

Oral history interview with Frank Jenkins, 1972

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Jenkins, Frank, -1973
Title	Oral history interview with Frank Jenkins
Dates	1972 (inclusive) 1972 1972
Quantity	2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.) 1 transcript (13 p.)
Collection Number	1964 (Accession No. 1964-001)
Summary	Interview of International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) official discussing education and his early experience with discrimination, his parents and the union
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	Open to all users.
Languages	English

Biographical Note

International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) official.

Jenkins was born at the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco, CA. His father, an African American born in Texas, was a non-commissioned officer in the U.S. Army; a professional soldier who fought in the Spanish American War. Jenkins' mother was a native of the Philippines. In 1909 he moved to Seattle when his father was transferred to Fort Lawton. Initially, the family lived there in base housing. Later they moved to Ballard. Jenkins attended the Fort Lawton grade school and Queen Anne High School, but did not finish. Except for a brief time spent in Alaska, he worked on the Seattle docks his entire adult life. He began as a riveter then became a longshoreman. He joined the longshoremen's union in 1934 and served as one of its officers from 1936 to 1940(?), and from 1943(?) until his retirement in 1967. He died in 1973.

Content Description

Interview conducted by R. C. Berner on 7 and 28 Jun 1972; transcript; ILWU constitutions; ephemera.

Jenkins discusses his education and his early experience with discrimination, and mentions several black families who were his neighbors in Ballard. He briefly describes the backgrounds of his parents who were not highly educated, the reasons for leaving Queen Anne High School, his early employment

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on the Seattle waterfront and his union involvement. Jenkins details the history of the unions' exclusionary practices in the Puget Sound area and explains the issue of blacks as strikebreakers. He discusses discriminatory hiring policies which limited employment opportunities for black longshoremen in Seattle, the 1921 and 1934 strikes, and the changed employment practices resulting from the latter strike. The structure of the longshoremen's union (ILWU) is discussed, as well as some contract negotiations that occurred during Jenkins' tenure as a union official. Military oversight of the Seattle Port during World War II is mentioned, including the discriminatory recruitment practices used by both the Army and the Navy. Jenkins illustrates the consequences of his union activism during the war and afterwards during the McCarthy era by recounting several episodes in which his port security pass was revoked and subsequently reissued. He chronicles the turbulent post-war history of the longshoremen's union in the Puget Sound area and explains the reason for the union's expulsion from the CIO in 1948.

Use of the Collection

Alternative Forms Available

[Listen to the audio recording and view the transcript](#) of this interview on the Libraries Digital Collections site.

Restrictions on Use

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Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated by Frank Jenkins, 7/6/1972

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

African American labor union members--Washington (State)--Seattle

African American stevedores--Washington (State)--Seattle

Stevedores--Labor unions--Washington (State)--Seattle

Personal Names :

Bridges, Harry, 1901-1990

Jenkins, Frank, d. 1973--Archives

Corporate Names :

International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union

International Longshoremen's Association

Jenkins, Andrew

Other Creators :

Personal Names :

Berner, Richard C

(creator)

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Personal Papers/Corporate Records (University of Washington)

2007 (Last modified: 4/16/2018)



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