



Smithsonian

Anacostia Community Museum

Dorothy Burlage Collection

ACMA.06-101

ACMA Staff

This project received support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Anacostia Community Museum Archives
Title:	Dorothy Burlage Southeast Neighborhood Collection
Date:	(bulk 1966-1971)
Identifier:	ACMA.06-101
Creator:	Burlage, Dorothy, 1937-
Extent:	.42 Linear feet (1 box)
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated by Dorothy Burlage in 2017.

Processing Information

Machine-readable guide completed by Jennifer Morris, 2019. The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Amelia J. Verkerk in 2023.

Preferred Citation

Dorothy Burlage collection, Anacostia Community Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Dorothy Burlage.

Restrictions

Use of the materials requires an appointment. Please contact the archivist at ACMarchives@si.edu

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical

Dorothy Dawson Burlage was born on September 13, 1937, in San Antonio, TX, to Joseph Dawson and Virginia Hendrix Dawson. Burlage attended Mary Baldwin University for one year before transferring to the University of Texas at Austin, where she became involved in campus political movements, such as National Student Association (NSA) and the YWCA Christian Faith and Life Community. Burlage graduated in 1959 and moved to Illinois to become the program director of the YMCA at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. During her time with the YMCA, she collaborated with members of NSA and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to organize various demonstrations, rallies, and protests focused on racial equality. Burlage also became an official member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and began working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

While working for the YMCA, Burlage met several prominent Civil Rights activists and workers, including Tom (1939-2016) and Casey Hayden (1937-2023), Alan Haber (1936-), and Ella Baker (1903-1986).

Burlage attended the Harvard Divinity School for a year and a half, before moving to Atlanta, Georgia in the winter of 1961-1962 to pursue work with the NSA's Southern Students Human Relations Project. Burlage was tasked with developing educational plans for White and Black students on integrated campuses and planning voter registration programs. During this time, Burlage met more prominent figures in the Civil Rights movement, such as Joan Browning (1943-), Anne Braden (1924-2006), Constance "Connie" Curry (1933-2020) and Bob Zellner (1939-). Soon after, Burlage moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to take a director position with the Raleigh Citizens Associations (RCA). Burlage worked closely with students from local Black colleges to develop voter registration strategy.

In August of 1962, Burlage moved back to Atlanta for one year before moving to Nashville, Tennessee, in 1963 with her husband, Robb Burlage (1937-). For the next two years, the couple worked with SDS and Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC) to help bridge gaps between the organizations' missions and goals. By mid-1965, Burlage and her husband moved to Washington D.C. where she became a community organizer in the Anacostia neighborhood, working primarily with the Southeast Neighborhood House. She joined fellow community activists, such as Etta Horn (1928-2001), Zora Martin-Felton (1930-2022), Walter Washington (1915-2003), and John Kinard (1936-1989), to organize a strong, community-based grassroots movement in Anacostia. The group Burlage was involved in was known as the "Target Team" and they worked with other local groups, including "Rebels with a Cause" and "Band of Angels." In 1966, Burlage and other community members helped Marion Barry (1936-2014) organize a citywide bus boycott to protest fare increases. The Target Team disbanded in 1968, feeling they had succeeded in their mission to support the movement in Anacostia. By 1970, after her divorce and the death of her friend, Ralph Featherstone (1939-1970), Burlage left community activism to pursue graduate studies.

Burlage received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from Harvard University, where her political involvement shifted to focus on women and family policies. In 2023, Burlage is a child psychologist in private practice focusing on children and adolescents.

Scope and Contents

The Dorothy Burlage Collection, which dates from 1966-1971 and measure .42 linear feet, documents the activism and activities of Southeast Neighborhood House in the Anacostia area of Washington, DC. Burlage worked for the organization during the 1960s. The collection includes newspaper clippings, newsletters, correspondence and writings focusing on community organizing, public housing, and social change. Also present are issues of Southeast News, a Southeast Neighborhood House publication.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Community-based social services
- Landlord and tenant
- Public housing

Types of Materials:

- Newsletters
- Newspaper clippings
- Reports

Writings

Names:

Barry, Marion, 1936-2014
Horn, Etta, 1928 – 2001
Jones, Theresa
Kinard, John, 1936-1989
Martin-Felton, Zora
Southeast Neighborhood House (Washington, D.C.)

Places:

Anacostia (Washington, D.C.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Reports

Scope and Contents: This series consists of published reports by various authors pertaining to contemporary housing, civil disobedience, and welfare issues in Washington D.C., primarily in the Anacostia neighborhood. These reports date from 1965-1966, and are by various publishers, such as the Southeast Neighborhood House and Washington D.C.'s City Council. This series is arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 1 Reports, 1965 May 16 - 1968 August 17

Box 1, Folder 2 Reports, 1966 April 12- 1968 April 01

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Series 2: Newspapers

Scope and Contents: This series is the largest in the collection and consists of newspapers, newspaper clippings, and magazine articles, mostly regarding the Anacostia community and its residents. Many of the articles focus on housing and welfare issues, such as tenant rights and support for single-income families. This series contains original and annotated copies of the "Southwest News" from September 1967, which feature articles about the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum and the Southeast Neighborhood House.

This series is arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 3	Newspaper photocopies, 1966 February 20 - 1967 September 20
Box 1, Folder 4	Magazine articles, 1966 April 30 - 1970 June
Box 1, Folder 5	Newspaper clippings, 1966 May - 1971 April 27
Box 1, Folder 6	Newspaper clippings, 1966 May 5 - 1967 August 29, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	<p>"Southeast News", 1967 September 1 Item (newsletter; 11.5 x 17 inches; 4 pages) Place: Anacostia (Washington, D.C.) Genre/Form: Newsletters -- 20th century Culture: African Americans</p>

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Series 3: Community Organizations

Scope and Contents: This series consists of materials by different community organizations, such as the Anacostia Community Museum, Jews for Urban Justice, and the Neighborhood Advisory Board. Some of these materials are federal publications pertaining to local community activism in Washington D.C.'s Anacostia neighborhood. Materials include case studies, booklets, pamphlets, and writings by various authors, including Dr. Dorothy Burlage and Dr. Pharnal Longus. This series is arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 9	Writings, 1965 May 26 - 1972 January
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Box 1, Folder 8	Housing and welfare program materials, 1965 August 24 - Jul 1969 July, 1978
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