



## The Civil Rights Movement in St. Louis Manuscript (S0187)

**Collection Number:** S0187

**Collection Title:** The Civil Rights Movement in St. Louis Manuscript

**Dates:** 1980

**Creator:** Henderson, Gina L.

**Abstract:** The Civil Rights Movement in St. Louis Manuscript consists of a thesis written by Gina L. Henderson titled *The Civil Rights Movement in St. Louis, 1954-1970: A Socio-Historical Perspective*. The author argues that Black St. Louisans were at the forefront of the Civil Rights movement despite popular notions that the city's African-American population was complacent.

**Collection Size:** 0.15 cubic foot  
(1 folder)

**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](mailto:stlouis@shsmo.org).

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *The Civil Rights Movement in St. Louis Manuscript* (S0187); 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 Ina Watson on September 20, 1984 (Accession No. SA2652).

**Processed by:** Processed by AJ Medlock and Remy Cognac, September 2023

**Historical Note:**

The modern Civil Rights movement in St. Louis began in 1954, shortly after the Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. During this period, segregation in St. Louis was often perpetuated through exclusionary real estate practices of isolating African Americans to older neighborhoods, such as the Ville neighborhood in North St. Louis City. The City's Black neighborhoods often lacked access to resources like education and healthcare. The resulting racial tensions led the Board of Alderman, at the urging of Mayor Joseph Darst, to establish the Council of Human Relations (CHR) in 1950. CHR's primary mission was to ease racial tensions in the city by promoting better relations between whites and Blacks. However, CHR's conservative approach ignored issues most important to the Black community, including education and employment.

Civil Rights groups such as the St. Louis chapter of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) took a more radical approach for that era, working towards desegregating employment and patronage in local businesses, securing victories in movie theaters and department stores, such as Famous Barr. However, one of the primary factors limiting the local Civil Rights movement's successes was the lack of coordination among groups. For example, in 1965, St. Louis CORE led a boycott against the Bi-State Development Authority, which operated St. Louis City's bus system, and purchased its primary competition, the Consolidated Service Car Company in 1965, laying off the predominantly Black drivers. At the beginning of 1966, a lack of communication between the drivers and St. Louis CORE doomed the protest, with the drivers unilaterally agreeing to concessions presented by the Bi-State Development Authority before the beginning of the boycott without consulting CORE.

The lack of clear goals and coordination between Civil Rights groups plagued the movement in St. Louis by the late 1960s and early 1970s. Other factors hampering the Civil Rights movement, which, conversely, may have prevented racial riots, included the Black middle-class exodus to the suburbs and the white communities' lack of ethnic cohesiveness to provide major counterprotests. These later failures and lack of high-profile publicity given to other midwestern communities, such as Cleveland, which endured race riots during this period, gave the impression that St. Louis lacked an active Civil Rights movement despite earlier successes in the 1950s and early 1960s.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into one folder.

**Scope and Content:**

*The Civil Rights Movement in St. Louis, 1954-1970: A Socio-Historical Perspective*, is an 83-page thesis written by Gina L. Henderson, a Washington University undergraduate student in 1980. Henderson argues that Black St. Louisans were at the forefront of the Civil Rights movement by highlighting significant protests by local civil rights groups, such as the Congress for Racial Equality's (CORE) Jefferson bank protests in 1963. Throughout the text, Henderson applies a socio-economic analysis to explain why St. Louis appeared relatively quiet, compared to racial uprisings in other midwestern cities, like Cleveland, by noting several factors, including the black middle-class leaving St. Louis City for the suburbs, depriving St. Louis City's black community of strong leadership; the lack of coordination among Civil Rights groups during this

period; and the white community's inability to organize themselves into a cohesive ethnic identity. The text is divided into five chapters, with two appendices and a bibliography.

**Container List:**

- f. 1                                 *The Civil Rights Movement in St. Louis, 1954-1970: A  
Socio-Historical Perspective, 1980*

**Index:**

<b>Index Terms</b>	<b>Folders</b>
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