

THE MYRA WOLFGANG COLLECTION

Papers, 1963-1976

.25 linear feet

Accession Number 1183

L. C. Number MS

The papers of Myra Wolfgang were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in June of 1984 by Norma Anselmi and were opened for research in October of 1984.

Myra Komaroff Wolfgang was born in Montreal, Canada in May of 1914 and came to Detroit with her family in 1917. She attended school in Detroit and went on to study art at Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The depression cut short her studies, and in 1932 she returned to Detroit to work for Louis Koenig, head of the old Detroit Waiters' Local 705, as a receptionist. She soon became Recording Secretary of Local 705 (now Local 24, Hotel, Motel, and Restaurant Employees Union) and a union organizer. During the 1930s she organized soup kitchens for the striking auto workers, led an eight-day sitdown strike at the F. W. Woolworth Co. and negotiated the first contract with that company. In the late 1930s she was appointed as manager for the domestic and personal service division of the Michigan Employment Security Commission by Governor Murphy.

In the early 1950s, Mrs. Wolfgang participated in the International's successful attack on Miami's non-union hotels and in 1953 she became an International vice-president for the third district representing a six state area. In 1960, when Louis Koenig retired, Mrs. Wolfgang became Secretary-Treasurer and Chief Executive Officer of Local 24 while continuing as Vice-President of the International Union. She became a driving force behind the enactment of the 1966 Michigan minimum wage law and negotiated her local's first pension and health care plan, and installed its first strike fund. Mrs. Wolfgang was active in the fight for women's rights, calling for child care centers and job training programs for mothers and she served with Eleanor Roosevelt on President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women in February of 1962. On March 31, 1971, she appeared before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee to testify against the Equal Rights Amendment on the grounds it would jeopardize existing labor laws and standards that applied only to women.

Myra Wolfgang died in April of 1976. In addition to her union activities she was a member of several state boards and commissions, a founding member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, a life member of the NAACP and member of the Mayor's Committee on Community Relations. The papers of Myra Wolfgang reflect her active involvement in the Hotel, Motel and Restaurant Employees Union and her participation in the women's rights movement.

Myra Wolfgang Collection

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Non-manuscript Material:

Approximately 100 photographs relating to the union activities of Myra Wolfgang have been placed in the Archives Audio-Visual Collection.

Box 1.

- 1-2. Clippings, 1947-1976
- 3-4. Correspondence, 1963-74
5. Memorial Service, 19 Apr 1976
- 6-8. Speeches and Statements, 1969-1971