998), the Ground Breakers–Dream Makers Award from The Woman's Foundation (1994), the Chancellor's Distinguished Lectureship from the University of California at Berkeley, the PEN Center USA West Freedom to Write Award (1991) and a congressional citation for her outstanding contributions to literature, the progressive movement and the civil rights movement.

The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University is a scholarly community where individuals pursue advanced work across a wide range of academic disciplines, professions and creative arts. Within this broad purpose, the Institute sustains a continuing commitment to the study of women, gender and society. For more information about the June Jordan papers, the

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Schlesinger Library or the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, call 617-495-8648 or visit <http://www.radcliffe.edu>.

The W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research is the nation's oldest research center dedicated to the study of the history, culture, and social institutions of Africans and African Americans. Founded in 1975 as the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research, the Institute serves as the site for research projects, fellowships for emerging and established scholars, publications, conferences, and working groups. Named after the first African American to receive a PhD from Harvard University (1895), the Du Bois Institute also sponsors four major lecture series each year and serves as the co-sponsor for numerous public conferences, lectures, readings, and forums.

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