# The Filson Historical Society

# Aubespin, Mervin, 1937-Papers, 1910-2020 (bulk: 1980-2015)

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, contact the Collections Department.

**Size of Collection:** 7 cubic feet and 1 oversize folder

> Location Number: Mss. A A892

#### **Scope and Content Note**

This collection includes material related to Mervin Aubespin's career as a journalist, as well as some material from his personal life. Material throughout the collection reflects Aubespin's lifelong mission to bring more people of color and underrepresented populations into the field of journalism. The collection largely consists of correspondence, newsletters, conference material, and clippings.

Throughout his career, Aubespin was involved in numerous professional journalism organizations including, but not limited to the National Association of Black Journalists, the American Copy Editor Society, and American Society of Newspaper Editors. The collection also relates to Aubespin's involvement in several programs related to mentoring journalism students, including the Chips Quinn Scholars and Multicultural Journalism Workshop, among others.

In addition, other material relates to Aubespin's involvement with the United Nations Development Programme focusing on such issues such as HIV/AIDS in Africa and media images of Africa, among other topics. Finally, Aubespin's involvement as co-author of *Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History* alongside Kenneth Clay and Dr. Blaine Hudson is reflected through photo permission forms, event flyers and other material.

This collection also contains digital audiovisual material that is available to researchers in the Reference Room. One video, originally labeled "A Day with Merv Aubespin," contains what appears to be part one of a multipart local talk show called *Consider This*. Aubespin discusses how he got in the newspaper industry, his involvement in the Civil Rights movement in Alabama and Kentucky, his time as a teacher, and work at BF Goodrich. Aubespin briefly recalls his service in the military, during which time he took an interest in art. In addition, Aubespin discusses his work with the Louisville Art Workshop and how he began working at the Courier-Journal. He briefly speaks about his career as a journalist, including his trips to Africa with the United Nations Development Programme and his work with the National Association of Black Journalists.

The second video is Louisville Metro TV Special Feature #256 Celebration of the release of *Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History* (2011). This video features Mayor Greg Fischer introducing the co-authors of the book, Mervin Aubespin, Kenneth Clay and Dr. J. Blaine Hudson. The authors in turn speak about the contents of the book, with short theatrical interpretations by actors periodically.

Related Collections: Mervin Aubespin museum collection (2020.27.1-2) Mervin Aubespin photo collection (020PC11)

#### **Biographical Note**

Mervin Aubespin was born in 1937 in Opelousas, Louisiana. In 1958, he graduated from the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University). While studying at Tuskegee, Aubespin became involved with the Civil Rights movement, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott and march from Selma to Montgomery. Upon graduation Aubespin moved to Louisville where he became a teacher and remained involved in the civil rights demonstrations in the city. He then took a job at BF Goodrich, which according to Aubespin resulted in the loss of his draft deferment. In an interview, Aubespin stated that while serving his obligatory two years of military service, he decided to spend his free time studying art.<sup>1</sup>

Following honorable release from the military, Aubespin returned to Louisville where he and other Black artists founded the Louisville Art Workshop. In 1967, Aubespin took a job at the *Courier-Journal* as a news artist.<sup>2</sup>

It was during a period of pronounced racial unrest in 1968 that Aubespin's career as a reporter began. During this time as it became unsafe for his white coworkers to report from the scene, Aubespin assumed the role of reporter and relayed stories of what was occurring in west Louisville to the writers at the *Courier-Journal*. Aubespin says he eventually returned to his job as an artist before being approached months later by the publisher of the newspaper and told that he was more valuable to the *Courier-Journal* as a reporter. In 1971, he entered the Minority Journalism Program at Columbia University.<sup>3</sup>

Aubespin's career as a journalist for the *Courier-Journal* spanned decades and included countless stories. Throughout his time at the *Courier-Journal* he worked in several positions and retired from the newspaper in 2002 as the Associate Editor/Development. Aubespin served as a consultant on media to the United Nations Development Programme's Office of Public Affairs and led numerous trips of journalists to countries including Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and South Africa, among others.<sup>4</sup>

Aubespin's lifelong mission was to diversify newspaper staff and involve more people of color in the production of the news, which is reflected in his involvement with numerous professional organizations and mentorship programs. Aubespin was a longtime member of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), and was involved in the Chips Quinn Scholars program and Multicultural Journalism Workshop, among other organizations.

In 2011, Mervin Aubespin, Kenneth Clay, and Dr. J. Blaine Hudson published their coauthored book *Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History* after years of work on the project. Aubespin has received numerous awards and accolades, including the Ida B. Wells Award in 1990 for "for exemplary leadership in providing minorities employment opportunities in journalism," and the 1991 Distinguished Service to Journalism Award by the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communications. He is a member of the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame.

Aubespin is married to Deborah Cahill Aubespin. He has a daughter from a previous marriage, Eleska Aubespin and a stepdaughter, Sarah Spearing.

References:

- 1 "Consider This," Digital Collections, undated
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Folder: 343a: Photocopies of plaques presented for Blanche B Ottenheimer award, Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame, and Summer Program for Minority Journalists, 1995-2012 Item 344: American Copy Editor Society Lifetime Membership plaque, undated Item 345: Guest Speaker Ida B. Wells Lecture plaque, 2000 Item 346: Real Mensh Award plaque conferred by Members of the Temple of Brotherhood, undated Item 347: Award of Distinction plaque conferred by the National Association of Black Journalists, 1995

### **Digital Materials**

Folder 348: Original copies of digital material DVDs, undated

O:\DIGITAL COLLECTIONS - Reference Room Access\Mss. A A892 – Mervin Aubespin papers

Video of Aubespin on show "Consider This" Video of Louisville Metro celebration of *Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History* release

These files are restricted to in-house viewing.

#### Oversize

Folder 349: Awards presented by the Board of Aldermen, Office of the Mayor, Governor Steven Beshear, and Poynter Institute, and caricature of Aubespin, 1990-2011

#### **Subject Headings**

African American arts. African American authors. African Americans – Kentucky – Louisville. American Copy Editor Society. American Society of Newspaper Editors. Civil rights movements – United States. Clay, Kenneth H., 1939-Courier-journal (Louisville, Ky.) Coxe, Gloucester Caliman, 1907-1999 Hawpe, David V., 1943-Hudson, James Blaine, III, 1949-2013 Journalism – Kentucky – Louisville. Louisville Art Workshop (Louisville, Ky.) Louisville (Ky.) Mandela, Nelson, 1918-2013. Mass media and minorities. Minorities in journalism. National Association of Black Journalists. Newspaper employees. Tuskegee Institute. United Nations Development Programme.