

Biography of William E. Adams, ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer

A native of Kansas City, Missouri, William E. Adams moved to Tacoma, Washington in 1978 where he worked on the docks as a longshoreman for 24 years.

In 1998, Adams was elected by co-workers to serve on their local union Executive Board, then chosen in 2000 to serve on the union's International Executive Board. Adams was also elected to serve as one of three Trustees who oversee the ILWU's finances.

In addition to his financial and legislative responsibilities, Adams has been a passionate cultural advocate. He produced the "Celebrations of Black History and Labor" programs in Tacoma in 1991, 1992 and 1993, and again in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005. The events featured leading cultural and political figures including Danny Glover, Paul Robeson, Jr., Yolanda King (Martin Luther King Jr.'s daughter), hip hop icon Chuck D, and Betty Shabazz (daughter of Malcolm X). The programs received national attention and critical acclaim.

Adams is also executive producer of several documentary films, including one exploring the life of African American writer Langston Hughes, "Hughes' Dream Harlem," and "The Black Composers," which tells the story of African American film score composers. Adams is currently involved with a full-length dramatic film exploring the life of labor leader Harry Bridges.

Adams' cultural work has been recognized by the cities of Los Angeles and Tacoma which have issued proclamations and awards honoring his cultural contributions.

In 2003, ILWU members elected Adams to serve as their International Secretary-Treasurer at the union headquarters in San Francisco, where he has responsibility for the organization's finances, oversees the union's political action work, and represents the union at international functions. Adams has represented the ILWU during visits with workers in South Africa, Australia, Spain, Cuba, Vietnam and China. In addition to his union duties, Adams serves on the Board of *TransAfrica*, where he works closely with Board Chairman Danny Glover and Board member Harry Belafonte.

In 2009, Adams was appointed by Mayor Gavin Newsom to a position on the San Francisco Film Commission which he still holds today. Adams has resided in San Francisco since 2003.