

REFERENCE CODE: AkAMH

REPOSITORY NAME:

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Guide prepared by: Julie Varee, Community Outreach Archivist

TITLE: Cal Williams Collection

COLLECTION NUMBER: B2022.002

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Dates: 1951 - 2022

Extent: 3 boxes

Language and Scripts: The collection is in English.

Name of creator(s): Cal Williams

Administrative/Biographical History:

Community activist Cal Williams was born on November 30, 1941, in Monroe, Louisiana. Seven days after his birth, Pearl Harbor was attacked, and Williams' father left to fight in the war. Williams' upbringing was left to his mother, who worked in a factory, and his paternal grandmother, a house cleaner.

Williams' mother and grandmother sang at home and at the Baptist church the family attended, and they encouraged their son and grandson to entertain company with singing, dancing, and poetry he memorized. Like at home, the nuns who taught Williams at Little Flower Academy from Kindergarten through 12th grade involved him in singing, poetry readings, and performances.

In 1965, Williams moved to Alaska, seeking job opportunities, racial integration, and a better life. In Alaska, Williams practiced political and civic activism, working with the Ad Hoc Democrats organization in Alaska. He was named President of the Alaska Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He also served as a member of the Alaska Delegation at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver,

Colorado. In 2012, Williams ran for the Alaska House of Representatives District 17-serving the Anchorage communities Mountain View, Airport Heights, and Russian Jack. He was defeated by opponent Geran Tarr in the Democratic primary.

He continued performing and spent time in Hollywood. Determined to become a movie star, Williams passed out his head shots and resume on the streets and was in two films before becoming disenchanted with the movie industry and returned to Alaska.

In Anchorage, Williams served as the Filipino choir director at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, and as the Chappie James American Legion Post 34 chaplain in Anchorage. He worked as a photographer and helped to exhibit the collection of the late Alaskan historian George Harper, who documented the history of African Americans in Alaska, including the Black U.S. Army troops who worked on the Alaska Highway. Williams was elected to the board of directors for Anchorage Senior Activity Center in 2016.

Williams was named in the Anchorage Municipal Assembly for his contributions to the growth and strength to the State of Alaska. In 2017, Williams was the recipient of the St. Francis of Assisi Award. Williams has served as Grand Knight of the Council of Knights of Columbus at St. Patrick's Church in Anchorage, as well as in 2018, he served as the District 22 Chair for the Alaska Democratic Party. In 2022, Williams was named Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Scope and Content Description: The collection consists of black & white and color photographs, copies of photographs, papers, legal and other documents, and award plaques.

Arrangement: Arranged as follows:

Box 1

- F1-3: Photographs and copies of photographs
- F4: Newspaper clippings
- F5: Honors and awards
- F6: Performances and events
- F7: Documents written by Cal Williams
- F8: Papers from 2012 run for Alaska State House of Representatives
- F9: Bound book of photographs

Box 2 Wood award plaques (3) Photographs of plaques in accession folder.

Box 3 Oversized photographs (2)

Contents remain in the order and condition in which they arrived.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS AND USE

Restrictions on Access: The collection is open for research use.

Physical Access: Original items and copies in fair to good condition.

Technical Access: No special equipment is needed to access the collection.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use:

The Anchorage Museum is the owner of the materials and makes available reproductions for research, publication, and other uses. Written permission must be obtained from the Anchorage Museum before any reproduction use. The Anchorage Museum does not necessarily hold copyright to all the materials in the collections. In some cases, permission for use may require seeking additional authorization from the copyright owners.

Preferred Citation: Cal Williams Collection, Anchorage Museum, B2022.2

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition and Appraisal Information

This collection was donated by Cal Williams in 2022.

Processing Notes

Sienna Shields, on contract with the Museum, worked with Cal Williams on descriptions of photographs and ephemera.

Separated Materials

B2022.002.31 – oversized photograph of Cal Williams with Alaska State Senator Bettye Davis

B2022.002.40 – oversized photograph [Cal Williams holding maracas and man playing piano]

SUBJECTS

Williams, Cal, 1941-

Davis, Bettye

Kente cloth

Little Flower Academy

Little Flower Catholic School

NAACP Anchorage

Anchorage NAACP

NAACP Anchorage Branch

Peltola, Mary

St. Anthony Catholic Church

The HistoryMakers

HistoryMakers

Detailed Description of Photographs/Copies of photographs and Selected Papers

F1

- .001 – Cal Williams in first grade, Little Flower Catholic School, Monroe, Louisiana, 1946 [school portrait, Cal Williams as a child in denim overalls and sweatshirt] Condition Note: stains on photograph and foam backing
- .002 – Cal Williams (top right) in 1944 with photographs of people he admired: Sam Cook (top left), and Little Richard with Bill Hailey [Cal Williams as a child, sitting on bench and looking down] Condition note: scratch in top left photograph
- .003 – Cal Williams (left) with Lillor Culpepper, his paternal grandmother, in front of the home of Bennie Browning. (Right) Cal Williams's father, Eddie Williams with his mother, Lillor Culpepper, who was in the first graduating class of licensed nurses in Louisiana. [Photocopy of black and white photo on left, of sepia photograph on right]
- .004 – (Left to right) Eddie Williams and his mother, Lillor Culpepper, Cal Williams and his paternal grandmother Lillor Culpepper, Cal Williams and Lillor Culpepper on camping trip with the Bedit Family, also pictured are Eugene Bedit and Nancy Bedit [Cal Williams and paternal grandmother with Bedit children standing in front of camper with canopy] Condition Note: piece torn from top left, small tears at top and upper right of page
- .005 – Cal Williams (first man in second row) with fellow soldiers in Personal Equipment Specialist training for Titan 2 missiles, Chanute Air Force Base, 1964 [Cal and eight other soldiers holding helmets, first row squatting, second row standing, note on bottom right of photograph: Personal 05063A Equip 27 Aug 63. Stamped on back: Instructor's Copy]
- .006 – Cal Williams, seventh from right, at his Kindergarten graduation from Martin Temple Baptist Church and Kindergarten, 1946. Teacher, Miss Lily Florence far right in row behind students, school principal in center [black and white photograph of children in white caps and gowns with tassels, three adults behind them, standing in front of door to brick schoolhouse. Handwritten note on back: Calvin Williams First school pitcher (sic) 5 years old]
- .007 – Cal Williams, Little Flower Academy, 1959 [Copy of photograph of Williams in bow tie, cap, and gown. Handwritten note on back: 1959 Little Flower Academy Graduation]
- .008.1 – Little Flower Academy seventh and eighth grade graduating class, 1955 [Four rows of students in caps and gowns, Cal Williams, second from left in first row of male students, Franciscan priests in belted robes on either side of first row, Father Ardwin Hillard on right side]
- .008.2 – (Photograph on reverse side of .8A) Little Flower Academy 12th grade graduating class, 1959, Cal Williams fourth from left in first row on male students, Father Ardwin Hillard to left of students in belted robe, Sister Mary Consuela in habit to right of students [four rows of students in caps and gowns]
- .009 – Reunion of Little Flower Academy Class of 1959, Left to right: Cal Williams, Hattie Fletcher, Patricia Lewis John, Lerner Rae Gordon, Corene Johnson, Darlene (Williams) Watson, Bernice Allen. [Cal Williams and high school classmates in yellow t-shirts with aqua lanyards.
- .010— Handwritten note on back of photograph: School Reunion 2019, Class of 1959 Little Flower Academy]

.011 – Top: Christmas card to Cal Williams from Sister Mary Consuela, Bottom: Cal Williams, 1944 [greeting card with angel in white robe, black and white photo of Cal Williams as a child]
.012 – Cal Williams demonstrating against ExxonMobil in front of the company’s corporate office in Anchorage, 1989 [Cal Williams wearing white sheet with black “oil” stains, Handwritten note on back of photograph: 1989 Valdez Oil Spill]

F2

.013A, B, C – Cal Williams’s headshots, Hollywood, California, 1971-1975 [black and white photographs of Cal Williams, at bottom: contact information about Cal Williams’s manager, Ernestine McClendon of Ernestine McClendon Enterprises Inc.]
.014 – Alaska Governor Tony Knowles with Cal Williams, 1994 [Color photograph autographed “Cal, Thanks for your public service, Tony Knowles” Handwritten on back: 1994]
.015 – Cal Williams when he was President of NAACP Anchorage, 1968 [Cal Williams smoking a cigarette, wearing a dashiki, Condition note: photograph torn near Cal Williams’s lips, handwritten note on back: 1968 President of Anchorage NAACP]
.016 – John S. Parks Naming Panel [Cal Williams third from left wearing kente cloth]
.017 – Cal Williams making a presentation at the Bartlett Democratic Club Political Forum lunch, Anchorage Senior Activity Center [photograph by Bill Roth, *Anchorage Daily News*]
.018 – Examples of Cal Williams community activism [clockwise from top left: making a presentation at Bartlett Democratic Club Political Forum lunch, Anchorage Senior Activity Center with a fellow veteran, holding up a photograph of John S. Parks, with actor Danny Glover at Anchorage Senior Center for Nutrition, speaking at Senior Center for Black History Month, at Anchorage Senior Center]
.019 – Cal Williams speaking about Martin Luther King, Jr. at St. Anthony Catholic Church, Anchorage, 2017 [Cal Williams wearing suit and tie, standing at church ambo] Condition Note: fold in photograph top left
.020 – Cal Williams performing at Pacific Islanders event, Park Strip, Anchorage, 2018 [Cal wearing blue robe and kente cloth hat, playing *djembe*] Handwritten note on back of photograph: 2018 performing at Pacific Islanders event on the Anchorage Park Strip, Condition Note: fold and stains at bottom of photograph
.021 – Cal Williams speaking at Anchorage Museum, 2017 [Cal wearing kente cloth and striped scarf]
.022 – Installation of officers, American Legion Post 34, Anchorage [Cal Williams third from right holding American flag] Handwritten note on back of photograph: Instalation (sic) of officers Chappie James Post 34 American Legion
.023 – Cal Williams walking with Bridge Builders organization, July 4 parade on Anchorage Park Strip [Cal Williams, center, wearing baseball cap and kente cloth poncho]
.024 – Right to left: Cal Williams, Harry Crawford, and Donna Brazil campaigning for Barack Obama, 2008 [Cal Williams in suit and striped tie during visit to Anchorage by Donna Brazil]
.025 – Cal Williams dressed for Democratic Convention ball, downtown Anchorage, 2008 [Cal in black suit, bow tie, fedora, holding wooden cane]

- .026 – Cal Williams dressed as Michael Jackson, Democratic Convention ball, downtown Anchorage, 2008 [Cal in black suit and wearing curly afro wig]
- .027 – Cal Williams attending a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration, 2018 [Cal standing in front of chairs and flags, wearing kente cloth robe and hat]

F3

- .028 – Cal Williams trout fishing, 1985 [Cal in plaid shirt holding fishing rod and fish]
- .029 – Cal Williams in front of old City Hall, Anchorage, 2012 [Cal Williams wearing suit and tie with statues of farmer couple and cow]
- .030 – Copy of drawing of Cal Williams by his friend, John Leveige, 1962 [signed hand-drawn portrait with mountains, drum, and railroad tracks in background]
- .031 – Cal Williams with State Senator Bettye Davis [oversized]
- .032 – Portrait of Cal Williams, Democratic Convention Delegate for Barack Obama, Denver, Colorado, 2008 [Cal Williams wearing white kuspuk and convention name tag]
- .033 – (Left to right) Darrel Hess, Jewel Jones, Richard Watts, Cal Williams after NAACP Anchorage event [Cal Williams with other NAACP Anchorage volunteer leaders]
- .034 – Cal Williams speaking with Alaska Public Media [Cal Williams wearing kente cloth hat and wooden beads, doing interview on local public television station]
- .035 – [Man sitting playing guitar, Cal Williams standing holding microphone]
- .036 – Zavier Smith, Cal Williams's sister, and Cal Williams [woman in black and white striped sweater, standing, Cal Williams seated, wearing yellow shirt and neckless with cross]
- .037 – Cal Williams with godson Joseph Snyder, 2005 [Cal Williams in plaid shirt holding infant, stained copy of photograph]
- .038 – Portrait of Cal Williams, 1968 [Cal Williams in white sweater in front of nature painted backdrop]
- .039 – Cal Williams' holy communion certificate, the Little Flower of Jesus Church, March 4, 1951
- .040 – Cal Williams at Anchorage NAACP event with M. Ashley Dickerson [Group in front of NAACP seal, Cal Williams in aqua robe, M. Ashley Dickerson seated to Williams' right, in white]
- .041 – Cal Williams being installed in Knights of Columbus at St. Anthony Catholic Church, Anchorage, Alaska [Cal Williams second from left, wearing black suite and bow tie]
- .042 – Cal Williams singing [Cal Williams in red and white cap, white shirt, holding microphone]
- .043 – Cal Williams and colleague being interviewed on local TV station [Williams behind news desk, facing reporter]
- .044 – Cal Williams speaking at Senior Veteran Luncheon, Anchorage Senior Activity Center [Cal Williams standing at podium, wearing navy and yellow hat and tie]
- .045 – Cal Williams dressed to receive Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by University of Alaska Anchorage, December 18, 2022 [Cal Williams in black graduation cap and gown]
- .046 – Cal Williams performing [Cal standing, holding maracas, behind guitarist]
- .047 – Cal Williams with U.S. Representative Mary Sattler Peltola [Cal Williams in kente cloth hat, tie and shawl with arm around Representative Peltola]

.048 – Resolution of the Anchorage Municipal Assembly Recognizing and Celebrating June 19, 2023, as Juneteenth in Anchorage, AR No. 2023-185, signed by Christopher Constant, Anchorage Assembly Chair

Guide written: 02/05/2023