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## National Congress of Neighborhood Women Records, 1974-1999

144 boxes (58 linear ft.)

Collection number: MS 322

### Abstract:

Feminist grassroots network. The primary goal of this organization was to empower poor and working-class women to become community leaders. The collection offers valuable source material for the study of working-class feminist organizing; urban studies; and women in community development. Also documented are the inner workings of grassroots organizing, with all of the personal and political dynamics that come with incorporating a feminist consciousness into an organization, where issues of class, race and ethnicity are acknowledged and openly discussed. Material includes correspondence, publications, funding proposals, photographs and audiovisual material.

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Sophia Smith Collection  
Smith College  
Northampton, MA

### Historical Note

The National Congress of Neighborhood Women (NCNW) is a support network for grassroots women community leaders dedicated to empowering, and providing a voice for, poor and working-class women working to improve their communities in low-income urban and rural areas on local, national, and international levels. The history of NCNW begins with the vision of Jan Peterson, co-founder and long-time director of NCNW, as well as the spirit and commitment of the neighborhood women of the Williamsburg-Greenpoint area of Brooklyn, New York.

Jan Peterson had recently arrived in New York City in 1969 when she joined the Conselyea Street Block Association of neighborhood women of Williamsburg-Greenpoint, a predominantly working-class and mixed ethnic (Italian, Polish, Irish, Spanish, and African American) area of Brooklyn. Inspired by the community activists of the civil rights movement she had worked with as a volunteer for CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) in Harlem, as well as the burgeoning anti-poverty and feminist movements, she had a vision of creating an inter-racial, multi-ethnic community organization within a poor and working-class neighborhood, similar to the one in which she'd grown up in Wisconsin.

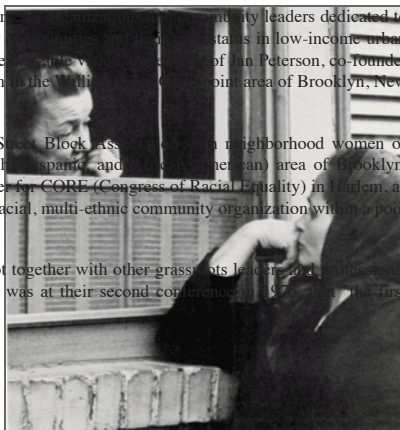
In 1973, at a meeting sponsored by the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, Jan Peterson got together with other grassroots leaders to plan a national conference of working-class women in Washington D.C. for 1974. It was at their second conference in 1975 that the first national federation of blue collar, neighborhood women" (National Committee letter, 1977) was founded, with an office established in Williamsburg-Greenpoint. The Brooklyn office would administer both national and local programs in Williamsburg-Greenpoint, serving as a "laboratory" and model for other community organizations. Their primary goal was to empower poor and working-class women to become community leaders -- to give them a voice, and to raise their consciousness of their own power so they would be better able to define and solve problems facing their communities. They aimed to accomplish this through education, as well as job skills and leadership training, always with an emphasis on preserving family and community cohesiveness. In addition, NCNW had a vision of developing a national network of grassroots women to share resources, experiences, and knowledge.

NCNW's flagship program was their community-based higher education program, begun in 1975. Developed in collaboration with local community colleges and with input from the students, courses were designed especially for mature women, most already active in their communities, who had a desire to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective community leaders. Closely tied to NCNW's first employment program, Project Open Doors, courses were supplemented by apprenticeship experience in women's and community organizations throughout New York City. In the 1980s, NCNW expanded its education program to include pre-College adult education courses in literacy, math, English as a second language, and preparation for the high school equivalency degree (G.E.D.). In 1986, NCNW opened the "You Can" Community School, an alternative education, pre-employment and leadership training program for youth.

Another one of NCNW's core programs is the Leadership Training and Support Program, of which an integral part is the Leadership Support Process (LSP) developed by Lisel Burns. Begun as part of the College Program, leadership training and support groups were soon offered as workshops in regional and national conferences, and incorporated into affiliated organizations across the country. The support groups include consciousness-raising to allow neighborhood women to develop an awareness of how oppression based on class, ethnicity, race or gender might impede their sense of empowerment as leaders. For more information on NCNW's programs, see "Series Descriptions" below.

In the early and mid-1980s, NCNW underwent restructuring of its organization in order to expand its national program and lend more support to grassroots women leaders around the country. In 1986, the Neighborhood Women of Williamsburg/Greenpoint (NWWG), an independent but affiliated organization was created to administer the local programs including the education programs, employment training, leadership support, and public housing tenant training and organizing. The national office continued to network with, and offer training and technical support to, other grassroots women's organizations ("affiliates") across the country, in urban as well as rural areas, including Appalachia, the Pacific Northwest, and the Dakota Nation. Members exchange information and experiences including tenant organizing, the formation of rural land trusts, reforming public schools, and creating leadership support groups.

In 1985, NCNW members attended the UN Third World Conference on Women in Kenya, where they noticed a lack of involvement by poor and working-



Neighborhood scene in Brooklyn, New York, circa 1980.  
Photograph by Janice Eisenberg.

class women. With other grassroots women from developed and developing countries, they created a network called GROOTS International (Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood). NCNW is the North American representative. GROOTS was successful at bringing grassroots women's representation to the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. NCNW also has gained consultative status with the United Nations and has opened an office there, enabling them to more easily disseminate information and resources to policy makers and grassroots community leaders and to ensure that low-income women have a voice in community development policies around the world.

### Scope and Contents of the Collection

The National Congress of Neighborhood Women Records consist of 58 linear feet, dating from 1974-1999, and document the early history of the organization, the growth of its local and national programs, and the development of a national and international network of poor and working-class grassroots women over a 20 year period.

Types of material include correspondence, memoranda, records of the administrative boards and committees, annual reports, material from national conferences and planning meetings, funding proposals, program descriptions and reports, writings on the history and programs of NCNW, publications, articles, research papers, files on affiliated organizations, printed material, photographs, and audiovisual materials.

Since this is a continuing collection of an existing organization, it is necessarily incomplete, with many gaps in the records, particularly those documenting programs still active. The bulk of the material in this processed portion dates from 1975 to 1990. Focusing on the years before the split between the national and local administrations, these records document the formation of core programs in education, employment, and leadership support, as well as the development of a national community development agenda. Also well represented are local housing and tenant programs of the 1980s, the Resource Center, and networking and involvement in the early years of the international women and development movement. In SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION, there is only a small amount of documentation of NCNW's local affiliate, the Neighborhood Women of Williamsburg/Greenpoint. However, their involvement in local programs from 1986 to the early 1990s is represented within SERIES II. PROGRAMS.

It offers a rich source of material on the formation of a successful national organization based on feminist principles and with a grassroots, working-class base. It also offers a fascinating view of its inner workings, with all of the personal and political dynamics that come with incorporating a feminist consciousness into an organization, and where issues of class, race and ethnicity are acknowledged and openly discussed. Through personal stories, shared in workshops, support groups, conferences, meetings, and writings, we are offered a unique perspective on the women's movement.

In addition, there is a treasure trove of subject files on women's issues, grassroots organizing, and community development. Included are numerous published and unpublished writings by NCNW members and others on topics such as class, working-class feminism, ethnicity, female poverty, and women and community development. There are also files on women's and community activist organizations, many in the New York City area, as well as NCNW affiliates nationwide, and international organizations.

This collection is organized into five series:

- [I. Administration](#)
- [II. Programs](#)
- [III. Organizations](#)
- [IV. Photographs](#)
- [V. Audiovisual Material](#)

The inter-relatedness and continuing evolution of the NCNW programs creates a challenge in attempting to organize the records in our typical hierarchical arrangement. The programs of NCNW are best viewed as a web, not distinct projects. The community and economic development vision/agenda of NCNW, for example, influenced projects in many program areas, including leadership and employment training, housing projects, and of course, international programs in community development. Identifying where one project ends and another begins can be problematic, changes in funding often affected the name of the project, as well as its staffing and scope. Wherever possible, the original organization of records has been retained. For example, in SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION, the Central Chronological File and the Development files have been kept intact. But for the most part, records were received in various states of order, in which case the archivist imposed an organization that seemed to be consistent with the original provenance of the records.

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### Information on Use

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#### Preferred Citation

Please use the following format when citing materials from this collection:

National Congress of Neighborhood Women Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

#### Additional Formats

Selections from the National Congress of Neighborhood Women Records can be viewed in the Web exhibit [Agents of Social Change: New Resources on 20th-century Women's Activism](#).

#### History of the Collection

The National Congress of Neighborhood Women began donating its records to the Sophia Smith Collection in 1986.

Recent additions to this collection are unprocessed and are not reflected in the finding aid.

##### *Accruals:*

Periodic additions to collection are expected and are not reflected in this record.

#### Processing Information

Processed by Margaret Jessup, 2000.

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 Additional Information
 

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Language  
English.

## Related Material

Selections from the National Congress of Neighborhood Women Records can be viewed online in the Web exhibit: [Agents of Social Change: New Resources on 20th-century Women's Activism](#).

See also Tamar Carroll's [New York City Women Community Activists Oral History Project](#); and the [Women and Social Movements Web site](#) featuring documents, images, video clips and oral histories of NCNW members (available with subscription).

## Contact Information

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## Bibliography

A number of articles have been published on the history of NCNW and its programs and many are included in this collection. Below are a few of the more comprehensive articles:

Belenky, Mary F., "The National Congress of Neighborhood Women," in *A Tradition That Has No Name* (NY: BasicBooks, 1997)

Haywoode, Terry L., "Neighborhood Women Keeping it Together," *City Limits*, April 1985

Haywoode, Terry L. and Laura Polla Scanlon, "World of Our Mothers: College for Neighborhood Women," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 1993: 3&4, pp. 133-141.

## Sponsor

Encoding funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

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 Series Descriptions
 

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**SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION**

(1974-1996)

24 linear ft.

## Arrangement:

This series is arranged in 16 subseries: General; Corporate Board of Directors; National Advisory Board; National Steering Committee; Task forces; National meetings and conferences; National meetings and conferences; Local; Staff; Individuals; Buildings; Public relations; Membership; Central chronological file; General correspondence; Subject files; and Development.

## Scope and content:

This series documents the founding and early planning of NCNW; funding of its programs; as well as the inner workings and interpersonal relations within the organization. Since its founding in 1975, the national programs have been administered by NCNW's Corporate Board of Directors and National Advisory Board; later the National Steering Committee (which replaced the NAB in 1982). These bodies are made up of members representing affiliated organizations across the country. Jan Peterson has been Executive Director of the National office in Brooklyn since the founding, except from October 1977 to January 1980 when Christine Noschese took over, and from 1983 to 1985 when Alice Quinn and Jan Peterson served as co-Directors. A Local Advisory Board and Local Director administer the Brooklyn programs (under the Neighborhood Women of Williamsburg/Greenpoint since 1986).

The General files include official documents; records documenting the NCNW's organizational structure, including the restructuring in 1982, and the separation of local and national operations in 1985-86; and annual reports, circa 1975-84. For additional reports, see the Executive Directors' reports under Individuals; Corporate Board of Directors; and reports on programs in SERIES II. The records of these national administrative bodies (the Corporate Board of Directors; National Advisory Board; and the National Steering Committee) include correspondence; meeting minutes; biographical information on members; reports; and committee files. These records offer valuable insight into the founding, planning, and development of NCNW. Notable Board members and Steering Committee members represented here include Maryland Congresswoman Barbara Mikulski; St. Louis Housing activist, Bertha Gilkey [see also SERIES II. PROGRAMS-Housing and tenants]; Eleanor Holmes Norton; Crystal Lee Sutton (the "real Norma Rae"); author Nancy Seifer; Rona Feit, founder of the National Women's Political Caucus; and Marie Cirillo, founder of the Woodland Community Trust in Tennessee. For more information on these and other members, see Individuals. The National meetings and conferences subseries includes the first planning meetings held in Washington, 1974-75, as well as NCNW-sponsored national conferences and conventions held thereafter. These files include additional material on several Board and Steering Committee meetings that took place at the national conferences. Types of material include correspondence, programs, agendas, minutes, membership information, notes, and printed material [see also SERIES IV. PHOTOGRAPHS, and SERIES V. AUDIOVISUAL]. For other conferences sponsored by NCNW, see SERIES II. PROGRAMS - Miscellaneous projects and events; and conferences under specific programs. With the restructuring of operations in 1986, the local affiliate, Neighborhood Women of Williamsburg/Greenpoint, was created to administer the programs in Brooklyn. The subseries Local - NWW/G includes documentation of the early planning before the split [see also General-Restructuring]; administrative correspondence; the Local Advisory Board records; and funding material. Of particular interest is a detailed interview of NWW/G staff by author Mary Belenky done in 1992. These are administrative records only. Records on specific local programs are filed in SERIES II.

The Staff subseries includes staff logs, meetings, files on training, office procedures, personnel policies, and other documents related to the inner workings of the Brooklyn office. Sensitive personnel material such as evaluations and salary information has been removed and is closed to research. The Individuals subseries contains files on staff, administrators, members, and others affiliated with NCNW. These include biographical information as well as working files on a variety of projects and topics. Types of material include correspondence, reports, papers, drafts, notes, clippings and printed material. There is a substantial amount of material for each of the Executive Directors (Jan Peterson, Christine Noschese, and Alice Quinn) as well as for Lisel Burns, Leadership coordinator. Additional working files for individuals are filed under specific programs in SERIES II. PROGRAMS. Additional biographical information can be found in this series under Membership, National Corporate Board, National Advisory Board, and National Steering Committee.

Public relations includes administrative files of the PR coordinator; press releases, clippings, and other publicity by and about NCNW; files related to the production of NCNW's newsletter, and other publications; and general descriptions of NCNW, primarily untitled excerpts that were probably used for funding proposals and reports. [See also SERIES II. PROGRAMS-Resource Center which includes records on outreach and networking efforts through "Project Interchange."] For more writings about NCNW and its programs, see Development-Proposals; and SERIES II. PROGRAMS-publicity, reports, papers, and proposals under each program. Additional documentation of NCNW's networking can be found in the Membership subseries which includes lists and completed membership forms of NCNW affiliates, providing interesting background information on community activists and organizations. Additional material on NCNW affiliates can be found in SERIES III. ORGANIZATIONS.

The Central chronological file dates from 1973 to 1989 and include most of the outgoing correspondence, publicity, minutes, agendas, internal memoranda, reports, and papers, produced by the NCNW national office during that period. Much of the material

here is duplicated elsewhere in the collection, but this file provides the most comprehensive overview of the organization and its day-to-day administration. Of particular interest is the internal memoranda which reveal the inner workings of the NCNW office, the interpersonal relations, as well as the infinite challenges and constraints involved in running a grassroots organization. The General correspondence contains incoming correspondence, dating from 1976 to 1985. Additional administrative correspondence can be found in the Subject files that include administrative correspondence, minutes, draft reports, printed material, and notes. Topics include local, state, and national political contacts; meetings with local community leaders; and legal matters. Additional administrative files can be found under Individuals and in SERIES III. ORGANIZATIONS.

The Development subseries documents the history of funding efforts for NCNW and includes administrative files, proposals for general operational funding; and files on funding agencies arranged alphabetically. This section includes important material on many of NCNW's programs. Additional funding information for specific projects can be found in SERIES II. PROGRAMS, but since funds from one source were often shared by more than one project, those files are found here under the funding agency. For instance, under New York City-Department of Employment, is material related to CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) funding for several of NCNW's employment programs. Included are records on the legal battle which ensued when the city tried to cut the programs' funding. [See also SERIES II. PROGRAMS - Employment - Project Open Doors; and SERIES IV. PHOTOGRAPHS.] Files related to the funding for curriculum development for the education program as well as for leadership training are under the Women's Education Equity Act Program (WEEA).

## SERIES II. PROGRAMS

(1975-1996)

28 linear ft.

These series documents local, national and international programs administered by NCNW. It is arranged alphabetically (after Support services) by program area, as defined by NCNW for the most part, although some projects are filed together under areas created by the archivist (such as the Community and economic development, International, and Youth). Under each program area, individual projects are arranged chronologically from date of inception. Many NCNW projects are interrelated as changes in funding often required shifting program parameters and staffing. These relationships are explained in the descriptions below, and cross-references appear throughout the folder list. Types of material include program descriptions and publicity; administrative records such as correspondence, reports, proposals, minutes, and funding information [see also SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Development]; surveys; training materials; conference materials; resource files including articles and papers by NCNW members; and files on participating organizations and individuals. Some Program participants' files containing sensitive personal information have been removed and are currently closed to research. These include counselors' intake forms; applications; questionnaires; student evaluations, and some personal correspondence.

The Support services subseries includes administrative records on the childcare, counseling and referral services which NCNW offered to participants in most of their local programs. Although sensitive material has been removed, there are interesting discussions on counseling sessions in the counselor's meeting minutes and social work interns' reports where the subjects are not named. Related counseling material can be found in under Education-College program, and in the job counseling files under Employment-Job development. There is also related material on support groups and the Leadership Support Process (LSP) filed under Leadership. Related material on childcare services can be found under Employment-World of Work-Childcare training and Youth programs which offered childcare instruction and services for teenage mothers.

The Community and economic development subseries documents NCNW projects which aimed to create a network with other grassroots leaders to research and dialogue on issues of female poverty and community development, and to formulate a cohesive strategy to influence public policy at state and national levels. The projects documented here are central to the principles and vision of NCNW and overarch of most other programs. Material related to a survey conducted for the Women in Neighborhoods Project (1979-80), NCNW's first project with a national scope, is included in this section. Its survey of thirty neighborhood organizations was an effort to analyze the role of women in community activism. Results showed that although neighborhood women initiated many community development projects, once funding was received, women were usually excluded from the planning and execution of the programs. The survey solicited important information from a geographically, racially, and ethnically diverse population of low-income women. The records include the published report of the project, Neighborhood Women: Putting it Together.

Other projects documented here include the Women in Poverty Project (1980-82) which identified community resources benefiting impoverished women through a series of questionnaires, and conducted leadership training sessions held throughout the region [see also Leadership]; the National Resource and Policy Analysis Center in Washington, D.C. (1981-82) which aimed to collect information on federal programs and policies affecting poor and working-class women and to disseminate that information to women leaders and organizations. The Dialogues on Community Development and Female Poverty (1983-) as well as NCNW's annual Community Development Institute (1990-) have served to bring together a diverse group of grassroots activists and scholars for networking and strategizing. The 1986 conference on "Women in Community Development: Forging a National Alliance with International Linkages," co-sponsored by the Overseas Education Fund, reflects NCNW's beginnings in the growing international Women and Development Movement [see also International]. The Subject files at end of this subseries include articles and papers that outline NCNW's community and economic development agenda.

The Education subseries documents its flagship projects, the community-based College Program, as well as its adult education program. The College Program (1975- ), originally funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, was started to provide "interdisciplinary course work augmented with apprenticeship in the community" for women in Williamsburg-Greenpoint. In collaboration with area community colleges, courses leading toward an Associates degree focused on neighborhood studies and community development and gave students the necessary knowledge and skills to become more effective leaders in their communities. In 1982, a Bachelor's degree program was added. As the first program of its kind, the College program has served as model for similar programs elsewhere in the country. Materials included here document the administrative and planning of the program, and curriculum development. Also included are papers written by students, publicity, and conference material.

Recognizing that many single mothers and other low-income women lacked sufficient education to enter their College program and job training programs, NCNW, in conjunction with New York City's Board of Education, introduced pre-College adult education courses in the 1980s. These include classes in literacy, math, English as a second language, and preparation for the high school equivalency degree (G.E.D.). Classes were also offered for women at public housing sites, in conjunction with employment and leadership training [see also Housing and tenants], and in 1986, NCNW opened the "You Can" Community School, an alternative program for young high school dropouts. [See also Youth.]

The Employment subseries documents NCNW's local projects that provide job skills training, job development, counseling and job placement for low-income women. After the General administrative files, the projects are arranged chronologically from the date of inception. The first, Project Open Doors (P.O.D.) was started by the Women's Funding Coalition of over thirty community and women's organizations in New York City, and funded by New York's Department of Employment under the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA). [See also SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Development.] NCNW was the administrator of the project and provided support services through its Job Development program. Hundreds of low-income women were placed in apprenticeship positions with the participating organizations which included women's shelters, health clinics, rape crisis centers, and other community agencies. [For additional files on these organizations, including the Women's Funding Coalition, see SERIES III. ORGANIZATIONS]. The Job Development Program, concurrent with P.O.D., offered career counseling, skills assessment and referrals to jobs and remedial education courses. [See also Education program.] In addition, NCNW offered workshops in resume preparation, job searching, networking, and work place issues such as stress management, sexual harassment, childcare, and unions. Included here are questionnaires and a report from a neighborhood "job analysis" done by NCNW. Based on this employment needs assessment NCNW developed a more intensive Employment and Training program in 1982, offering job skills training in computer repair, programming, and word processing. Beginning in 1985, NCNW also offered an employment orientation course, "World of Work," with workshops on interviewing techniques, resume writing, and job search skills. Additional material on World of Work and job training can be found under Women's Public Works, Housing and tenants, and Youth.

The Housing and tenant subseries is arranged in two sections: the first focuses on grassroots efforts to create affordable housing for women on local, national and international levels; and second documents NCNW's training and support programs for public housing tenants in the New York City area. The Housing section includes a project of the Greenpoint Renaissance Enterprise Corporation (GREC), co-founded by NCNW, to convert an abandoned hospital complex into affordable inter-generational housing

designed by a feminist architectural firm in the 1980s. [See also SERIES III. ORGANIZATIONS-St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation; and the Williamsburg-Greenpoint Community Planning Board.] This section also includes material on the international conference, "Housing Options for Women" organized by NCNW and U.N. HABITAT, as part of the United Nations International Year of the Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) in 1987. At the end of the Housing section are subject files that include writings by NCNW members and others on women and housing.

NCNW's comprehensive education and employment training program for public housing tenants provided job orientation, skills training and job placement, leadership training, and adult education. It also offered support and technical assistance to newly formed tenant associations. Once established, the tenant associations joined the Williamsburg/Greenpoint Federation of Public Housing Developments, coordinated by NCNW's local affiliate, Neighborhood Women of Williamsburg/Greenpoint. Records of the public housing tenant program include general administration files of the New York City Housing Authority and the Community Service Society, which provided both funding and administrative assistance to the tenant training program [see also SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Development]; and the files of Bertha Gilkey, NCNW National Steering Committee member who helped develop NCNW's tenant program, based on her highly successful work organizing tenants at Cochran Gardens, a public housing development in St. Louis. Also included are the administrative files of the Williamsburg/Greenpoint Federation of Public Housing Developments; and files on various tenant associations the New York City area.

The International subseries documents NCNW's participation in the international Women and Community Development movement. In 1985, NCNW and other grassroots women leaders formed the international grassroots network, GROOTS (Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood), for which NCNW is the North American representative. The section on GROOTS in this subseries includes correspondence, minutes, conference material and publicity for the the early organizing of GROOTS, as well as their efforts to ensure grassroots women's participation in several international women's conferences, including the U.N.'s Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. In the late 1980s, NCNW achieved consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (UNESCO). As an official Non-governmental organization (NGO),

NCNW recently opened an office at the United Nations where it works to provide practical assistance and advocates for low-income women around the world who are working to improve their communities. The United Nations files document NCNW's and GROOTS' participation in the international conferences on women sponsored by the U.N. Other organizations and projects represented in this subseries include HABITAT International [see also Housing and tenants], the Overseas Education Fund, which funds economic development projects for poor women (Jan Peterson was elected to serve on Board of O.E.F. in 1985); and the German Marshall Fund, a supporter of research projects on community women's leadership. [See also SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Development.]

The Leadership program is another core program of NCNW that aims to develop and support leadership qualities among women active in their communities. IT offers leadership training at national and regional conferences, and in conjunction with its local Employment, Education, and Tenant training programs. Support groups are integral to the Leadership Program and include consciousness-raising sessions to allow neighborhood women to develop an awareness of how oppression based on class, ethnicity, race or gender might impede their sense of empowerment as leaders. This sub-series is divided into five sections: Administration, Local training, Support groups, National training, and Subject files. For related material, see SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Individuals-Lisel Burns (Leadership coordinator).

NCNW's Resource Center, located at the Brooklyn office, serves as an information and referral center for individuals and grassroots organizations. The Resource Center has provided, at various times, technical assistance, education and training materials, a Speaker's Bureau, and workshops on a variety of topics. [See also Miscellaneous projects, and conferences or events.] In the late 1970's, the Resource Center was part of "Proje-ct Interchange," a program designed to encompass all of NCNW's outreach and networking activities, as well as administering research and documentation projects in the community. Eventually the public relations, networking, and membership activities were allocated to other administrative areas. [See also SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Membership; and Public relations.] This subseries includes administrative files of the Resource Center, such as project descriptions, proposals, meeting minutes, correspondence, and reports, as well as documentation on the early planning and implementation of Project Interchange. Also included here are files on NCNW's documentation projects, the Cultural Exchange Project, which involved oral histories of poor and working-class women of Williamsburg-Greenpoint in community leadership roles, and the production of the film "Metropolitan Avenue: Community Women in a Changing Urban Neighborhood," which documented NCNW's activities in Brooklyn. Both projects were administered by Christine Noschese. [See also SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Individuals-Christine Noschese; SERIES IV. PHOTOGRAPHS; and SERIES V. AUDIOVISUAL.]

Finally, the Resource Center library includes directories of local services, bulletin board notices, and subject files. The subject files include unpublished papers, many written by NCNW members, as well as articles, pamphlets, clippings, and other printed material. Topics include class, ethnicity, women's health, local history, grassroots organizing, women's rights, and NCNW itself. Note that the subject files were reconstructed by the archivist and may include files not originally from the Resource Center. There may also be files located in other series that were part of the Resource Center such as papers and articles on specific NCNW programs that can be found under those programs and files on organizations that are under SERIES III. ORGANIZATIONS.

The Women's Public Works (WPW) project was also referred to as the Neighborhood Women's Mother Self-help Program, or the Minority Female Single Parent Program. A five-year program funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, WPW targeted low-income minority women heads of household, many of whom were receiving welfare benefits. Eligible women participated in NCNW's World of Work job orientation program then, depending on their education and job training needs, were referred to the education and/or employment training programs. These records include administrative files for the most part, such as publicity, proposals, reports, funding files, and correspondence. Since the participants took part in various NCNW programs, including Employment, Education, Leadership, and Support services, related material can be found under each of those programs.

Women's Survival Space (also called the Center for the Elimination of Violence in the Family) was a joint project of NCNW, the Mayor's Task Force on Rape, and the Brooklyn YWCA to provide shelter to abused women and their children, as well as to conduct research and provide community education on the issue of violence in the family. Opened in 1976, it was the first battered women's shelter in New York State and became a national prototype for developing safe space for women. The shelter was soon operating independently of NCNW, although NCNW program participants helped staff the shelter as interns. The records include early planning meetings, correspondence, funding files, project descriptions, reports, and resource files.

The Youth subseries includes records of NCNW's "You Can Stand on Your Own Two Feet" Community School which opened in 1986. Still in existence, the school offers an education and job-training alternative for high school dropouts, ages 16 to 21. The comprehensive program offers a basic curriculum leading towards a high school equivalency degree (G.E.D.), job preparation (through the "World of Work" course), job skills training, and personal development including leadership training, individual and peer counseling, and theater workshop. The "Four-Step Program" is a component of the school for young women, which includes pregnancy prevention education and childcare training. Other projects represented here include a Summer Youth Program of the mid-1970s that combined recreation and employment opportunities.

The subseries on Miscellaneous projects, conferences, and events include a few projects unrelated to any of the above programs. There is a small amount of material on the Brooklyn "Legal project" of the 1970s, which proposed a Neighborhood Law Center to fill gaps in existing legal services, including a law library, and workshops for community women on legal issues. It is not clear from the records whether this project was ever funded and implemented. There is material related to local women-run businesses sponsored by NCNW such as "The Corner Store" and the Cooperative for the Production of Hand-Woven Fabrics. Conferences sponsored by NCNW but not directly related to any program are also filed here. [See also SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-National meetings and conferences; and conferences under specific programs.] Conferences not sponsored by NCNW are in SERIES III. ORGANIZATIONS. There is documentation of workshops on topics such as classism, self-improvement, and anti-rape. Some or all of these may have been workshops offered through the Resource Center. The miscellaneous events include fundraisers, film showings, "Neighborhood speak-outs," awards nights, and NCNW's open house and tenth anniversary.

### SERIES III. ORGANIZATIONS

(1974-1991)

4.5 linear ft.

Arrangement:

The series is arranged alphabetically by name of organization or conference.

Scope and content:

This series consists of records of NCNW affiliates and resource files on many other local and national community and grassroots organizations. Files on conferences sponsored by other organizations are also included. There is a substantial amount of material on organizations with which NCNW worked closely or to which it belonged, such as the Williamsburg-Greenpoint Community Planning Board, the National Association of Neighborhoods, and the St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Project. The material on the Community Planning Board, a branch of the New York City's Area Policy Boards, documents neighborhood development projects such as the Williamsburg Coalition for Quality Housing, an innovative solution to deal the city's lack of affordable housing and severe homeless problem.

Numerous women's grassroots organizations represented in this series document the women's movement, including the planning committee for International Women's Year, the Summer Institute in Women's History, the Brooklyn College Women's Center, the Women's Action Alliance, the New York Women's Funding Coalition, Women of Many Voices, and Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Women.

Related material:

Additional material on affiliated organizations can be found under SERIES II. PROGRAMS, in particular the organizations which participated in Project Open Doors filed under Employment; and tenant associations filed under Housing and tenants. Some international organizations are filed under SERIES II. PROGRAMS-International. For lists of NCNW affiliates, see SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Membership.

Note:

[See also [SERIES II. PROGRAMS-International](#)]

#### SERIES IV. PHOTOGRAPHS

(circa 1970s-1990s) .75 linear ft.

Scope and content:

This series contains photographic prints, color photocopies of images, contact sheets, negatives, and slides documenting local, national and international NCNW events, conferences, and workshops, as well as neighborhood scenes, individuals and groups. Included are many images used in NCNW publications and in publicity for programs.

Related material:

[See also [SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Public relations](#)] There are also photographs of the women's march on New York's City Hall to protest cuts in CETA funding in 1980. [See also [SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION - Development](#).]

#### SERIES V. AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS

(circa 1976-1990s) 1 linear ft.

Scope and content:

There are thirteen Audiotapes, including oral history interviews, discussion groups, and meetings of NCNW members. Most are recorded interviews and planning meetings for the Ethnic Heritage Film Project produced by Christine Noschese, circa 1979 [see also [SERIES II. PROGRAMS-Resource Center](#)] and are a unique source of "raw material," including discussions on topics such as ethnicity, class, women's leadership, Brooklyn history, and early NCNW history.

Four Videotapes document NCNW activities and the stories of women in affiliated organizations in East Harlem, New York and in the Northwest, including the documentary on NCNW produced by Christine Noschese, Metropolitan Avenue: Community Women in a Changing Urban Neighborhood. [See also [SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION-Individuals-Christine Noschese](#).]

Related material:

For more information on NCNW film projects, see [SERIES II. PROGRAMS-Resource Center](#).

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"Cooper Park Meeting #2" (side A) {continuation of discussion on tape 8}		Box 143: folder 9
Discussion on leadership (side B)		Box 143
"Ethnic Heritage Cooper Park - Neighborhood Conference: Women & Men, women and Community Work, Dianet-Moslem, Religion, Bordomuti Community Work, New Organization, 'What Did Community Work do for you'" (side A)		Box 143: folder 10
"Film Ideas / Conference on Neighborhoods: Sally at NCLE GOUG conference, BANNER - Italian American Demonstration, Miton Futler, Christine, Mollie Koff" (side B)		Box 143
"Ethnic Heritage - Italian Women"		Box 143: folder 11
"Cooper Park Women's tape" {many faded parts}		Box 143: folder 12
Employment,	10/27	Box 143: folder 13
Original tapes		Box 144
Note: [Please use research copies]		
Videocassette tapes		
Note: [Please use research copies]		
"Metropolitan Avenue" (documentary on Williamsburg-Greenpoint neighborhood women),	1985	Box 145: folder 1
Note: [original and research copy]		
"Partnership in East Harlem: James Weldon Johnson Houses and National Congress of Neighborhood Women,"	n.d.	Box 145: folder 2
Note: [original and research copy]		
"Voices from the Summit: Neighborhood Women Tell their Stories" (Oregon Women's Summit, NCNW affiliate),	1997	Box 145: folder 3
Note: [original and research copy]		
"Working-Class Women Changing Their World" (first NCNW national conference),	1975	Box 145: folder 4
Note: [original and research copy]		
<b>OVERSIZED MATERIALS</b>		
<b>SERIES I. ADMINISTRATION</b>		
National meetings: poster,	1976	Flat file
Public relations: article and NCNW newspapers - originals (copies in collection)		Flat file
<b>SERIES II. PROGRAMS</b>		
Housing and tenants		
G.R.E.C.-Neighborhood Women's Inter-generational Housing project: plans		Flat file
International		
GROOTS: "GROOTS goals" (handwritten cardboard poster)		Flat file

Subjects: miscellaneous posters			
Foundation for the Support of Women's Work, Istanbul, Turkey,	1986		Flat file
Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action, Bombay, India,	1988		Flat file
People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter, Cape Town & Johannesburg, S.A.,	1991		Flat file
World Habitat Day, {in Spanish}	Oct. 7, 1991		Flat file
Leadership			
National Leadership Training Forum for Neighborhood Women: poster,	1982		Flat file
Leadership Evaluation Workshop: flip chart,	1981		Flat file
Miscellaneous conferences, workshops, and events			
Workshops: handwritten notes from flip chart for unidentified workshop,	1981		Flat file
Events: Labor Theater poster			Flat file
SERIES III. ORGANIZATIONS			
Williamsburg-Greenpoint Community Planning Board No. 1			
Brooklyn-Queens Expressway Reconstruction Project: plans,	1987		Flat file
Friends of Cooper Park: plans			Flat file

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## Search Terms

The following terms represent persons, organizations, and topics documented in this collection. Use these headings to search for additional materials on this web site, in the [Five College Library Catalog](#), or in other library catalogs and databases.

### Subjects

- Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)--History--20th century--Sources
- Burns, Lisel
- Community development--New York (State)--New York--History--Sources
- Ethnicity--United States--History--Sources
- Feminism--United States--History--Sources
- Gilkey, Bertha
- Housing--United States--History--20th century--Sources
- Leadership in women--United States--History--Sources
- Minority women--United States--History--20th century--Sources
- National Congress of Neighborhood Women--History--Sources
- Neighborhood--New York (State)--New York--History--Sources
- Neighborhood Women of Williamsburg/Greenpoint (Brooklyn, N.Y.)
- New York (N.Y.)--Social conditions--20th century--Sources
- NGO Forum on Women, Beijing '95
- Noschese, Christine
- Occupational training for women--United States--History--Sources
- Peterson, Jan
- Poor women--United States--History--20th century--Sources
- Urban renewal--United States--History--Sources
- Vocational guidance for women--United States--History--Sources
- Welfare recipients--Employment--New York (State)--New York--History--Sources
- Women's rights--Congresses
- Women--Education--United States--History--Sources
- Women--Employment--United States--History--Sources
- Women--Housing--History--Sources
- Women in development--International cooperation
- Women--Services for--United States--History--Sources
- Women--United States--Economic conditions--20th century
- Women--United States--Social conditions--20th century
- Working class women--United States--History--Sources
- World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women (1985 : Nairobi, Kenya)

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