

Collection #
M 1086
OM 0541
CT 2219-2308

MATTIE CONEY COLLECTION 1954-1988

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Processed by

Zulaiha Razak
October 2014

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 7 manuscript boxes; 3 OM folders
7 boxes color photographs; 2 boxes photographs; 1 folder
OVA photographs; 2 folders OVA color photographs; 1 folder
OVB graphics; 1 bin 35 mm slides; 20 35 mm negatives; 6 4x5
negatives; 3 boxes of cassette tapes; 21 artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1954-1988; Bulk 1964-1988

PROVENANCE: 2002.0599: Catherine D. Lichtenauer, 25 July 2002
2002.0630: IUPUI University Library, 11 July 2002
2004.0195: University of Indianapolis, 26 March 2004
2004.0467: University of Indianapolis, 09 September 2004

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Citizens Forum, Inc. Records, 1962-1985 (M 0425; CT 0704-
0712)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2002.0599; 2002.0630; 2004.0195; 2004.0467

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mattie Rice Coney (May 30, 1909-August 5, 1988) was a school teacher, community leader, and civic activist. The only child of Salon and Delia Porter House, she was born in Gallatin, Tennessee and moved to Indiana with her family when she was six weeks old. Her parents eventually divorced, and she lived with her mother and step-father Oscar Weathers in a two-story house, west of Indiana Avenue. She graduated from Shortridge High School in 1927. An education major, she put herself through Butler University by delivering newspapers and working at the Ayers Tea Room. She then went on to complete postgraduate studies at Indiana State University, Western Reserve University and Columbia University. Mattie married Elmo Gerald Coney in 1961. Elmo was a former Gary resident who worked as a salesman and distributor for the Fuller Products Company.

Coney taught 4th grade at Indianapolis public schools for 30 years before retiring to found Citizens Forum, Inc. on July 9, 1964. Elmo also quit his job to support his wife and serve as Project Coordinator. Citizens Forum was a grass-roots neighborhood program that encouraged good citizenship and individual responsibility through community organization and civic engagement. The Lilly Endowment financed the program believing it could be adapted to many other cities. The organization gained national attention and proved to be influential in Indianapolis and beyond - similar programs were modeled in cities like Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Coney was known for her no-nonsense philosophies, affectionately called "Mattieisms". Her writings were published in the U.S. News and World Report and New York Times and she was quoted in various newspaper columns. She was a board member of the Indiana Tuberculosis and Respiratory Association, Julia Jamerson Health Camp, Winona Memorial Hospital, the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, and the National Education Association. She was named an honorary member of the Indiana Association of Women Deans and Counselors, National Association of Sanitarians, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, and Delta Kappa Gamma Society. She also received honorary doctorates from Butler University, her alma mater, and Hillsdale College for her work in service to her community. She served as Co-chairman of the Indiana Blacks for Reagan-Bush Committee, a group of black Hoosiers who supported Republican nominee Ronald Reagan in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections.

She received numerous awards and recognitions for her work as well, including the Special National Award from the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge (1966), Outstanding Citizens Award from Frontiers International; Outstanding Negro Woman Award from the Imperial Court Daughters of Isis, P.H.A. (1972), Distinguished Citizen Award from the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity (1986), and the Service to Mankind Award from the Southwest Indiana District of Sertoma International (1969).

Indianapolis Mayor William Hudnut III named December 10, 1987 "Mattie Coney Day" in honor of her spirited and sensitive leadership that instilled a civic pride, sense of caring, and can-do spirit in some of the city's disadvantaged neighborhoods. Coney retired from

her work with Citizens Forum in 1981. She died at the age of 79 and her funeral service was held at the Stuart Mortuary Chapel on August 9, 1988.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

Boomhower, Ray. "Mattie Coney." *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*, VIII, Fall 1996: pg. 57-61.

Citizens Forum, Inc. Records, 1962-1985

"NRTA Notables: Crusader for People". *The King Center*.

<http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/article>, accessed 4-24-2014

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Series 1 contains personal correspondence between Mattie Coney and other individuals, including Senator Birch Bayh, Marvella Bayh, President Dwight Eisenhower, Indianapolis Mayor William H. Hudnut III, Eli Lilly, Senator Richard Lugar, and the offices of then President-Elect Richard Nixon and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson. Greeting cards she received for various occasions are also included. She received many greeting cards as she was sick towards the end of her life.

Series 2 contains Mattie Coney's personal papers, including appointment and record books, diaries, writings and speeches, and interviews. There are cassette recordings of her speeches and interviews, as well as papers regarding her will, funeral service, and memorial order. News clippings regarding Mattie Coney are also included.

Series 3 contains Mattie Coney's personal photographs, including images of Mattie and Elmo Coney in their home, gatherings held at their residence, and photographs of various family celebrations.

Series 4 contains financial records, including bank statements, bills and checks, tax records, and insurance and social security records. Medical records and hospital and pharmacy bills and payments are also included. Medical records show that she had a radical mastectomy and wore prosthesis towards the end of her life.

Series 5 contains materials regarding awards and honors given to Mattie Coney, including certificates, plaques, medals, honorary doctorates, and special exhibits. Photographs of Mattie Coney receiving awards are also included. There are certificates and plaques awarded to Elmo Coney as well.

Series 6 contains materials regarding Mattie Coney's activities, ranging from religious and political activities to her involvement with several local and national organizations, clubs, banquets, and conventions. Photographs show Mattie Coney in attendance at various events. There are cassette recordings of Mattie Coney's speeches given at events too.

Series 7 contains photographs of Mattie Coney, Elmo Coney, and other individuals. Many individuals are unidentified. There are several personalized and signed portraits addressed to Mattie Coney, including those by Ronald and Nancy Reagan, Sheriff Jim Wells, Police Chief John McAtee, Senator Richard Lugar, Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard M. Givan, Sarkes Tarzian, Frank R. Beckwith, John S. Lynn, Senator Birch Bayh, and Mayor William Hudnut, III.

Series 8 contains papers related to Citizens Forum, including correspondence and materials regarding its founding and organization, offices, entities, officers, staff, volunteers, and members. There are also materials regarding Block Clubs, meetings, reports, newsletters, press releases, and promotional material and graphics. Certificates and plaques awarded to Citizens Forum are also included.

Series 9 contains publicity received by Citizens Forum and its staff. This includes news clippings, photographs, and cassette recordings of radio and television interviews and features.

Series 10 contains materials related to Citizens Forum activities, including photographs documenting Citizens Forum's annual recognition banquets, events, and programs like the Greater Indiana Beautification Program, Clean-Up Campaign, De-RAT-ification Campaign, and Helping Hands, a nationally recognized program.

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Sally James, n.d.;
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Buffet Reception [Bernice Fraction, Carl Terzian; Anne McDaniels and Husband, Marie Harmon; C. Schnelker; Unidentified], 1974	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 2
CPR Training, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 3
Christmas Activities, 1972, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 4
Citizens Forum Social, 1966	Photographs: Box 2, Folder 7
City Wide Clean Up Campaign, 1965, n.d.	Box 7, Folder 21
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Coop Extension Join Meeting, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 5
Common Sense Inc. Raffle, 1984	Box 7, Folder 22
Community Service Council "Do Something" Fair, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 6
De-RAT-ification Campaign, 1969	Box 7, Folder 23
De-RAT-ification Campaign [Naomie Clay and Mattie Coney], 1971	Photographs: Box 2, Folder 9
De-RAT-ification Campaign, 1980, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 7
[Mattie Coney speaking about De-RAT-ification Campaign], Tech High School, n.d.	Box 10, CT 2303
Rat Problem, Mattie Coney, 1971	Box 9, CT 2258: Side 2
Dogwood Tree Caravan, 1975	Box 10, CT 2304

Employee Recognition Banquet, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 8
Summer Garden Party [Carolyn O'Dell, Bertha Caldwell, Mattie Coney], 1973	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 9
Summer Garden Party, 1973	Box 10, CT 2305
Girl Scouts Activities, 1971-1972, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 10
Greater Indiana Beautification Program, n.d.	Box 7, Folder 24
Greater Indiana Beautification Project, 1980, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 11
Beautification Committee Meeting, n.d.	Box 7, Folder 25
Greater Indiana Beautification Committee [Andrea Puscheck, Joyce Berner, Dorothy Cook, Ann McDaniel], 1969-1980	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 12
Greater Indiana Beatification Awards, 1975-1982, n.d. [Atta Bollinger, Marie Harmon, n.d.; Col. L. R. Mottern, John Benbow, Mattie Coney, 1975; Col. L. R. Mottern, Jack Reich, Mattie Coney, 1975; Tom Wright, Celia Burkhart, Jon Bickel, 1981; Unidentified, 1975-1982, n.d.]	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 13
Hawaiian Luau, 1971	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 14
Health Fair, 1978	35 mm Acetate Negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 20
Helping Hand Program, 1970-71, n.d.	Box 7, Folder 26
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Helping Hand Program, 1973-1980, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 15
Hillsdale Landscape & Nursery Co. [Ted Tuschinsky Mattie Coney, Dorothy Newman; Congressman Bray; Mayor Richard Lugar; Ken Silva], 1971	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 16

Keep America Beautiful, Inc., 1975	Box 7, Folder 27
Keep America Beautiful, Inc., 1971	Photographs: Box 2, Folder 11
Keep America Beautiful, Inc.. 1968-1975, n.d. [Ruth Coleman, 1968; Ruth Coleman, John Coleman, 1968; Mrs. Craig, Mr. Emanuel Galeone, 1968; Joan Crawford, 1968; Susan Warner, Mattie Coney, Ruth Galanopoulos, 1968; Unidentified, 1968-1975, n.d.]	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 17
Keep America Beautiful, Inc. Regional Conference, Milwaukee, n.d.	Box 10, CT 2306
Keep America Beautiful, Inc., Speech by Mattie Coney, 1971	Box 10, CT 2307: Side 1
Keep America Beautiful, Inc., Speech by Dr. Wells, n.d.	Box 10, CT 2307: Side 2
Lockefield Garden Clean Up Drive [Mattie Coney, Frank Johnson], 1976	Photographs: Box 2, Folder 12
Meadow Fresh Compensation Plan, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 18
Milford Area Development Association, 1st Annual Banquet, 1971	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 19
Monument Circle Activities, 1978	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 20
National Meeting on Crime Prevention, 1973	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 21
National Women's Meeting [Acquila McDougal, Mrs. Ralph Coble; Fanny Young; Charles T. Amos; Sergei Osborn; Margaret Moore Post; Margaret Moore Post, Mattie Coney; Ada Puscheck, Col. L. R. Mottern and Ada Puscheck], 1970	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 22

Open House [Nancie Johnson, Andrew Harris, Mattie Coney], 1973	Photographs: Box 2, Folder 13
Open House, 1973	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 23
Operation Clean Sweep [Mattie Coney and Governor Edgar Whitcomb], 1970	Photographs: Box 2, Folder 14
Operation Clean Sweep [Vanita LaDine; Mattie Coney], 1970	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 24
Pike Township Mothers Study Group, 1969	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 25
State House Chapel Recognition Service, 1983	Box 7, Folder 28
Citizens Forum Study Group, 1982	Box 7, Folder 29
Tour of Police Station [Officer O'Brien and unidentified children], 1970	Photographs: Box 2, Folder 15
Women's Council [Mrs. Alex Jones], n.d.	Box 10, CT 2308
Youth Activities [with Richard Lugar], n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 7, Folder 26

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