

Grand Rapids History and Special Collections

Archives

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Finding Aid of the  
Paul I. Phillips Papers  
Collection # 006

April 2008 version

Abstract

The Paul I. Phillips Papers contain news clippings, writings, speeches, memorabilia and biographical information on this African American community services leader of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Phillips (1914-1976) came to Grand Rapids in 1946, to work for the Borough Community Association of Grand Rapids. Working with the Board, he affiliated this organization with the National Urban League. Phillips served as executive secretary/director for the Grand Rapids Urban League from 1947 until his death in 1976. He was the first Black elected to public office in Grand Rapids, winning election to the Grand Rapids Charter Commission in 1951. He was also the first African American elected to the Grand Rapids Board of Education, serving from 1962 to 1970. He achieved several other offices, winning various award, as well as serving as a consultant to Grand Rapids native, President Gerald R. Ford, on minority citizen concerns. The news clippings contain information about Phillips' influence in Grand Rapids, and his devotion to black rights and the African American community. The memorabilia are collected from events attended by Phillips. A list of awards he received during his time in Grand Rapids is included. This is a small collection.

Paul Phillips, Director, GR Urban League. From: News Photos Coll. 133- 2-92  
<http://www.grpl.org/perl/gallery/display.pl?decade=1950&display=11>

President Gerald R. Ford brief remarks on Urban League and Paul Phillips  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=4540>

Collection #: 006

Accession #: 1979.001

Donor: Ethel Phillips

Span dates: 1947-1979

Processor: Original processor, Lisa Lowther, March 1990; Revised and expanded, R. Mayne 2002 & 2005.

Size: 0.4 cu.ft.

Related Collections

Coll. 125, Robinson Studio Collection, for images of Phillips and other Borough or League members.

Coll. 129, Grand Rapids Rotary Club Records, 129-15-15 Image of Phillips.

Coll. 252, Grand Rapids Neighborhoods Collection, RE the development of the Madison Area Neighborhood Association

See also the Grand Rapids Urban League Records, 1941-1986, at the Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
1	bio/clippings/speeches	blue slim
2	Clippings & miscellaneous	slim legal

Biography

Born in Omaha, Nebraska, Paul Phillips (1914-Jan. 31, 1976) received a track scholarship to Marquette University in Milwaukee. Then received his MS and Ph.D. in Sociology from Fisk University in 1936. Phillips came to Grand Rapids in 1946 and in 1947 became executive director of the Grand Rapids Urban League. In 1951 Phillips won a position on the City Charter Revision Commission. In 1962 he was the first African American to win a position on the Board of Education in Grand Rapids. Phillips was awarded the PTA's Council Distinguished Award in 1967. In 1972 Phillips received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Grand Valley State College. Three years later, Phillips became Vice Chairman for President Gerald Ford on minority affairs. He also served on the Board of Michigan Mental Health Society as member and President.

Phillips' wife, Ethel Phillips, worked actively for minority rights. She was active in the community supporting black rights.

Scope and Content

This collection contains news clippings about the progress of non-whites in Grand Rapids community. These clippings show the influence of Phillips. His writings and speeches helped change the attitudes toward minorities in Grand Rapids. The file also contains a sociological study by Phillips on ten inter-cultural areas of Grand Rapids. There is also miscellaneous material about Phillips, including an evaluation of his membership in the Urban League.

Contents

Box   Folder   Description

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | 1 | <p><b>Biographical material.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brief Account of our 25 years of stewardship. Paul I. Phillips. ca. 1971</li><li>• Resume, ca. 1976.</li><li>• Introducing 1976 Alumni Award Recipients. Marquette University. (2) 11/10/2005</li><li>• Phillip's Business card. Grand Rapids Urban League.</li><li>• National Urban League, Inc. Affiliate Executive Director Performance Appraisal. Aug. 1975. [Phillip's "outstanding" job evaluation, March. 1976.</li><li>• Point of View 13 letterhead. . RE Paul Phillips Death. Photocopy.</li><li>• WOTV Editorial. Jan. 4, 1977. RE Phillip's Death. photocopy.</li><li>• Wood Broadcasting Inc, Jan. 4, 1977. RE Phillips death.</li><li>• Point of View 13 letterhead. RE Paul Phillips Street. (2 sheets)</li><li>• WGRD letterhead. Sept. 19, 1977. RE vote not to rename Franklin St. for Paul Phillips.</li><li>• WOTV 8. Apr. 10, 1978. RE Paul Phillips Street.</li><li>• Grand Rapids Times. Apr. 5, 1976. Includes article: Marquette University Honors Paul Phillips. Added 11/10/2005</li><li>• Western Michigan Catholic. Mar. 26, 1976. Has article pg. 2. "Marquette University Honors Paul Phillips".</li></ul> |
| 1 | 2 | <p><b>Writings and speeches 1947-1976</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• History of the Negro in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1840-1956.</li><li>• "I bring you greetings from the Grand Rapids Urban League ..." (4 versions, including annotated originals)</li><li>• "Background on Urban League ..." (3 versions, including an annotated original).</li><li>• Give Us Some Price!!!, ca. 1970. Typed copy</li><li>• White House Position Paper on the Blacks and the Poor in Our Nation [summary] / by Paul I. Phillips ... On Grand Rapids Urban League letterhead. Jan. 26, 1976 handwritten date. Photocopy.</li><li>• To Be Equal, Column no. 38. Lay-offs, seniority and affirmative action / by Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. [Oct. 1, 1975] (Two typed pages with handwritten annotations)</li><li>• Blacks in Metro-Politics : precis, commentary and recommendations / Irvin H. Bromall, Education Analyst, National urban League, Sept. 1972. photocopy.</li></ul>   |

- 1 2 **Writings and speeches 1947-1976 continued ...**
- Appeal to United Community Services, Board of Directors, for funds for additional staff / by Grand Rapids urban League and Brough Community Association, Grand Rapids, Michigan. (photocopy of M325.26.G762)
  - Note cards. "What Does the American Negro Want"
  - Note cards. "Cites Handicaps"
  - Note cards. "Pace of Progress not fast enough"
- 1 2.5 A Study of Ten Inter-cultural areas in Grand Rapids, Michigan : made under the supervisor of the Community Organization Committee / by Paul Phillips, Director, Grand Rapids Urban league and Borough Community Association. Nov. 1947.  
c. 1 1979.001  
c. 2 00.[2984].1 Added 11/10/2005  
Formerly MKG312.P545
- 1 3 Newspaper Clippings Feb. 1947 - Jan. 1977
- 1 4 Memorabilia
- Time Magazine reprint. July 10, 1974. Mary McLeod Bethune, 1875-1955".
  - Program. Dedication Ceremonies of the Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial. Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C. July 10, 1974. Includes "Tribute to a Legend" / by Connie Myer.
  - Michigan Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students. Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial Dedication. (2 sheets)
  - The Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial Dedication. Three Day Program outline. July 10-12, 1974.
  - Flyer. National Council of Negro Women, Inc. Roll of Honor?
  - Program. The Karamu Dancers ... Nov. 22, 1958.
  - Invitation. GR Urban League & Brough Community Association. 19th Annual Dinner Meeting. Speakers. Paul G. Goebel, Congressman Gerald R. Ford, Jr., and Paul Phillips.
  - Membership Card. (2). Grand Rapids Recreation Department. Paul I. Phillips Recreation Center. Delton A. Heard, director.

- 1 4.5 Paul I. Phillips Building
- Program. Dedication of the Paul I. Phillips Building. Apr. 27, 1979.
  - Letter. Apr. 12, 1979. Invitation, with Ehlers signature only.
  - Letter. Apr. 12, 1979. Invitation to dedication. Signed by Ethel Phillips and Vernon J. Ehlers.
  - Wording of the plaque accompany the portrait hund in the lobby of the Paul I. Phillips Building. photocopy. On Kent Co. Board of County Commissioners letterhead.
  - Point of View 13 letterhead. George Lyons RE Building.
  - News Release. Vernon Ehlers.
- 1 5 Miscellaneous papers 1972-1979 n.d.
- 2 1 News clippings 1947-1977
- 2 2 Oversized clippings. (2)  
Processing note: to be humidified, encapsulated and stored in oversized.
- Paul Phillips dies; Civil Rights Leader / by Mike Lloyd. Jan. 1, 1977. GR Press.
  - LaBella at Large / by Tom LaBelle. Illustration "Black Power" by Diann Bartnick. "Before 'civil rights', such personal as, clockwise from the left, Walter Coe, Floyd Skinner and Paul Phillips supplied a special leadership in the black community in Grand Rapids. GR Press. Flair. Feb. 8, 1981.  
Added 11/10/2005
- 2 3 Oversized clipping. Laminated by donor.  
Grand Rapids Times. Dec. 22, 1980. Creston High School Gym  
Dedicated to Paul Phillips.  
Added 11/10/2005
- 2 4 Office of the White House Press Secretary. Jan. 19, 1976. Embargoed for Release. "The White House. Fact Sheet. The President's State of the Union Message". [Gerald R. Ford's administration]  
Added 11/10/2005  
Accompanied by:
- copy of Western Union Mailgram. Jan. 15, 1976. Invitation to Phillips to a White House Briefing on President Ford's Budget and State of the Union Message. Jan. 26, 1976.
  - a second copy of the White House Position Paper on the Blacks and the Poor in our Nation.