SHOREFRONT

Collect | Preserve | Educate

Creator: Organization for Positive Action and Leadership (OPAL)

Collection Title: Organization for Positive Action and Leadership (OPAL)

Date Span: 2014 – 2022

Extent: 2 boxes, 13 folders, 1 oversized box

Processors: Processed by Alexandra Gonzalez, Graduate Assistant at Northwestern University's Center for Civic Engagement. Completed October 2021.

Repository: Shorefront Legacy Center, 2214 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, IL 60201

Related Collections: Social & Civic Clubs and Organizations Collection, Evanston Chapter NAACP Collection.

ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Access Restrictions: No access restrictions.

Usage Restrictions: All copyrighted material created by OPAL was transferred to Shorefront Legacy Center upon donation of materials.

Language: English

Preferred Citation: Shorefront Archives

Provenance: These records were donated to Shorefront Legacy Center by OPAL in 2022.

Separations: Duplicates of some items in Box 1 were discarded, including duplicates of fact sheets, educational resources, board member biographies, membership forms, and sign-in sheets. Duplicates of some items in Box 2 were discarded: OPAL t-shirts, buttons, and flyers.

See Also: Social and Civic Clubs and Organizations collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection contains materials donated by OPAL to Shorefront Legacy Center shortly after OPAL disbanded in 2022. Paper materials include FOIA requests, FOIA documents, OPAL newsletters, OPAL's Facebook page posts and pictures, educational resources for members and meeting attendees, education proposals, biographies of OPAL's board members, and speaker notes and remarks. The collection also houses non-paper collateral, including OPAL t-shirts, buttons, flyers, a face mask, and an award for Rev. Dr. Michael Nabors.

BIOGRAPPHICAL / ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

OPAL was a nonprofit founded in 2014 by members of Evanston's Black community. Its lead founder is Cicely Fleming. OPAL's mission was to achieve racial equity in Evanston through advocacy, voter education, civic engagement, and candidate development by: engaging and equipping Evanston residents to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives, working to ensure that leadership reflects and prioritizes racial equity, and working to amplify the voices of Evanston residents who have been under-represented. OPAL used both public methods and private advocacy to purse its objectives. OPAL focused on improving Black student achievement in Evanston/Skokie School District 65; electing equity-focused candidates to the District 65 school board, the ETHS District 202 school board, and the Oakton Community College Board of Trustees; and racial equity in Evanston City government. OPAL disbanded in 2021. (Source: http://www.opalevanston.com/about)

ACCESS HEADINGS

African American history.

African Americans--Illinois--Evanston.
African Americans—race and equity
African Americans--education
Organization for Positive Action and Leadership (Evanston, Ill.)
OPAL (Evanston, Ill.)
Shorefront Legacy Center

CONTAINER LIST

Series I: General Materials

This series contains materials related to OPAL's general mission, organizational structure, and community work.

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	1	General Materials Materials include: external presentations that describe OPAL's mission and the structure of Evanston local government and local school boards, OPAL's 2016-17 goals and priorities, biographies of OPAL's board members, a fact sheet titled "Who is OPAL?", a description of OPAL Board Member positions, and a description of OPAL committees.	2016 – 2018
1	2	Letterhead & Collateral Materials include: OPAL membership forms, sign-in sheets, "Ways to Get Involved" sheets, a guide to attending school board meetings, and a guide on taking action with OPAL.	

Series II: Meeting Materials

This series contains material related to OPAL meetings, including Facebook events, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, sign-up sheets, and meeting announcements, flyers, and advertisements.

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	3	Meeting Materials	September 2016 – January 28, 2021

Series III: Newsletters

This series contains copies of OPAL newsletters sent from July 2018 – September 2021. Although individual newsletters are missing publication dates, they appear to be organized in reverse chronological order.

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	4	OPAL Newsletters	July 2018 – May 2020
1	5	OPAL Newsletters	May 18, 2020 – September 2021

Series IV: Activism

This series contains material related to OPAL's activism, with special attention to Evanston's District 65 education and local politics.

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	6	Education Activism & Resources	2014 – 2020

		This folder contains materials related to OPAL's activism in District 65 education, including District 65 statistics, District 65 fact sheets, District 65 achievement reports, a guide to the 2015 achievement and accountability report, a description of OPAL's educational priorities and strategies, a demand for racial equity in District 65 schools, a description of District 65 school board's function and election process, and a June 2020 proposal for remote learning funding in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.	
1	7	Educating Yourself About Race This folder contains three educational lists created by OPAL, intended to help community members learn more about race. The resources list books, films, trainings, workshops, and conferences and are titled "Educating Yourself About Race."	October 2018 – April 2019
1	8	Media & Petitions This folder contains speaker notes and remarks for a Justice for Peace speech (January 31, 2016), speaker notes for an Evanston Rotary Club speech, and media press releases up to October 2017. This folder also contains a copy of a letter from the OPAL Board to Mayor Hagerty and the Evanston City Council dated June 8, 2020. The letter vigorously objects to the City Council's attempt to initiate a process to hire a City Manager without following the public, transparent process agreed to on February 24, 2020. The letter ends with a signed petition that calls for citizens to be involved in the search for a City Manager.	January 2016 – June 8, 2020
1	9	FOIA Requests & Documents This folder contains a copy of OPAL's FOIA requests from May 2016 – June 2020, along with responses and documents from School District 65.	May 2016 – June 2020

Series V: Miscellaneous

This series contains miscellaneous items related to OPAL but not easily categorized in a previous series. Materials include thank you letters sent in response to OPAL's disbanding, contracts between OPAL and Reba Place Church, and an empty envelope from Cook County Clerk Election Department to Cicely Fleming labeled "Cicely Fleming $6.00."

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	10	Miscellaneous	2014 – 2020
1	11	Social Media 1 A printed and bound book containing all of OPAL's Facebook posts, photos, and events from July 2015 to December 2017.	July 2015 – December 2017
1	12	Social Media 2 A printed and bound book containing all of OPAL's Facebook posts, photos, and events from January 2018 to July 2021.	January 2018 – July 2021

Box	Folder	Title	Date
2	1	Collateral This box contains OPAL t-shirts, buttons, flyers, a face mask, and an award for Rev. Dr. Michael Nabors. The award was granted for "commitment and dedicated service to education" on February 9, 2020.	2022

Oversized

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Contains sets of oversized panels mounted on foam board measuring approximately “24 x 36” displaying statistical information related to educational gaps , policing and incarceration assembled for presentation and display.