

Focus: HOPE Collection
Records, 1960-2000
(Predominantly, 1970-1990)

18 linear feet

Accession #1737
DALNET #
OCLC #

The records of Focus: HOPE were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in March of 2000 by the organization's executive director, Eleanor Josaitis, and were opened for research in November of 2000.

Focus: HOPE emerged in March of 1968 from the ashes of the 1967 Detroit riot. The vision of two Catholic priests, Father William T. Cunningham and Father Jerome Fraser, and a suburban housewife and mother of five, Eleanor M. Josaitis, the largely volunteer civil and human rights organization has created an astonishing variety of innovative programs aimed at overcoming racism, poverty and injustice by fostering integration and bringing the urban unemployed into the economic mainstream, programs which have become a model for urban revitalization worldwide.

In the spring of 1968, many in Detroit were worried that the catastrophic events of the previous summer might repeat themselves. FOCUS: SUMMER HOPE, as it was then called, recruited and trained fifty area clergymen to address racial issues from the pulpit. Its symbol, two hands—one white, one black—reaching for each other under the sign of HOPE, expressed the themes of brotherhood and racial cooperation which energized the organization and informed programs like Project Trust, which developed a national model of race relations programming at desegregated public and private high schools in Detroit and its suburbs in the 1970s, and the annual Walk for Justice, successor to the brotherhood festivals staged in downtown Detroit beginning in 1970, which was patterned after the great civil rights marches of the 1960s.

Focus: HOPE first gained national attention with its comparative survey of pricing, product quality and service in inner city and suburban grocery stores and pharmacies. The results, published in 1968, underscored the link between poverty and hunger and convinced the city of Detroit to entrust the direction of its commodity supplemental food program for mothers and children to Focus: HOPE in 1971. Over the next several years, Focus: HOPE, with the help of Michigan legislators, struggled to preserve and expand its Food Prescription Program into the nation's largest. In 1981, Congress, influenced by the Focus: HOPE/Wayne County Area Agency on Aging survey of malnutrition among senior citizens, narrowly authorized what came to be the highly successful Focus: HOPE Food for Seniors program.

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Early on, Focus: HOPE had tied high rates of unemployment among Detroit African Americans to the exodus of employers to the suburbs, taking with them jobs black workers, without transportation and denied housing, had no hope of filling. That conviction led to its involvement in the successful class action lawsuit against the Automobile Club of Michigan, when the company moved its headquarters to Dearborn in 1972. By the early 1980s, Focus: HOPE recognized that the only way to move unemployed Detroiters into the economic mainstream was through job training and minority business development. Its own survey revealed a critical shortage of the skilled machinists necessary to automobile manufacturing as well as technical training opportunities for the unemployed. So, with support from private foundations, corporations and government, Focus: HOPE launched Industry Mall in purchased, donated and renovated property along Oakman Boulevard.

Industry Mall became the site for the Machinist Training Institute, where students received classroom training and practical experience in machine tool set-up and operation from retired industry experts. MTI's debut in 1981, coincident with Michigan's worst recession since the 1930s, insured funding through state and local job training programs, but also complicated the employment picture for its first graduates. Focus: HOPE responded by establishing minority-owned incubator companies like F & H Manufacturing (1983) and High Quality Manufacturing (1984) to employ its own graduates. When it became obvious that there weren't enough eligible applicants with the basic skills necessary to succeed in the program, Focus: HOPE added FAST TRACK and First Step to facilitate recruitment and upgrade MTI candidates' math, reading, communication and computer skills. And in 1987, Focus: HOPE, in yet another demonstration of its gift for crafting practical solutions to seemingly intractable problems, opened the Center for Children, serving the childcare needs of students and workers in Focus: HOPE programs.

Focus: HOPE's crowning achievement came in 1989 when, after three years of intensive lobbying by the Michigan congressional delegation, the federal departments of Commerce, Defense, Education and Labor in a Memorandum of Understanding agreed to establish Focus: HOPE's Center for Advanced Technologies as a national cooperative demonstration program to train workers in the multidisciplinary skills necessary to 21st-century manufacturing. The Greenfield Coalition (of universities and companies) for New Manufacturing Education was formed to design a cutting-edge academic engineering program combining practical production experience with theoretical training and former General Motors president, Lloyd Reuss was brought in as dean. The 220,000 square foot, award-winning CAT facility, the centerpiece of today's Industry Mall, was dedicated in 1993.

Father Cunningham, Focus: HOPE's brilliant planner and charismatic leader, died on May 26, 1997. His confidant and business partner for thirty years, Eleanor Josaitis, a woman described by her friend, *Detroit Free Press* columnist Neal Rubin as the muscle of the operation, succeeded him as executive director.

The Focus: HOPE Collection contains a wide variety of sources, including correspondence, statistical reports, financial records, survey data, grant proposals, legislative history and publicity, documenting the food distribution, human relations and job training programs Focus: HOPE pioneered to eliminate the racism, poverty and unemployment which fueled the 1967 Detroit riot. Additionally, the collection examines the motivation and careers of the organization's co-founders, Father William Cunningham and Eleanor Josaitis.

Important subjects in the collection:

Afro-Americans--Discrimination in employment--Michigan--Detroit
Afro-Americans--Economic conditions--Michigan--Detroit
Afro-Americans--Education--Michigan--Detroit
Aged--Michigan--Detroit
Buildings--Repair and reconstruction--Michigan--Detroit
Center for Advanced Technologies (Detroit, Mich.)
Child--Nutrition--Psychological aspects
Coalition for New Manufacturing Education
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (U.S.)
Community development, Urban--Michigan--Detroit
Corporations--Charitable contributions--Michigan
Cunningham, William T.
Day care centers--Michigan--Detroit
Detroit (Mich.) riot, 1967
Discrimination in housing--Michigan--Detroit
Federal aid to community development--Michigan--Detroit
Food relief--Law and legislation--United States
Ford Motor Company
General Motors Corporation
Greenspan, et al. v. Automobile Club of Michigan, et al.
Industry and education--Michigan--Detroit
Josaitis, Eleanor M.
Machine-tool industry--United States.
Mott Foundation (Flint, Mich.)
Poor--Michigan--Detroit
Production engineering--United States
Race relations--Michigan--Detroit
Race relations--Religious aspects--Catholic Church. Diocese of Detroit (Mich.)
Reuss, Lloyd
School-to-work transition--Michigan--Detroit
Skilled labor--Effect of technological innovations on
Skilled labor--Training of--Michigan--Detroit
Unemployment--Michigan--Detroit

Important correspondents in the collection:

Albom, Mitch
Bode, John W.
Bonior, David E.
Brodhead, William M.
Broomfield, William S.
Bush, George Herbert Walker

Carr, Bob
Cisneros, Henry G.
Cunningham, William T.
Dearden, John
Grenville, Charles
Gumbleton, Thomas J.
Jourdan, J. Phillip
Josaitis, Eleanor M.
Kudek, Kenneth

Important correspondents (cont'd):

Landes, Lee E.
Levin, Carl
Levin, Sander M.
Lindell, Carlton R.
Morin, Roger P.
Panetta, Leon
Reuss, Lloyd
Riegle, Donald W., Jr.
Schuette, Bill
Shine, Neal
Teeley, Peter W.
Traxler, Bob

Non-manuscript material:

A large number of photographs, a few audio and video tapes and some slides, bumper stickers, posters and items of memorabilia have been placed in the Archives Audiovisual Collection.

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Series II, Food Programs, 1968-1994, Boxes 2-7

Correspondence, reports, testimony and other legislative history, newspaper and magazine articles, Focus: HOPE food center newsletters and recipes, conference materials, statistics, surveys and participant profiles relating to the USDA's commodity supplemental food program and Focus: HOPE's food distribution programs for mothers, children and senior citizens.

Series III, Industry Mall, 1978-2000, Boxes 8-13

Correspondence, staff notes, grant proposals, facility descriptions and architects' plans, budgets, media coverage, visitor information and other material documenting the Machinist Training Institute and its school-to-work programs, the Center for Advanced Technologies, Focus: HOPE companies and similar programs in other cities.

Series IV, Other Focus: HOPE Programs, 1969-2000, Boxes 13-15

Correspondence, reports, programs, publicity and other promotional literature relating to benefit concerts and other fund-raising events like the Walk for Justice and Holiday Music Festival as well as special projects like the Center for Children, Journalism Olympics and the racial/sexual discrimination lawsuit against AAA.

Series V, Administrative and Subject Files, 1968-1997, Boxes 16-17

Correspondence, reports, financial records, meeting minutes, staff memoranda and profiles, departmental and early organizational files, material relating to corporate and foundation funding for Focus: HOPE programs and information about racial discrimination, especially with regard to housing, in the Detroit area.

Series VI, Publications and Media Coverage, 1970-2000, Box 18

Newspaper clippings, magazine articles, the newsletter and other Focus: HOPE publications chronicling the activities of the organization.

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Manufacturing Sciences), May 1990
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33. WTC; speech—"The Renaissance Engineer" (Society of Manufacturing Engineers Forum), Nov 1992

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13. Focus: HOPE funding; Skillman Foundation—FAST TRACK, 1989-90

14. Focus: HOPE; incorporation documents, 1968-89
15. Focus: HOPE; Litigation Unit, 1981-82
16. Focus: HOPE; management meetings, 1977-89
17. Focus: HOPE; managers' annual reports, 1983
18. Focus: HOPE; personnel—Azizi Adisa Masai case, 1979
19. Focus: HOPE; personnel—directories, policies and procedures, 1970s-1980s
20. Focus: HOPE; purchasing policy, 1980s
21. Focus: HOPE; reorganization, report on proposed, 1983
22. Focus: HOPE; Resource Dept., 1983-84, 1990
23. Focus: HOPE staff; Ciesnicki, David, 1979-82
24. Focus: HOPE staff; Connelly, Stan, 1979-92
25. Focus: HOPE staff; Kudek, Ken, poems by, n.d.
26. Focus: HOPE staff; Lemenu, Jerry, 1977-79
27. Focus: HOPE staff; Little, Wilfred, 1995
28. Focus: HOPE staff; miscellaneous, 1972-94
29. Focus: HOPE staff newsletter (“Inside Hope”), 1980-86
30. Focus: HOPE; video production, 1980s
31. Focus: HOPE; “Visitor Notes and Comments,” 1997
- 32-33. FOCUS: SUMMER HOPE, 1968-69
34. Group homes, 1978
35. Handguns, 1984-88
36. Joy of Jesus 20th Anniversary Banquet, 1996
37. Linwood/Oakman Blvd. Business Improvement Group, 1990-91
38. Lucas, William, nomination, 1989
39. Michigan Catholic Conference video, “A Future with Hope,” 1995

40. Michigan Economic and Social Opportunity Commission, 1983-90
41. "Poverty and Racism in Detroit Model Neighborhood," 1970

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Series VI
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- 1-2. Annual reports, program descriptions, general informational brochures, 1970s-1990s
3. Contributor/holiday cards
4. "Cope Happenings," (spoof of Focus: HOPE newsletter), Dec 1974
- 5-6. "Focus: HOPE Is ...," 1980s-1990s
- 7-21. Media coverage, general, 1972-2000
- 22-28. Newsletter (*HOPE HAPPENINGS*, *Focus: HOPE News*), Nov 1970-97
29. "Poor People's Paper," n.d.