Guide to the Lionel J. Wilson Collection

Collection number: MS 134

African American Museum & Library at Oakland
Oakland, California

Processed by:
Sean Heyliger

Date Completed:
02/21/2014

Encoded by:
Sean Heyliger

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Lionel J. Wilson collection
Dates: 1944-1998
Collection number: MS 134
Collector: East Bay Negro Historical Society
Collection Size: .25 linear feet (1 box)
Repository: African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, Calif.)
Oakland, CA 94612

Abstract: The Lionel J. Collection consists of newspaper clippings, political campaign flyers, biographical sketches, photographs, and programs documenting the political career of Oakland’s first black mayor Lionel J. Wilson. The collection is organized into five series: biographical material, programs, photographs, political flyers, and newspaper clippings. The bulk of the collection is newspaper clippings on Wilson’s political career, and also includes photographs of the Oakland City Council and various mayoral events, political flyers from Wilson’s mayoral campaigns in 1977 and 1981, biographical sketches, and programs from mayoral events including the mayor’s annual prayer breakfast and various banquets honoring Wilson.

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 Lionel J. Wilson collection must be obtained from the African American Museum & Library at Oakland.

Preferred Citation
Lionel J. Wilson collection, MS 134, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

Processing Information
Processed by Sean Heyliger, 02/21/2014.

Biography / Administrative History
Lawyer, judge, and politician Lionel J. Wilson (1915-1998) was born on March 14, 1915 in New Orleans, Louisiana the eldest son of Julius J. and Louise Barrios Wilson. At the age of three, he moved with the Wilson family to Oakland, California where he attended Clawson Elementary School and graduated from McClymonds High School in 1932. After graduating from the University of California Berkeley in 1939 with a degree in economics, he played semi-professional baseball for four years as a pitcher for the Oakland Larks. In 1943, he left baseball and enlisted in the United States Army and served in combat duty in Europe for 22 months during World War II eventually reaching the rank of first sergeant.
He enrolled in the University of California’s Hastings School of Law following the war earning a J.D. in 1949 and practicing law in Oakland until Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr. appointed him to the Oakland-Piedmont Municipal Court in 1960 making him the first African American judge in Alameda County. He was promoted in 1964 to the Alameda County Superior Court and became its presiding judge in 1973. Wilson’s political career began with his unsuccessful bid for the Berkeley City Council in 1953 and 1955. In 1977, he was elected as Oakland’s first African American mayor and was successfully reelected to the office in 1981 and 1985. During his term as Oakland’s mayor, he initiated a downtown building boom that brought over 1$ billion in development projects and an unsuccessful bid to return the Los Angeles Raiders back to Oakland. Wilson was also active in a number of civic and professional organizations. He served as president and a member of the board of directors of the New Oakland Committee of the National Urban Coalition, Oakland Economic Development Council, Men of Tomorrow, Inc., Charles Houston Law Club, Oakland and Berkeley branches of the N.A.A.C.P., and served as chairman of Oakland’s anti-poverty board and on-the-job training program. He was also an active member of the Executive Committee of the Criminal Courts Bar Association of Alameda County, Alameda County Committee on Drug Abuse, Alameda County Mental Health Association, and the Alameda County Council on Alcoholism.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The Lionel J. Collection consists of newspaper clippings, political campaign flyers, biographical sketches, photographs, and programs documenting the political career of Oakland’s first black mayor Lionel J. Wilson. The collection is organized into five series: biographical material, programs, photographs, political flyers, and newspaper clippings. The bulk of the collection is newspaper clippings on Wilson’s political career, and also includes photographs of the Oakland City Council and various mayoral events, political flyers from Wilson’s mayoral campaigns in 1977 and 1981, biographical sketches, and programs from mayoral events including the mayor’s annual prayer breakfast and various banquets honoring Wilson.

**Arrangement**

Series I. Biographical material Series II. Programs Series III. Photographs Series IV. Political flyers Series V. Newspaper clippings

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Oakland (Calif.). Mayor
Oakland (Calif.)--Politics and government.

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**Biographical material**

**Physical Description:** 3 folders

**Series Scope and Content Summary**

Includes two biographical sketches of Lionel J. Wilson, an oral history interview, and a plaque presented to Wilson by Assemblywoman Barbara Lee.

**Arrangement**

Arranged by format.

**Box 1:1**

“Biographical information - Judge Lionel J. Wilson” undated

**Box 1:1**

“Biography of Mayor Lionel J. Wilson” undated

**Box 1:2**

Lionel Wilson: athlete, judge, Oakland mayor 1995

**Box 1:3**

The W. Byron Rumford Sr. award for political leadership presented to Lionel J. Wilson 1993

**Box 1:4**

**Political flyers 1977,1981**

**Physical Description:** 1 folder

**Series Scope and Content Summary**


**Arrangement**

Arranged by format.
Photographs

Physical Description: 1 folder
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes five photographs of assorted City of Oakland mayoral functions and a group photograph of Mayor Lionel Wilson and the City of Oakland City Council.

Box 1:5
Five men and women standing on stage [001] circa 1970s
Box 1:5
Man and woman looking at floral bouquet on banquet table, reverse: 'at mayor Wilson's circa 1970s
Box 1:5
Group photograph of men and women attending reception [003] circa 1970s
Box 1:5
Group photograph of Mayor Lionel Wilson and Oakland City Council [004] circa 1980s
Box 1:5
Lionel Wilson standing with group of school children [005] circa 1980s

Programs

Physical Description: 1 folder
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes programs and invitations for assorted mayoral functions and banquets honoring Lionel J. Wilson.
Arrangement
Arranged by format.

Box 1:6
Testimonial dinner honoring Judge Lionel Wilson 1976
Box 1:6
A celebration of life and appreciation for former Oakland mayor honorable Lionel J. Wilson 1998
Box 1:6
The mayor's fifth annual prayer breakfast 1979
Box 1:6
The mayor's sixth annual prayer breakfast 1980
Box 1:6
Oak Center Cultural House dinner with honorable judge Lionel Wilson 1975
Box 1:6
Swearing-in ceremony for Judge Lionel J. Wilson, mayor-elect, Oakland 1977
Box 1:6
Dedication ceremonies for new Goring Plaza and public improvements in the San Pablo neighborhood commercial revitalization area 1983
Box 1:6
Testimonial banquet in honor of Judge Lionel J. Wilson 1960

Newspaper clippings

Physical Description: 2 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
Includes assorted newspaper clippings related to the life and career of Lionel J. Wilson.
Arrangement
Arranged by format.