

Collection #
M 1527
OM 0779
CT 2619-2620

**EUNICE TROTTER
COLLECTION, 1961-2017**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	2 manuscript boxes, 2 oversized folders, 1 box photographs, 3 polaroid photographs, 2 cassette tapes, 4 artifacts
COLLECTION DATES:	1961-2017
PROVENANCE:	Gift of Eunice Trotter, 2022
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Indianapolis Recorder Collection, P0303; George P. Stewart Papers, M0556
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2022.0004
NOTES:	Polaroid photographs are kept in cold storage and need at least four hours to acclimate to room temperature. Patrons are advised to call ahead if they wish to view those items.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Trailblazing Indianapolis journalist Eunice Trotter was born Eunice Alisa Brewer in 1953. She grew up in the Martindale neighborhood, near the corner of 20th and Columbia Streets. She once described herself as a “precocious, nosy child,” with an appetite for reading. Her family was musical, with her older sisters Ethel and Charleine involved in singing groups and her father Charles a “plunker” on the piano. Her father was also an electrician, and often did repair work at the various music venues on Indiana Avenue. While attending Arsenal Technical High School, Eunice herself joined a singing group, Sam [White] & the Soulettes. She also wrote for the school paper. Soon Eunice was writing a column for the *Indianapolis Recorder* called “Teen Talk”. This led to an internship and a column about Indiana Avenue nightlife called “Party People.” During this time Eunice—now McLayea—learned to be an assertive and tenacious reporter. She interviewed and photographed local artists like Baby Leon and national stars like James Brown and Kool & the Gang.

In 1976, Eunice earned her associate degree in journalism from Indiana University Southeast. She was immediately hired at the *Indianapolis Star* by managing editor Bo Connor. After the Jonestown tragedy in 1978, she was one of many Indianapolis journalists scrambling to uncover what they could about Jim Jones and the People’s Temple. Around 1982, Eunice was promoted to assistant city editor, later realizing that she was the first Black editor at the *Star*.

On New Year’s Eve 1983, Eunice married Jeffrey Trotter, a machinist for General Motors, and thereby obtained the professional name she has used ever since. While still working at the *Star*, Eunice started Syndicated Writers & Artists, an effort to find and train minority journalists. The Syndicated staff filled the pages of the *Indianapolis Reporter*, a free publication “serving the Indianapolis minority community” and arranged publicity for events like the Indiana Black Expo and the Circle City Classic.

In 1987, Eunice received a call from the *Recorder*, asking if she would come in as a consultant. The disorganization she saw there motivated her to not only rejoin the staff (at minimum wage) but to buy the general manager’s controlling share of the paper. In 1988, Eunice became one of the youngest of the 11 Black publishers in the country. While working to rejuvenate the *Recorder*, Eunice’s mother Henrietta, a sister, and daughter all pitched in to help. Eunice modernized the *Recorder*’s newsroom and eventually helped it to reclaim its place as the trusted organ of the Black community in Indianapolis.

In 1991 she sold her share in the *Recorder* and signed a five-year noncompete agreement. Eunice subsequently ran for the State Senate in 1992. In a controversial and contested election, Eunice won the slating race but ultimately lost to incumbent Billie Breaux. Back in the private sector and with a noncompete agreement in place, Eunice would have to leave Indianapolis in order to continue in journalism. This led to stints at the *Stockton* (Calif.) *Record*, The Lafayette, Indiana *Journal & Courier*, the *New York Post*, *Florida Today*, and Fort Wayne’s *News-Sentinel*.

In 2002, Eunice returned to the *Indianapolis Star*, and also published a book—*Black in Indiana*. The book traces the life and precedent-setting lawsuit of her ancestor, Mary Bateman Clark. In 1821, Clark filed a lawsuit in Vincennes to end indentured servitude in

Indiana, essentially slavery by a different name. In 2009 a historical marker was unveiled at the Knox County courthouse due to Eunice's work uncovering the story.

Since 2011, Eunice has worked in marketing for American Senior Communities. In 2017, some of her work in this regard was published (uncredited) as the book *Special Stories of Seniors*. That same year she was inducted into the Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame. In 2022, Eunice joined the staff of Indiana Landmarks as the director of its new Black Heritage Preservation program. In this role, she "coordinate[s] a broad initiative to identify, save, and celebrate places significant to Indiana's Black history."

Sources:

Kyle Long, interview with Eunice Trotter, *Echoes of Indiana Avenue*, podcast audio, July 8, 2021, <https://www.wfyi.org/programs/echoes-indiana-avenue/radio/eunice-trotter>

Material in the collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains material collected by Eunice Trotter during her career in journalism, plus a few personal items. The manuscript portion of the collection contains clippings of articles written by Eunice and about her, research for stories, documentation, invitations, correspondence, and programs.

It begins with some report cards from her grade school years and a collection of writings by her peers in junior high school. A scrapbook of her early career with the *Indianapolis Recorder* was photocopied and foldered under “Scrapbook contents.” A photograph album was similarly disassembled and foldered under “Album contents.” The balance of the collection is arranged chronologically, with a selection of Eunice’s articles from the various newspapers she worked for included.

Also included is some of Eunice’s genealogical research, a Samuel and Mary Bateman Clark family tree, and historical marker dedication program foldered under “The Mary Bateman Clark Project, 2009.”

Two 1985 issues of the *Indianapolis Reporter* containing articles by Syndicated Writers & Artists staff are included in an oversized folder.

A group of historical *Indianapolis Recorder* materials found by Eunice in a trunk in a shed at the *Recorder* on Indiana Avenue is labeled “Historical information—Indianapolis Recorder.” A group of photographs labeled “Indiana Avenue building—Recorder?” showing exterior and interior views of what appear to be newspaper production rooms are included in visual materials.

Other included visual materials are photographs from the album described above as well as a number of loose, unidentified photographs. These have been arranged by decade to the processor’s best ability.

Two audio cassette tapes are included. The first, CT2619, contains a sixty-second radio spot promoting Eunice Trotter for state senate. The second, CT2620, is only partially audible due to loud distortion on the tape. Side B is much more audible than side A. The tape seems to contain a roundtable discussion among *Indianapolis Recorder* staffers about the state of the paper soon after Eunice took control. Topics include “More people would read the *Recorder* if...” and the perceived advantages of the *Indianapolis Star* and *Indianapolis News* over the *Recorder*.

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CONTAINER

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