

## LIS 640 FINDING AID ASSIGNMENT – STACY TORIAN

**Title of Collection:** Personal Papers of Stacy Lynn Torian, 1994-2012

**Creator:** Stacy Torian of the Torian Home Archives

**Dates:** 1994-2012

**Bulk Dates:** 1994-2007

**Repository Location:** The Torian Home Archives

**Languages:** French and English

**Biographical Abstract:** Stacy Torian (1972- ) is a poet and a native of North Carolina. She received her formal education at Duke University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science and French, a master's degree in Liberal Studies, and graduate certificate in African and African American Studies. In 2001, she won a Gender and Race Research Award from the Duke University Council on Women's Studies and an Exceptional Final Project Award from the Duke University Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) program for her research on gendered conceptions of revolution in Black Arts poetry of the 1960s and 1970s. It was as a graduate student that she published her first poetry volume, *Soul Speak* (2000), which chronicles her experiences as a "black girl, woman, worker, and lover in American society" (from the book cover). Her second book, *Chisel*, an eclectic collection of poems about street encounters, elder relatives, and moments of loss, was published in 2010.

Torian's poems have appeared in the literary journals *Prometheus Black*, *VOICES*, *San Diego Writer's Monthly*, *Stanford Black Arts Quarterly*, and *Transformations*, as well as in the news publications *Real Change* and *The Courier-Times*. From 2000 to 2004 she read her poetry at literary festivals, bookstores, libraries, schools, and cultural centers in North Carolina, California, and Washington State. During the mid-2000's, one of her *Soul Speak* poems, "Life Lessons," was included in the program repertoire of San Diego-based sex educator and youth empowerment activist Theresa Foxx. In 2016, multiple selections from *Soul Speak* were performed by actor Kurt Benrud at the North Carolina Women's Theatre Festival in Wilmington, NC, an event which highlighted the work of her sister, playwright Carol Torian.

In addition to being a poet, Torian has worked as a bookseller, a community college instructor, an administrative assistant, a community news reporter, a language skills assessment specialist, an admissions communications specialist, a volunteer adult literacy tutor, and a volunteer oral historian. Aside from a year spent in Princeton, New Jersey (2006-2007), she has lived in North Carolina continuously since 2004.

**Provenance:** The papers were gathered, arranged, and placed in the Torian Home Archives by Stacy Lynn Torian on March 3, 2017. Before being archived, some of the papers were in a brown paper bag; others were in a manila folder labeled "Poetry Manuscripts." Papers from

both the folder and the bag were combined and arranged as described in the Arrangement section of the finding aid.

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Researchers should use the author's full name (Stacy Lynn Torian) when citing the author's manuscripts and journals.

Journals are closed to public viewing until 10 years after the death of the author.

**Citation:** Torian, Stacy Lynn. (Year, Month, Day of item). [Name of Item]. The Stacy Lynn Torian Papers, 1994-2012, (Box XX, Folder XX), The Torian Home Archives, Durham, NC.

**Scope and Content:** The collection contains 25 poem drafts, two short story drafts, one marked-up copy of a book (*Soul Speak*), and three journals. According to the author, the poem drafts, which are not dated, were most likely written between 1994 and 2007; the short story drafts between 2002 and 2003. Approximate dates have been noted on each draft. The book was published in 2000. The book copy in the collection is the one from which Torian sometimes read while performing at numerous venues between 2000 and 2004. The journal entries, which contain exact dates, were written between 1994 and 2012. There are no journal entries at all for the years 2003 through 2011; as of this writing, the journal entries from those years remain in the author's personal files. French and English entries are mixed throughout the journals in the collection, with the largest number of French entries being in Journal 1, 1994-2000 (all French).

Some of the poem drafts are handwritten; others are typed. In several cases, poems appear on both the front and the back of the page. The book contains post-publication edits and comments. The abundance of markings on the drafts (e.g., edits, numbering, accent marks), and the presence of multiple marked-up copies of certain pieces, suggest an intense and multifaceted revision process.

Torian's arrival on the poetry scene coincided with the rise of slam poetry, a form of poetic expression that often features highly dramatic recitations of poems about social issues, such as racial and gender discrimination. Although Torian does not identify as a slam poet, the subject matter, rhyme patterns, and verse repetition of the *Soul Speak* (2000) poems mirror creative devices of slam poets, as well as those of the Black Arts poets whose work she studied in graduate school. The main themes of the *Soul Speak* poems - financial struggle, womanhood, intimate relationships, and being African American - reflect Torian's upbringing in the rural U.S. South, and are consistent with her lifelong interest in class issues, African American history, and

feminism. The 13 *Chisel* poem drafts consist of biographical portraits of family members and scenes from city life. While the *Chisel* poems are less overtly political than the *Soul Speak* poems and contain fewer rhymes, they reflect Torian's ongoing social consciousness and characteristic rhythm.

The journals, as noted above, contain entries in both French and English. They document Torian's travels throughout the United States, her work experiences, her financial struggles, her professional goals, and her creative aspirations.

**Arrangement:** The papers arrived unordered with multiple drafts of the same poems scattered throughout the stack. To provide some sense of the author's creative process and the editorial progression of each poem, the papers have been reordered so that multiple drafts of the same poem are grouped together in chronological order (earliest draft first).

Series 1: Creative Manuscripts, 1994-2007 (all dates listed are approximate)

Box 1: Manuscripts, 1994-2000

Folder 1, *Soul Speak* poem drafts (12 drafts), 1994-2000

One draft, titled "Popular," includes a handwritten note from the author's sister, playwright Carol Torian.

Folder 2, *Soul Speak* (marked-up book), 2000

Box 2: Manuscripts, 2002-2007

Folder 1, *Chisel* poem drafts (13 drafts), 2002-2007

Folder 2, "Correo" (unpublished short story), two drafts, 2002-2003

Series 2: Journals, 1994-2012

Box 1: Journal 1, 1994-2000 (red cover; entries in French)

Topics: Financial struggles, career aspirations, and the editing and publication of *Soul Speak*

Box 2: Journal 2, 2001-2002 (beige leaf cover; entries in English)

Topics: Cross-country travels, jobhunting, and life in San Diego. Includes reflections on the 09/11 World Trade Center bombing, which occurred shortly after Torian's arrival in San Diego.

Box 3: Journal 3, June-December, 2012 (light blue cover; entries in French and in English)

Topics: Day-to-day work and leisure activities.