



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
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Guide to the

Lawrence James papers

1956-1996

Sc MG 579

Summary

Creator: James, Lawrence, 1935-

Title: Lawrence James papers

Date: 1956-1996

Size: .6 linear feet (2 archival boxes)

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

Abstract: The Lawrence James Papers consist of personal and professional correspondence concerning his acting career, 1959-1995, contracts 1966-1994, production and rehearsal schedules, 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.

Access: Some collections held by the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. To request access to materials in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, please visit: http://archives.nypl.org/scm/request_access

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Creator History

Actor, 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 theatre'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 films including "Malcolm X" (1992) directed by Spike Lee, Woody Allen's "Manhattan" (1979), and in television dramas.

Scope and Content Note

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Key Terms

Subjects

African American actors
African Americans in the performing arts
Arts administrators

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Theater programs

Names

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