K1219

Thomas A. Webster (1907-1988) Papers
1921-1988
9 cubic feet, 5 oversize volumes

Webster was executive director of the Urban League of Kansas City, community activist, and chairman of the Social Science Department of Avila College. Includes files related to his research and writing: notes, clippings, preliminary and final drafts of articles, correspondence, and printed material. Also his personal and professional correspondence and scrapbooks and files of his wife, Fern Beck Webster (1911-2002), an early childhood educator and advocate.

BIOGRAPHY:

Thomas A. Webster was born to Charles and Annie Webster in Wilmington, Delaware on March 2, 1907. He received his A.B. in Sociology from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1931 and came to Kansas City in 1932 to become Industrial Relations Secretary for the Urban League. He was named Executive Director of the League in 1935 and served in that capacity for 23 years, retiring in 1958. In 1949, he earned a Master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Kansas. From 1959 to 1960, he was an instructor in Sociology at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, after which he joined the faculty of Avila College and served as Chairman of the Social Science Department until 1975.

Throughout his life, Webster was a community activist, receiving numerous awards and serving on many committees, commissions, and boards, including: The Kansas City Housing Authority, the Jackson County Charter Commission, the Jackson County Advisory Commission on Human Relations, the Missouri Housing Development Commission, the Jackson County Charter Review Commission, the Governor’s Advisory Council for Housing and Neighborhood Investment Study, the Santa Fe Outreach Project. He was a life member of the Urban League and received awards from the Ivanhoe Club, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, the Kansas City Regional Council, and the NAACP Harold L. Holliday, Sr. Civil Rights Award. Webster was an active member of St. Augustine’s Episcopal Church.
Webster’s personal research interests included the culture of the Cuna Indians of San Blas, Panama, as well as other, Pre-Columbian societies, and he made several study trips in the 1960s and 1970s. He was also a prolific writer of articles and book reviews which appeared frequently in the Kansas City Star, the Kansas City Call, and other publications throughout the country.

Webster married Fern Araminta Beck on March 2, 1935, and they had one daughter, Carolyn. Fern Webster was an early childhood educator herself, receiving an award from the Missouri State Board of Education in 1982. Thomas Webster died on October 7, 1988.

PROVENANCE:

This gift was received from Fern Beck Webster as accession KA1019 on January 5, 1999.

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PREFERRED CITATION:

Specific item; folder number; Thomas A. Webster (1907-1988) Papers (K1219); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-KC].

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DESCRIPTION:

The collection chiefly consists of Webster’s files related to his research and writing. Folders may include notes, clippings, preliminary and final drafts of articles, correspondence, and printed material. The collection also contains his personal and professional correspondence from 1976-86. Boxes 7 and 8 contain materials related to Fern Webster’s profession as an educator.
INVENTORY:

BOX 001

Folder 1.1 The Ancient Rubber Ball Game, 1970s
Folder 1.2 *Chaneysville Incident* by Bradley- review, 1981
Folder 1.3 African Survivals: Plants and Vegetables, 1980s
Folder 1.4 *The Last of the Scottsboro Boys* by Norris and Washington- review, 1981
Folder 1.5 Graphiti, 1972
Folder 1.6 Travel article for *Modern Maturity*, 1975
Folder 1.7 Pre-Columbian Contacts in New World by Africans, 1970s
Folder 1.8 “Crucifixion: A Method of Capital Punishment”- article, 1980s
Folder 1.9 “The Fountain of the Good Life: Commerce Tower Building” – article, 1970s-1980s
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Folder 1.16 Nefertiti, 1977
Folder 1.17 *Crisis at Central High School* by Huckaby- review, 1978
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Folder 1.24 Mayan Ruins, 1970s
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Folder 1.26 Anasazi Culture, 1970s
Folder 1.27 *Counting by Race: Moral Equality or Numerical Equality?*- review, 1970s
Folder 1.28  *Abolitionism* by Joaquim Nabuco- review, 1970s
Folder 1.29  In Search of Our Mother’s Garden, 1980s
Folder 1.30  Invisible People: Red Legs, Eta, Moors, Maroons, Black Carib, Creoles, Cajuns, Croatans, 1970s
Folder 1.31  Urban League Research Council, August 12, 1982
Folder 1.32  *The Riddle of Violence* by Kenneth Kaunda- review
Folder 1.33  *This Was Harlem, 1900-1950* by Jervis Anderson, 1982
Folder 1.34  Critiques – Fell and Sertima books, 1986
Folder 1.35  *Brothers and Keepers* by John Wideman- review, 1984
Folder 1.36  *Tostsi* by Athol Fugard- review, 1980s
Folder 1.37  *Schools on Trial* by Dentler and Scott- review, 1981
Folder 1.38  *The Underclass* by Ken Auletta, 1980s
Folder 1.39  *Black Life in Corporate America* by Davis and Watson- review, 1980s
Folder 1.40  Richard Allen, 1980s
Folder 1.41  *Great Expectations: Baby Boom* by Landon Jones, 1981
Folder 1.42  *Black Apollo of Science* by Ernest E. Just- review, 1984
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Folder 1.45  Cuna- miscellaneous notes, 1970s
Folder 1.46  Cuna Ceremonies for the Girl, 1960s-1970s
Folder 1.47  “A Tale of Two Doctors: James Durham and Benjamin Rush”- article, 1980s
Folder 1.48  Miscellaneous- civil rights, 1950s-1970s
Folder 1.49  Dr. Solomon C. Fuller – revised manuscript, 1970s
Folder 1.50  Dr. Solomon C. Fuller- photographs, 1950s

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Folder 2.2  Cuna Mola: History and Art, 1980s
Folder 2.3  Cuna Mola Material, 1970s
Folder 2.4  Dr. Clyde E. Keeler, 1969-1970
Folder 2.5  Original manuscripts, reviews, letters from important people, 1931-1984
Folder 2.6  Moon Children, 1970s
Folder 2.7  Publications, catalogs, etc., 1972-1973
Folder 2.8  Black English, 1970s
Folder 2.9  *Been in the Storm So Long* by Leon Litwack- review, 1980s
Folder 2.10  Avila retirement reception, 1975
Folder 2.11  *Roots of the Soul: The Psychology of Black Expressiveness* by Pasteur and Toldson- review, 1982
Folder 2.12  *Sex Roles and Change in Central America* by Loveland- review, 1982
Folder 2.13  Roots/Booklovers- review, 1970s
Folder 2.14  Alley Life in Washington, 1970s
Folder 2.15  The Collected Poems of Sterling Brown, 1981
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Folder 2.20  *Daddy King* by Martin Luther King Sr.- review, 1980
Folder 2.21  Glossalia, 1970s
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Folder 2.23  *People Are Such Funny Animals* by William Waddell- review, 1983
Folder 2.24  Truman’s letters to Bess, 1950s-1980s
Folder 2.25  *Song of Solomon/Tar Baby* by Toni Morrison, 1980s
Folder 2.26  *The New American Poverty* by Michael Harrington, 1980s
Folder 2.27  *City of Refuge* by Rudolph Fisher- review, 1987
Folder 2.28  *Negro Baseball* by Tygiel and Kogosin- review, 1980s
Folder 2.29  Dr. William L. Dawson, 1960s
Folder 2.30  Quality Hill – East 24th Street, 1970s
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Folder 2.32  Kansas City Monarchs, 1983
Folder 2.33  Urban League Alumni, 1980s
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Folder 2.35 “Imhotep: Father of Egyptian Medicine”- article, 1980s
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Folder 2.39 Webster profiled in KC Star, 1977
Folder 2.40 Photographs- Norbert Rillieux, inventor, 1970s
Folder 2.41 Photographs- Dr. Solomon C. Fuller, 1920s-1950s
Folder 2.42 *A Gallery of Harlem Portraits* by Melvin B. Tolson- review, 1980s
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Folder 3.5 Letter from Webster soliciting stories of KS and MO blacks who were prominent in their careers; overview of William Fambrough negatives, 1985
Folder 3.6 Slavery and Medicine, 1970s
Folder 3.7 *The Life of Langston Hughes* by Arnold Rampersad- review, 1986
Folder 3.8 Craig Lamonte Pryor, 1976-1987
Folder 3.9 *Quiet Rage: Bernie Goetz in a Time of Madness* by Lillian Rubin- review, 1986
Folder 3.10 *The Black Extended Family* by Martin and Mitchel- review, 1978
Folder 3.12 Arna Bontemps-Lanston Hughes letters, 1925-1967
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Folder 3.14 Langston Hughes materials, 1981
Folder 3.15 Langston Hughes- photographs, negatives, 1920s-1960s
Folder 3.16 Program – retirement celebration of Ernest Louis Webster, Wilmington, DE, November 8, 1986
Folder 3.17 Origins of the Civil Rights Movement, 1980s
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Folder 3.20 Cuna Indians of San Blas Territory, 1970s
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Folder 3.36 The Black Experience – KCUL, February 18, 1982
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Folder 4.13 Book Lovers, February 9, 1985
Folder 4.14 *William Hastie: Grace under Pressure* by Gilbert Ware- review, 1983
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Folder 4.19 Toni Morrison- reviews, 1980s
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Folder 4.21 *Communism in Harlem* by Mark Naison- review, 1984
Folder 4.22 *Just Above My Head* by James Baldwin, 1979
Folder 4.23 *Marcus Garvey: The Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, 1983
Folder 4.24 *Black Life in Corporate America* by Davis and Watson, 1983
Folder 4.25 *Groundwork: Charles H. Houston* by Genna Rae McNeil, 1984
Folder 4.26 *Women, Race and Sex* by Angela Davis, 1982
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<td>Notes for Paul Robeson biography by Susan Robeson, 1970s</td>
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<td><em>America B.C.</em> by Barry Fell for Book Review editor Thorpe Menn, November 22, 1976</td>
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<td>Folder 4.54</td>
<td><em>Race and Kinship in Monroe, Michigan</em> by James DeVries - review, 1984</td>
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<td><em>The World from Brown’s Lounge</em> by Michael Bell - review, 1983</td>
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<td><em>Free Frank</em> by Juliet Walker - review, 1983</td>
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<td>The Boule Journal of Sigma Pi Phi (Webster referenced on page 32), January 1959</td>
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**BOX 005**

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Community Survey of Social and Health Work in KCMO, 1939

FERN BECK WEBSTER

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Folder 7.32  Developing Intellectual Skills/Workshop Materials, 1970s
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Folder 8.21  Anthropology/Medical articles and journals, 1943-1981
Folder 8.22  Lincoln High School yearbooks, 1921, 1922, 1925, 1926, 1935, 1938

The Crisis Magazine, June/July 1988


Our City in Racial Ferment – KC Star/Times series, 1968
National Urban League – 70th anniversary, 1980
State Board of Education award and photograph, 1982

BOX 009
Folder 9.1 Illustrations and photographs of influential Blacks (moved to Flatbox)
The State of Black America (National Urban League), 1980, 1982
Kansas City’s Santa Fe Neighborhood: Analysis and Report, 1982
National Urban League- Quarter Century Club Silver Anniversary Dinner, Chicago, July 23, 1979 desk stand

Scroll (Urban League?)

FLAT BOXES 001 AND 002
Framed photograph – Beau Brummel Club 15th Anniversary, Elks Rest, February 9, 1934
Green scrapbook – Fern, c.1975-1980
Brown scrapbook – clippings, 1951-1957
2 large black scrapbooks – clippings and articles on various black and civic issues, 1932-1988
1 large black scrapbook – correspondence, photographs, printed material, clippings, awards, certificates, 1930-1988
Folder 1. Illustrations and photographs of influential Blacks