Guide to the James Alfred Smith Scrapbooks

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Guide to the James Alfred Smith Scrapbooks

Collection number: MS 77

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Descriptive Summary

Title: James Alfred Smith scrapbooks
Dates: 1961-1983
Collection number: MS 77
Creator: Smith, J. Alfred (James Alfred)
Collection Size: 1 linear foot (1 box)
Repository: African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, Calif.)
Oakland, CA 94612

Abstract: The James Alfred Smith papers consists of two scrapbooks which document Smith's career between 1961 and 1983. They consist primarily of clippings relating to Smith's appointments and activities, his participation in conferences, his publications, and the history of Allen Temple Baptist Church during the seventies. In addition, they contain programs from services and events, announcements for speeches given by Smith and for special events, and correspondence relating to his teaching, pastoral, and community activities.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
No access restrictions. Collection is open to the public.

Access Restrictions
Materials are for use in-library only, non-circulating.

Publication Rights
Permission to publish from the James Alfred Smith Scrapbooks must be obtained from the African American Museum & Library at Oakland.

Preferred Citation
James Alfred Smith scrapbooks, MS 77, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

Acquisition Information
Scrapbooks were donated to the East Bay Negro Historical Society.

Processing Information

Biography / Administrative History
James Alfred Smith was born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1931 and graduated from R. T. Coles High School in 1948. He attended the Western Baptist College of Kansas City, where he received a B.S. in education in 1952. After graduation, he began work on his Bachelors of Divinity and Th.M. degrees at the School of Religion at the University of Missouri at Columbia. His first assignments as a minister included a Baptist church in Huntsville, Missouri and the Second Baptist Church of Columbia, Missouri. He also worked briefly as principal of Lincoln Elementary School in Keytesville, Missouri. Smith moved to California in 1960 to assume the post of Field Secretary and Missionary for the General Baptist Association of Northern California. To enhance his education, he continued his studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley and
at the American Baptist Seminary of the West in El Cerrito. In 1963, Smith and his wife, Joanna, and five children moved to Dallas, Texas, where Smith served as Vice-President of Development and Assistant to the President of Bishop College. Two years later, Smith resigned from this post to return to California and re-join the Baptist Association of Northern California as Minister of Christian Community Witness. He and his family lived in Richmond and attended McGee Ave. Baptist Church in Berkeley. This new position enabled Smith to pursue his interest in community service and to become involved with many charitable organizations in the East Bay. He developed tutorial programs for African Americans unable to finish school, mounted campaigns to prevent school drop-outs, set-up counseling programs for families, and participated in civic action against housing discrimination and segregation.

In December 1968, Smith accepted new responsibilities as a member of the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board and worked to upgrade educational, salary, and pension standards for church employees. He was able to return to his efforts in pioneering inner-city programs for youths and for African-Americans upon his installation as minister of Allen Temple Baptist Church in East Oakland. After his formal installation as pastor in February 1971, Smith began developing programs to combat poverty, racism, and delinquency in Oakland and inspired members of his congregation to become more active in community affairs. He joined many different civic organizations, including the Racial and Cultural Relations Commission, the Alameda-Contra Costa Community Foundation, the East Bay Conference on Religion and Race, the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance of the East Bay, United Clergy of East Oakland, and National Black Churchmen. Through his membership in these organizations, as well as the programs of his church, Smith sought to address racism in the community and within the Christian religion and also inspired his people to see how the African American church could help combat the problems of the African American community.

As a result of his efforts, Allen Temple Baptist Church became a leading African American church and even became the object of controversy within the Oakland community. In 1980, the church was firebombed for its efforts to build coalitions with other minority groups. Smith also received death threats in 1981 when he mounted a campaign to combat drug dealing in East Oakland. Overall, however, the church received a great deal of warm recognition for its programs. In 1980, Allen Temple Baptist won the Church of the Year Award from the Oakland Branch of the NAACP. Smith was also honored with election to Who's Who in Black America and cited as Humanitarian of the Year by the Easter Seal Society.

Smith also made many contributions as an educator. He accepted a position as adjunct professor of preaching at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley in 1975. In addition, he served on the Board of Trustees of the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School and Seminary of the West and became Acting Dean of the seminary in 1977. His publications also received praise and included Thus by Faith, a history of Allen Temple Baptist Church; Don't Be Squeezed into the World's Mold: In the Name of Our Elder Brother, a volume of prayers; and Outstanding Black Sermons. In recognition of his scholastic achievements, he received an honorary doctorate of laws degree from the Inter-Baptist Theological Center of Houston.

Scope and Content of Collection
The James Alfred Smith papers consist of two scrapbooks which document Smith's career between 1961 and 1983. They consist primarily of clippings relating to Smith's appointments and activities, his participation in conferences, his publications, and the history of Allen Temple Baptist Church during the seventies. In addition, they contain programs from services and events, announcements for speeches given by Smith and for special events, and correspondence relating to his teaching, pastoral, and community activities.

His initial training and work in Missouri are not documented. The scrapbooks begin with his appointment as Field Secretary and Missionary of the General Baptist Association of Northern California in 1960 and end with his campaign for the Oakland School Board in 1983. They document his community involvement through programs and clippings relating his appointments to and actions on various organizational boards. The papers also reveal the concerns which guided his ministry: inner-city programming, education for youth, and the problems of racism in both the community at large and within the Christian religion. Examples of his views on various issues affecting the church and the community are present in the form of articles he published in bulletins and newspapers. His contributions as pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church are highlighted in news articles and letters of appreciation included within the papers.

Arrangement
Series I. Scrapbooks

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.
Smith, J. Alfred (James Alfred).
African American Baptists -- California – Oakland.
African American churches -- California – Oakland.
Oakland (Calif.) -- Church history.
Allen Temple Street Baptist Church (Oakland, Calif.).

Other Finding Aids
James Alfred Smith, Sr. papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

Box 1

Scrapbooks

- Physical Description: 2 scrapbooks
- Series Scope and Content Summary
  Includes two scrapbooks with newspaper clippings documenting his participation in conferences, publications, appointments, the history of Allen Temple Baptist Church, announcements for speeches, special events and correspondence relating to his teaching, pastoral, and community activities.
- Arrangement
  Arranged chronologically.