



## State Representative Joe Lang Kershaw, Sr.

Joe Lang Kershaw was elected to the Florida House of Representative in 1968 and served until 1982. He was the first Black legislator in the state of Florida since Reconstruction. He attended Florida A&M University in Tallahassee where he received a history degree in 1935 and his Master of Education degree in 1955. He was a career educator and he taught civics in Dade County public schools.

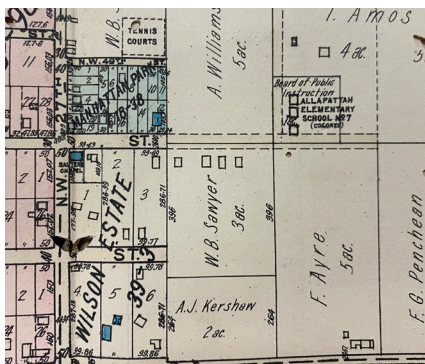
Representative Kershaw's civic involvement included serving on the Miami Economic Advisory Board, the Knights of Columbus, and the Holy Name Society. He was a lifelong member of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. During his tenure as an elected representative, he served as chairman of the Elections Committee and introduced legislation that lead to the formation of the Florida Human Rights Commission.<sup>1</sup> In 1971, Kershaw maneuvered Florida Statute 241.477 through the legislature, which lead to the creation of the Black Archives at Florida A&M University.<sup>2</sup> He was known in the Florida House of Representatives as "Cane Pole," due to his ongoing battle to exclude cane pole fishing from requiring a license. The requirement was finally abolished in 1976, allowing people to fish in their own county with a cane pole, a common practice among poor African American people in Florida.<sup>3</sup>

Representative Kershaw was the son of Dr. A.J. Kershaw, a colleague of Dr. William B. Sawyer. Dr. Kershaw bought two acres of land from Dr. Sawyer in Brownsville in the 1930s, and his son Joe Lang Kershaw lived in a house on this land during his tenure in the Florida legislature and throughout his adult life.



**Image.** Joe Lang Kershaw. (Source: Florida Memory).

**Image.** Joe Lang Kershaw being sworn into the Florida Legislature. (Source: Florida Memory).

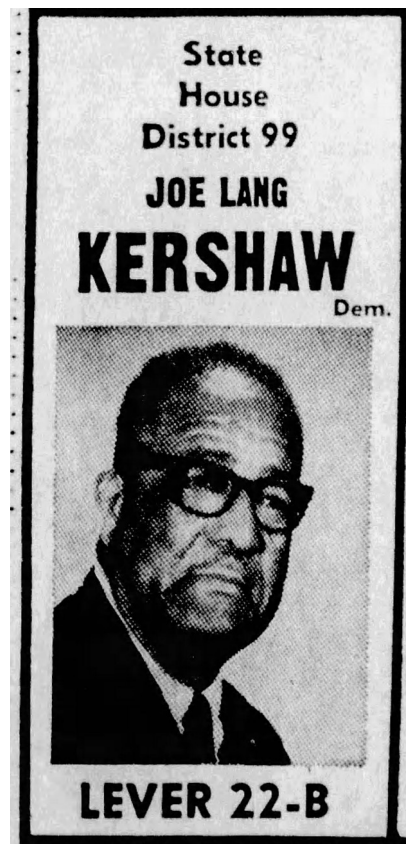


**Image.** 1936 Hopkins Map of Brownsville showing Dr. A.J. Kershaw land ownership. (Source: Hopkins Map).

1 "Birth of Joe Lang Kershaw". Florida Historical Society. 2015-04-01. Retrieved 2020-01-22. Cited in Wikipedia contributors, "Joe Lang Kershaw," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Joe\\_Lang\\_Kershaw&oldid=1145694330](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Joe_Lang_Kershaw&oldid=1145694330) (accessed July 12, 2023).

2 "Meek Eaton Black Archives- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University2020". famu.edu. Retrieved 2020-01-22. Cited in Wikipedia contributors, "Joe Lang Kershaw," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Joe\\_Lang\\_Kershaw&oldid=1145694330](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Joe_Lang_Kershaw&oldid=1145694330) (accessed July 12, 2023).

3 "Birth of Joe Lang Kershaw".



**Image.** 1968 newspaper article. (Source: The Miami News).

**Image.** 1968 political advertisement for District 99. (Source: The Miami Herald).

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