



## DeVerne Calloway Papers (S0012)

**Collection Number:** S0012

**Collection Title:** DeVerne Calloway Papers

**Dates:** 1929-1986

**Creator:** Calloway, DeVerne Lee, 1916-1993

**Abstract:** The DeVerne Calloway papers contain correspondence, meeting meetings, newspaper clippings, photographs, posters, and scrapbooks chronicling her personal life and career as the first African American woman elected to the Missouri legislature. As the Missouri State Representative from the 70th District (1962-1981), Calloway focused on assisting welfare recipients and prisoners, which is reflected in her correspondence.

**Collection Size:** 18.2 cubic feet  
(430 folders, 604 photographs, 5 volumes, 4 items)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](https://www.shsmo.org/research-center). If you would like more information, please contact us at [stlouis@shsmo.org](mailto:stlouis@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *DeVerne Calloway Papers* (S0012); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

**Donor Information:** The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by DeVerne Calloway on December 2, 1975 (Accession No. SA0725). Additions were made on August 21, 1980, by DeVerne Calloway (Accession No. SA2321); and on June 1, 1992, by DeVerne Calloway.

**Related Materials:** Additional materials related to the DeVerne Calloway Papers can be found in the following collections:

*Ernest Calloway Papers (S0011)*

**Processed by:** Processed by Western Historical Manuscript Collection Staff June 1992. Revised by Zack Palitzsch September 2022.

**Historical Note:**

DeVerne Calloway was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on June 17, 1916. She attended LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis and did graduate work at Atlanta University and Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She taught school in Georgia and Mississippi before joining the American Red Cross and traveled to China, Burma, and India during World War II. While in India, she led a protest against the segregation of Negro Soldiers in the use of Red Cross facilities.

Calloway moved to Chicago after the war and helped form the Committee for Racial Equality (CORE) in 1946. She later joined the staff of the Jewish Welfare Fund and Developed skills in fund-raising. In 1948, she married Ernest Calloway, a political activist, and union organizer. Ernest Calloway later became president of the St. Louis NAACP, research director of Teamster's Joint Council #3, and a professor of Urban Affairs at St. Louis University. In February 1961, they began publishing *Citizen Crusader*, later named *New Citizen*, a newspaper covering black politics and civil rights in St. Louis.

Calloway was elected to the Missouri House of Representatives on her first bid for public office in November 1962. She was the first Black woman elected to the Missouri Legislature. She served on the House committees on education, public health and safety, and social security. She also served on the Elections Committee, and the Accounts Committee, as chairman of the Federal- State Relations Committee, and as a secretary of legislature's Democratic caucus. During her career in the legislature, she worked actively to increase state aid to public education and to improve welfare grants and services for dependent children, the blind, disabled and elderly. She also worked to reform prisons that refused to desegregate.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Calloway focused much of her time in the Missouri Legislature facilitating a civil rights movement within Missouri State corrections facilities. She helped prisoners navigate the legal system to help fight for more equitable treatment and better living conditions. Many prisoners from the Missouri State Penitentiary wrote to Calloway discussing their mistreatment from the guards and administration, headed by Warden Donald Wyrick. Calloway would often visit the prison facilities to speak with prisoners about their plight. Through Calloway's help in the legislature, the Penitentiary was finally forced to desegregate in the mid-1970s.

In 1978, she served on the education committee that presided over the transfer of administrative control of Harris- Stowe Teachers' College from the St. Louis Board of Education to the state. Calloway also served on many community boards, including the board of the Union-Sarah Economic Development Corporation, an organization incorporated to improve the economic, educational, and social opportunities in the North St. Louis area. Calloway was elected to her tenth term in the Missouri House in November 1980. She retired from public office at the conclusion of that term. DeVerne Calloway died on January 23, 1993.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following ten series:

Political  
Personal  
Harris-Stowe State College  
Union-Sarah Economic Development Corporation  
Prison Correspondence  
Publications  
1976 Democratic National Convention  
Photographs  
Oversize  
Scrapbooks

**Scope and Content Note:****Political**

This series contains articles, correspondence, newspaper clippings, house bills, petitions, reports, and newsletters documenting Calloway's involvement with civil issues surrounding the districts which she represented as well as the State of Missouri. Topics of interest include abortion, education, housing, legislation, prison reformation, welfare, and women. Materials of note include correspondence between notable state and federal officials, including William Clay, Stewart Symington, Thomas Eagleton, and Jimmy Carter. This series also contains campaign materials from Ernest Calloway's campaign to represent the First Congressional District in Missouri. The materials in this series date from 1956 to 1989 and are arranged alphabetically.

**Personal**

This series consists of correspondence, newsletters, newspaper clippings, and reports documenting Calloway's personal life as well as her involvement in various St. Louis local organizations including Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, National Council of Negro Women, and the Southern Negro youth Congress. Materials of note in this collection include the family correspondence. The materials in this series date from 1933 to 1988 and are arranged alphabetically.

**Harris-Stowe State College**

This series contains correspondence, meeting minutes, newspaper clippings, and reports regarding the activities of Harris-Stowe during the 1970s and 1980s, especially concerning the proposed merger of Harris-Stowe and the University of Missouri-St. Louis to create a new state institution and the controversies that followed. Other materials of note in this series include meeting minutes of the Board of Regents, as well as correspondence and legislation regarding the transition to a state-run college. The materials in this series date from 1975 to 1985 and are arranged alphabetically.

## **Union-Sarah Economic Development Corporation**

This series contains bylaws, financial statements, memoranda, and reports regarding the founding, governance, and activities of the Union-Sarah Economic Development Corporation. Materials of note include meeting minutes of the Corporation, documenting their efforts at combating the inadequacies of welfare programs and to promote more equitable economic development in the St. Louis area. The materials in this series date from 1967 to 1975 and are arranged alphabetically.

## **Prison Correspondence**

This series contains correspondence from prisoners and prison staff in the Missouri State Penitentiary, Central Missouri Correctional Center, and the Correctional Center for Women to DeVerne Calloway. Notable topics of discussion include the mistreatment of inmates, wrongful convictions, and the conditions of prisons. Correspondence of note includes letters regarding the death of Leon Dent, Robert Lee Myrick, and Jesse Lang at the Missouri State Penitentiary, which many prisoners suspected was a result of foul play amongst the guards and administration. This series also includes correspondence between DeVerne Calloway and the warden of the Missouri State Penitentiary, Donald Wyrick regarding the status of prisoners. The materials in this series date from 1967 to 1982 and are arranged alphabetically by name.

## **Publications**

This series contains books, bulletins, magazines, newsletters, and newspaper clippings regarding the Black community and politics. Materials of note include *The Black Scholar* magazines, with issues from 1970 to 1976; *The Crisis*, a magazine published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, with issues from 1963 to 1969; and *The Horizon*, a newsletter from the Missouri Department of Corrections, with issues from 1974 to 1976. The materials in this series date from 1933 to 1988 and are arranged alphabetically.

## **1976 Democratic National Convention**

This series contains booklets, correspondence, lists of delegates, maps, and reports regarding the 1976 Democratic National Convention, which took place in New York City. Specific reports include the Democratic Platform Committee report, the Committee on Rules report, and the Credentials Committee report. The materials in this series are arranged alphabetically.

## **Photographs**

This series includes images from several individuals and organizations including DeVerne and Ernest Calloway, William Clay, Congress of Racial Equity, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Also included are images from political organizations from the Fourth, Eighteenth, and Twenty-Eight Wards in St. Louis. Some of the photographs contain graphic images. The photographs in this series date from 1959 to 1988 and are arranged alphabetically.

## **Oversize**

This series contains buttons, posters, newspaper clippings, and memorabilia regarding political campaigns of Ernest Calloway and Jimmy Carter. This series also includes buttons from the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, issues from NAACP's *Citizen*, and newspaper clippings and election memorabilia from St. Louis' Eighteenth Ward. The materials in this series date from 1957 to 1980 and are arranged alphabetically.

## Scrapbooks

This series consists of 5 scrapbooks documenting DeVerne Calloway's life and political career. The scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings, correspondence, and photographs. Included in this series are scrapbooks documenting Calloway's time in Calcutta, India, now known as Kolkata, while she worked for the American Red Cross during World War II. Also included is a scrapbook documenting Calloway's childhood. The scrapbooks in this series date from 1930 to 1984.

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