

## **S0438 Freedom Of Residence, Greater St. Louis Committee (1961- ) Records, 1962-1969 28 Folders**

This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri](http://The State Historical Society of Missouri). If you would like more information, please contact us at [shsresearch@umsystem.edu](mailto:shsresearch@umsystem.edu).

Robert Knickmeyer donated the records of the Freedom of Residence, Greater St. Louis Committee to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in January 1984.

After a year of informal discussion among community leaders, a group of prominent St. Louisans, black and white, founded the Freedom of Residence, Greater St. Louis Committee in March 1961. Volunteers staffed the private non-profit corporation in its early years. An anonymous grant provided the initial funds for the group. Other sources of funds came from membership dues and donations. The committee facilitated integration of housing in St. Louis by sponsoring buyers in previously segregated areas, preparing housing lists of non-segregated units, engaging in community education programs, and supporting fair housing laws.

In 1962, the committee included 100 members. The Reverend William Lorenz, Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, headed the organization. That same year, the committee succeeded in moving a black family into a previously all-white University City neighborhood.

By 1964, the committee had raised \$21,000. This amount included a \$5,000 grant from the New York-based Horne Crest Foundation. This enabled the hiring of two staff members. Ruth C. Porter, one of the founders, filled the position of Executive Secretary. She kept the job until her death on February 9, 1967.

Affiliated chapters, such as the Florissant Council, formed in suburban communities in 1965 and 1966. The combined efforts of the groups resulted in major accomplishments for 1965 and 1966. The committee provided speakers for 157 meetings and distributed 30,000 pamphlets entitled, "New Era in Housing," to black and white communities. The committee also sponsored, in cooperation with religious leaders and other local fair housing groups, a Fair Housing Week in February 1965. At this event the committee distributed pledge cards to elicit community support. By the end of 1966, the Greater St. Louis Committee had succeeded in finding 600 black families housing in 130 neighborhoods and 37 municipalities throughout the St. Louis area.

The committee's funds ran out by the end of 1966, and the office closed. In January 1967, the Horne Crest Foundation notified the committee of a \$5,000 grant contingent on matching funds. Local donors contributed \$8,600 and the committee reopened its office.

Until 1967, the Freedom of Residence Committee worked primarily with middle income families. In April 1967, the Human Development Corporation, a federal agency, approved a \$16,000 program with the committee for moving blacks out of the city's ghettos.

A landmark Supreme Court ruling evolved from the efforts of the Freedom of Residence Greater St. Louis Committee. In 1965, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Lee Jones, an interracial couple, attempted to buy a house from a suburban developer. The Alfred H. Mayer Corporation refused to sell to them because Mr. Jones was black.

The Joneses went to the Freedom of Residence office. After speaking with a staff attorney, Samuel H. Liberman II, they agreed to sue. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court. In June 1968, the court ruled that discrimination in all housing sales and rentals was illegal. The decision provided Freedom of Residence with a previously lacking legal tool for integrating neighborhoods. In 1969, the committee received \$150,000 which they used to provide assistance to families denied housing on the basis of race. The funds came from a three-year grant from the Danforth Foundation.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The Freedom of Residence, Greater St. Louis Committee Records, 1967-1969, document the committee's activities in integrating housing in metropolitan St. Louis. The collection includes newsclippings on the June 1968 landmark fair housing suit, Jones vs. Mayer Realty Co., in which the Supreme Court ruled discrimination in all housing sales and rentals to be illegal.

The collection consists of three series: 1) Greater St. Louis Committee, FOR, 1965-1969; 2) Florissant Council, FOR, 1965-1968; and 3) Newsclippings, 1962-1969. Series 1 and 2 are arranged in alphabetical order. Series 3 is in chronological order.

The first series (folders 1-12) document the work of the Greater St. Louis Committee. It contains correspondence, housing lists, minutes, notices, maps, newsletters, pamphlets, and statements.

The Florissant Council series (folders 13-22) reflects the activities of an affiliate of the Greater St. Louis Committee. Included are: correspondence, a constitution, housing lists, membership lists, minutes, notices, press releases, and statements.

The third series (folders 23-28) consists of St. Louis area newspaper clippings. Folders 27-28 contain information on the Jones vs. Mayer Realty Co. fair housing case (June 1968).

### **FOLDER LIST**

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#### **FOLDERS 1-28**

#### **SERIES 1 - GREATER ST. LOUIS COMMITTEE, FOR**

1. Campaign Committee, c. 1965
2. Correspondence, 1966-1968
3. Housing Discrimination, c. 1966
4. Housing Lists, 1968
5. Local Fair Housing Committees, 1965-1966

6. Maps, 1915-1966
  7. Meeting Minutes and Notices, 1965-1967
  8. Newsletters, 1965
  9. North County Meeting, April 1, 1965
  10. Pamphlets and Songsheet, c.1960s
  11. Porter, Ruth C., February 1967
  12. Statements and Resolutions, 1965-1969
- SERIES 2 - FLORISSANT COUNCIL, FOR**
13. Board Member List, 1965-1966
  14. Constitution, September 29, 1965
  15. Correspondence, 1965-1968
  16. Florissant Council Newsletters, January 1966
  17. Housing Lists, 1965-1966
  18. Minutes, 1965-1967
  19. Meeting Notices, 1965-1966
  20. Operation Homeseach, 1965
  21. Press Releases, 1965-1966
  22. Real Estate Co. Lists, 1964-1965
- SERIES 3: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS**
23. Newsclippings, 1962
  24. Newsclippings, April 1964 - May 1965
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