Inventory of the
Esau Jenkins Papers, 1963 - 2003
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Esau Jenkins Papers,

Dates: 1963 - 2003

Creator: Jenkins, Esau, 1910-1972.

Abstract: Esau Jenkins (1910-1972) was born and raised on Johns Island, South Carolina. With very little formal education, he became a businessman and civil rights leader.

The collection is divided into four small series: 1.) Biographical papers include printed tributes; death notices and materials, including funeral sermons; a compact disc of images and other papers documenting lectures and exhibits regarding Jenkins held after his death, along with programs, correspondence and related material regarding naming of buildings, services and a bridge after him. It also contains genealogical information on Jenkins and his family. 2.) Writings holds miscellaneous correspondence and notes and printed versions of his talks and writings. 3.) Affiliations contains correspondence, brochures, notes, and other data on variety of organizations he helped found or was a member of, including the Progressive Club, Citizen’s Committee of Charleston, Community Organization Credit Union, Political Action Committee of Charleston County, Political Awareness League of Charleston County, and the Highlander Folks Center. Topics mentioned include the 1969 Charleston Hospital Worker’s strike, and the protested death of a young African American, Robert Brown, killed by a white policeman in 1970. 4.) Miscellaneous materials include photocopies of published materials documenting life on Johns Island, South Carolina and Jenkins’ role in citizenship schools run by the Highlander Center and funded by the Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation.

Extent: 0.5 linear feet (1 archival box)

Repository: Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston

Call Number: AMN 1004

Language of Material: Material in English

Biographical Note

Esau Jenkins was born to Peter and Eva Jenkins on Johns Island, South Carolina on July 3, 1910 and lived most of his life there. Upon completing the fourth grade, he began working on boat out of Charleston. As a life-long learner, Jenkins continued his through night classes and correspondence courses, becoming a businessman and civil rights leader. Jenkins married Janie Elizabeth Jones in 1926, together they had thirteen children

Jenkins founded the Progressive Club in 1948, which encouraged local African Americans to register to vote, through the aid of Citizenship Schools, a topic he was educated in by his attendance at Highlander Folk Center in Tennessee. In 1959, he organized the Citizens’ Committee of Charleston County dedicated to the economic,
cultural and political improvement of local African Americans. With a personal motto "Hate is Expensive, Love is Progress," Jenkins uplifted his community, helping to found the Community Organization Federal Credit Union and serving on many local boards and committees.

Jenkins died in 1972, leaving behind a large family. After his death, many institutions, programs, and a bridge were named for him.

Collection Overview

Printed material, correspondence, photographic materials, and literary productions (1963-2003) document the life and works of Esau Jenkins (1910-1972). The collection is divided into four small series: 1.) Biographical papers include printed tributes; death notices and materials, including funeral sermons; a compact disc of images and other papers documenting lectures and exhibits regarding Jenkins held after his death, along with programs, correspondence and related material regarding naming of buildings, services and a bridge after him. It also contains genealogical information on Jenkins and his family. 2.) Writings holds miscellaneous correspondence and notes and printed versions of his talks and writings. 3.) Affiliations contains correspondence, brochures, notes, and other data on variety of organizations he helped found or was a member of, including the Progressive Club, Citizen's Committee of Charleston, Community Organization Credit Union, Political Action Committee of Charleston County, Political Awareness League of Charleston County, and the Highlander Folks Center. Topics mentioned include the 1969 Charleston Hospital Worker's strike, and the protested death of a young African American, Robert Brown, killed by a white policeman in 1970. 4.) Miscellaneous materials include photocopies of published materials documenting life on Johns Island, South Carolina and Jenkins' role in citizenship schools run by the Highlander Center and funded by the Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation.

Collection Arrangement

2. Writings, 1967-1972
4. Miscellaneous Material, 1966

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

No restrictions.

Copyright Notice

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Related Material
Esau Jenkins Audio Collection (AMN 500.024)

Subject Headings

African American businesspeople -- South Carolina.
African Americans -- Civil rights -- South Carolina.
African Americans -- Education -- South Carolina.
African Americans -- Politics and government -- South Carolina.
African Americans -- South Carolina -- Charleston County -- History.
African Americans -- South Carolina -- Johns Island -- Social conditions.
African Americans -- Suffrage -- South Carolina.
Charleston Area Community Relations Committee (Charleston, S.C.)
Citizens' Committee of Charleston (Charleston, S.C.)
Community Organization Credit Union.
Highlander Folk School (Monteagle, Tenn.)
Hospital Workers' Strike, Charleston, S.C., 1969.
Jenkins family.
Legal assistance to the poor -- South Carolina.
Literacy tests (Election law) -- South Carolina.
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
Police-community relations -- South Carolina -- Charleston.
Political Action Committee of Charleston County (Charleston County, S.C.)
Political action committees -- South Carolina.
Progressive Club (Charleston, S.C.)
Race discrimination -- South Carolina -- History.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Esau Jenkins Papers, Avery Research Center, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA.

Processing Information
Processed by Ervin Barnes, June 2005, and Harlan Greene

Encoded by Melissa Bronheim, July 2010, and Amanda Ross, February 2011

Edited by Aaron Spelbring, May 2013

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Detailed Description of the Collection


Box 1 Folder 1  Biographical Sketches
Includes clippings, photocopies and other materials sketching the life of Jenkins, including many obituary tributes.

Box 1 Folder 2  Caw Caw Interpretive Center Tribute CD
Includes CD containing color images documenting Jenkins' life, black-and-white printouts, and printed materials regarding program on Jenkins presented at Caw Caw Interpretive Center, 2003.

Box 1 Folder 3  Avery Research Center Tribute Program, 1982
Includes photocopies, programs and notes regarding program on Esau Jenkins at Avery Research Center, 1982.

Box 1 Folder 4  Memorials and Funeral
Includes memorial service data, including sermons preached at Esau Jenkins' funeral.

Box 1 Folder 5  Awards and Honors
Includes certificates and citations awarded to Jenkins, with some programs.

Box 1 Folder 6  Esau Jenkins Memorial Bridge
Includes resolution, correspondence, and program regarding naming a bridge between Johns and Wadmalaw Islands for Esau Jenkins, 1977-1978.

Box 1 Folder 7  Esau Jenkins Memorial Health Center
Includes clippings, photocopies, and programs regarding Esau Jenkins Memorial Health Center and Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation, 1970s.

Box 1 Folder 8  Esau Jenkins Opportunity Center
Includes photocopies of materials regarding Camp Care and Esau Jenkins Opportunity Center, 1970s.

Box 1 Folder 9  Jenkins Family History Book
Includes photocopy of booklet given to Esau and Janie Jenkins by their children, compiling a family history, with narrative, images, and family trees.

Box 1 Folder 10  Tributes Written by Family Members and Others
Includes photocopies of articles by and about Esau Jenkins' children and grandchildren; including a tribute poem; and a pencil sketch of "Papa Esau" Jenkins.

2. Writings, 1967-1972

Box 1 Folder 11  Speeches, Published Writings, and Notes
Includes notes for speeches on various topics, including some autobiographical jottings; with clippings and photocopies of published writings of Esau Jenkins.

Box 1 Folder 12  Correspondence, 1967-1972

Includes letters to and from Jenkins on a number of topics, chiefly concerning political, civil rights, and business matters. Also includes a National Geographic article mentioning him; a letter to Jenkins in Septima Clark's handwriting; and a letter from Guy and Candie Carawan.


Box 1 Folder 13  Progressive Club, 1965-1973

Includes correspondence and clippings regarding Progressive Club on Johns Island. A school composition essay by Jenkins discusses the founding of the Progressive Club.

Box 1 Folder 14  Citizens' Committee, 1964-1972

Includes correspondence of Jenkins as representative of the Citizens' Committee, a grass roots group working for equality and social change. Includes letters of thanks to officials for keeping the peace during the Charleston Hospital Workers' Strike of 1969.

Box 1 Folder 15  Citizens' Committee: Operations

Includes clippings, Jenkins' handwritten notes, programs, brochure, grant request, and miscellaneous materials regarding work of Citizens' Committee of Charleston.

Box 1 Folder 16  Citizens' Committee: Shooting of Robert Brown, 1970

Includes clippings and petitions by Citizens' Committee protesting the 1970 shooting death of 18-year-old Wadmalaw African American Robert Brown by a white policeman.

Box 1 Folder 17  Citizens' Committee: Scholarship Fund, 1971-1977

Includes correspondence, lists and programs regarding Citizens' Committee Scholarship Fund, renamed Esau Jenkins Memorial Scholarship Fund, 1971-1977 and undated.

Box 1 Folder 18  Community Organization Credit Union, 1966-1972

Includes brochure, speech, handwritten notes, statistics, correspondence, and other material regarding the Community Organization Credit Union, which was founded by Esau Jenkins.

Box 1 Folder 19  Political Action Committee of Charleston County, 1965

Includes a 1965 mimeo letter and member lists of the Political Action Committee of Charleston County, led by Herbert U. Fielding, Esau Jenkins, and others.

Box 1 Folder 21  Political Awareness League of Charleston County, 1971-1972

Includes correspondence, constitution, and program of appreciation dinner of the Political Awareness League of Charleston County, 1971-1972.

Box 1 Folder 22  Highlander Research and Education Center, 1963-1990
4. Miscellaneous Material, 1966

Box 1 Folder 23  Appeal to South Carolina Supreme Court: The City of Charleston v. Esau Jenkins

Includes published appeal to South Carolina Supreme Court requesting dismissal of Jenkins' 1962 conviction for selling alcohol after hours.

Box 1 Folder 24  Photographs

Includes reprints of photographs of Esau Jenkins, the Citizen's Committee, and other Johns Island scenes, some of which appeared in *Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life*.

Box 1 Folder 25  *Education for Citizenship: A Foundation's Experience* and Johns Island Materials

Includes photocopies of part of *Education for Citizenship: A Foundation's Experience* by Carl Tjerandsen regarding Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation's funding of Highlander Programs, specifically citizen education programs which involved Esau Jenkins; with clips from other publications regarding poverty and life on Johns Island.

Box 1 Folder 26  Miscellaneous Materials

Includes assorted photocopies, letters, and other materials found with collection, possibly unrelated.