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## Guide to the Marcus A. Foster Collection

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## Guide to the Marcus A. Foster Collection

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Oakland, California

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John Hickman

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Marcus A. Foster Collection

**Dates:** 1941-1975 (bulk 1968-1974)

**Collection number:** MS 149

**Creator:** Marcus A. Foster Education Institute

**Collection Size:** 5.5 linear feet (1 box + 2 oversized boxes)

**Repository:** African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, Calif.)  
Oakland, CA 94612

**Abstract:** The Marcus A. Foster was a progressive, innovative educator who rose to national prominence as the first African-American superintendent of schools in Oakland, California. The collection spans the years 1941-1975, and includes administrative documents, professional certifications, printed materials, photographs, newspaper articles and ceremonial attire, with the bulk of the material pertaining to the years 1968-1974.

**Languages:** Languages represented in the collection: English

### Access

No access restrictions to the Marcus Foster Collection. Collection is open to the public.

### Access Restrictions

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

### Publication Rights

Permission to publish must be obtained from the African American Museum & Library at Oakland.

### Preferred Citation

Marcus A. Foster Collection, MS149, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

### Acquisition Information

Collection donated to the African American Museum & Library at Oakland by the Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute.

### Processing Information

Processed by John Hickman, April 29th, 2014. Finding aid updated to add OM box numbers by Sean Heyliger on April 21, 2017.

### Biography / Administrative History

Educator Dr. Marcus A. Foster (1923-1973) was born in Athens, Georgia in 1923, the youngest of 5 children. His family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when he was 3 years old. There he attended Philadelphia public schools, graduating from South Philadelphia High School in 1941. He earned degrees from Cheyney State College, Lincoln University, St. Joseph's College and the University of Pennsylvania, where he earned his doctorate in 1971.

Dr. Foster began his career as principal of Simon Gratz High School in Philadelphia, and later became Associate Superintendent of Schools in Philadelphia where he was in charge of community relations. Dr. Foster moved to Oakland, California in 1970, and became Oakland's first African-American superintendent that same year. He had a strong belief in community involvement, and as superintendent he implemented a Master Plan Citizen's Committee and decentralized the

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Oakland Public School system by dividing the city into 3 regions. In 1973, he founded the Oakland Education Institute, whose purpose was to raise discretionary funds to promote excellence in Oakland schools. After his death the institute was renamed the Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute in his honor. Dr. Foster was assassinated November 6, 1973 by members of the Symbionese Liberation Army following an evening meeting of the Oakland School Board.

Through his life Dr. Foster rose to national prominence as a progressive, innovative educator, who was known as a leader who challenged entrenched educational principles and displayed great ability in developing effective solutions by getting people of diverse interests to work together for the benefit of the children he served.

#### **Scope and Content of Collection**

The Marcus A. Foster collection spans the years 1941-1975, and includes administrative documents, professional certifications, printed materials, photographs, newspaper articles and ceremonial attire, with the bulk of the material pertaining to the years 1968-1974.

The collection is organized into four series: 1) School Administration documents including a 1974 report of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, an earthquake safety construction program report, cost estimate for classroom construction and a 1974 status report on the quake-safe schools program. 2) A group of black and white photographs showing the site of the fatal attack on Dr. Foster, the OPS administration building, an OPS security vehicle, an unknown apartment building and a professional portrait of Dr. Foster. 3) Printed Materials including the soft-cover book "Dr. Marcus A. Foster, A Man For All People", a set of photocopied newspaper articles pertaining to Dr. Foster's life and a set of miscellaneous publications, including two doctoral dissertations, pertaining to Dr. Foster's accomplishments and life. 4) Plaques and Awards presented to Dr. Foster including an Award of Merit from Simon Gratz High School, various professional certificates, posthumous awards and resolutions from the State of California legislature honoring his many achievements. 5) Ceremonial attire worn by Dr. Foster including graduation gowns and cowls.

#### **Arrangement**

Series I. Biographic Materials Series II. Photographs Series III. Printed material Series IV. Awards Series V. Clothing

#### **Indexing Terms**

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

Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute (Oakland, Calif).

Public schools--California--Oakland.

African American educators.

Oakland (Calif.)--History.

Philadelphia (Pa.)--History--20th century.

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#### **Biographical material**

**Physical Description:** 2 folders

##### **Series Scope and Content Summary**

The series contains documents covering Dr. Foster's resume, brief biography, education credentials and awards.

##### **Arrangement**

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

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#### **Resumes and Biographies**

##### **Subseries Scope and Content Summary**

Contains a resume and brief biography for Marcus A. Foster.

##### **Arrangement**

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

Box 1:1

**Curriculum Vitae for Dr. Marcus A. Foster undated**

Box 1:1

**Brief biography for Marcus A. Foster, author unknown undated**

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### Education credentials

- Box 1:1 **Pennsylvania Department of Education Professional Certificate updated**  
Box 1:1 **California Board of Education General Administration Credential 1970**  
Box 1:1 **California Board of Education General Elementary Credential 1970**  
Box 1:1 **California Board of Education General Secondary Credential 1970**  
Box 1:1 **State of California General School Services Credential 1973**  
Box 1:1 **State of California General Teaching Credential, Elementary 1973**  
Box 1:1 **State of California General Teaching Credential, Secondary 1973**

Box 1:1

### Resolution presenting the Senate of Pennsylvania Philadelphia award 1969

#### Educational activities

##### Series Scope and Content Summary

The series contains documents of Dr. Foster's activities relating to committees of the Oakland Public Schools District, and classroom construction.

##### Arrangement

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

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### Committees

#### Subseries Scope and Content Summary

The series covers activities with committees of the Oakland Unified School District relating to earthquake safety, and buildings and grounds.

#### Arrangement

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

Box 1:1

Box 1:1

- Oakland Public Schools report of the Buildings and Grounds Committee 1974**  
**Oakland Unified School District, Marcus A. Foster Earthquake Safety Construction Program, Report to the Board of Education by Robert Blackburn, Acting Superintendent, Status report on quake-safe schools program 1974**

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### Construction

#### Subseries Scope and Content Summary

Contains site surveys of OPS school buildings and a cost estimate for a typical classroom.

#### Arrangement

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

Box 1:1

Box 1:1

- Cost estimate; "Comparative Costs of Typical 24' x 36' Classroom" 1974**  
**Site surveys for various existing school buildings [16 total], 1974**

#### Photographs

##### Series Scope and Content Summary

The series contains black and white photographs of the Oakland Public Schools Administration building, photo negatives related to the black and white photographs, and a portrait of Marcus A. Foster.

##### Arrangement

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

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### School Facilities

- Oakland Public Schools Administration Building at 1025 Second Ave., Oakland, California. [site of Marcus Foster assassination]**

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Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building, [001] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [002] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [003] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [004] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [005] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [006] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [007] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [008] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [009] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [010] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [011] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [012] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Site of Marcus Foster Assassination behind OPS Administration Building [013] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [014] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [015] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [016] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [017] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [018] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [019] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [020] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [021] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [022] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [023] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [024] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [025] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [026] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [027] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [028] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Building entry at OPS Administration Building [029] circa 1970's</b>
	<b>Security Division Vehicle at Oakland Public Schools Administration Building, 1025 Second Ave</b>
Box 1:2	<b>OPS Security Division Vehicle [030] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>OPS Security Division Vehicle [031] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>OPS Security Division Vehicle [032] circa 1970's</b>
	<b>Assorted Photos</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Apartment building at 1621 (street unknown) [006] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Apartment building at 1621 (street unknown) [007] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Apartment building at 1621 (street unknown) [034] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Apartment building at 1621 (street unknown) [035] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Apartment building at 1621 (street unknown) [036] circa 1970's</b>
Box 1:2	<b>Photo Negatives: Negatives for school facility, security vehicle and assorted photos series [some negatives do not have corresponding photos] circa 1970's</b>

**Portrait of Marcus Foster**

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**Printed material****Series Scope and Content Summary**

Contains books, newspaper articles and miscellaneous publications relating to Marcus A. Foster, his life and accomplishments.

**Arrangement**

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

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**Books****Subseries Scope and Content Summary**

Contains books written about the life of Marcus A. Foster.

**Arrangement**

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

Box 1:3

**Softcover Book; Dr. Marcus A. Foster, A Man For All People,[ 3 copies] 1974**

Box 1:3

**Hallum, Rosemary, and Albertine Foster. Dr. Marcus A. Foster: A Man for All People 1974**

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**Newspaper articles****Subseries Scope and Content Summary**

Contains newspaper articles published about Marcus A. Foster during his tenure as Superintendent of Oakland Public Schools, his assassination and his legacy.

**Arrangement**

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

Box 1:4

**"Business will serve as classroom for new school"[photocopy], Oakland Tribune> 1972**

Box 1:4

**"Dr. Marcus A. Foster fatally wounded", Berkeley Post 1973**

Box 1:4

**"I.D. cards for students urged" (photocopy), Oakland Tribune 1974**

Box 1:4

**"25 Years later, Foster remains education hero", Oakland Tribune 1998**

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**Miscellaneous Publications****Subseries Scope and Content Summary**

Contains a variety of publications, primarily posthumous, regarding Marcus A. Foster's life and achievements in education.

**Arrangement**

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

Box 1:4

**Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute 2003-2004 annual report undated**

Box 1:4

**Bethel Baptist Church's 13th annual scholarship awards program 1974**

Box 1:4

**Simon Gratz High School memo 1969**

Box 1:4

**Community memorial services program for Dr. Marcus A. Foster with annotated rough draft of speech by Rev. Kenneth Baumhoff 1973**

Box 1:5

**Foster's Travels: A Twenty Year Adventure in the Philadelphia Schools, author unknown undated**

Box 1:5

**Quotes from Marcus Foster, [2 copies] undated**

Box 1:5

**Listing of accomplishments for Dr. Marcus A. Foster Superintendent of Schools; including community activities, publications, awards, citations, experience, education, professional organizations and activities undated**

Box 1:5

**California State Assembly Memorial Resolution 1974**

Box 1:5

**In Memoriam, handout undated**

Box 1:5

**Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute inaugural dinner program handout, [2 copies] 1974**

Box 1:5

**Oakland Unified School District Superintendent's Bulletin, [2 copies] 1973**

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- Box 1:5 **Poem; *Any Day Now*, Terran Davis 1973**
- Box 1:6 **Collection of posthumous news clippings for Dr. Marcus A. Foster Superintendent of Schools, photocopies undated**
- Box 1:7 **Doctoral Dissertation, *Caught in Crossfire, Marcus Foster and America's Urban Education Crisis, 1941-1973*, by John Palmer Spencer 2002**
- Box 1:8 **Doctoral Dissertation, *Miracle Workers Wanted: Executive Succession and Organizational Change in an Urban School District, An Explanatory Study*, by Gary Yee 1996**

**Awards****Series Scope and Content Summary**

A collection of plaques, certifications, degrees and other commemorative memorabilia awarded to Marcus A. Foster. Also includes a 1941 graduating class photo from South Philadelphia High School.

**Arrangement**

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

- Box OM 40 **Plaque; Liberty Bell Award, Law Day USA (posthumous) undated**
- Box OM 40 **Plaque; Award of Merit, Principal Simon Gratz High School 1969**
- Box OM 40 **Plaque; St. Philip's EV Lutheran Church 1969**
- Box OM 40 **State of California General School Services, General Administration Credential 1973**
- Box OM 40 **State of California General Teaching Credential, Elementary 1973**
- Box OM 40 **State of California General Teaching Credential, Secondary 1973**
- Box OM 40 **California Legislature Resolution 1975**
- Box OM 40 **The Senate, California Legislature Resolution 1974**
- Box 1:1 **State of Pennsylvania Resolution 1969**
- Box 1:1 **Pennsylvania Department of Education Professional Certificate 1969**
- Box 1:1 **Speech presenting Lincoln University honorary degree to Marcus Foster 1972**
- Box OM 40 **Plaque; In Memorium 1973**
- Box OM 40 **South Philadelphia High School Class Photo 1941**

**Clothing****Series Scope and Content Summary**

Assorted robes and ceremonial regalia believed to have been worn by Marcus A. Foster.

**Arrangement**

Items are arranged by subject and by date thereafter.

- Box OM 41 **Assorted robes and ceremonial regalia believed to have been worn by Marcus A. Foster circa 1970s**