

# PURDUE

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## UNIVERSITY

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<http://earchives.lib.purdue.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/debris&CISOPTR=55292&REC=10>

## FINDING AID TO THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND FACULTY COLLECTION, 1961-2014

**Purdue University Libraries  
Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections  
Research Center  
504 West State Street  
West Lafayette, Indiana 47907-2058  
(765) 494-2839**

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Processed by: Mary A. Seago, June 5, 2014

## Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator Information</b>	Cornelius, Alexandra, 1970(?)-
<b>Title</b>	Purdue University African American Students, Alumni and Faculty collection
<b>Collection Identifier</b>	MSP 154
<b>Date Span</b>	1961-2014, predominant 1993
<b>Abstract</b>	Research material including brochures, by-laws, clippings, directories, flyers, historical documents, newsletters, photocopies, programs, questionnaires and statistics, which document the history of Purdue University, African American students, alumni and faculty.
<b>Extent</b>	0.4 cubic feet (1 mss box)
<b>Finding Aid Author</b>	Mary A. Segó, 2014
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Repository</b>	Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University Libraries

## Administrative Information

<b>Location Information:</b>	ASC
<b>Access Restrictions:</b>	Collection is open for research.
<b>Acquisition Information:</b>	Research material donated by Alexandra Cornelius.
<b>Accession Number:</b>	unknown
<b>Preferred Citation:</b>	MSP 154, Purdue University African American Students, Alumni and Faculty collection, Karnes Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries
<b>Copyright Notice:</b>	Purdue University

**Related  
Materials  
Information:**

Pictorial Record of African American Students at Purdue University,  
1889-1992  
<http://www4.lib.purdue.edu/archon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=799&q=african+american>

...Or the Fire Next Time: A Timeline of African American History at Purdue  
<http://collections.lib.purdue.edu/orthefirenexttime/>

## **Subjects and Genres**

### **Persons**

Cornelius, Alexandra, 1970(?) (date of birth)  
Williams, Helen Bass, 1916-1991  
Zamora, Antonio, 1930-  
Higginbotham, Judge A. Leon, Jr., 1928-1998  
Robinson, Glenn, 1973-  
Burton, Lawrence, 1951-  
Jackson, Eugene B., 1915-2003  
Taylor, Eugene L.

### **Organizations**

Purdue University  
Purdue University. Black Cultural Center  
Purdue University. African American Studies and Research Center

### **Topics**

Purdue University--Students  
African American Students--Indiana  
Purdue University--Faculty  
Purdue University--Alumni and alumnae  
African Americans

### **Form and Genre Types**

Brochures  
By-laws  
Clippings  
Directories  
Flyers  
Historical documents  
Newsletters  
Photocopies  
Programs  
Questionnaires  
Research  
Statistics

### **Occupations**

Students  
Faculty

## History of Purdue University African American Students, Faculty and Alumni collection

In 1993 The Office of Human Relations, the Purdue Alumni Association and the Black Cultural Center worked together to increase the involvement of African Americans in alumni and other University activities. A quote from a Purdue University *Perspective* at that time states, "There have been numerous contributions by African Americans to Purdue's growth as a premier university," says Myra DeBrow Mason, director of diversity and multicultural affairs. "Black alumni have distinguished themselves in many fields, and we would hope they will lend their skills and expertise to become involved again."

A project backed by the Purdue Alumni Association and the Black Cultural Center was undertaken in 1993 to contact African American alumni and invite those not already connected to the University to become involved again. This project was also spurred on by the silver anniversary celebration of the Black Cultural Center on the West Lafayette Campus in 1995, along with the creation of the Helen Bass Williams Scholarship presented annually to an incoming African American student from Indiana. It was also noted in the Purdue University *Perspective*, "We would really like alumni to become interested in the Williams Scholarship," says Renee Spaulding, assistant director of the Black Cultural Center. "She was a voice of conscience at the University during a time that saw many changes on campus. She was an extraordinary woman, and we hope people will support the scholarship in her memory."

It was noted that before 1974, a student's permanent record did not include any racial or ethnic identification. This missing information impaired efforts of the Purdue Alumni Association to make the group more inclusive of all alumni.

At the same time efforts were being made to contact African American alumni in 1993, Alexandra Cornelius, a graduate student in history began researching African-American history at Purdue for the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. She used the research project to learn about the many contributions blacks have made to Purdue and to learn of the experiences of blacks attending Purdue decades ago. Cornelius went through 99 volumes of the *Debris*, the Purdue student yearbook and hundreds of *Exponents*, the student newspaper. She searched for information to fill the gap in Purdue's history.

As Cornelius undertook research for this project, she made several discoveries. The first was that Purdue had a longer history of black matriculation than she had expected. The first black student she came across in the yearbook was David Robert Lewis, a student from Greensburg who graduated in 1894 with a civil engineering degree. She also discovered that George W. Lacey may have been the first black student to graduate from Purdue.

In 1905, John Henry Weaver, a black student, ran for the university track team. But Purdue teams, like other national sports teams, became segregated in the 1910s and 1920s. They remained segregated until 1947, when black attorney Willard Ransom, a Purdue alumnus, challenged the University, and a student protest led to a black football player being put into the game. Cornelius found other evidence that life must have been difficult for black students in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This collection contains material from Cornelius' research into the history of blacks at Purdue. Alexandra Cornelius graduated from Purdue with a M.A. in 1994. She went on to get a Ph.D. from Washington University in 2006.

For further information on African American history at Purdue University, please see:

<http://collections.lib.purdue.edu/orthefirenexttime/Or%20the%20Fire%20Next%20Time.pdf>

*Sources:*

Lotus, Jean L. "'Up South' In Indiana: Black Alumni Remember Purdue." *Campus Weekly: for Purdue Students* 2 (10): pp. 1, 7. Print.

"University reaches out to African American alumni." *Purdue University Perspective*: circa 1993: 3. Print.

## Collection Description

### Scope

The Purdue University African American Students, Alumni and Faculty collection (1961-2014; 0.4 cubic feet) donated by Alexandria Cornelius, was likely gathered during her research on African American students, alumni and faculty at Purdue University. Historical information was gathered from numerous newspapers, *Debris* yearbooks, directories, statistics, and questionnaires sent to black alumni. Also included are Black Cultural Center newsletters, along with programs and flyers from the Black Cultural Center and The African American Studies and Research Center. Prominent alumni featured include, Helen Bass Williams, Glenn Robinson, Lawrence Burton, Judge A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. and Eugene B. Jackson. Also included is information on former faculty members, Antonio (Tony) Zamora, director, Black Cultural Center, 1973-1995 and Orlando L. Taylor, recipient of honorary Doctor of Letters, 1994. Types of materials include: brochures, by-laws, various clippings, directories, flyers, historical documents, newsletters, photocopies of articles, programs, questionnaires and statistics. The collection is organized into 3 series:

### Arrangement

#### **1. Purdue University African American Students, 1961-2014 (0.2 cubic feet).**

This series contains the historical manuscript, "Evolution of the Black Presence at Purdue University," by Alexandria Cornelius, along with articles, a document and vita pertaining to Cornelius and her African-American Purdue alumni research project. Also included are newspaper clippings (photocopies) of *Exponent* articles from 1961; photocopies from the *Debris*, which include fraternity photographs from Omega Psi Phi and Alpha Phi Alpha; a listing, "Black Graduate Students and Professional Staff, Purdue University," 1973-1974; statistics sheets on, "Minority Student Enrollment, Purdue at West Lafayette and a "Directory of Black and Hispanic Staff and Students," Purdue University, 1987-1988. This series also contains additional clippings about students and events from various newspapers (photocopies) and a newsletter, *Black History News & Notes*, from the Indiana Historical Society, 1993. Lastly, there is a program, "30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Book: The Black Caucus of Faculty and Staff Annual Academic and Service Awards Program, April 16, 2005."

#### **2. Purdue University African American Alumni and Faculty, 1977-1994 (0.1 cubic feet).**

The various items in this series include, directories, Black Faculty and Administrative Staff, 1977-78, 1988-89, 1991 (faculty); clippings and notations, Purdue University black alumni and faculty, circa 1981-1994; a constitution and by-laws for the black caucus of faculty and staff at Purdue University, 1984; "Purdue Black Alumni Questionnaires," "Black Cultural Center, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration," 1993; *The Purdue Alumnus*, cover stories featuring Purdue University black alumni and faculty; Helen Bass Williams, Glenn Robinson and Lawrence Burton, November 1993, April 1994 and May 1994; a newspaper clipping, "Black Judge's Success Story Begins in Cold Attic," by Neil A. Lewis, an article about Purdue alum, Judge A. Leon

Higginbotham, Jr.; newspaper clippings (photocopies) from various newspapers, 1994 articles about the Black Cultural Center and various alumni, and a commencement program, with focus on honorary degrees given to Purdue alum, Eugene B. Jackson – Doctor of Humane Letters and former Purdue faculty member, Orlando L. Taylor – Doctor of Letters, 1994.

**3. Purdue University Black Cultural Center and the African American Studies and Research Center, 1977-1995 (0.1 cubic feet).** This series is comprised of newsletters from The Black Cultural Center, October 1977-December 1987 and February 1988-February 1994. It also includes brochures and flyers from various events at the African American Studies and Research Center, 1993 and brochures, pamphlets and flyers from, The Black Cultural Center, 1993; a clipping and biography information about Antonio (Tony) Zamora, director, Black Cultural Center, Purdue University, 1973-1995 and a listing from, “10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Black Cultural Center Commemorative,” (Purdue faculty, students and alumni listed), 1980.

## **Descriptive Rules**

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

## **Processing Information**

All materials have been housed in acid-free folders and acid-free boxes. The material is arranged chronologically within each series.



## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

### **Series 1. Purdue University African American Students, 1961-2014** (0.2 cubic feet)

**1 Box** *Newspaper Clippings (Photocopies), Statistics Sheets, Newsletter, Historical manuscript and program, 1961-2014*

#### Folder

1. Newspaper clippings (photocopies) of *Exponent* articles, 1961
2. Photocopies from the *Debris*, includes fraternity photographs from Omega Psi Phi and Alpha Phi Alpha, 1970
3. Listing, "Black Graduate Students and Professional Staff, Purdue University," 1973-1974
4. Statistics sheets, "Minority Student Enrollment, Purdue at West Lafayette, 1983, 1988 and 1993; "Total Students of Color As Percent of Enrollment," 1983, 1988 and 1993
5. "Directory of Black and Hispanic Staff and Students," Purdue University, 1987-1988
6. Newspaper clippings (photocopies) from various newspapers, 1993 (includes information on students and events)
7. Articles, document and vita which describe Alexandra Cornelius and her African-American Purdue alumni research project, 1993

#### Item

1. Document, "African-American Purdue Alumni Project," circa 1993
2. Lotus, Jean L. (1993). 'Up South' In Indiana: Black Alumni Remember Purdue. *Campus Weekly: for Purdue Students*, 2 (10), pp. 1, 7.
3. "University reaches out to African-American alumni," *Purdue University Perspective*, p. 3, circa 1993
4. Curriculum vitae, Alexandra Cornelius, 2014
8. Newsletter, *Black History News & Notes*, Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana Historical Society, November 1993.
9. Statistics sheet, "Purdue University--Office of the Registrar, Facts at a Glance - West Lafayette Campus, Spring Semester, 1993-94"
10. Historical manuscript, "Evolution of the Black Presence at Purdue University," by Alexandra Cornelius, second draft, July 15, 1994
11. Program, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Book: The Black Caucus of Faculty and Staff Annual Academic and Service Awards Program, April 16, 2005

### **Series 2. Purdue University African American Alumni and Faculty, 1977-1994** (0.1 cubic feet)

**1 Box** *Directories, Clippings (and notations), By-Laws, Questionnaires and Commencement Program, 1977-1994*

Folder

12. Directories, Black Faculty and Administrative Staff, 1977-78, 1988-89, 1991 (faculty)
13. Clippings and notations, Purdue University black alumni and faculty, circa 1981-1994
14. Constitution and By-Laws, The Black Caucus of Faculty and Staff at Purdue University, 1984
15. "Purdue Black Alumni Questionnaires," "Black Cultural Center, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration," 1993
16. *The Purdue Alumnus*, cover stories featuring Purdue University black alumni and faculty; Helen Bass Williams, Glenn Robinson and Lawrence Burton, November 1993, April 1994 and May 1994
17. Newspaper clipping, "Black Judge's Success Story Begins in Cold Attic," by Neil A. Lewis, *The New York Times Law*, p. B7, July 19, 1991 (article about Purdue alum, Judge A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr.)
18. Newspaper clippings (photocopies) from various newspapers, 1994 articles about the Black Cultural Center and various alumni
19. Commencement program, with focus on honorary degrees given to Purdue alum, Eugene B. Jackson – Doctor of Humane Letters and former Purdue faculty member, Orlando L. Taylor – Doctor of Letters, 1994

**Series 3. Purdue University Black Cultural Center and the African American Studies and Research Center, 1977-1995**

(0.1 cubic feet)

**1 Box** *Newsletters, Brochures, Clipping and Biography Information, List, "10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Black Cultural Center Commemorative," (Purdue faculty, students and alumni listed), 1977-1995*

20. Newsletters, The Black Cultural Center, Purdue University, October 1977-December 1987
21. Newsletters, The Black Cultural Center, Purdue University, February 1988-February 1994
22. Brochures and flyers from various events, The African American Studies and Research Center, 1993
23. Brochures, pamphlets and flyers, The Black Cultural Center, 1993
24. Clipping and biography information, Antonio (Tony) Zamora, Director, Black Cultural Center, Purdue University, 1973-1995
25. List, "10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Black Cultural Center Commemorative," (Purdue faculty, students and alumni listed), 1980