

## **Olga Madar Collection**

**Papers, 1929-1996  
(Predominantly, 1950s-1990s)**

**12 linear feet**

Accession # 203

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Olga Marie Madar was born in the coal mining town of Sykesville, Pennsylvania May 17, 1915 and moved to Detroit with her family during the Depression. Because of her prowess on the softball field, Chrysler hired her to work on the assembly line after her graduation from Northeastern High School in 1933 and she used summer jobs at the corporation's Kercheval plant and the Bower Roller Bearing plant to put herself through Michigan Normal School (now Eastern Michigan University), graduating in 1938 with a degree in physical education.

In 1941 she traded her teaching position for a better paying job at the Ford Willow Run bomber plant, joined nascent UAW Local 50 and organized its first community recreation programs, programs so successful that the local hired her as director of recreation, social services and women's activities. In 1947 she was appointed director of the International Union's Recreation Department where she fought and won the battle to integrate organized bowling leagues. From 1958 until 1966 Ms. Madar also served as a Detroit Parks and Recreation Commissioner and was responsible for instituting competitive promotional exams within the city's recreation department and for setting up innovative programs for senior citizens.

In 1966 Ms. Madar was elected to the UAW International Executive Board as a member-at-large, the first woman to hold such office. Four years later she was elected to the first of two terms as International Vice-President—again, the first woman to achieve such a leadership position within the UAW—with responsibility for directing the Departments of Conservation and Resource Development, Recreation and Leisure-Time Activities and Consumer Affairs and servicing technical, office and professional workers' locals. Ms. Madar retired from the UAW in 1974, but remained active in retiree affairs.

Throughout her life, Olga Madar worked tirelessly to eliminate discrimination against women and minorities in the workplace and in the community and proved especially adept at coalition-building. She was instrumental in launching in 1971 the Michigan Women's Political Caucus and the Network for Economic Rights, which pushed for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and for gender equity in the workplace, and spearheaded the formation of the Coalition of Labor Union Women by women who felt powerless within their unions, winning election as national president at its founding

convention in March of 1974. Through service with countless civic organizations, she sought to increase citizen participation in decision-making in recreation, education, health care and other areas.

The papers of Olga Madar include correspondence, reports, minutes, news clippings, publications and other material reflecting her career with the UAW and her work on behalf of issues of concern to women, senior citizens and other community groups.

Additional material relating to Olga Madar may be found in the CLUW and UAW Conservation and Recreation Departments Collections and in her UAW IEB oral history and two others available in the Reuther Library Reading Room in which she discusses her involvement in the women's movement.

**Important subjects in the collection:**

Civil Rights Act of 1964--Title VII  
Coalition of Labor Union Women  
Democratic Party (Mich.)  
Detroit Public Schools  
Equal pay for equal work--United States  
Equal Rights Amendment--United States  
Michigan Democratic Party  
National Women's Political Caucus  
Network for Economic Rights  
Retirees--Services for--Michigan  
Sex discrimination against women  
Trade-unions--Environmental policy  
UAW Conservation and Resource Development Department  
UAW Recreation and Leisure-Time Activities Department  
UAW Retired Workers Centers  
UAW Technical, Office, Professional Department  
United States. Civil Rights Act of 1964  
Women automobile industry workers  
Women labor leaders--United States  
Women's rights--Societies, etc.

**Important correspondents in the collection:**

Birch Bayh  
Liz Carpenter  
Caroline Davis  
Carolyn Forrest

Douglas Fraser  
Erma Henderson  
Hubert Humphrey  
Mildred Jeffrey  
Coretta Scott King  
Margaret Laurence  
Emil Mazey  
George McGovern  
Barbara Mikulski  
Walter Reuther  
Edith Van Horn  
Myra Wolfgang  
Leonard Woodcock

**Non-manuscript material:**

A few photographs and items of memorabilia received with the collection have been placed in the Archives Audiovisual Department.

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