

Inventory of the Faculty Records of William B. Hanson, 1909-2005

William B. Hanson Faculty Records 1909-2005
1909-2005

A Collection in Special Collections 005-001
Simpson Library, University of Mary Washington
2011

Contact information:

History

Processed by: Special Collections Staff

Title Statement

Inventory of the Faculty Records of William B. Hanson, 1909-2005

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Publication Statement

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Profile Description

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Revision Description

November 4, 2011 Updated finding aid to reflect newly accessioned materials.

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Accession Number

005-001

Language

English

Abstract

Faculty records of William "Bill" Byrd Hanson, professor at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Bulk of records document Hanson's efforts to memorialize Civil Rights leader and former UMW professor James Farmer, Jr. Also included are publications on Farmer and audio-visual materials.

Creator

Hanson, William B.

Physical Description

4 boxes

Repository

Special Collections, Simpson Library, University of Mary Washington

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collections are open for research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

The bulk of materials were donated to the University of Mary Washington's Special Collections in Simpson Library by Roxane Hanson in 2005.

Preferred Citation

Faculty records of William B. Hanson, #005-001, Special Collections, Simpson Library, University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, VA.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional collections in the University Archives with information on James Farmer:

- 13.I Office of University Relations and Communications - Individuals - Farmer, James L.
- 27 Special Programs (A-Z) - James Farmer Scholars Program
- 75 James Farmer Multicultural Center
- Dr. James L. Farmer Papers, 1980-1999

Biographical/Historical Information

William "Bill" Byrd Hanson was born November 15, 1940 in Washington, D.C. to Jesse Byrd Hanson and Margaret Ludwig Hanson. Hanson attended Marietta College and received his B.A. in 1964. He pursued his doctoral studies in medical sociology at Brown University and completed his Ph.D. in 1971. On November 28, 1968, Hanson married Roxane "Rocky" Scharry. The couple had two children together: a daughter, Megan, and a son, Jesse. Hanson served as an assistant professor at Providence College and later as associate professor at California State University at Bakersfield. In 1981, Hanson joined the faculty at the University of Mary Washington. He became a tenured professor of sociology and briefly served as chair for the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Hanson authored a number of academic publications and in 1985 co-edited *Life with Heroin: Voices from the Inner City*.

Hanson was known within the Mary Washington and Fredericksburg community for his social activism. Locally, he acted as board member of the Fredericksburg Area Food Relief Clearinghouse and participated in the Central Virginia Housing Coalition, Thurman Brisben Homeless Shelter, and a nuclear freeze alliance. Hanson was also involved in "Project SOAR", a program offering college preparation classes for minority students. At times his advocacy was deeply personal; as a recipient of organ donation, Hanson was a steadfast supporter of the procedure. On-campus, he campaigned for disability rights and living wages for college employees. His admiration for the Civil Rights Movement further shaped his involvement at UMW. Hanson helped to develop the Martin Luther King Day celebration committee at the university and taught a class called "Civil Rights in the New Millennium".

Hanson became close to Dr. James Farmer, Jr. during the Civil Rights leader's professorship at the University of Mary Washington. The friendship deepened as Farmer's health failed and Hanson became an advocate for Farmer, securing adequate medical care and campaigning for a larger retirement stipend. In his later years, Farmer came to rely upon Hanson for assistance in navigating his financial and personal matters. When Farmer was presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998, Hanson and his son Jesse both attended the ceremony and reception.

Following Farmer's death in 1999, Hanson and his son were invited to a private memorial service at the Farmer home. Hanson became a strong supporter for commemoration of Farmer and was heavily involved in the University of Mary Washington James Farmer tributes, including the Farmer bust on Campus Walk. He also contributed to the establishment of the James Farmer Multicultural Center and fought attempts to

relocate or defund the center.

Hanson was diagnosed with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and received a lung transplant in 1996. The same year, he started teaching part-time at the University of Mary Washington. Hanson passed away January 31, 2005 in Fredericksburg, Virginia after battling with the disease for nearly ten years.

Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr. was born on January 12, 1920 in Marshall, Texas to James L. Farmer, Sr., theologian and first African American Ph.D. in Texas, and Pearl Houston. At the age of 14, Farmer enrolled in Wiley College and received a B.S. in 1938. He continued his education at Howard University, receiving a Bachelor of Divinity in 1941, but refused ordination in the Methodist Church due to segregation of the denomination in the South.

During the period of 1941 to 1945, Farmer acted as a race relations secretary for the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation. He founded the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Chicago in 1942 and chapters of the organization soon formed in New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Seattle, and Los Angeles. In 1961, as CORE's National Director, Farmer organized and participated in the "Freedom Rides" as a trial of the 1960 Supreme Court decision *Boynton v. Virginia*.

Farmer retired as National Director in 1966 - though he continued volunteer work for CORE. After a failed bid for the United States Congress in 1968, he was selected by President Richard Nixon to serve as Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare between 1969 and 1970.

During the 1970s, Farmer exited the political stage, focusing his energies on lecturing and serving in organizations and committees. In 1985, Farmer published his autobiography, *Lay Bare the Heart*, recounting his early life, education, and activities in the Civil Rights Movement. The same year, Farmer joined the faculty of Mary Washington College as a Distinguished Professor of History and American Studies. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Clinton in 1998, earning national recognition for his contribution to civil rights.

In the 1990s Farmer's health slowly deteriorated and he lost considerable use of his sight, hearing, and mobility. By 1998, Farmer was too ill to continue teaching and retired to his home in Spotsylvania County. Farmer passed away on July 9, 1999 in Fredericksburg, Virginia, due to complications from diabetes. His professorship at the university was memorialized in the renaming of Mary Washington College's Multicultural Center to the James Farmer Multicultural Center in 1998 and the dedication of his bust on Campus Walk in 2001.

Scope and Content

This collection contains the faculty records of William "Bill" Byrd Hanson. While series 1-4 relate exclusively to Hanson, the bulk of records document the career of James Farmer, Jr. and various tributes following his death.

Series 1-4 contain materials on William Byrd Hanson during his professorship at the University of Mary Washington. Included are Hanson's curriculum vitae from August 1980 and June 1986; correspondence regarding Hanson's illness and death; a collection of newspaper and magazine articles featuring Hanson; and tribute materials.

Materials from Series 5 pertain to James Leonard Farmer, Jr. (1920-1999) and his father (1886-1961). Subseries A consists of audiovisual materials, dated between 1964 and 1996. Recordings include radio and television interviews, audio lectures, and video from tributes to Farmer.

Subseries B documents James Farmer, Jr.'s involvement in the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Correspondence addressed to Farmer include letters from Richard A. Hayden (undated), George Houser (undated), and Richard K. MacMaster of Bluffton College (September 21, 1992). Records from FoR National Council Meetings are dated April 10-11 and September 11-13, 1942, comprised of minutes and reports from the following FoR members: Charlotte Bentley, James Farmer, Jr., Caleb Foote, Marion Frenyear, Larry Henderson, George Houser, Harold Stone Hull, Carl J. Landes, A.J. Muste, Dennis Nyberg, Sheldon Rahn, Constance Rumbough, Bayard Rustin, John Nevin Sayre, John M. Swomley, Jr., David White, and Herman Will, Jr.

Farmer's memorandum to A.J. Muste on the "Brotherhood Mobilization" also can be found within the subseries.

Subseries C contains general materials on Farmer, primarily publicity materials, publications, and correspondence prior to and immediately following his death.

Subseries D holds a 1909 poem written by Farmer, Sr., in memoriam of Lillie M. Whitney, his high school teacher, and "James Leonard Farmer: Texas' First African-American Ph.D.", an article written by Gail K. Beil, undated. **Note:** The article also can be found in *East Texas Historical Journal* 36, no. 1 (Spring, 1998): pp. 18-25.

During Farmer's professorship at the university, Mary Washington College's Multicultural Center was

renamed the James Farmer Multicultural Center in honor of the civil rights leader. Subseries E contains various correspondence and publications related to the Multicultural Center, primarily concerning budget cuts and relocation proposed in 2000.

The James Farmer Scholars Program was similarly initiated in honor of Farmer and Subseries F contains publicity materials promoting the program.

The bulk of materials can be found in Subseries G, a collection of tributes to Farmer. Folders 1-4 contain correspondence, publications, publicity materials, and photographs concerning tributes during Farmer's lifetime, particularly his receipt of the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998. Folders 5-8 pertain to tributes immediately following Farmer's death: publicity materials, publications, correspondence and working notes primarily for the September 1, 1999 memorial at the University of Mary Washington.

A year after Farmer's death, the James Farmer Multicultural Center was subject to controversial budget cuts and relocation. On November 10, 2000, Hanson and other members of the university organized a commemorative reading of James Farmer's autobiography *Lay Bare the Heart* in support of the Center. Folders 9-12 contain materials related to the reading, including publicity materials (programs, fliers), correspondence, book excerpts selected for the reading, and working notes.

Folders 13-16 document the unveiling of the James Farmer bust on April 20, 2001, followed by the inaugural address of James Farmer Visiting Professor of Human Rights Andrew Young. The folders contain publicity materials and publications for the unveiling. Correspondence and working notes from the series focuses on preparation for the unveiling ceremony, primarily in identifying potential invitees for the ceremony. Correspondents include UMW faculty and staff, anarchist Joffre Stewart, Donald Carleton of the University of Texas, Gail K. Beil, and Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker.

Index Terms

Farmer, James, 1920-1999

Farmer, James, 1920-1999--Commemoration

Hanson, William Byrd, 1940-2005

African Americans--Civil rights.

Arrangement

Series are arranged alphabetically.

The collection is organized into five series: (1) Biographical Materials, (2) Correspondence, (3) Publications, (4) Tribute Materials, and (5) James Farmer Materials.

The latter series is divided into six subseries: (A) Audiovisual Materials, (B) FoR and CORE, (C) General Materials, (D) James Farmer, Sr., (E) James Farmer Multicultural Center, (F) James Farmer Scholars Program, and (G) Tributes.

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