

Collection #
M 1355
OM 0662
OMB 0172
DVD 1351-63, 1401

**FATHER BONIFACE HARDIN COLLECTION
1954-2012 (BULK: 1990s-2000s)**

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Processed by

Lyndsey Blair
March 2018

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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	Manuscript Materials: 8 manuscript boxes, 1 oversized manuscript box (OMB), 2 oversized manuscript (OM) folders Visual Materials: 4 photograph folders, 2 cold storage color photograph boxes, 2 OVA photograph folders, 2 cold storage color OVA folders, 1 cold storage color OVB folder, 22 VHS tapes, 14 DVDs Printed Materials: 6 printed collections items Artifacts: 1 artifact
COLLECTION DATES:	1954–2012 (Bulk: 1990s–2000s)
PROVENANCE:	Joseph & Matthew Payton Philanthropic Studies Library at IUPUI (2015.0337) and Stefanie Lee (2016.0003)
RESTRICTIONS:	Items listed as being in cold storage need at least four hours to acclimate, so patrons are advised to call ahead of their visit if they wish to view those items to allow for thawing time. There is a 73-year restriction from the date this collection is made public for folders listed as [RESTRICTED] in the guide.
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ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Martin University Publicity Collection M1076; <i>Indianapolis Recorder</i> Collection P303
ACCESSION NUMBERS:	2015.0337 & 2016.0003
NOTES:	Issues of <i>The Afro-American Journal</i> located in OMB 0172 have been vacuumed for mold, but residue might remain. If patrons are aware they may have allergies, please let Reference staff know so they can provide masks and/or gloves for patron use.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Dwight Randolph Hardin was born 18 November 1933 to Alfred and Elizabeth Hardin in Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky. Raised Catholic, he received his elementary education at St. Monica Parochial School in Bardstown. After his family's move to Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky, James continued his education at St. Peter Claver Parochial School.

At age thirteen, James decided to enter the priesthood. He was admitted to St. Meinrad Seminary, which had recently started accepting black students, in St. Meinrad, Spencer County, Indiana. He graduated from the seminary's high school in 1951. Two years later James became a Benedictine monk and chose the name "Boniface," which means "doer of good."

Boniface graduated from St. Meinrad College in 1955. Four years later, he received his Master of Divinity degree from St. Meinrad's School of Theology and was ordained to the priesthood on 11 May 1959. Following graduation, Father Hardin served as assistant treasurer of St. Meinrad Archabbey. During this time, he also enrolled in graduate studies at the University of Notre Dame's School of Commerce and received his degree in 1963.

After completing his graduate work, Father Hardin decided he was ready to leave St. Meinrad and dedicate his life to serving the disenfranchised, particularly those in the black community. In 1965, he accepted the position of associate pastor at Holy Angels Catholic Church in Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana. Father Hardin served in this role under pastor Father Albert Ajamie.

Since the 1960s, Holy Angels' membership has been predominantly black. As such, Father Hardin got to experience the issues of this community and its inner-city neighborhood firsthand. To try and address these problems, Father Hardin founded the Northwest Action Council. Membership consisted of concerned residents from religious, educational, business, civic, and political sectors. Together this group protested and spoke out against poverty, segregation, police brutality, and the construction of Interstate 65. Despite the organization's best efforts, its goals were often not realized (Interstate 65, for instance, was eventually constructed and cut through the neighborhood, which resulted in the loss of several homes and businesses).

Even though the Northwest Action Council did not achieve all its goals, the group still received lots of attention for its efforts. Much of this attention was directed at Father Hardin. While some in the community praised his actions, others condemned them. For this latter group, Father Hardin was seen as "militant" and his actions were viewed as inappropriate for a priest. By 1968–69, negative opinion was so strong that then-Archbishop of Indianapolis Paul Schulte removed Father Hardin from his position at Holy Angels following his appearance at a Shortridge High School protest. He was quickly reinstated, however, following community outcry and a walkout during the Archbishop's Easter Sunday Mass at Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in 1969.

Father Hardin's return to his home church was brief. Partially inspired by his participation in the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC), an organization formed in 1968 in response to the Black Power movement, Father Hardin decided to leave Holy Angels and focus his efforts on advocating for the disenfranchised full-time. Instead of working with an existing organization, however, he decided to create his own.

In 1969, Father Hardin opened Martin Center at 35th and College Avenue. The name was chosen to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and St. Martin de Porres, the first black saint from the Americas. Just like MLK Jr. and de Porres, Father Hardin wanted his work at Martin Center to positively impact racial minorities and the poor.

Working alongside the reverend in this effort was Sister Jane Schilling (1930–2017), a white nun.¹ Father and Sister met during the latter's time as a teacher at Holy Angels School, and the two bonded over their commitment to racial justice. The social programs and services they provided at Martin Center were not only meant to help the disenfranchised but society as a whole. For instance, the center offered anti-racism training to people of all races and backgrounds.

The Institute of Afro-American Studies, meanwhile, was established at Martin Center to increase awareness and appreciation of black history and culture. Information of this nature was largely disseminated through programs and publications produced by Father Hardin and Sister Schilling. The best-known were *The Afro-American Journal*, the *Afro-American in Indiana* radio show, which aired on WIAN 90.1 from 1971–1991, and *Afro-American*, which aired on television station WFYI in the 1970s.

Finally, the Indianapolis Sickle Cell Center (now known as the Martin Center Sickle Cell Initiative) was established at Martin Center by Father Hardin and Dr. Raymond Pierce (1930–2014) in 1971 to educate the community about this genetic disorder. In 1972, the center received government funding to study the disease. In addition to conducting research, the Sickle Cell Center also tested people for the disorder. This service was very important to the community, especially for African-Americans who were (and still are) disproportionately affected by the disease.

During his time at Martin Center, Father Hardin realized that many people he interacted with were barred from career advancement, despite their work experience, because they lacked a college degree. In 1977, Father Hardin and Sister Schilling decided to address this problem by establishing Martin Center College. Another offshoot of Martin Center, the college was created for non-traditional students: low-income, minorities, and adult-learners.

¹ Nancy Mary Schilling was born 8 October 1930 in Minocqua, Oneida County, Wisconsin. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in St. Louis, Missouri on 15 September 1948, and professed final vows in the community on 15 August 1956. Sister Jane earned a bachelor's degree in history and social studies at Fontbonne University in St. Louis in 1961 and a master's degree in ancient history at Loyola University in Chicago in 1966.

Originally located at Martin Center's 35th and College Avenue address, the college separated from the social services center and moved into the former St. Francis de Sales Church in the Brightwood neighborhood in 1987. The same year, Martin Center College received accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (now known as the Higher Learning Commission). In 1990, Martin Center College became Martin University. Following this name change, the number of students, faculty, and staff expanded, which necessitated more learning space. With funding from Lilly Endowment, the newly constructed, \$10 million Martin University Educational Center opened in 2001.

Current educational opportunities at Martin University include both undergraduate and graduate programs. Bachelor's degrees are available in Addiction Counseling, Applied Sciences, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Education, Liberal Arts, Psychology, and Religious Studies, while Master's degrees are available in Community Psychology and Urban Ministry. Martin University has also offered courses at its Lady Elizabeth satellite campus inside the Indiana Women's Prison since 1988.

Frederick Douglass performances served as another educational opportunity as well as a time-honored event at the school. President Hardin, who happened to greatly resemble Douglass in appearance, wrote, produced, and starred in several original plays on the famed abolitionist's life. Supporting roles, meanwhile, were often performed by other faculty members. The programs were held for Martin students and the larger Indianapolis community from the early 1990s to the late 2000s.

By the late 2000s, Father Hardin had already begun the process of stepping down as Martin University's president. His official last day was 31 December 2007. During his retirement, Father Hardin remained active at the school as well as the larger community. Special attention was given to cancer and diabetes awareness and education, especially within the black community. Father Hardin also spent some of his retirement fostering interfaith dialogue in Indianapolis, an effort he had participated in throughout his life.

Father Hardin's years of service have been recognized numerous times by various sectors of society including religion, education, government, health, business, and the arts. A selection of his awards include International Citizen of the Year from the International Center of Indianapolis; Indiana Living Legend from the Indiana Historical Society; *NUVO's* Cultural Vision Award for Lifetime Achievement; Spirit of Justice Award from the Indiana Civil Rights Commission; and honorary doctorates from Indiana University, Marian University, Franklin College, Manchester University, Christian Theological Seminary, Governor's State University, Oakland City University, and University of Indianapolis. In 2009, the 50th anniversary of Hardin's ordination to the priesthood was recognized with a Mass attended by local Catholic leaders and well-wishers.

Father Boniface Hardin died 24 March 2012. He is buried at St. Meinrad Archabbey.

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Father Boniface Hardin Collection is organized into four series:

Series One covers Father Hardin's early years. This section includes genealogical records; documents and photographs related to St. Meinrad; materials about Holy Angels Catholic Church and the Northwest Action Council; documents connected to Hardin's temporary removal from Holy Angels; and records from the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus.

Series Two covers Martin Center. This section includes brochures; funding proposals; photographs; select editions of *The Afro-American Journal*²; select audio recordings of *The Afro-American in Indiana* radio program³; and videos of television specials on black history and culture produced by the center in the 1970s.

Series Three covers Martin Center College and Martin University. This section includes school pamphlets and catalogs; documents and videos of graduations, convocations, and honorary doctorate ceremonies; documents and photographs about the Educational Center; documents, photographs, and videos of Frederick Douglass performances; President Hardin's daily planners; biographies, genealogical records and awards related to Vice President Schilling; board meeting minutes; employee handbooks; financial statements; promotional documents and videos; annual reports; strategic plans; documentation regarding accreditation; documentation regarding grants and donations; correspondence; and articles.

Series Four covers Father Hardin's later years. This section includes documents, photographs, videos, and an artifact connected to Hardin's awards and recognitions; personal writings and speeches; photographs of Hardin's family; photographs from the Mass celebrating Hardin's 50th anniversary in the priesthood; and photographs from Father Hardin's memorial service at Martin University.

² Additional issues of *The Afro-American Journal* are available at IUPUI, IU Bloomington, Indianapolis Marion County Public Library (IMCPL), and Indiana State Library.

³ Additional recordings of *The Afro-American in Indiana* radio program are available at the Archives of African American Music and Culture at Indiana University. They can be accessed online via IU's Media Collections streaming site ([LINK](#)).

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