

Roy Wilkins

A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress

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Revised by Allan Teichroew**



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Latest revision: 2004-08-23

Collection Summary

Title: Papers of Roy Wilkins

Span Dates: 1901-1980

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1932-1980)

ID No.: MSS75939

Creator: Wilkins, Roy, 1901-

Extent: 28,200 items; 76 containers; 30.7 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Civil rights leader and journalist. Correspondence, memoranda, diary, manuscripts of speeches, newspaper columns, and articles, subject files, reports, minutes, committee, board, and administrative material, printed material, and other papers relating primarily to Wilkins's career with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in various positions between 1931 and 1977, especially his service as executive director (1965-1977).

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Names:

Wilkins, Roy, 1901-

Carter, Robert L., 1917- --Correspondence

Current, Gloster B. (Gloster Bryant), 1913- --Correspondence

Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963

Evers, Charles, 1922- --Correspondence

Farmer, James, 1920- --Correspondence

Franklin, Chester Arthur, 1880-1955--Correspondence

Hastie, William, 1904-1976--Correspondence

Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973--Correspondence

Lampkin, Daisy E. (Daisy Elizabeth), 1882-1965--Correspondence

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993--Correspondence

Matthews, Charles H.--Correspondence

Mitchell, Clarence M. (Clarence Maurice), 1911-1984--Correspondence

Moon, Henry Lee, 1901- --Correspondence

Morsell, John A.--Correspondence

Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913- --Correspondence

Spingarn, Arthur B. (Arthur Barnett), 1878-1971--Correspondence

Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972--Correspondence

White, Walter Francis, 1893-1955--Correspondence

Wilkins, Aminda Badeau--Correspondence

Wilkins, Roger W., 1932- --Correspondence

Wright, Herbert L.--Correspondence

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Subjects:

African American newspapers--Sections, columns, etc.

African Americans--Civil rights

African Americans--Education

Newspapers--Sections, columns, etc.

Segregation

Occupations:

Civil rights leaders

Journalists

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of Roy Wilkins, civil rights leader and journalist, were given to the Library of Congress by Wilkins and his wife, Aminda Badeau Wilkins, from 1980 to 1988. Additional items were given by Mildred Bond Roxborough in 1981 and by James E. Nicholson in 1992.

Processing History:

The papers of Roy Wilkins were first arranged and described in 1989. Additional material received in 1992 was incorporated into the collection in 1997. A description of the Wilkins Papers appears in *Library of Congress Acquisitions: Manuscript Division, 1980*, pp. 14-19.

Transfers:

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. A sound recording and tape have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. Photographs and other illustrated items have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Wilkins Papers.

Copyright Status:

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Roy Wilkins is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Roy Wilkins Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1901, Aug. 30	Born, St. Louis, Mo.
1906	Moved to St. Paul, Minn.
1923	A.B., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.
1923-1932	Journalist and managing editor, <i>Kansas City Call</i>
1929	Married Aminda Badeau
1931-1949	Assistant to secretary, NAACP
1934-1949	Editor, <i>Crisis</i>
1949	Acting executive secretary, NAACP
1950-1955	Administrator, NAACP
1955-1965	Executive secretary, NAACP
1965-1977	Executive director, NAACP

1969	Awarded Medal of Freedom
1977	Retired
1981, Sept. 8	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Roy Wilkins (1901-1981) span the years 1901-1980, with the bulk of the items concentrated in the period 1932-1980. Included are a diary, correspondence, memoranda, appointment books, minutes, reports and other administrative records, speeches and writings, printed matter, and miscellaneous material. Although the papers reflect several aspects of Wilkins's career as a journalist and civil rights leader, their focus is largely on his role as an administrator in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), where he began as assistant to the secretary in 1931 and served as acting secretary, administrator, executive secretary, and executive director between 1949 and 1977.

Family letters in the [Correspondence](#) series in the collection consist largely of letters between Roy Wilkins and his wife, Aminda Badeau Wilkins, and with their nephew, Roger Wilkins. General correspondence spans the years 1939-1979 and covers many of the principal activities and issues in which Wilkins was engaged from the onset of World War II to the presidency of Jimmy Carter. Featured are the inner workings and operations of the NAACP, Wilkins's relationship to other leaders in the organization, particularly Walter Francis White, and the broadening movement among African Americans after 1945 for equal rights in every sphere of American life. In addition to White, prominent or frequent correspondents include Robert L. Carter, Gloster B. Current, Charles Evers, James Farmer, C. A. Franklin, William Hastie, Lyndon B. Johnson, Daisy E. Lampkin, Thurgood Marshall, Charles H. Matthews, Clarence M. Mitchell, Henry Lee Moon, John A. Morsell, Richard M. Nixon, Arthur Barnett Spingarn, Harry S. Truman, and Herbert L. Wright.

The [NAACP File](#) contains topical and administrative files as well as personal material relating to Wilkins's association with the organization. Among the subjects documented are the civil rights mobilization drive of 1950, an interview Wilkins conducted with Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952, copies of Wilkins's Federal Bureau of Investigation file obtained by him through a freedom of information request, and controversy surrounding an unflattering portrayal of Wilkins and the NAACP by Lewis Steel in a *New York Times Magazine* of 1968. Significant also are items pertaining to the relationship of W. E. B. DuBois to the organization, as reflected in Wilkins's response to an article by DuBois in 1948, and numerous files pertaining to the NAACP's role in the desegregation and civil rights efforts of the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to state and local matters within the organization, the NAACP's involvement in improving education for African Americans nationwide is recorded in various files relating to schools in Arkansas, California, New York, and other jurisdictions.

The [Speeches and Writings](#) series includes drafts and published copies of articles and newspaper columns by Wilkins, especially "The Roy Wilkins Column" released nationally by the Register and Tribune Syndicate and columns he wrote for the *New Amsterdam News*. Also in the series is an extensive file of speeches Wilkins delivered around the country in the cause of equal rights between 1946 and 1978.

Contained in a small [addition](#) to the collection are a few items of correspondence, a diary Wilkins kept in January and February 1935, the handwritten text of a speech he delivered to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights in Washington, D.C., on 28 January 1969, and additional writings.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in five series:

- [Correspondence, 1939-1979, n.d.](#)
- [NAACP Files, 1921-1979, n.d.](#)
- [Speeches and Writings, 1943-1978, n.d.](#)
- [Miscellany, 1915-1977, n.d.](#)
- [Addition, 1901-1980, n.d.](#)

Description of Series

Container

Series

BOX 1-11

Correspondence, 1939-1979, n.d.

Letters sent and received by Wilkins with enclosures.

Divided between family and general correspondence. Family letters are arranged alphabetically by person and chronologically therein. General correspondence includes letters of both a personal and official nature and is organized chronologically by year and alphabetically therein. Daily mail sheets which register the writer and purpose of incoming letters are included for some years of the general correspondence.

BOX 12-35

NAACP Files, 1921-1979, n.d.

Correspondence, minutes, and reports; committee, board, and administrative material; financial records, itineraries, and travel expense sheets; office notes and messages; procedural memoranda, statistical data, subject files, and other material pertaining to the NAACP and related organizations.

Arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material.

BOX 35-63

Speeches and Writings, 1943-1978, n.d.

Notes, outlines, drafts, and near-print and printed copies of Wilkins's speeches, talks, statements, newspaper columns, and articles with related matter such as correspondence and background data. Also includes an incomplete bibliography, a speech and engagement calendar, and a television script by Wilkins.

Organized alphabetically by type of presentation and therein chronologically.

BOX 63-71

Miscellany, 1915-1977, n.d.

Personal subject files, financial records, certificates and citations, and printed and near-print matter pertaining to Wilkins and his association with the NAACP, and related organizations.

Arranged alphabetically by type or subject of material.

BOX 72-76

Addition, 1901-1980, n.d.

Appointment books, a diary, correspondence interviews, research notes, writings, and printed matter.

Arranged alphabetically by type of material.

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Correspondence, 1939-1979, n.d.

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NAACP Files, 1921-1979, n.d.

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