



Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Collection (S0093)

Collection Number: S0093

Collection Title: Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Collection

Dates: 1938-1982

Creator: Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis

Abstract: The collection consists of annual reports, newsletters, and pamphlets chronicling the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis's efforts to provide social services for the St. Louis area's African American population.

Collection Size: 0.02 cubic foot
(5 folders)

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](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Urban League of St. Louis Collection* (S0093); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The collection was donated to the University of Missouri by the Thomas Jefferson Library on January 3, 1975 (Accession No. SA0510). Additions were made on March 17, 1976 by the Western Historical Manuscript Collection-St. Louis (Accession No. SA0795), on June 22, 1979 by Jeff Tallent (Accession No. SA2191), and on August 26, 1987 by Chris Daniels (Accession No. SA2812).

Related Material: Additional materials related to the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis can be found in the following collections:

[Ivan C. James Papers \(S0144\)](#)

[Health and Welfare Council of Metropolitan St. Louis Records \(S0434\)](#)

[Urban League of St. Louis Records \(LH-wua00368\)](#)

Processed by: Processed by AJ Medlock, April 2023.

Historical Note:

In June 1918, an interracial group of St. Louisans founded The Urban League of St. Louis to assist Black citizens who had fled East St. Louis, Illinois, due to the previous year's race riots. The St. Louis office affiliated itself with the National Urban League, which was formed in New York City in 1910 to provide social services to African Americans who had migrated from the rural south to northern cities. The St. Louis branch's first Executive Secretary was George W. Buckner. Under his leadership, Buckner initiated the construction of an open-air school for disabled African American children and secured funding via the League's membership in the St. Louis Community Fund (now the United Way), St. Louis's most extensive voluntary giving program.

Buckner resigned in late 1923, by which time the League's board of directors integrated; Gordon Simpson succeeded Buckner in 1924. John T. Clark became Executive Director in 1926. During his first year as Executive Director, Clark and his staff received 16,000 job applications from African American clients and managed to secure jobs for 6,000 applicants, mostly in "domestic service" positions. In 1932, Clark developed the first Block Unit System in the Urban League. Block Units consisted of local neighborhood residents who banded together to provide mutual aid and lobby the city government for improved services.

Leo Bohanon followed Clark as Executive Secretary in 1950. Under his stewardship, the St. Louis branch complied with the National League's efforts to eliminate job placements in domestic service and transfer all relevant employment files to state employment offices. William E. Douthit became President of the Urban League of St. Louis after Bohanon's retirement in 1964. In 1971, Douthit opened offices in Kinloch, Missouri, in St. Louis County and secured \$95,000 for urban renewal projects in the all-Black community. Douthit also oversaw the merger of the Urban League of St. Louis and St. Claire County, Illinois, to form the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, Inc., in 1979.

In 1985, James H. Buford assumed the Presidency of the Urban League of St. Louis. Buford oversaw the St. Louis office's transition to focusing primarily on equality and economic development. Michael P. McMillan has served as President since 2013. The League currently offers programs focusing on education, economic opportunity, Civil Rights, and empowering local communities.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Content Note:

The collection contains annual reports, monthly and quarterly newsletters, and pamphlets documenting the Urban League of St. Louis's mission to provide social services for St. Louis's African American community. Materials of interest include *Monthly Newsnotes* discussing

national and local events affecting St. Louis's African American community, such as open housing and desegregation of St. Louis Public Schools. Also included in the collection is a report, *The Negro in the St. Louis Economy*, which provides an overview of the African American labor force in St. Louis and identifies discriminatory policies practiced by businesses and unions. The materials in this collection are arranged alphabetically and date from 1938 to 1982.

Container List:

- f. 1 Annual reports, 1938-1942, 1944-1945, 1948, 1957, 1960, 1964-1970, 1972, 1974, 1979
- f. 2 Invites and notices 1975-1982
- f. 3 Newsletters, 1968-1976
- f. 4 Newspaper, *Urban League of St. Louis*, 1974-1978
- f. 5 *Trend of Negro Areas in St. Louis*, *The Negro in the St. Louis Economy*, and *What's Happening at the Urban League?*, 1947, 1954, no date

Index:

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