



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

Guide to the

**Clarence Williams III papers**

1965-1989

Sc MG 801

## Summary

**Creator:** Williams, Clarence, III, 1939-

**Title:** Clarence Williams III papers

**Date:** 1965-1989

**Size:** 1.92 linear feet (5 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of the Estate of Gloria Foster, 2008.

**Abstract:** The Clarence Williams III papers consist of personal and professional material related to this actor. The personal matter is small and contains biographical information and correspondence. The professional material focuses on Williams's early career and is comprised of contracts, correspondence, and scripts. Additionally, there are scrapbooks and printed matter.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Clarence Williams III papers, Sc MG 801, 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:**

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

## Creator History

Born on August 21, 1939, Harlem-born African American actor Clarence Williams III was raised by his musical grandparents, the legendary jazz and boogie-woogie composer/pianist Clarence Williams, who wrote such classics as "T'Aint Nobody's Business If I Do" and "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home", and blues singer Eva Taylor. While attending a local YMCA as a teen, Williams became interested in dramatics. After a two-year stint with the U.S. Air Force, he started acting, making a minor New York stage debut with "The Long Dream" in 1960. Subsequent roles followed, in "Walk in Darkness" (1963), "Sarah and the Sax" (1964), and "Doubletalk" (1964). He received a Tony nomination for the three-person play "Slow Dance on the Killing Ground" (1964).

Williams's "big break" arrived with the role of undercover cop Linc Hayes on the highly popular TV cop series *Mod Squad* (1968). Following the series' demise in 1973, he returned to the stage, notably on Broadway opposite Maggie Smith in Tom Stoppard's play "Night and Day" (1979). He also was known for the following roles: Prince's abusive father in *Purple Rain* (1984), a burnt-out political activist in the spoof *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka* (1988), the recurring part of Roger Hardy in the TV series *Twin Peaks* (1990), a good-guy cop in *Deep Cover* (1992), and Wesley Snipes's heroin-addicted dad in *Sugar Hill* (1993), among others. Additionally, he appeared in the films *Reindeer Games* (2000) and *Lee Daniels' The Butler* (2013), and on the television shows *Justified* and *Empire*, to name a few. Clarence was first married to actress Gloria Foster (1967-1984); he was married to his second wife, Kelly, before passing away in June 2021.

## Scope and Content Note

The Clarence Williams III papers consist of personal and professional material related to this actor. The personal matter is small and contains biographical information and correspondence. The professional material focuses on Williams's early career and is comprised of contracts, correspondence, and scripts. Additionally, there are scrapbooks and printed matter.

**Arrangement:** Arranged into 3 series: (1) Personal; (2) Professional; and (3) Printed matter and scrapbooks.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American actors  
African Americans in the motion picture industry  
African Americans in the performing arts -- United States

### Names

Williams, Clarence, III, 1939-

## Container List

### Personal 1967-1981

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical information
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence 1970-1981
- b. 1 f. 3 "Portrait of an Artist (in Black and White and Color)" 1967  
Synopsis of proposed special on Diahann Carroll written by Williams.
- b. 1 f. 4 Henry Street School graduation program 1980 June  
Williams was the guest speaker.  
5th Annual Tor Awards 1980  
Williams was nominated, and won, the award for best actor for *Suspenders*.
- b. 1 f. 5 Program
- b. 5 f. 1 Award
- b. 1 f. 6 Memorabilia  
Mostly includes clippings of photographs of Williams.
- b. 1 f. 7 Miscellaneous
- b. 5 f. 1 Includes poems, programs for other events, sheet music, and a hand-drawn portrait of Williams (in box 5).

### Professional 1965-1989

This series mostly consists of material related to *The Mod Squad* and playscripts. However, there is also a small amount of correspondence and two contracts. *The Mod Squad* subseries includes contracts, correspondence, interviews, and fan mail. The Scripts subseries is mostly comprised of playscripts for which Williams had a role. Some of these files also contain reviews, correspondence, and programs.

Arranged into 4 subseries: (1) *The Mod Squad*; (2) Correspondence; (3) Contracts; and (4) Scripts.

#### *The Mod Squad*

- b. 1 f. 8 Contracts 1967-1972
- b. 1 f. 9 Correspondence 1968-1982
- b. 1 f. 10 Interviews 1970-1971
- b. 1 f. 11 Staff and crew list 1968-1979
- b. 5 f. 2 Advertisements 1968

#### Correspondence

- b. 1 f. 12 Fan mail 1966-1982
- b. 1 f. 13 Kamp, Irene 1965-1966
- b. 1 f. 14 Blake, Eubie 1979-1989
  - b. 5 f. 1 Includes handwritten sheet music by Blake in box 5.
- b. 1 f. 15 General 1965-1981

#### Contracts

- b. 1 f. 16 "Coriolanus and Julius Caesar", Actors' Equity Association 1978
- b. 1 f. 17 William Morris Agency, Inc 1979

Professional (cont.)

Scripts

All of the scripts are playscripts, unless otherwise noted.

Arranged chronologically.

- b. 1 f. 18 Caldwell, Ben and Woodie King, Jr. "Who the...Is Frank Willis?" (teleplay outline) undated
- b. 2 f. 1 Kamp, Irene. "The Great Indoors" 1965
- b. 2 f. 2-4 Hanley, Williams. "Slow Dance on the Killing Ground" ca. 1965  
Includes two scripts, one of which is annotated and missing pages, and programs.
- b. 2 f. 5 Bin Hassan, Umar. "Suspenders" 1979  
Includes programs, reviews, and correspondence.
- b. 2 f. 6 Keefe, Barrie. "Sus" 1979
- b. 2 f. 7 Picardie, Michael. "Shades of Brown" 1979
- b. 2 f. 8-9 Stoppard, Tom. "Night and Day" 1979-1980  
Includes script, reviews, program, and fan mail.
- b. 3 f. 1 Reed, Ishmael. "Hell Hath No Fury" ca. 1980
- b. 3 f. 2 Robinson, Matt. "Keyboard" ca. 1981
- b. 3 f. 3 Holder, Laurence. "Dreams Deferred" 1981
- b. 3 f. 4 "Touch and Go" synopsis undated  
Author unknown.  
*"The Furnished Room" (dramatized by David Ambrose), segment of Great Mysteries hosted by Orson Welles* 1973  
Segment based on O'Henry's short story of the same name.
- b. 3 f. 5 Correspondence and publicity material
- b. 5 f. 1 Script
- b. 3 f. 6 Slang terms used by inmates from San Quentin undated  
Most likely used by Williams as research for a role.
- b. 3 f. 7 Untitled screenplay, unknown author 1979

Printed matter and scrapbooks 1965-1974

- b. 3 f. 8-10 Clippings
  - b. 3-4 Articles 1965-1974  
Includes various copies of *TV Guide*, of which four covers are mounted on plaques (two are in box 3); *Jet*; *New York Magazine*; and other magazines with articles about Williams and/or *The Mod Squad*.
  - b. 5 Scrapbooks  
Includes 2 scrapbooks, one about Williams and the other about Black actors and actresses. The latter scrapbook was sent by fans of Williams and Gloria Foster.