Guide to the Benjamin V. Williams Papers

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Guide to the Benjamin V. Williams Papers

Collection number: MS 194

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Benjamin V. Williams papers
Dates: 1957-2012
Collection number: MS 194
Creator: Williams, Benjamin V.
Collection Size: 4 linear feet (8 boxes + 1 oversized box)
Repository: African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, Calif.)
Oakland, CA 94612
Abstract: The Benjamin V. Williams papers consists on correspondence, news reports, audiovisual material, speeches, employment records, photographs, and memorabilia documenting Ben Williams’ long career as a journalist and reporter for KPIX and other news San Francisco Bay news organizations.
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Access
Access to audiovisual material is restricted. See archivist for details.
Access Restrictions
Materials are for use in-library only, non-circulating.
Publication Rights
Permission to publish from the Benjamin V. Williams Papers must be obtained from the African American Museum & Library at Oakland.
Preferred Citation
Benjamin V. Williams papers, MS 194, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.
Acquisition Information
Benjamin V. Williams Papers were donated to the African American Museum & Library at Oakland by Benjamin V. Williams Jr. in July, 2016.
Processing Information
Collection was processed by Sean Heyliger, 2017-02-17.
Biography / Administrative History
Journalist and television reporter Benjamin Vernon Williams (1927-2012) was born on January 25, 1927 in St. Louis, Missouri. He grew up in a working class neighborhood in St. Louis attending Riddick Elementary School and graduated from Charles Sumner High School, the first high school for African Americans west of the Mississippi River, in June, 1945. After graduation, he enlisted in the United States Army working as an administrative assistant for two years. At the time, higher education in Missouri was segregated and African Americans were not able to attend the University of Missouri. Lincoln University, a historically black college in Jefferson City, Missouri, was the only college in Missouri open to African Americans that offered a degree in journalism. He enrolled at Lincoln University in the fall of 1947, majoring in journalism and sociology, before moving back to St. Louis where he split time working at the post office while also working at the St. Louis
Call and the St. Louis Argus as a newspaper reporter.
In 1955, he moved briefly to Los Angeles, California still working at the post office while working at the Los Angeles Sentinel. Two years later he asked for a transfer to the post office in Oakland, California and began working as a reporter first for the Bay Area Daily Record and then at the Sun-Reporter. At the Sun-Reporter, veteran news reporter Thomas Fleming acted as a mentor for the young reporter. His position at the Sun-Reporter was unpaid and Williams enrolled at San Francisco State University, where he continued to take classes in journalism eventually earning his degree in June 1962. He was offered his first paid position as a journalist in 1963, when Gale Cook, city editor at the San Francisco Examiner, offered him a position at the newspaper. When he was hired at the San Francisco Examiner, he was the first African American journalist at the newspaper.

Three years later, Westinghouse Broadcasting, Inc., the parent company of local CBS affiliate KPIX, began to actively recruit and hire African American television reporters. KPIX station manager Lou Simon approached Williams and offered him as position as a television news reporter at the station. After joining KPIX in 1966, he became the first African American television reporter in northern California. While working as a television news reporter at KPIX, he covered stories on the Free Speech Movement on the University of California Berkeley campus, Vietnam War protests, the assassination of Bobby Kennedy at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, California, the Black Panther Party, Symbionese Liberation Army’s kidnapping of Patty Hearst, and the trial of serial killer Juan Corona. In 1977, he was awarded an Area Emmy Award from the San Francisco Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for his exclusive interview with Sara Jane Moore after her attempted assassination of President Gerald Ford in San Francisco, California on September 22, 1975. In 1972, he was promoted to weekend anchorman and in 1975 became Oakland News Bureau Chief. He worked for KPIX for over 25 years until his retirement in 1990. As a television reporter at KPIX, Williams was the recipient of numerous awards in journalism including the San Francisco Press Club Award for the story of a balloonist and a multi-part series “The myth of welfare,” an Edward V. McQuade / Catholic Newsman Association award for his multi-part series on the plight of the elderly, “Old folks at home,” and a Silver Circle inductee in the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Benjamin V. Williams papers consists on correspondence, news reports, audiovisual material, speeches, employment records, photographs, and memorabilia documenting Ben Williams’ long career as a journalist and reporter for KPIX and other news San Francisco Bay news organizations. The papers are organized into six series: I. Biographical material, II. Journalism, III. Audiovisual material, IV. Photographs, V. Assorted printed material, VI. News and political buttons. Biographical material Williams’ resumes as a journalist, speeches delivered to social organizations, and newspaper clippings documenting his career. The journalism series is organized into four subseries – San Francisco Examiner, KPIX, Sara Jane Moore, and Awards. The San Francisco Examiner subseries documents Williams’ early career as a journalist working at the Examiner and the Bay Area Daily Record and includes correspondence from editors and the general public, news story drafts for significant historical events including President John F. Kennedy’s assassination, employment records, and press releases. The KPIX subseries includes Williams’ correspondence, employment records, notebooks covering the Huey Newton trial and Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaign, and press passes during his long career as Oakland news bureau with the television station. The Sara Jane Moore subseries consists mostly of Williams’ correspondence over 30 years with Sara Jane Moore while she was incarcerated in federal prison for attempting to assassination President Gerald Ford. Also included are Williams’ news story drafts and transcripts of his news broadcasts following her arrest. Audiovisual material consists mostly of Williams’ broadcasts as a news reporter for KPIX. Included in the series are Williams’ prison interview with Sara Jane Moore following her arrest, KPIX’s live coverage of Robert Kennedy’s assassination in Los Angeles, California, and recordings of live radio reports following the Symbionese Liberation Army’s kidnapping of Patty Hearst. The photographs series includes 11 photographs documenting William’s career as a journalist at KPIX. Assorted printed material consists of rare newspapers, calendars, magazines, and flyers mostly related to African American in the San Francisco Bay area and includes a funeral program from the memorial services for Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale’s press release on Blaxploitation films, and cartoonist Morrie Turner’s annual Wee Pals calendar and Soul Corner dedicated to William’s career. The news and political button series consists of Williams’ small collection of political and news related buttons which includes KPIX news buttons and political buttons for the campaigns of Jesse Jackson and Joseph Alioto.

Arrangement

Series I. Biographical material Series II. Journalism Series III. Audiovisual material Series III. Photographs Series IV. Assorted printed material Series V. News and Political Buttons

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog. Williams, Benjamin V.
Biographical material

Physical Description: 10 folders + 1 oversized folder

Scope and Content Summary

Biographical material includes Benjamin Williams' resumes, personal correspondence with family and friends, transcript of speeches delivered to local organizations, newspaper clippings related to his career as a journalist and awards and certificates.

Arrangement

Arranged by format and chronologically thereafter.

Box 1:1
Biographical sketches 1990-2010

Box 1:2
Personal correspondence 1959-2012

Box 1:3
Obituary 2012

Writings and speeches

Speeches

Speech delivered to the Berkeley Rotary Club 1980-12-31
“Black History Week” 1983
“Black man in the media” undated
“Men’s day - One nation under god and the media” undated
“Talk for Marsha’s mother” undated

Writings

Ben’s Mail Bag 2003
“A Cuban adventure” 2002-02-15

Newspaper clippings 1967-1981

Certificates

San Francisco State College certificate of meritorious achievement 1969-11-26
San Francisco State University diploma 1963-08-23
Postal transportation service Examiner’s office room 1957-03-22
N.A.A.C.P. El Cerrito Branch commendation of Ben Williams 1973-06-09
Rotary Club certificate of appreciation 1980-12-31
Summer Institute on Law and Ethics in Urban Society at Stanford University 1969-08-22
Boys’ Clubs of America certificate of appreciation 1973-10-28
Niagara Movement Democratic Club certificate 1983-02-12
Next Step Learning Center certificate and photograph undated
National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, San Francisco / Northern California Chapter silver circle award undated
Society to preserve and encourage radio drama, variety and comedy friend of PERDVAC certificate 2000-11-11
Arrested landing aboard the first nuclear powered aircraft carrier U.S.S. Enterprise CVAN-65 1966-06-20
ACLU membership card 2004
California State Legislature assembly resolution KPIX-TV Oakland News Bureau chief Ben Williams 1990-03-07
College Bounders Committee, Inc. National Association for United Services presents outstanding services to education award 1979-04-15
Biographical material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1:10</th>
<th>Broadcast Communication Arts Department School of Creative Arts San Francisco State University present Broadcast Media Award to KPIX-TV “Sara Jane Moore” interview 1977-04-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journalism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong> 3 boxes + 1 oversized folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Series Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journalism series includes Benjamin Williams' employment records, pay stubs, correspondence with editors and viewers, draft news stories, his notebooks covering Huey P. Newton's trial and Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, and various journalism awards presented to Williams. Also included is correspondence between Williams and Sara Jane Moore from prison and transcripts and drafts of Williams' news stories on Moore's attempted assassination of President Gerald Ford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Arrangement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged by news organization and by format thereafter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| San Francisco Examiner / Bay Area Daily Record |
| --- | --- |
| Box 1:11 | Correspondence 1960-1964 |
| Box 1:12 | Newspaper story drafts circa 1960s |
| Box 1:13 | Pay stubs 1963-1964 |
| Box 1:13 | Berkeley Civil Defense Organization press pass circa 1960s |
| Box 1:14 | Notes circa 1960s |
| Box 1:15 | Press releases circa 1960s |

| KPIX 5 |
| --- | --- |
| Box 1:16 | Employment application 1965-09-17 |
| Box 1:17 | Business cards undated |
| | Promotional material |
| Box 1:18 | KPIX 5 Show Slant press release |
| Box 1:18 | Again we're honored brochure circa 1960s |
| Box 1:19 | Talent contract 1972-08-15 |
| | Correspondence |
| Box 1:20 | Internal correspondence 1968-1990 |
| Box 1:21 | General correspondence 1965-1990 |
| Box 1:22 | Pay stubs undated |
| | Artist's sketches |
| Box OM 32:13 | Courtroom sketch of Ben Williams at Huey P. Newton trial 1968-08-13 |
| Box OM 32:13 | Courtroom sketch of Ben Williams at Juan Corona retrial awaiting verdict, Hayward, California 1982 |
| | Reporter's notebooks |
| Box 2:1 | Huey P. Newton trial 1968 |
| Box 2:2 | Jesse Jackson presidential campaign circa 1988 |
| Box 2:3 | News report transcripts 1974-1976, 1981 and undated |
| | Press passes |
| Box 2:4 | San Francisco Papal visit, John Paul II 1987 |
| Box 2:4 | 1984 presidential campaign 1984 |
| Box 2:4 | San Francisco Police Department press pass 1978-1983 |
| Box 2:4 | Oakland Police department press passes 1965-1990 |
| Box 2:4 | Funeral of Huey P. Newton, Allen Temple Baptist Church pass 1989-08-28 |
| Box 2:4 | California Highway Patrol press pass 1972 |
| Box 2:4 | Atlanta Journal-Constitution presidential debates pass undated |

Sara Jane Moore

Guide to the Benjamin V. Williams Papers
Correspondence

Box 2:5
1976-1977

Box 2:6
1978

Box 2:7
1979-1982

Box 2:8
1985

Box 2:9
1987

Box 2:10
2004-2005

Box 3:1
Newspaper story drafts 1975

Box 3:2
News report transcripts 1976

Women’s Reflections, newsletter of the Federal Corrections Institution (Alderson, WV)

Box 3:3
Vol. I, No. 17 1978-12-13

Box 3:3
Vol. II, No. 3 1979-01-17

Awards

Box 4:1
Top Mr. Personality of 1968 donor Texas College Alumni 1968

Box 4:2
Association of Catholic Newsmen Edward V. McQuade Radio-TV award for distinguished programing in the field of social justice, KPIX-TV “Old folks at home 1971

Box 4:3
Ben Williams charter board member Next Step Learning Center 1999-10-13

Box 1977-07-09
Lincoln University Alumni Association San Francisco Bay Area Chapter distinguished service award

Box 4:4

National Association of Black Journalists 1989 journalism award first place sports features for outstanding coverage of the Black condition presented to Ben Williams, KPIX-TV for “Travis Williams” 1989

Box 8

Bay Area Black Media Coalition presents Beverly Ann Johnson award undated

Audiovisual material

Physical Description: 3 boxes

Series Scope and Content Summary

Audiovisual material includes Ben Williams’ news stories for KPIX on the Berkeley riots, Robert Kennedy’s assassination, his interview with Sara Jane Moore, Gerald Ford’s attempted assassin, and various radio news reports on the Symbionese Liberation Army’s kidnapping of Patty Hearst.

Arrangement

Arranged by subject matter.

News stories

Box 5

Dub tape for B. Williams, Cal professor, Umatic tape undated

Corporation for Public Broadcasting Local Television Program Awards show, Moscone/Milk 1978-11-27

Box 5

Jolie (?) DeBewards (?) final project, Umatic tape undated

Box 7


Box 8


Box 7


Box 5

Mt. Diablo fire, KPIX live shot, Ben Williams, Joseph Smith, and Wayne Tiner circa 1977

Box 5

“Hometown hero,” Next Step Learning Center, KPIX Channel 5 2001-05-01

Box 5

News reports on the Symbionese Liberation Army’s kidnapping of Patty Hearst 1974 https://archive.org/details/caolaam_000127

Box 7


Box 7

Baldwin and Kirkpatrick, French and Perseflage undated

Box 7

Oxford and James Baldwin discussing “The case for segregation” undated

Box 7

Integration of University of Mississippi by James Meredith 1962

Box 6

Ben Williams package undated

Box 6

Unlabeled vhs-c tape undated

Box 6

Ben’s retirement #2 1990-03

Box 6

Travis Williams homeless pro football player undated

Box 6

West Oakland schools face cutbacks undated

Box 6

Kids do “Oliver” undated

Box 6

Black Panther Party (partial recording) undated

Box 6

Sara Jane Moore circa 1977

Box 6

Sara Jane Moore (finalized) circa 1977

Box 6

Anti-war march Oakland Induction Center, Bettina Apetheker undated

Box 6

“World’s longest continuous balloon release” 1984

Box 6

Ben Williams undated

Box 6

Hank Schoepp’s case, San Francisco Police Department undated
Audiovisual material

News stories

| Box 6 | Svetlana Ogorodnikova spy case undated |
| Box 6 | Ben Williams retirement party circa 1990s |

Home movies

| Box 5 | Costa Rica artisans 2001 |
| Box 5 | Robbin Island South Africa Capetown undated |
| Box 5 | Caribbean trip 1993 |
| Box 6 | Cuba trip, starts at Museo de Revolution, beach, interview with English teacher, good talk and music undated |

Assorted tapes

| Box 6 | Case Pareto Partners v. Inktomi Corp., OFPD David Brewer, Attorney Joseph Thornhill 1997-10-30 |
| Box 6 | Case: Cardiac v. St. Jude, Depo: Steve Masson, attorney Larry Jarvis 1997-12-11 |
| Box 4 | Unlabeled ¼ reel-to-reel audiotape circa 1960s |

Photographs

Physical Description: 11 photographs

Series Scope and Content Summary

Includes 11 photographs of Ben Williams as a reporter for KPIX.

Arrangement

Arranged by photograph identification number.

| Box OM 32:13 | Reporter Ben Williams interviewing San Francisco mayor John F. Shelley [001] 1965-05-16 |
| Box OM 32:13 | (left-right): Lisa Hobbs, Gale Cook, Bill O'Brien, and Mary Ellen O'Brien having drinks at party [002] 1965-09-11 |
| Box 3:14 | KPIX News (left-right): Rollin Post, Helen Bentley, Ben Williams [003] circa 1960s |
| Box 3:14 | Ben Williams interviewing workers working on Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) tunnel [006] circa 1960s |
| Box 3:14 | Ben Williams and KPIX news crew with employees working on Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) tunnel [007] circa 1960s |
| Box 3:14 | Journalist Tom Fleming sitting in chair [008] 2004-09-11 |
| Box 3:14 | Rosa Parks sitting in chair [009] 1969-12 |
| Box 3:14 | Group photograph of KPIX news team [010] 1983 |
| Box 3:14 | Portrait of Juan Corona [reproduction, three copies][011] undated |

Assorted printed material

Physical Description: 10 folders + 2 oversized folders

Series Scope and Content Summary

Includes assorted newsletters, flyers, calendars, magazines, and newspapers mostly related to African Americans and journalism in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Arrangement

Arranged by format.

| Box 3:4 | Equal opportunity in Oakland: a survey of affirmative action successes & failures / Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal (OCCUR) 1976 |
| Box 3:5 | feed/ back : the journalism report & review for Northern California [two copies] Fall 1976 |
| Box 3:6 | Citations of merit for outstanding performance in journalism / Lincoln University Department of Journalism 1969 |
Box 3:6  the Left Bank / Upstairs Art Association [three copies] 1975-04
Box 3:7  The San Francisco Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences sixth annual Northern California area Emmy awards program 1977-04-23
Box 3:7  Unit-K West U.S.N. mess attendants reunion program 1983
Box 3:7  The 27th annual broadcast industry conference, San Francisco State University 1977-04-24
Box 3:8  Pamoja vol. 2 no. 1 1981-06
Box 3:8  Lions roar newsletter, vol. XL, no. 3 1973-06-13
Box 3:8  Arista: magazine for Oakland Athletic Club members, vol. 1 no. 4 1978-07
Box 3:9  San Francisco Examiner News Call Bulletin style book 1963
Box 3:9  Phone numbers for press, radio, & television San Francisco Bay Area 1985
Box 3:9  National Association of Black Journalists salute to excellence program 1989-08-19
Box 3:10 Sumner High School (St. Louis, MO) reunion 1946-1951 program 1985-08-18
Box 3:11 Arthur Jackson v. Frank M. Jordan petition for writ of mandate, Supreme Court of the State of California 1964-09-04
Box 3:11 Huey P. Newton funeral program 1989-08-28
Box 3:11 Jack LaLanne press packet 2004
Box 3:12 Off camera, newsletter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences San Francisco / Northern California Chapter 2000-10
Box 3:12 Jesse Jackson itinerary February 26-28, 1988 1988-02-26
Box 3:12 Concert honoring National Negro History Week presenting Paul Robeson basso in “An afternoon of music and poetry” with William Duncan Allen, Oakland Auditorium Theatre 1958-02-09
Box 3:12 Press statement from Bobby Seale on “Blaxploitation” 1972-09-27
Box 3:12 Resolution - Union Local 250-A undated
Box 3:12 “Seven relevant issues,” Cedric X 1972-12-07
Box 3:12 William Shockley, Alexander M. Poniatoff Professor of Engineering Science, Stanford University, biographical sketch 1972-06-15
Box 3:12 “Statement by Senator Robert F. Kennedy” 1968-06-04
Box 3:12 The Brief Case, pp. 37-38 1966-01
Box OM 32:14 Bay Area Daily Record, vol. 1 no. 30 1960-12-26
Box OM 32:14 Gary’s political review souvenir edition welcome first National Black Caucus 1972
Box OM 32:14 National Black political agenda presented to the National Black Political Convention, Gary, Indiana 1972-03-11
Box OM 32:14 San Quentin News, vol. XXVI, no. 10 1960-05-12
Box OM 32:14 The Bottom Line: a monthly entertainment & cultural guide, Oakland, CA, vol. 1 no. 5 [two copies] 1992-09
Box OM 32:14 Oakland Metro Reporter, vol. 4, no. 14 1975-03-31
Box OM 32:14 50th anniversary edition celebration The Sun Reporter 1994
Box OM 32:14 The Sun-Reporter, Thomas Courtney Fleming 1907-2006 circa 2006
Box 3:13 Morrie Turner
Box 3:13 Wee Pals the kid power gang presents significant dates in African-American History [two copies] 1997
Box 3:13 African-American Advocate and Wee Pals present the century African-American personalities and events that shaped Black history in America the last 100 years 2000
Box 3:13 Salute to pioneering cartoonists of color 1998
Box 3:13 Soul corner - Ben Williams undated
Box 3:13 Soul corner - Ben Williams undated
News and political buttons

**News and political buttons**

Physical Description: 41 buttons

Series Scope and Content Summary

News-related and political buttons collected by Ben Williams from his time working as a journalist.

Arrangement

Arranged by subject.

**News buttons**

Box 4:5  Channel 5 button undated
Box 4:5  CBS KPIX 5 button undated
Box 4:5  California Black TV Commission member button undated
Box 4:5  Golden Gate Field press button undated
Box 4:5  KPIX 5 Eyewitness News We’re #1 button undated
Box 4:5  Eddie Alexander KRON-TV good luck, everybody button undated

**Political buttons**

Box 4:6  Jesse Jackson ’88 button circa 1988
Box 4:6  Asians and Pacific Islanders for Jesse Jackson ’88 circa 1988
Box 4:6  Jesse Jackson for President in ’88 circa 1988
Box 4:6  Run Jesse run! button circa 1980s
Box 4:6  Win Jesse Win button circa 1980s
Box 4:6  Labor for Jackson ’88 circa 1988
Box 4:6  Democratic National Convention San Francisco July 16-19, 1984 button 1984
Box 4:6  Jackson for president follow the rainbow button 1984
Box 4:6  Latinos for Jesse Jackson ’88 circa 1988
Box 4:6  Jesse Jackson for president in ’84 circa 1984
Box 4:6  Geraldine Ferraro America’s first woman vice pres. button [three copies] circa 1984
Box 4:6  Paul Simon president ’88 button circa 1988
Box 4:6  United labor for Alioto for Governor ’74 circa 1974
Box 4:6  McGovern peace button circa 1972
Box 4:6  Dump Nixon button circa 1970s
Box 4:6  Barack Obama si se puede! ’08 button circa 2008

**Assorted buttons**

Box 4:7  Oakland A’s host of the 1987 All-star game button 1987

Box 4:7  Welcome to Oakland [A’s] button undated

Box 4:7  Soy bilingue bicultural y orgulloso de mi raza button undated

Box 4:7  It’s now baby button undated
Happy 20th anniversary BART’s transbay tube 1974-1994 circa 1994
Box 4:7

I’m #1 why try harder button undated
Box 4:7

Say fromage cheeses from France button undated
Box 4:7

Forty Niners XVI XIX pin circa 1980s
Box 4:7

undated
Box 4:7

undated
Box 4:7

Bike Day bicycle commuter button 1979-10-16
Box 4:7

Numero uno button undated
Box 4:7

United we stand divided we fall F.F.T. button undated
Box 4:7

Card-carrying member of the A.C.L.U. button undated
Box 4:7

California State Fair your memories are here button 1986
Box 4:7

I’m in the left bank button undated
Box 4:7

Racquetball is my game button undated
Box 4:7

Fremont is fantastic button undated
Box 4:7

Te quiero mas que ayer per menos que manana! Villa Allegre button undated
Box 4:7

Welcome home P.O.W.’s button undated
Box 4:7

Statue of liberty pin 1986