

Guide to the Barbara Ricks Thompson Papers

1953-1991



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The purpose of this finding aid is to help you understand the nature of this collection and to assist you in the retrieval of material from this collection. The following pages contain a brief biographical history of the person, or persons, who created or collected these papers, followed by a general description of the collection in the scope and content note. If more detailed information is warranted then series descriptions also appear. The container listing appears last and is the listing of material in each box, or container, of this collection. To request material you need to turn to the container listing section. It is essentially a listing of file folders, or artifact items, in the collection. Each folder, or item, has a call number associated with it. Each folder also lists the inclusive dates of the material in the folder. On the material request form list both the call number and the folder, or item, title. Use a different line for each folder, or item, requested. When your request sheet is complete, or full, bring it to the archivist and the material will be retrieved.

Biographical Note

Barbara Ricks Thompson (?-), lay leader, activist, United Methodist Church agency executive, grew up in Georgetown, Washington, D.C. Ricks' family moved to Georgetown in the early 1930s. During her childhood the Georgetown public schools were racially segregated which meant Thompson only attended African American public schools. Thompson began her education at the Phillips School till fifth grade. After leaving Phillips she attended the Wormley School until entering Francis Junior High School. Barbara followed in her parent's footsteps by attending Armstrong High School. Eventually she would continue her education by earning both Bachelor and Masters degrees in Home Economics.

Mount Zion Methodist Church played an important role in the lives of the Ricks family. The church's ministries and congregation would nurture the Ricks siblings to become future leaders in their respective professional and church vocations. Throughout her life Mount Zion's impact never left Thompson and Thompson never left what would become Mount Zion United Methodist Church. Barbara attributes all of the above influences along with her parents would mold her into the person she became as an adult.

These positive influences are evident when documenting Thompson's career within The United Methodist Church connection. Mount Zion provided Barbara many in-house leadership positions included in the following list. It should be noted that this list is not complete: Lay Leader, United Methodist Women, Sunday School teacher, Board of Stewards-Ethnic Minority Outreach Project Chair, Washington Conference Methodist Youth Fellowship President which turned out is the last president before an annual conference merger.

Thompson would go on to serve the larger denomination in various capacities: National Conference of Methodist Youth Officer, Asbury Village Board of Trustees, Gammon Theological Seminary Trustee, Delegate to four General Conferences (1972, 1976, 1980 and 1984), Delegate to four Northeast Jurisdictional Conferences (1972, 1976, 1980, 1984), United Methodist Commission on General Conference member, General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns Vice Chair (1980-1987), Reconciling Ministries Network Vice Chair, First Chairperson of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (1972-1978), General Commission on Religion and Race board member and later General Secretary (1985-1998).

Organized ecumenism became another outlet for Thompson to serve the church beyond United Methodism. Here is a list of organizations she donated her time: Baltimore Council of Ministries Chair 1972-1974, National Council of Churches Member, United Methodist representative on the



Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC), WCC United States Conference Vice Monitor, WCC Meeting Delegate (1975, 1983), African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC) President.

Thompson's secular career also focused on social justice. Employment with the Internal Revenue Service (1957-1985) are marked by these foci. Thompson rose through the ranks until she led the Equal Opportunity/Employment Office. There was also a stint working at Howard University's Department of Human Ecology formerly known as the Home Economics Department.

Additional secular groups benefitting from Thompson's leadership include: Washington Opportunities for Women Board of Directors member, Federally Employed Women (Washington, D.C.), Treasury Department's Federal Women's Advisory Committee and the National Project Equality Board.

Barbara Ricks married Alfred Thompson.

Scope and Content Note

This small collection comprises snapshots related to Thompson's professional and personal life with The United Methodist Church, ecumenical organizations and the Internal Revenue Service. There are only a few clues to the fact that she worked for the Internal Revenue Service. There are no other extensive records documenting her personal life with the exception of one photograph and an occasional mention in other records. Many of the records relate to her role as General Secretary for the General Commission on Religion and Race. Thompson's work with the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women is limited as well despite her leadership positions. Other records document involvement with organizations to promote not only African American United Methodists but more specifically Black women in the church.

It should be noted that the pins and badges illustrate the breadth and depth that Thompson leadership in the fight against racism and women's rights. The largest set of delegate badges comes from attending various General Conferences. There is one delegate badge from the Northeast Jurisdiction. A total of eight pins represents her work with General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) and United Methodist Women (UMW). Surprisingly there are just two pins from her tenure at the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCRR). Other pins and a badge originate from working with ecumenical bodies, United Nations, and other organizations.

Arrangement

Material has been arranged in the following manner. The collection is arranged by topics and organizations.

Related Material

The oral history project of the Citizens Association of Georgetown. http://www.cagtown.com/sites/default/files/OralHistory/Transcripts/Barbara%20Ricks%20Thompson%20and%20Vernon%20Ricks_0.pdf

Records of the General Commission on Religion and Race of the United Methodist Church - GCAH.

Records of the Mission Education and Cultivation Program Department of the General Board of Global Ministries - GCAH.

Microfilm Edition of the Mission Biographical Reference Files - GCAH.

Records of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women - GCAH.



Thelma Randall Papers.

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding this collection.

Use Access

Detailed use restrictions relating to our collections can be requested from the office of the archivist at the General Commission on Archives and History. Photocopying is handled by the staff and may be limited in certain instances. Before using any material for publication from this collection a formal request for permission to publish is expected and required.

Preferred Citation

When citing material from this collection please use the following format: Direct reference to the item or its file folder, Barbara Ricks Thompson Collection, African American Methodist Heritage Center - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey. Do not make use of the item's call number as that is not a stable descriptor.

Index Terms

Subject Terms

African American Methodists
Civil rights
Human rights
Women's rights--Religious aspects--Christianity

Geographic Terms

Maryland
Washington (D.C.)

Subject Names - Corporate Bodies

United Methodist Church (U.S.). General Commission on Religion and Race
United Methodist Church (U.S.). General Commission on the Status and Role of Women
United Methodist Church (U.S.). General Conference

Genre Terms

Artifacts
Clippings
Correspondence
Newsletters
Photographs
Pins (Jewelry)
Publications
Reports

Occupation Terms

General Secretary

Table of Contents



Container List

Call Number	Folder Title	Date(s)
2413-4-4:1	Black Women in The United Methodist Church	1976
2413-4-4:2	Clippings	1953-1991
2413-4-4:3	General Commission on Religion and Race (GCRR)	1985
2413-4-4:4	General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW)	1978-1985
2413-4-4:5	General Correspondence	1980-1985
2413-4-4:6	Mary McLeod Bethune	1975
2413-4-4:7	Miscellaneous	1973-1985
2413-4-4:8	Mount Zion United Methodist Church: Women's Day	1985
2413-4-4:9	Photographs	1987-1988
2413-4-4:10	World Council of Churches	1974
2413-4-5:0	Artifacts: Badges and Pins	1984-1988
2413-4-6:0	Artifacts: Badges and Pins	1976-1989

