

**S0321 Mcneal, Theodore D. (1906-1982),  
Scrapbook, 1941-1943  
2 Microfilm Rolls**

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Related collections:

S0170 Grant, Louise Elizabeth, "The Saint Louis Unit Of The March On Washington Movement: A Study In Sociology Of Conflict," 1944  
S0011 Calloway, Ernest (1909-1989), Papers, 1937-1983

Records of the St. Louis March on Washington Movement, which was founded in response to A. Phillip Randolph's call for a march to end discrimination in defense work. Executive Order 8802 established the Fair Employment Practices Commission in June 1941. The local MOWM picketed businesses and industry, staged mass rallies, and succeeded in bringing the FEPC to St. Louis in August 1944 to hold hearings.

Theodore McNeal became Missouri's first black senator in 1961. The scrapbooks, however, document his activities as president of the St. Louis branch of the March on Washington Movement (MOWM), 1942-1944.

The MOWM began in January 1941 when A. Phillip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, issued a call for 10,000 blacks to march on Washington to demand jobs in the defense industry and to end the segregation in the armed services. Faced with possibly 50,000 blacks marching on Washington, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, establishing a Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) in June 1941.

McNeal, an organizer for the St. Louis Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and David Grant, an attorney, organized the St. Louis branch of the MOWM in the spring of 1942. In June 400 members "marched" on the U.S. Cartridge plant protesting lack of training for blacks, lack of jobs for black women, and lack of advancement for black workers. They marched on Carter Carburetor in August protesting its refusal to hire blacks. McNeal also organized a rally at Kiel Auditorium in August. Between 9,000 and 10,000 people attended and McNeal, Grant, Randolph and Walter White (president of the national NAACP) were the principal speakers. The St. Louis MOWM continued to monitor hiring practices at war contract and defense plants throughout the war. In 1943 McNeal decided to focus on employment for blacks in St. Louis public utilities: Union Electric, Laclede Gas, Southwestern Bell, and the St. Louis Public Service Company. The achieved success with the phone company offices. In the fall of 1943 Southwestern Bell agreed to open an office in a black neighborhood with black employees and eventual integration of blacks in other offices.

By 1944 the employment situation had improved for black men. Out of 300 defense related employees in the city, 250 had hired black men, but only 100 employed black women. David Grant, in hearings before the U.S. Congress, declared that the employment situation for black

women was the worst in the nation. Estimates ranged from 15, 000 to 20, 000 black women available for work, with 10,000 to 12,000 desperately needing work. McNeal decided to "raise some hell" to get more black women employed. The MOWM urged women in newspaper ads to apply for defense jobs, document their interviews, and give the results to the MOWM. After receiving responses from several women the MOWM asked the FEPC to come to St. Louis and hold hearings. In August, 1944 the FEPC held hearings in St. Louis. Thirteen women testified against seven war contract plants that did not hire black women: Amertorp, Wagner Electric, McDonnell Douglas, Bussman Manufacturing, Carter Carburetor, St. Louis Shipbuilding and Steel Company, and McQuay Norris Manufacturing. The FEPC opened an office in St. Louis in October 1944 and had one of the heaviest case loads in the nation.

The MOWM supported the efforts of other civil rights groups during the war, especially in ending Jim Crow segregation in public accommodations. The NAACP and the Citizens Civil Rights Committee (a group of black and white women) worked to integrate downtown eating facilities during 1944. McNeal and the NAACP sponsored the sit-ins of the CCRC at downtown department stores.

By early 1945 the MOWM disbanded and McNeal and Grant continued to work on civil rights with the NAACP and Urban League. McNeal speculated that the MOWM was responsible for obtaining 15, 000 jobs for black St. Louisans during World War II.

See also:

T024, T343, Taped Interviews with Theodore McNeal

T002, Taped Interview with David Grant