



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

Guide to the

Canada Lee Foundation records

1952-1955

Sc MG 295

Summary

Creator: Canada Lee Foundation

Title: Canada Lee Foundation records

Date: 1952-1955

Size: 3 linear feet

Source: Gift, Pearson, Frances Lee, 1989

Abstract: The Canada Lee Foundation Records consist of organizational records including by-laws, minutes of the board of trustees, a draft of the organizational manual and brochures. Correspondence with Frances Lee and members of the board document the promotion of the objectives of the organization, especially the memorial album privately produced in Canada Lee's honor. There is also material regarding the presentation of awards and scholarships, and questionnaires and correspondence used to encourage summer stock theaters and colleges to accept more African-American students.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Canada Lee Foundation records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Canada Lee was a well known actor who performed on stage, screen, radio and television, with his most important performances being in Richard Wright's "Native Son," "Cry the Beloved Country," and "On Whitman Avenue." Born in New York City in 1907, Lee's diverse career included stints as a jockey, prizefighter, bandleader and violinist.

Following Lee's death in December 1952, his widow, Frances Lee and leaders in entertainment and politics organized the Canada Lee Foundation to preserve his memory and ideals through aid and encouragement to talented youth in the dramatic arts. The Foundation sought to assist in the full integration of African American youth in all phases of the performing arts including writing, producing, directing and acting, both amateur and professional. It provided scholarships to talented young actors

and presented awards of recognition to individuals representing various aspects of the theatrical arts. It also produced a posthumous private edition record album, entitled "The Canada Lee Memorial Record," which included readings and dramatic presentations by Lee. The Foundation, which was not conceived as a permanent body, ceased functioning in the mid 1950's.

Scope and Content Note

The Canada Lee Foundation Records consist of organizational records including by-laws, minutes of the board of trustees, a draft of the organizational manual and brochures. Correspondence with Frances Lee and members of the board document the promotion of the objectives of the organization, especially the memorial album privately produced in Canada Lee's honor. There is also material regarding the presentation of awards and scholarships, and questionnaires and correspondence used to encourage summer stock theaters and colleges to accept more African-American students. The promotion of the Foundation in Los Angeles is documented and includes Lee's address books, which were possibly used to identify potential donors. There are numerous index cards listing names and addresses of individuals. Some financial records are also included in the collection.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American actors
African Americans -- Societies, etc
African Americans in the performing arts
Endowments -- New York (State) -- New York

Titles

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project
Schomburg NEH Blacks on Stage: African-American Theater Arts Collections Project

Names

Canada Lee Foundation
Lee, Canada
Lee, Frances
Pearson, Frances Lee, 1919-