

**Guide to the Barnard Organization
of Soul Sisters (B.O.S.S.)
BC37.02**

Finding aid prepared by Hilary Price

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Barnard Archives and Special Collections
Creator	Barnard College.
Title	Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters (B.O.S.S.)
Date [inclusive]	1969-2013
Extent	3.29 Linear feet
Physical Location	This collection is stored offsite and advance notice is required for access. To use this collection, please contact the Barnard Archives and Special Collections at 212.854.4079 or archives@barnard.edu.
Language	English
Abstract	This collection consists of materials from the Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters (B.O.S.S.). The collection includes letters, notes, membership rosters, meeting minutes, speeches, reports, photographs, booklets, pamphlets, brochures, fliers, memorabilia, and newspaper clippings.

Preferred Citation

Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters, 1969-2013; Box and Folder; Barnard Archives and Special Collections, Barnard Library, Barnard College.

Historical Note

In the autumn of 1968, a group of students gathered in the dorm room of Frances Sadler '72 to share their experiences and concerns as Black women at a predominantly white women's college. Acting on the heels of the 1968 takeover of Hamilton Hall by students of color at Columbia University, the fledgling group discussed new avenues for activism at Barnard College.

The development of their organization and its name, B.O.S.S., may have emerged from multiple sources. Sherry Suttles '69 recalled in an email that she brainstormed the acronym with the help of her mother, Ann Suttles, the Executive Director of a Detroit-based group called BOSS (Black Order of Social Servants). Frances Sadler '72 remembered coming up with the name. According to Suttles, the word "boss" was a popular colloquial expression at the time.

From these initial meetings, the steering committee, composed of members Clara Hayler, Alma Kinney, and Carmen Martinez, mobilized the activities of the Black Organization of Soul Sisters. Lemoine Callender, the Assistant to the Dean of Faculty and Director of Human Resources, acted as an ally and liaison between B.O.S.S. and the Barnard administration.

On February 24, 1969, B.O.S.S. issued a list of ten demands to the Barnard College Administration. These demands included an interdepartmental Afro-American studies major implemented by a committee of students and faculty; flexible and transparent financial aid policies for black students; a targeted nationwide recruitment program driven by black students and working towards increased enrollment of black women at Barnard; lounge and office space in BHR and Plimpton with an eventual guarantee of permanent space in the Student Union Building; selective housing options that would allow black students to live together; student input in the collection of periodicals, books, and records about black culture by the Barnard College Library; reconstruction of the "Special Student Program" geared towards students' cultural, academic, and financial needs; inclusion of soul food in campus food service; and an end to harassment of black students by campus security.

President Peterson's reply, issued at the March 3, 1969 convocation, met with mixed response from students and faculty. Peterson called for further discussion of B.O.S.S.'s demands in "modified town meetings," with a progress report to be delivered by appointed College Representatives after a period of two weeks.

On March 4, 1969, the day following the convocation, B.O.S.S. issued a formal rejection of President Peterson's reply to their demands. Later, B.O.S.S. issued a clarification of its position and invited students and professors to participate in informal dialogues around issues raised by their ten point platform.

B.O.S.S.'s list of demands achieved concrete outcomes within the semester. In Spring 1969, the administration agreed to grant B.O.S.S. provisional office and lounge space in Reid Hall. During the same semester, Barnard announced the appointment of three Black faculty members for the fall of 1969. These included James Cone, Assistant Professor of Religion; Inez Smith Reid, Assistant Professor of Political Science; and Lloyd Delany, Instructor in Psychology. In 1970, the Office of the Dean of Faculty compiled a list entitled, "Courses of Special Interest to Black and Latin Students," most likely prompted by the B.O.S.S. demand for an interdepartmental Afro-American Studies Major. This list comprised courses

at Barnard as well as Columbia College, and it covered the departments of Anthropology, Art History, Economics, Geography and History.

In subsequent years, B.O.S.S. continued to advocate for non-discriminatory housing policy at Barnard. Their correspondence with the Office of Housing drew attention to the experiences of Black and Third World students in the Lottery system, the inadequacy of financial aid for housing, and the continuing need for self-selective housing options for Black and Third World women at Barnard. In March 1974, the New York Board of Regents ruled that Barnard's selective housing options for students of color were in violation of Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act. In response, President Peterson issued a policy ending self-selective housing at Barnard on the basis of race, while affirming continuing options for self-selection for coeducational housing, as well as roommate selection. B.O.S.S. urged President Peterson to appeal the Board of Regents ruling, raising the importance of selective housing for students of color in supporting the recruitment and retention of Black and Third World students at Barnard. In October 1974, following extensive correspondence with B.O.S.S. and members of the Housing Committee, President Peterson formally declined B.O.S.S.'s request to appeal to the Board of Regents, concluding that such an appeal would be "futile." Peterson assured students that Barnard's administration would review and revise other policies and procedures that could possibly discourage black student enrollment.

In 1974, B.O.S.S. changed its name to Barnard's Organization of Black Women (B.O.B.W.).

In 1978, the Brooks Hewitt-Reid Dorm Council challenged B.O.B.W.'s right to maintain an office space in Reid Hall, on the grounds that, as a club occupying space in a residential hall, they had no claim to the space. B.O.B.W.'s response to this challenge cited the space's multivalent role: as a location for cultural workshops, a space for commuters of color to stay overnight, a formal and informal meeting space for Black organizations and individual students, and a site for fostering a sense of community among Black students. In April 1978, the Tripartite Housing Committee decided to allow B.O.B.W. to remain in Reid Hall.

Throughout the years, B.O.S.S. has pressed the administration to address issues, including racism and sexism, that affect students of color at Barnard. In B.O.S.S.'s more recent history, the organization has coordinated campus-wide events such as the Celebration of Black Womanhood.

In 1995, the group's name changed from B.O.B.W. to Black Sisters of Barnard and Columbia (B.S.B.C.). Most recently, in the fall of 2002, the group changed its name to reflect the original: Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters. B.O.S.S. remains an active student organization at Barnard College to this day.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

The records consist of letters, notes, membership rosters, meeting minutes, speeches, notes for speeches, reports, photographs, booklets, pamphlets, brochures, fliers, memorabilia, and newspaper clippings.

Collection Arrangement

This collection is arranged into three series.

Series 1, Administrative, Correspondence, and Publicity Materials, 1968-2013

Series 2, Photographs, 1969-1994

Series 3, Memorabilia, 2012

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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Access

This collection has no restrictions.

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Accruals

No additions are expected.

Acquisition Information

Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters Student Organization.

Processing History

This collection was processed and the finding aid written by Marcia Bassett and Kiran Tahir in February, 2011. Revisions made by Vani Natarajan in December 2011.

Finding aid updated by Hilary Price in June 2015.

Descriptive Rules Used: Finding aid adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Encoding: Machine readable finding aid encoded in EAD 2002.

Finding aid written in English.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Barnard College.

Subject(s)

- African American women
- College Students
- Student activities
- Students--Social life and customs
- Women, Black
- Women--Social conditions

Administrative, Correspondence, and Publicity Materials

Collection Inventory

Series 1. Administrative, Correspondence, and Publicity Materials 1968-2013 2.0 boxes	
	Box
Documents, correspondence, and news clippings, 1968-2007	1
Organizational documents, correspondence, and publicity materials, 1968-2013	2
Series 2. Photographs 1969-1994 , 1 half document box	
	Box
	3
Series 3. Memorabilia 2012 2.0 boxes , cartons	
	Box
Paper identity chain, 2012	4
Hand decorated tote bag, t-shirt, circa 2012	5