

Collection #
M 0775

**DIALOGUE TODAY (INDIANAPOLIS, IND.)
RECORDS, 1984–2000**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	5 manuscript boxes; 1 color photographs box, 1 black and white photograph folder
COLLECTION DATES:	1984–2000
PROVENANCE:	Dialogue Today, c/o Gladys C. Nisenbaum, Indianapolis.
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	
ACCESSION NUMBERS:	2000.1055; 2001.0029; 2002.0280
NOTES:	

HISTORICAL SKETCH

In 1984 Theresa Guise, Diane Meyer Simon, and Carole Stein formed a coalition between African-American and Jewish women in Indianapolis. The group, Dialogue Today, was comprised of 100 women, and attempted to maintain an equal balance between the two groups. When the organization incorporated in 1987, it stated as its purpose: "To consider and deal with common problems through a coalition of Black and Jewish women."

In an effort to keep informed, the women stayed abreast of current events, had book talks, attended lectures, and planned thematic programs, including annual retreats. They often localized national programs and discussions. Two issues that captured their attention were racism and anti-Semitism. They discussed hate groups, myths and stereotypes about their two groups, problems in Africa and the Middle East, as well as the United States, and concerns facing women in society. Programs that shared Jewish and African-American culture included a Passover seder and a lecture on the history of the black church.

Dialogue members saw their role as advocacy and working to make conditions better for groups within Indianapolis. They committed to several community projects, and sometimes commented on political issues. In 1987, the Action Committee prepared a public statement describing the organization's opposition to Robert Bork's nomination to the United States Supreme Court. The following year Dialogue Today lent financial support to Interfaith Housing, Inc., to provide homes for residents with low and moderate income. In the Homes of Hope program, abandoned houses were often rehabilitated, and the work gave training in construction jobs to criminal offenders. Dialogue Today was particularly supportive of construction training for female offenders.

Teen Dialogue was an effort to create a coalition between Jewish and African-American teens from different congregations. Originally formed during the first years of Dialogue Today, the program was revived in 1990. Meetings and get-togethers were held for teens in grades ten through twelve. A main purpose of the group was to create a tolerance in the schools among the students.

In 1991, Dialogue Today compiled and printed 2,000 copies of a booklist that was distributed to Indianapolis area libraries and schools. *Learning About Each Other*, a 100-item list included novels, biographies, and children and nonfiction books recommended by members of the group. It was hoped that the titles on the list would promote the goals of dignity and understanding, and demonstrate the need for human rights for all groups.

Dialogue Today celebrated its 10th anniversary in the Crystal Room of the Marott Apartments in October 1994. Attended by a host of politicians (including Governor Evan Bayh, Congressman Andy Jacobs, and Attorney General Pam Carter), the event honored and roasted the group's founders.

The organization has alternated its leadership by having a Jewish or African-American president every other administrative term.

Carole Stein	1984–87
Osma Spurlock	1987–89
Gladys Nisenbaum	1989–91
Alpha Blackburn	1991–93
Claudette Einhorn	1993–95
Clara Shelton, Kathy Blaine	1995–97
Natalie Siegel	1997–99
Jackie Blackwell	1999–2001

Dialogue Today plans programs that examine varying viewpoints. Some guest speakers have included Muhammad Siddeeq of the Islamic Center; Sam Jones, Indianapolis Urban League; Lani Guinier, Harvard Law School, and Brian Wittman, Indianapolis Baha’I Faith Community. In 1999, the organization joined forces with the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation to present “Praising God in the Seasons of Easter and Passover.” The featured performers, Rosemarie Gore Bigbee and Cantor Janice Roger, brought Christian and Jewish perspectives to the program.

The organization has held annual retreats that encourage the members to explore and reflect on various issues. Every year there is a different theme or focus. Through diverse programming and genuine dialogue, Dialogue Today has continued to confront and discuss issues that affect African-American and Jewish women.

Sources: Materials in the collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection materials (1984–2000) are contained within five manuscript boxes. The original order of the materials has been altered. Previously arranged by presidential administrations within the Dialogue Today organization, the collection is now ordered by eight series: Incorporation Papers and Minutes, Correspondence, Annual Reports, Directories, Committees, Programs and Financial Records, Newsletters and News Clippings, and Topic. Materials are filed chronologically. This allows for the reconstruction of materials that pertain to a specific presidential era.

Box 1 contains the incorporation papers, by-laws, history, agendas, minutes, and correspondence of the organization. Additional correspondence and meeting and program announcements are in box 2. In addition to annual meetings (box 2, folders 6–10), Dialogue Today held annual retreats (box 2, folders 11–18). Annual reports for 1993 and 1998 are in box 2, folders 19–20.

In 1986, the organization compiled a directory that depicted their original structure. It included a mission statement, a history and retrospective, a membership roster, and reflections. It is in box 2, folders 21–24. The collection also includes other versions of a membership directory in box 2, folders 25–28. Membership profiles and rosters used to compile the directories are in box 3, folders 4–5.

Over the years, Dialogue Today formed several committees. There were Action, Executive, Library, Long Range Planning, Nominating, Program, Retreat, and Teen Dialogue committees. Materials pertaining to these committees make up the bulk of box 3.

The Dialogue Today members planned many programs, several of which were executed during their regularly scheduled meetings. Information about their programs and community projects are in box 4, folders 1–8. Members often shared their ideologies through written comments and speeches. There are statements and speeches prepared by the membership, as well as by individuals who spoke to the Dialogue Today organization in box 4, folder 9. Financial records are in box 4, folder 10. From its inception, the Dialogue Today newsletter, *Dialogue for Dialogue*, has periodically changed in appearance. Issues of the newsletter dated from 1985–99 are in box 4, folders 11–16.

Box 5 contains news clippings (folders 1–4) and subject materials on various topics (folders 5–10). Some of the clippings are news stories about Dialogue Today (folder 1). The majority of them are articles or opinion pieces that pertain to African-American and Jewish concerns. Cultural diversity and race relations are major topics for the group, as reflected in their collection of materials about the subjects. In 2000, Bart Peterson and the City of Indianapolis hosted the Mayor's Summit on Race Relations. A program booklet for the meeting that attracted national politicians is in box 5, folder 8.

There are a limited amount of photographs in the collection, arranged according to their subject matter.

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Series 1: Incorporation Papers and Minutes

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Incorporation Papers, 1989–95

By-Laws, 1997–98

History, 1987–93, n.d.

Agendas, 1985–98, n.d.

Minutes, 1984–87

Minutes, 1988–89

Minutes, 1990

Minutes, 1991

Minutes, 1992

Minutes, 1993–1994

Minutes, 1995–1996

Minutes, 1997–98

Minutes, 1999

CONTAINER

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Box 1, Folder 6

Box 1 , Folder 7

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Series 2: Correspondence

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Correspondence, 1990s

Correspondence Between Members, 1987–91

Correspondence Between Members, 1992–2000

Correspondence: Resignations from Dialogue Today
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Correspondence–Forms, n.d.

Meeting Notices, 1987–97

Meeting and Program Announcements, 1987–2000,
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Sign-in Sheets, 1989–98

Meeting, 1991

Meeting, 1991

Meeting, 1991

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Series 3: Annual Reports

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Annual Meeting, 1989

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Annual Retreat, 1994	Box 2, Folder 13
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Annual Retreat, 1999	Box 2, Folder 17
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Series 4: Directories

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Original Structure Directory, 1986

Original Structure Directory, 1986

Original Structure Directory, 1986

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Membership Directory, n.d.

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Membership Profiles, n.d.

Membership Rosters, 1993–95

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Series 5: Committees

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Committee Reports, 1989–1990

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Committee: Friendship, 1991

Committee: Library, 1988–1993, n.d.

Committee: Long Range Planning, 1985–1991

Committee: Membership, 1986–1998, n.d.

Committee: Membership Directory, 1989–1994, n.d.

Committee: Newsletter, 1988

Committee: Nominating, 1987–1997, n.d.

Committee: Operation, 1986

Committee: Planning, 1987

Committee: Program, 1986–1991, n.d.

Committee: Religious/Cultural, 1994–95

Committee: Retreat, 1990

Committee: Teen Dialogue, 1986–1990, n.d.

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Series 6: Programs and Financial Records

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Programs, 1987–1999, n.d.	Box 4, Folder 5
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Programs (other groups), 1986–1995, n.d.	Box 4, Folder 6
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Series 7: Newsletters and News clippings

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