



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

Guide to the

**Lawrence James papers**

1956-1996

Sc MG 579

## Summary

**Creator:** James, Lawrence, 1935-

**Title:** Lawrence James papers

**Date:** 1956-1996

**Size:** 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of Edward Lawrence, Sr., May 1996.

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

**Abstract:** The Lawrence James papers consist of personal and professional correspondence concerning his acting career, 1959-1995; contracts 1966-1994; production and rehearsal schedules; and theater programs, flyers, and news clippings pertaining to performances of *Fences* (1990), *Black Eagles* (1991), *Driving Miss Daisy*, *I'm Not Rappaport* (1990), and *Mr. Ricky Calls a Meeting* (1994), in which James appeared. Files on Buffalo's African American Cultural Center consist of correspondence, reports, news clippings, and programs relating to the Center's services, 1970-1976.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Lawrence James papers, Sc MG 579, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Accessioned by Chandra Buie, May 1996.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

## Creator History

Actor and director Lawrence James (born Edward Lawrence in 1935) is a graduate of the Studio Theater School in Buffalo, New York. While still a student there he appeared in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1963) with Claudia McNeil. Subsequently, he became a member of Buffalo's Studio Arena Theater's

first and only resident acting company. James was a member of the company for over two years, appearing in such productions as *Little Foxes* (1966) with Colleen Dewhurst.

After working at Buffalo's African American Cultural Center's theater for several years as drama instructor, James became the executive director (1968-1976), using his given name of Edward Lawrence. He was a driving force in broadening programs for children and adults at the Center, and focused on supporting and promoting the Black experience to the Black community. He also continued to direct and perform in the theater's productions.

After leaving the Center in 1976, James appeared in several Off-Broadway and regional productions. He spent two years in residence at New York City's Theater for the Forgotten under the CETA Arts Program, which sponsored performances of Shakespeare and the classics in New York City public high schools (1979-1980). His theatrical credits include *The Trial of Dr. Beck* (1981-1980), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1987-1988), *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (1989), and *The Piano Lesson* (1992), with principal roles in *Fences* (1990-1991) and *Driving Miss Daisy* (1990). Lawrence has also appeared in several television dramas and films, including *Malcolm X* (1992), directed by Spike Lee, and *Manhattan* (1979).

## Scope and Content Note

The Lawrence James papers consist of personal and professional correspondence concerning his acting career, 1959-1995; contracts 1966-1994; production and rehearsal schedules; and theater programs, flyers, and news clippings pertaining to performances of *Fences* (1990), *Black Eagles* (1991), *Driving Miss Daisy*, *I'm Not Rappaport* (1990), and *Mr. Ricky Calls a Meeting* (1994), in which James appeared. Files on Buffalo's African American Cultural Center consist of correspondence, reports, news clippings, and programs relating to the Center's services, 1970-1976.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American actors  
African American theater  
African Americans in the performing arts  
Arts administrators  
Theater management

### Names

James, Lawrence, 1935-  
African American Cultural Center (Buffalo, N.Y.)

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