



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Isabel Washington Powell collection**

1929-1981

Sc MG 163

Home to Harlem Project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

## Summary

**Creator:** Powell, Isabel Washington, 1908-

**Title:** Isabel Washington Powell collection

**Date:** 1929-1981

**Size:** 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

**Source:** Powell, Isabel Washington, 1982

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark. Finding aid updated by Allison Hughes.

**Abstract:** Isabel Washington Powell (1908-2007) was an actress, teacher, and the first wife of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. The Isabel Washington Powell collection contains news clippings relating to Powell's appearance in the plays *Bamboola* (1929), *Harlem* (1929), and *Singin' the Blues*. Additional clippings refer to her engagement and marriage to Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. There are also several letters deal with her work as a public school teacher, speaker, and Jimmy Carter supporter.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Isabel Washington Powell collection, Sc MG 163, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Separated Materials:**

Photographs transferred to Photographs and Prints Division.

Recordings transferred to Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division.

## Creator History

Isabel Washington Powell (1908-2007) was an actress, teacher, and the first wife of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Born in Savannah, Georgia, she moved to New York City after finishing school and became a dancer, showgirl, and actress, appearing on Broadway and in the 1929 film *St. Louis Blues*. She was

married to Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., from 1933 to 1945, assisting in his election to New York City Council then Congress. After their divorce, she became a teacher for New York City public schools. She divided her time between Harlem and Martha's Vineyard, and died in New York in 2007.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Isabel Washington Powell collection contains news clippings relating to Powell's appearance in the plays *Bamboola* (1929), *Harlem* (1929), and *Singin' the Blues*. Additional clippings refer to her engagement and marriage to Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. There are also several letters deal with her work as a public school teacher, speaker, and Jimmy Carter supporter.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American actresses  
African American women teachers  
African Americans -- Social life and customs  
African Americans in the performing arts

### **Names**

Carter, Jimmy, 1924-  
Powell, Adam Clayton, Jr., 1908-1972  
Powell, Isabel Washington, 1908-