

Robert Millender Papers
5.5 linear feet (8 MB, 1 OS)
1963-1978, bulk 1969-1977

Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

Finding aid written by Dallas Pillen on September 24, 2013

Accession Number: UP002410

Creator: Robert Millender

Acquisition: Material donated to the Reuther Library on March 20, 2013 by Pennie and Patricia Millender.

Language: Material entirely in English.

Access: Collection is closed for research for three years following its complete processing.

Use: Refer to the Walter P. Reuther Library *Rules for Use of Archival Materials*.

Notes: Citation style: "Robert Millender Papers, Box [#], Folder [#], Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University"

Related Material: Reuther Library Collections: Coleman Young Papers, George Crockett Papers, Richard H. Austin Papers, New Detroit, Inc. Records.

One tape (see inventory) was transferred to the Reuther's Audiovisual Collection.

History

Robert Millender (1916-1978) was an influential attorney, political strategist, and campaign manager in Detroit, most notable for his efforts to establish political power for African Americans in the city throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Born in Chicora, Mississippi in 1916, Millender came to Detroit in 1921 when his father moved to the city for employment at Ford Motor Company. Millender graduated from Northwestern High School. Following stints at Ford Motor Company and in the United States Army during World War II, he attended the Detroit College of Law, beginning his successful and influential legal and political career.

As an attorney, Robert Millender worked on issues related to labor activism, including appointments on the Workers Compensation Board and the Trade Unions Leadership Council, in addition to issues related to African American political representation. He was a partner at the law firm of Goodman, Eden, Millender, and Bedrosian, the first known racially integrated law firm in the United States. In the early 1960s, he and George Crockett, Jr. began working towards the goal of getting African Americans elected to prominent political offices in Detroit. In the process, Millender established himself as an instrumental force in the elections of many of Detroit's first generation of successful African American politicians.

Millender's most notable political activism was his role as campaign manager for numerous African American candidates. He first served as campaign manager for John Conyers in his successful 1964 candidacy for U.S. Representative for Michigan's 1st Congressional District and, throughout the proceeding decade, had continued success as a campaign manager and political strategist. Millender managed George Crockett's successful campaign to be the first African American Recorder's Court Judge in the City of Detroit in 1966, and also managed the successful campaigns of Detroit City Council members Robert Tindal and Erma Henderson. He managed Richard Austin's 1969 campaign as the first African American candidate for mayor in Detroit, a race which he narrowly lost, and then managed Austin's successful campaign for Michigan Secretary of State in 1970. Following these successes, Millender became the campaign manager for Coleman Young, managing his successful 1973 election and 1977 re-election campaigns as Detroit's first African American mayor.

Robert Millender passed away at the age of 61 in 1978, a year following Coleman Young's first re-election campaign. As a testament to his influence in establishing African American political power in Detroit, the Millender Center was named after him upon its construction in 1985.

Scope and Content:

The Robert Millender Papers document Robert Millender's legal and political activities from 1963-1978, including his work as a campaign manager for numerous Detroit politicians and as an attorney active in issues related to labor activism and African American political representation. It comprises mostly paper records including correspondence, legal documents, financial information, speeches, committee reports, meeting minutes and agendas, and clippings, in addition to some photographs and memorabilia.

Materials in the collection, especially those in the Campaigns series, demonstrate Robert Millender's influence on and dedication to the candidacies of African American politicians in the city of Detroit. The materials serve as records of the campaigns of Richard Austin, George Crockett, Erma Henderson, Robert Tindal, Coleman Young, and other African American politicians. Correspondence with business, community, and political organizations document Millender's strategies to establish a foundation on which African Americans could become elected by developing a network of politically active groups to generate volunteer support, financial contributions, and endorsements. Information related to electoral precincts, districts, and polling locations exemplify Millender's organizational strategies and get out the vote campaigns to ensure that voting opportunities and voter turnout were sufficient to elect his candidates to office. Promotional materials, public relations documents, and newspaper clippings document the ways in which Millender's campaigns sought to represent themselves in the community and the media. Records related to task forces, special committees, speaking engagements, and polls and surveys document the positions of the various campaigns and the strategies used to communicate those positions to the electorate.

The collection also contains materials, especially in the Professional Activities and Interests Series, demonstrating Robert Millender's activities as an attorney and political activist outside of his work as a campaign manager. His legal and political support for politicians following their election is evidenced by correspondence with and legal efforts in support of Richard Austin, George Crockett, and Coleman Young. Records from the Workers Compensation Board and Labor Unity Screening Committee document Millender's activities as a labor attorney and the ways in which he used his ties with labor groups to further his political goals. Correspondence, clippings, and conference information demonstrating Millender's involvement in the African American legal and political community include material related to the Congressional Black Caucus, the Caucus of Black Democrats, and the National Conference for Black Political Scientists. The extent of Robert Millender's activities outside of the city of Detroit are exemplified by materials including campaign information, correspondence, and speeches associated with the Michigan Democratic Party and politics in the city of New Orleans. Millender's commitment to issues in the city of Detroit aside from the campaigns of prominent politicians is shown in materials related to his involvement in community organizations including Citizens for Better Detroit, Greater Detroit Fair Housing, Inc., the Move Detroit Forward Committee, and New Detroit.

Important Subjects:

African American lawyers
African American political consultants
African American politicians
Democratic Party
Detroit (Mich.)
Detroit (Mich.). City Council
Detroit (Mich.). Mayor
Detroit (Mich.)—Politics and government
Elections
Judges—Election
Mayors—Election

Political campaigns

Important Names:

Austin, Richard H.
Congressional Black Caucus
Conyers, John, 1929-
Crockett, George W.
Henderson, Erma, 1917-
Humphries, Derrick
Mahaffey, Maryann
National Conference of Black Political Scientists
New Detroit, Inc. (Detroit, Mich.)
Tindal, Robert
Young, Coleman A.

Series 1: Campaigns, 1969-1977

Correspondence, memos, promotional materials, and administrative papers related to Robert Millender's activities as campaign manager for Detroit politicians including Richard Austin, George Crockett, Erma Henderson, Robert Tindal, and Coleman Young.

Series 2: Professional Activities & Interests, 1963-1978

Correspondence, conference information, committee materials, and legal documents related to Robert Millender's legal and political endeavors other than his campaign management activities.

Series 3: Audiovisual & Oversize, 1969-1978

Photographs, resolutions, certificates, and campaign memorabilia.

Arrangement

Arranged in 3 series – Series 1 (Boxes 1-4), Series 2 (Boxes 4-7) and Series 3 (Boxes 8-9).
Folders are arranged alphabetically by subject and then chronologically by calendar year. Folders for which the subject is an individual are arranged alphabetically by surname.

Series 1

Box 1

- 1 Richard Austin Campaign, Correspondence, Press Releases & Precinct Info, 1969
- 2 Richard Austin Campaign, Correspondence, Press Releases & Election Info, 1969
- 3 Richard Austin Campaign, Clippings & Correspondence, 1969-1973
- 4 Richard Austin Campaign, Clippings, Polls, & Surveys, 1974-1976
- 5 Richard Austin Campaign, Campaign Finance & Correspondence, 1976
- 6 Richard Austin Campaign, Articles, 1976
- 7 Richard Austin Campaign, Articles, Correspondence & Press Releases, 1976
- 8 Richard Austin Campaign, Articles & Correspondence Re: Israel, 1976
- 9 Richard Austin Campaign, Clippings, Correspondence, & Lists, 1976

Box 2

- 1 Richard Austin Campaign, Finances & Fundraising, 1976
- 2 Richard Austin Campaign, Get Out the Vote Info & Precinct Info, 1976
- 3 Richard Austin Campaign, Correspondence, Speeches, & Clippings, 1976
- 4 Richard Austin Campaign, Questionnaires, 1976
- 5 George Crockett Campaign, 1965-1967, 1977
- 6 Elections, Clippings & Lists, 1970s
- 7 Elections, Correspondence, 1970s
- 8 Erma Henderson Campaign, 1972
- 9 Robert Tindal Campaign, 1969

Box 3

- 1 Coleman Young Campaign, Clippings, Correspondence, Memos, & Promotional Materials, 1973
- 2 Coleman Young Campaign, Campaign Finance, Correspondence, & Proposals, 1973
- 3 Coleman Young Campaign, Correspondence, Meetings, Memos, & Public Relations, 1973
- 4 Coleman Young Campaign, Task Force: Mayor's Ten Points & Program Development, 1973-1974
- 5 Coleman Young Campaign, Campaign Finance, Correspondence, Meetings, Memos, & Public Relations, 1973-1974
- 6 Coleman Young Campaign, Promotional Materials, 1973-1976
- 7 Coleman Young Re-Election Campaign, Correspondence, Memos, Promotional Materials, Special Projects, & Committees, 1977
- 8 Coleman Young Re-Election Campaign, Campaign Finance, Correspondence, Election Info, & Memos, 1977

Box 4

- 1 Coleman Young Re-Election Campaign, Campaign Finance & District Info, 1977
- 2 Coleman Young Re-Election Campaign, Clippings, Correspondence, Memos, & Promotional Materials, 1977

Series 2

Box 4

- 3 Richard Austin, Legal Matters, 1976
- 4 Bakke Case, Clippings & Correspondence, 1977
- 5 Black Community Education, Community Services, Cultural, Entertainment, & Recreation Programs
- 6 Black Elected Officials Correspondence, 1971
- 7 Black Politics, Newspaper Articles, 1970s
- 8 Black Politics, Newspaper Articles, 1970s
- 9 Black Politics, Newspaper Articles, 1970s
- 10 Carter-Mondale Campaign Materials, 1976

Box 5

- 1 Caucus of Black Democrats Issues Conference, 1976
- 2 Citizens for Better Detroit, 1974-1977
- 3 Clippings - General, 1970s-1990s
- 4 Committee for Fair Representation, 1972
- 5 Congressional Black Caucus, Correspondence, 1970s
- 6 Correspondence, 1970s
- 7 Correspondence, 1970s
- 8 George Crockett, Correspondence, 1972-1973
- 9 Financial Information, 1970s
- 10 Greater Detroit Fair Housing, Inc., 1965

Box 6

- 1 Greater Detroit Fair Housing, Inc., 1966
- 2 Derrick Humphries, Correspondence, 1974-1978
- 3 Labor Unity Screening Committee, 1969
- 4 Legal Briefs, 1975
- 5 Maryann Mahaffey, Speeches, 1975
- 6 Michigan Democratic Politics, 1970s
- 7 Robert Millender Personal Resume
- 8 Move Detroit Forward Committee, 1974-1977
- 9 National Conference of Black Political Scientists, 1973-1976
- 10 New Detroit, Action Programs Against Unemployment, 1973
- 11 New Detroit, Summary Report of the Urban Action Needs Analyses, 1973
- 12 New Orleans, Correspondence & Election Info, 1973-1974
- 13 New Orleans, Robert Millender Speech, 1973

Box 7

- 1 Omega Psi Phi Citizen of the Year Award, 1976
- 2 Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, 1977
- 3 Workmen's Compensation Department, Correspondence, 1967-1974

- 4 Coleman Young, Legal Proceedings, 1978

Series 3

Box 8

- 1 Richard Austin Campaign, Photos, 1976
- 2 Erma Henderson Campaign, Photos, 1972
- 3 Robert Tindal, Slides and Correspondence for Tindal Centre Painting, 1976

Box 9

- 2 John Conyers, Jr. for Congressman Signs
- 1 Sketch of Robert Millender Portrait
- 2 "Austin for Mayor" Buttons
- 1 "I'm for Young for Mayor" Button
- 4 City of Detroit Testimonial Resolutions, 1978
- 1 Wayne County Testimonial Resolution, 1978
- 1 Shaw College at Detroit Honorary Degree, 1978
- 1 Membership Certificate - The Cotillion Club, Inc., 1976
- 1 Membership Certificate - Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, 1977
- 1 Honorary Citizen Certificate, New Orleans, 1973

AV Material

- 1 Millender Services Master Broadcast Cassette, 1978