

*South Carolina Political Collections
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The University of South Carolina*

Luther James Battiste, III

(1949-)

Papers, 1965-2015

Volume:	6 linear feet
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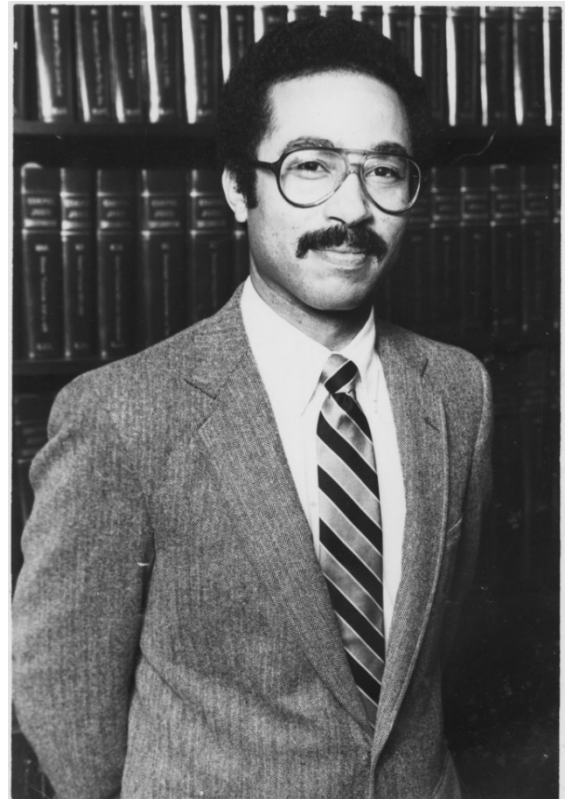
Biographical Note:

“Every complimentary word ever said about a man has probably been uttered in reference to Luther J. Battiste, III. Honest, diplomatic, intelligent, caring and diligent are some of the adjectives most commonly used to describe him by constituents, peers, and citizens throughout Columbia and the state of South Carolina.” – Cityscape, Summer 1998

Luther James Battiste, III has been a respected leader in the Columbia community for most of his life. From his summer in college working with low-income children to his fifteen years of service on the Columbia City Council, Battiste has dedicated himself to improving Columbia for all of its residents. In 1983, he became one of the first African-Americans elected to the Columbia City Council since the Reconstruction Era, sharing the honor with E.W. Cromartie II, and he served two terms as Mayor Pro Tem during his time in office. Battiste remained on the Council until 1998 when he decided not to run for re-election. While proving himself to be an effective community representative, Battiste also remained highly involved in the fields of law and business.

Born July 21, 1949 in Orangeburg, South Carolina, Battiste attributes his success predominantly to his parents, Mildred Battiste and Luther Battiste, Jr. “My parents had different qualities. I like to think I took the best from my parents,” he commented to the *Carolina Tribune*. After graduating from Wilkinson High School in 1967, Battiste began attending the University of South Carolina. Reminiscing to *Attitude Magazine*, Battiste said, “They used to say that you could walk around U.S.C. campus for one week and not see a Black face before we came.”

Battiste got his introduction to politics at the University of South Carolina when he managed the successful campaign of Harry Walker, the first African-American to run for president of student government. While at USC, Battiste was named to *Who’s Who among Colleges and Universities* and recognized as an outstanding senior. Among his accomplishments, he co-authored a successful proposal for the creation of an African-American Studies Program at U.S.C. In 1971, Battiste graduated with a B.A. in International Studies, the first African-American to do so. He went on to Emory University Law School, where he was equally involved as a member of the Dean Selection Committee for the Law School, a representative for the Law School to the Student Government Association, and president of the Black American Law Students Association. In 1974, Battiste graduated with a Juris Doctor degree.



Soon after graduation, Battiste began his law career in Columbia as an associate for I.S. Leevy Johnson and was made a partner within a year. Battiste is now the managing and founding shareholder of Johnson, Toal, and Battiste, P.A., which he chartered with William T. Toal and I.S. Leevy Johnson in 1975. The firm has received the highest rating given by the Martindale-Hubbell attorney rating service and was the first minority firm in South Carolina to earn membership to the American Bar Association's Minority Demonstration Program.

Battiste is renowned for his ability as a trial lawyer, particularly his cross-examinations and closings, with areas of specialty in worker's compensation, complex civil litigation, motor vehicle accidents, medical malpractice, and administrative law. Battiste was the first African-American president of the Richland County Bar Association and of the South Carolina Trial Lawyers Association. His additional leadership roles in the law profession include president of the



As a first-year law student at Emory, Battiste stands with colleagues of the Georgia Service Center for Black Elected Officials for the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus. Pictured left to right: Willie Woods, director of GSCBE; law student Anna-Marie Booth; Battiste; Bernice Moore & Georgia State Rep. Ben Brown

Columbia Lawyers Association, member of the National Board of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA), and president of the Southeastern Region of ABOTA (SEABOTA).

Battiste's leadership within Columbia's business profession includes two terms

as Vice Chair of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, membership on the Standard Federal Savings Bank and South Carolina Bank and Trust boards, and Chairman of the Richland/Lexington County Airport Commission.

Battiste saw his career as a lawyer as highly relevant to his service on City Council. In an interview with a coalition of neighborhoods from District One, Battiste explained that as a lawyer he spent time problem solving and giving advice to individuals. He believed this experience translated to Council service because he understood a large portion of the role of a council member as responding to individual constituent concerns. On the local level, this meant seemingly mundane issues including garbage problems, streetlights, drainage, and public safety complaints.

Overall, Battiste aimed to bring government closer to the people. This goal began with his election, which was the first under the new “4-2-1” plan. Before this, five Columbia City Council members were elected at large. Many, including Battiste, believed that this prevented African-Americans from being elected to City Council and, therefore, the concerns of the African-American community from being adequately addressed by the Council. The city decided to expand the Council to have four district representatives, two at large representatives, and one at large Mayor, 4-2-1. The districts were drawn so that two had an African-American majority, and two African-American council members were elected the first year Columbia implemented the new plan.

Battiste saw his responsibilities as a council member as three-fold encompassing representation of District One, the African-American community, and the City as a whole. In his district, Battiste was a major advocate for neighborhoods. He encouraged neighborhood organizations to form and to voice their concerns to himself and City Council and frequently attended their meetings to better understand their concerns. He championed the improvement of low-income housing while ensuring that current low-income residents were not displaced as a result of those improvements. Battiste passionately co-sponsored and advocated for The Minority Business Enterprise Program, a program for hiring more minorities and women for city jobs and contracts, despite the friction it caused among council members. He worked to make Columbia a safer, more attractive place for its residents and a destination for visitors. Finlay Park, Riverfront Park, and the development of the Congaree Vista are just a few of the many improvements Battiste supported during his city leadership.



Battiste’s success in bringing government closer to the people and addressing individual constituent concerns is obvious. In 1986, 1990, and 1994, Battiste was the only council member to run unopposed. Upon his retirement, the city built a plaza and monument in his honor in one of the neighborhoods he advocated for most, the Eau Claire Community. Battiste’s service was recognized by the Congress in a proclamation read by The Hon. James Clyburn which described the former Councilman as “one of the most articulate and thoughtful members of (the) Council.” A transcript of this Proclamation can be found in the collection under the folder marked “Retirement”. After leaving the Columbia City Council, Battiste remained highly active within the community, serving on the boards of the Columbia Metropolitan Airport Authority, the Columbia Museum of Art, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Capital City Club. In 1999, Battiste was inducted into the South Carolina Black Hall of Fame.

From the very start, Battiste thought of his position as being solely about the community. “I feel like I was drafted by the community. It wasn’t something that I planned to do,” he told the *Carolina Tribune*. In 1998 he chose not to seek reelection. As the position evolved into one including more and more committee meetings and community involvement, he realized he could no longer give the position 100%. With his wife, Judy Battiste, and their two children, Justin Foster and Jade Nicole, along with a full-time job, he felt that there was not enough time to do the job well and maintain a balanced life. With all he had done for the community, upon his

retirement Battiste expressed to *Cityscape* that he was proudest of the Summer Concert Series, particularly the first that featured Betty Carter. This event, which came to be known as the Wachovia Main Street Jazz Festival, illustrates Battiste's particular love for jazz music. Battiste owns an extensive collection of jazz recordings which he began to assemble as a student at USC in the late 1960's, and he takes great pride in sharing his collection via the weekly radio program *Jazz in the City* on 92.1 FM The Palm.

Scope and Content Note:

The Battiste Collection consists of 6 linear feet of material, arranged into five series: Public, Personal, Clippings, Audiovisual, and Vertical File Materials. About half of the collection chronicles Battiste's pioneering political life as a member of the Columbia City Council while the other half documents Battiste's college years, campaigns, and professional life.

Public papers document Battiste's service on the Columbia City Council, chiefly dates from 1983 to 1989, and is topically arranged. City program plans and correspondence between Councilman



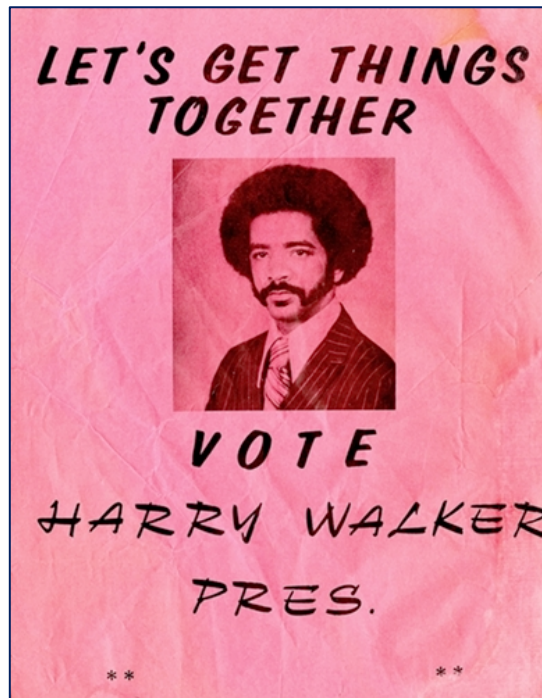
Battiste, individual constituents or neighborhood organizations, and other government officials make up most of these papers. The correspondence often follows an issue from initial complaint to conclusion and demonstrates how quickly Battiste was able to address issues. The subseries Community Development deals with both general topics, such as zoning and housing, along with specific neighborhoods. The neighborhood files may have papers that concern the citywide subjects as well. This organization reflects Battiste's own emphasis on the importance of neighborhoods. In a speech given to the Hyatt Park Neighborhood, Battiste explains, "I believe that in order to have a healthy city, we must protect our neighborhoods...our neighborhoods form the heart and soul of our city" (found in Speeches and Press Releases).

The Eau Claire Community and College Place, a neighborhood within Eau Claire, have the largest group of materials. Folders for the majority of the neighborhoods contain individual development plans while a few have neighborhood bulletins. The Public series also contains notes Battiste took at council meetings and conferences he attended, office messages, and reference materials. One folder of interest is the City Calendars/Annual Reports put out by the City of Columbia between 1983 and 1998. The calendars demonstrate the frequency, date, and time of various city meetings and give an account of the major projects going on during Battiste's time in office. The subseries Retirement chronicles the outpouring of appreciation for Battiste upon his decision not to seek re-election to the Columbia City Council in 1998. Items of note include a Certificate of Appreciation presented to Battiste by the City of Columbia, an invitation

and guest list from the Roast and Toast event that served as both a retirement party for Battiste and a fundraiser for St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

The Personal series contains papers from Battiste's campaigns, involvement with the Democratic Party, professional life, education, and family. The series begins with a General folder containing correspondence with friends and family. Of particular note is a series of letters between renowned artist Romare Bearden and Battiste which are preserved digitally in the collection. The Campaigns subseries mostly covers Battiste's 1983 campaign; however, there are a few items from his later campaigns in the General and Speeches folders. An item of interest is a set of interview questions from a coalition of neighborhoods in District One with several drafts of

Battiste's responses in preparation for the interview.



In 1971, while a student at USC, Battiste managed the historic and successful campaign of Harry L. Walker, the first African American to run for student body president. Walker's campaign is documented under USC Student Government. Walker's progressive ten point platform called for "Open House" in all dormitories; the sale of beer on campus, with profits to underwrite scholarship assistance for financially disadvantaged students; increased recruitment of blacks and veterans; and a restructuring of student government "to make the organization more germane to the students rather than a mechanism of administration dominance." Clippings from the student newspaper, *The Gamecock*, further document the campaign.

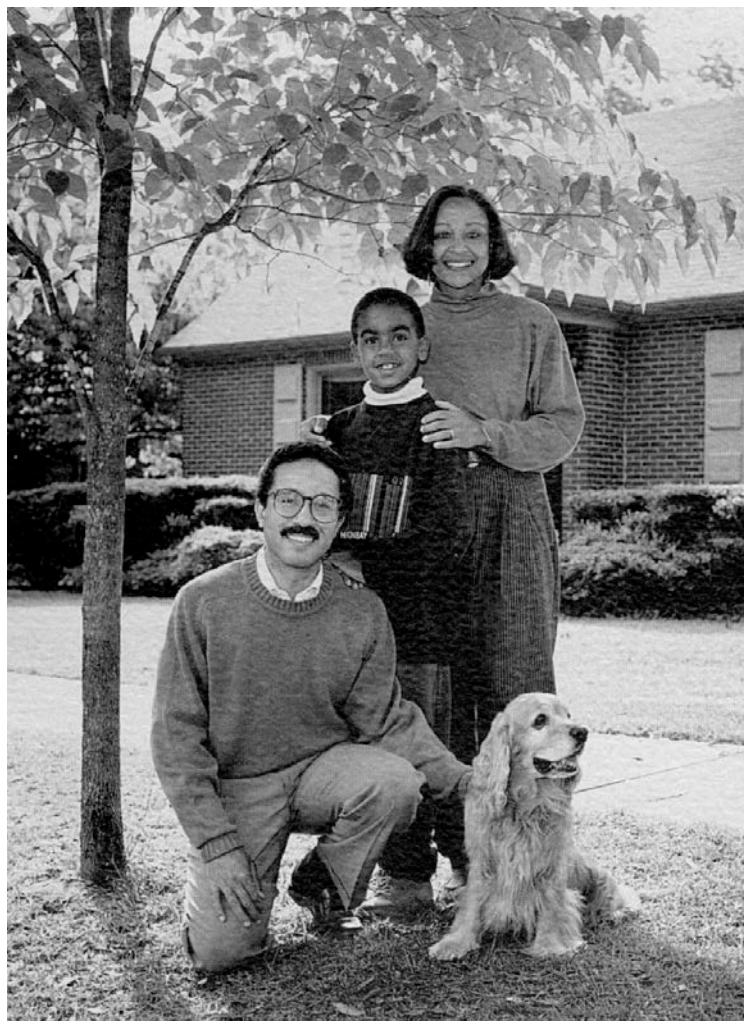
Papers from the law firm, 1983 to 2011, bulk 1996 to 2007, include law reference materials, various association directories and magazines, and a small volume of correspondence. In the South Carolina Bar subseries, there is a string of emails between lawyers giving advice on particular cases. Also of note are Battiste's copious tabs in the Supreme Court of South Carolina Appeals Decisions indicating the legal subjects of specific portions of the decisions. Examples of the subjects are criminal, family court, worker's compensation, and witnesses influenced during trial.

Clippings, 1971 to 1998, relate to Battiste and subjects of import to him regarding Columbia, South Carolina, and the nation as a whole, such as Black America, elections and voting, Columbia development, zoning, minorities, etc. Two events of particular interest are covered here, the South Carolina Government Vote Buying and FBI scandals and the 1986 Federal Budget Cuts and Tax Reform. The latter focuses primarily on the impact these federal decisions had on cities. There is also one folder containing clippings on Battiste, mostly connected to his political life, and one folder about his father, Luther Battiste Jr., who worked at South Carolina

State College for over four decades. The articles on Battiste give an overview of his career and offer insights into his political agenda and personality.

The Audiovisual series contains an audio CD from 1997 in which two young students receive a \$100 scholarship in the honor of Luther J. Battiste, III. Video recordings highlight both public and private achievements in Battiste's career, including the dedication of a new Airport Parking Facility whose construction Battiste oversaw while serving with the Airport Authority; the 1995 Wachovia Main Street Jazz Festival; and Battiste's retirement Roast and Toast. VHS recordings have been transferred to digital MP4 files. For access to these materials, please contact SCPC in advance of your visit. Photographs show Battiste and his family, Battiste's early career on the Council, attendance at a Black Caucus, and Bicentennial Park. An oversize folder contains an issue of *Ebony Magazine* featuring an article on the historic 1971 election of Harry Walker as USC Student Body President, a yard sign from Battiste's 1983 campaign for Columbia City Council, and a color photo of the 1986-1990 Columbia City Council.

Vertical File Materials contain information gathered by SCPC relating to Battiste and may duplicate information already present in the collection.



Box List:

Public, Columbia City Council:

Box 1

- General
- City Calendars/Annual Reports, 1983-1998
- City Finances:
 - General
 - Budget
 - 1982-1983
 - 1985-1986
- Community Bulletins
- Community Development:
 - General
 - Code Enforcement
 - Community Development Performance Report, 1978-1983
 - Drainage
 - Housing
 - “Jazz in the Park” with Betty Carter
 - Landmarks
 - Minorities:
 - General
 - Affirmative Action
 - Minority and Female Business Enterprise Program, 1987
 - Neighborhoods:
 - Booker Washington/ Colonial Heights
 - College Place
 - Columbia Council of Neighborhoods Member Organizations
 - Congaree Vista
 - Earlewood
 - Eau Claire:
 - General
 - Development Plan, 1982
 - Redevelopment Plan, 1993
 - Elmwood
 - Five Points
 - Greenvew
 - Hyatt Park
 - Northwood Hills/Ridgewood
 - Seaboard Park
- Public Safety
- Public Services
- Transportation
- Zoning
- Conferences
- Correspondence

Box 2

Council Office Messages
Local Governance Reference Materials, Joint Center for Political Studies
Notes:
 City Council Meetings
 Miscellaneous
Recommendations
Retirement
[Single Member District Lines Map, 1981 **Oversize**]
South Carolina/National Black Caucus
Speeches and Press Releases

Personal:

General
Bank Audit Committees, 2006-2007
Battiste Papers Collection Opening Celebration at SCPC 2015
Bennett College Historical Documents, 1938-1947
Campaigns:
 General
 Advertising
 Contributions
 District One Neighborhood Coalition Interview
 Finances
 Speeches and Press Releases
 Voting Register (sample with notes)
Capital City Club
Chamber of Commerce
Columbia Metropolitan Airport Authority
Columbia Museum of Art
Democratic Party:
 General
 Delegate Convention Lists (with notes) [2 folders]
 Democratic National Committee, 1984
 U.S. Policy Recommendations (author unknown), circa 1984
Education:
 General
 Assignments in Trial Practice, 3rd ed., 1971 (includes handwritten notes)

Grade School Notes

Box 3

1965, two notebooks
1966

loose notes
one notebook

Law School (c. 1971-1974)

General

Emory University School of Law

University of South Carolina:

General [2 folders]

Afro American Studies Program, 1970-1971
Carolina Community, 1970-1971 [Student Handbook]

Class Notes:

1968, one notebook

1969

loose notes

six notebooks [4 folders]

1970

International Studies Senior Seminar [2 folders]

loose notes and class materials

five notebooks [3 of 4 folders]

five notebooks [4 of 4 folders]

Box 4

1971, three notebooks [2 folders]

1969-1971, loose [2 folders]

Exams and Papers

Student Conference on United States Affairs (SCUSA)

Student Directory, 1969-1970

Student Government [including Harry L. Walker Election]

Syllabi and Class Materials [2 folders]

Family:

General

Luther Battiste, Jr.

First Financial Corporation/ First National Bank Board of Directors, 2000-2014

Jazz in the City Program on Radio Station 92.1 The Palm, 2013-2014

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity,

General

Policy Reports from State Department

Law Firm:

Associations:

American Association for Justice, July 2011 Convention

American Board of Trial Advocates Roster, 2001

American Board of Trial Advocates, 2009 Jury Summit

ATLA Minority Trial Lawyer Directory, 1996-1997

Miscellaneous Associations

National Bar Association, 1989-1990

National Center for State Courts, 2013-2014

Richland County Bar Association, 1996

South Carolina Bar

South Carolina Trial Lawyers Association, 1999-2004

Correspondence

Legal Notes

Minority Counsel Demonstration Program, 1990 and 1994

Box 5

Reference Materials:

Court Decisions, Miscellaneous

Guides for the Practice of Law

JereBeasley Report:

August 2005 – February 2007

April and July 2007

Law Reporter, 2006-2007

Legal Magazines, Miscellaneous

South Carolina Lawyer:

2002-2003

2007

Supreme Court of South Carolina Appeals Decisions [with subject tabs]

2006:

August – September

October

November-December

2007:

February

February cont. -March

April

Trial, 1994-2000

Metropolitan Education Foundation (MCF) [worked as Job Counselor]

Sigma Pi Phi

South Carolina State University, Historical Documents 1934-1992

Whitney M. Young Jr. Award Presented by Boy Scouts of America (2014)

Audiovisual:

Audio Recording, Luther Battiste, III Scholarship Presentation, 1997 [CD]

Floppy disk, 3-1/2 inch, Tribute to Leroy Davis

Photographs:

Battiste, Luther III:

Personal

Public

Bicentennial Park

Walker, Harry L.

Video Recordings:

Airport Parking Structure Dedication Ceremony, 2003 [DVD]

Luther J. Battiste Retirement Roast and Toast, 1998 [digitized as

ljbvideo0002]

Preparing a Client for Trial, 2008 [DVD]

South Carolina State Bar Convention, 2011 [DVD]

Wachovia Main Street Jazz Festival, 1995 [digitized as ljbvideo0001]

WIS TV-10 Newswatch 10:30 a.m. [digitized as ljbvideo0003]

Clippings:

General

Battiste, Luther Jr.

Battiste, Luther III

Box 6

Black America

Columbia:

General

Bicentennial:

General

[*The State*, March 23, 1986 **Oversize**]

Community Development:

General

Neighborhoods

[The Palmetto Center, 1983 **Oversize**]

Minorities

Taxes

Zoning

Elections and Voting

Federal Budget Cuts and Tax Reform, 1986

The Gamecock

Kappa Alpha Psi

Political Cartoons

South Carolina State Government Corruption (Vote-buying and FBI scandals)

University of South Carolina, Harry L. Walker Election, 1971

Vertical File Materials, 1983-2015