

THE MARY UPSHAW McCLENDON COLLECTION

Papers, 1969-1981

1 linear foot

Accession Number 784

The papers of Mary Upshaw McClendon were placed in the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs on July 27, 1976 by Mary Upshaw McClendon. Additional papers were placed in the Archives by Ms. McClendon in October of 1981 and opened for research in May of 1985.

The Detroit Household Workers Organization (H.W.O.) was formed on September 4, 1969. The founder and first president was Mary Upshaw McClendon. She was born in Andalusia, Alabama, on October 31, 1922. While attending Snow Hill Normal Industrial Institute, she worked before and after classes as a cook's helper, a babysitter, a housecleaner, and a yard worker. She graduated from Covington County Training School at the age of sixteen. Up until 1969, she continued to be a household worker.

The early history of the H.W.O. is inextricably bound to Mary McClendon, for she was its driving force. It aimed to improve the wages and working conditions of household workers. Its goals included a daily wage of \$15.00, car fare, paid vacations, sick leave, workman's compensation, and social security benefits. For fifty cents a month a worker could become a member, and thus support lobbying efforts, receive placement services, and obtain help in solving their grievances with their employers. To upgrade the skills, status, and quality of household work, a training program was proposed. The H.W.O. tapped the resources and talents of many local organizations such as New Detroit and Professional Skills Alliance to achieve these goals.

The H.W.O. became an affiliate of the National Committee for Household Employment (N.C.H.E.) in 1970. This was a nonprofit group whose purpose was to aid in the establishment of local organizations. Mary McClendon proposed the first national convention of household workers in Washington, D.C. This resulted in nationwide organization, the Household Technicians of America.

In 1972, with the help of the Wolverine Bar Association and the West Side Mothers, the H.W.O. attempted to unionize household workers by focusing on the Dial-A-Maid company. However, the certification election failed.

As president of the H.W.O., Mary McClendon was active in the community. She was on the executive board of the Detroit N.A.A.C.P., the Coordinating Council for Human Relations, a member of the Woman's Commission of Community Relations, and the Women's Council of Concerns. Under her guidance, the H.W.O. also concerned itself with the children of household technicians. From 1971-1973 it provided a work station for the Detroit Youth Board.

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In the spring of 1974, Mary McClendon resigned as president of the organization. She, however, continued to be active, working for the inclusion of household workers in the minimum wage law and in obtaining special unemployment benefits for them.

Important subjects covered in the collection are:

Household Technicians of America, 1971-1975  
Minimum Wage for Household Workers, 1972-1975  
National Committee of Household Employment, 1970-1975  
Unionization of Household Workers, 1969

Contents

2 manuscript boxes

Part 1

Series I, Box 1

The personal files of Mary Upshaw McClendon consist of biographical information, correspondence, and speeches.

Series II, Boxes 1-2

These are the records of the H.W.O. as generated by Mary McClendon. Materials included are articles of incorporation, brochures, correspondence, financial data, newspaper clippings, office files, and proposals.

Part 2

Series III, Box 2

Transcript of testimony of Ms. McClendon in her suit against the City of Detroit relating to her assignments by the City's Neighborhood Services Department, April 18, 1980. Includes reports of settlement of case as reported in Detroit Legal News, Feb. 27, 1981.

Non-manuscript Material:

Duplicate material in the form of newsletters and flyers along with printed material have been placed in the Archives Library.

Part 1

Series I  
Box 1

This series consists of personal correspondence, speeches, and biographical material on the life of Mary McClendon. The biographical information briefly sketches her childhood in Alabama. It also documents the variety of community organizations she was involved in as the president of the U.W.O. The speeches, written and compiled by Mary McClendon, indicate her fiery, yet sensitive, character. The files are arranged alphabetically by topic and cover the span of the collection.

Box 1

1. Biographical Information
2. Correspondence, 1969-1974
3. Speeches and Compilations

Series II  
Boxes 1-2

Most of the material consists of correspondence, newspaper clippings, financial data, and office files. These are arranged alphabetically by topic and type, then chronologically. The topics cover a wide range of subjects and indicate the activities of the H.W.O. as well as local organizations. From 1974 to 1976 it takes on a more personal touch and expresses the interests of Mary McClendon after her resignation. Found with the miscellaneous correspondence are early organizational materials and information on the proposed training program. The newspaper clippings show the interests of the H.W.O. in Black achievement, women, and the plight of the poor. They are a rich source of information on the organization itself. The financial records point out the pressing need for funding and the ways in which the H.W.O. attempted to solve this problem. Files on collective bargaining and Dial-A-Maid relate to the unionization of household workers.

Box 1

4. Aims and Objectives
5. Alabama G.C. Club of Detroit, 1972
6. Articles of Incorporation, 1970
- 7-8. Clippings, Blacks, 1970-1975; Household Workers Organization, 1969-1975
- 9-11. Clippings and Printed Material, Miscellaneous; Poor, 1970-1974; Women, 1973-1976
12. Collective Bargaining, 1975
13. Community Organizations, 1969-1973
- 14-17. Correspondence, 1970-1976; Miscellaneous, 1970-1972

Box 1, cont.

- 18-19. Detroit Commission on Community Relations, 1972-1974; Women's Commission, 1973
20. Detroit Coordinating Council on Human Relations, 1972-1974
21. Detroit N.A.A.C.P., 1973
22. Detroit Public Schools Area Occupation Education Commission, 1972-1973
23. Dial-A-Maid, 1972-1973
- 24-28. Financial, Board of Missions United Methodist Church, 1972; Donations, 1970-1973; Miscellaneous Records, 1970-1972; State of Michigan, 1970-1973; U.S. Internal Revenue Service, 1970-1972
29. Grosse Pointe Human Relations Council, 1971-1972
30. Erma Henderson, 1973-1974
31. Household Workers Employment News

Box 2

1. Mayor's Committee for Human Resources, 1970-1975
2. Membership Lists
- 3-4. Minimum Wage, 1972-1975
- 5-8. National Committee on Household Employment (N.C.H.E.), 1970-1975
- 9-12. N.C.H.E., Affiliated Organizations; Household Technicians of America, 1971-1973; N.C.H.E. News, 1970-1973
13. Newsletters and Forms, 1969-1975
- 14-15. Office Records, 1969-1973; Undated
16. Political Appeals, 1973
17. Publicity, Responses, 1970-1973
18. Speaking Engagements, 1972-1973
- 19-24. Training Program, 1970-1971; Miscellaneous Papers; New Detroit, 1970-1975; Professional Skills Alliance, 1970-1973; Proposal; Proposal Redraft
25. Unemployment, 1974-1975
26. U.S. Department of Labor, 1969-1970
27. Urban Alliance, 1973
29. Youth Program, 1971-1974
28. "You and Your Household Help" (pamphlet for employers), c. 1971

Part 2

Series III  
Box 2

Transcript of testimony of Ms. McClendon in her suit against the City of Detroit relating to her assignments by the city's Neighborhood Services Department, April 18, 1980. Details of settlement of case as reported by Detroit Legal News, Feb. 27, 1981.

Box 2

30. Mary McClendon vs. City of Detroit, April 1980, Feb. 1981