MOZEL SANDERS
COLLECTION, 1978 - 1996

Collection #:
SC 2637

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USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 folder
COLLECTION DATES: 1978 - 1996
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NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Mozel Sanders (25 May 1924 - 1 September 1988), the son of Moses and Bertha Sanders, was born in East St. Louis, Illinois. He spent his early life in Canton, Mississippi, where he attended school and later joined the Civilian Conservation Corps.
Mr. Sanders accepted the call to the ministry while in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1943. During his early ministry he was a vocalist and recording artist who toured the country and preached revivals. In 1959 he became the pastor of Mount Vernon Missionary Baptist Church in Indianapolis. Under his leadership the church significantly increased its membership and relocated to 709 N. Belmont Avenue, remaining on the near westside of the city. For several years, Sanders hosted "The Way Out," an early morning gospel program, aired on WTLF-FM, a local radio station.

A civic leader, Sanders was at the helm of the Indianapolis Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), a national job training program, for many years. He was also instrumental in the development of other OIC programs around the state. During the early 1960s, Sanders formed a group known as the Fair Share Organization. The purpose of the organization was to boycott stores and industries throughout the city to encourage the hiring of more African Americans, especially in management training programs.

Mozel Sanders was best known for the founding of an annual citywide Thanksgiving dinner. The dinner started in 1974 when Sanders and a few volunteers served a small group of people the traditional Thanksgiving dinner at the Mount Vernon Missionary Baptist Church. Each year the number of participants grew, and the program became too large for the church. Early on dinners were carried out and delivered. Cooking facilities at other locations (e.g., Turkeys were cooked at Winona, Methodist, and Indiana University hospitals) were used to supplement the church's kitchen. By the late 1970s, the dinner activities moved to the Foster Motor Lodge (formerly located at 2154 N. Illinois St.). Outgrowing the lodge, the Thanksgiving dinner moved to Arsenal Technical High School. It has been estimated that in 1987—the last Thanksgiving before Sanders's death, over 16,000 people were fed with the help of 200 volunteers.

In 1996, the Mozel Sanders Thanksgiving Day Dinner volunteers (estimated at more than 500) fed 30,000 people at Arsenal Technical High School.

Afro-American churches--Indiana--Indianapolis--Photographs

Thanksgiving Day.

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