

S0241 Drey, Kay (1933-)
Papers, 1965-1983
124 Folders, 1 Oral History Interview In Cassette

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Kay Drey was an activist for housing integration from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. Her commitment to integration began in her childhood; as a member of the first Jewish family in her neighborhood, other children bullied or ignored her. After enrolling at Washington University she joined the first Jewish sorority allowed on that campus in several years. As a freshman, she also conducted a survey to determine student opinion about admitting blacks to Washington University's undergraduate school.

After college Drey married and began raising a family in University City. She attempted to open the housing market there to black families before the first blacks moved into that township in 1963. She collected information on available properties for interested black families, and urged real estate agents to make such properties available to blacks. When a neighboring house was put on the market, Drey invited a black family to her house to view the property, since real estate agents would not show homes in white neighborhoods to black families. Shortly thereafter, she began working with Freedom of Residence, an open housing organization headed by Ruth Ann Porter and later by the Reverend Herman Graham.

In January 1965, Drey opposed a fair housing ordinance being considered by the city council of University City on the grounds that it might cause panic selling by white homeowners. She argued that similar ordinances needed to be pursued simultaneously in many of the other 96 county municipalities before there would be effective integration. The ordinance did not pass but the city council did approve a resolution supporting open housing.

By 1966 real estate agents were showing properties in the University Forest area of University City only to blacks, thereby discouraging white families from moving into an area that was "changing." Drey organized concerned residents and formed the University City Residential Service, which concentrated on attracting white families to the area. UCRS maintained a listing of homes for rent or sale in University City and sought potential residents by making the listing service available to businesses, colleges and the federal government, organizations that continually brought new personnel into the area. UCRS also helped families find homes in areas of the University City where there were fewer blacks.

In March 1970, Drey and other integration activists met with members of the Concordia Seminary Social Concerns Committee, a group that raised funds for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Keys For Christ campaign. The two groups joined to form New Neighbors, an organization that collected information on available properties, often surreptitiously, in all areas of the county and made it available to black families. New Neighbors was staffed by volunteers and one salaried housing rights advocate. The group was funded by the Social Concerns Committee treasury and by contributions from Drey, who was also one of the

group's most active organizers. New Neighbors was established in part as a response to the United States Civil Rights Commission hearings held in St. Louis in early 1970. Those hearings concluded that St. Louis was "an example of a community that has reached the level of racial division into two societies some experts have said threatens the nation." In December 1972, New Neighbors changed its name to County Open Housing after an organization federally incorporated as "New Neighbors" threatened legal action.

County Open Housing and the University City Residential Service worked together to keep University City integrated. UCRS directed black families looking for homes to COH, which did not maintain listings for University City, Normandy, Wellston or St. Louis City. By 1974, COH also offered a listing service to low-income families, particularly those participating in subsidized housing under Section 8 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

In addition to its housing listing, County Open Housing maintained a speaker's bureau and was involved in public controversies concerning housing in St. Louis. When the north county community of Black Jack attempted to block the development of a housing complex for low and middle-income families, COH helped organize people in that community to support it. In 1973 the St. Louis County Planning Commission approved a proposed land-use plan that COH publicly criticized as perpetuating exclusionary zoning. The areas slated for additional multi-family developments in the plan were already densely populated while other areas, like Ladue and Parkway, remained zoned almost exclusively for large-lot, single family homes. The plan was never implemented. A U.S. Court of Appeals declared Black Jack's actions unconstitutional in 1974. Creve Coeur began buying lots in the Malcolm Terrace subdivision in 1974 to turn into a park and "keep Black Jack apartments from coming in." Mayor Harold Dielmann, "personally did not want any colored people" living there. COH supported the successful efforts of residents to modify park plans and preserve the residential character of the neighborhood.

Drey was also involved in other issues concerning University City. She opposed the opening of an abortion clinic in 1974 because it was a profit-making, storefront operation which did not provide adequate emergency ambulance service to the nearest hospital. She also thought controversy surrounding the clinic would have an adverse effect on a proposed tax hike designed to improve University City schools. From 1972 to 1973 Drey served on the Committee of 15, which advised University City schools on problems of transportation, building conditions and curriculum development. Drey wrote letters of complaint to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1982 in response to articles she felt exaggerated racial tensions in University City schools.

County Open Housing established a Goals and Policies Committee in 1976 after a division among board and staff members about the group's approach to integration. Some members felt that COH's work should emphasize finding housing for low-income families and looked upon integration management as a benign but suspect form of racial steering. In 1977 COH board members voted 5 to 4 to begin listing University City properties. In response to this move, Drey resigned from the organization. Lack of funding caused COH, which had changed its name to Metro Housing, to cease operation in March 1983.

After leaving County Open Housing, Drey continued to do some work for UCRS, but she

became most active in opposing the development of nuclear power.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Kay Drey Papers document Kay Drey's work with the University City Residential Service and County Open Housing and her involvement with public issues important to University City. The collection includes housing listings, correspondence, board meeting minutes and literature from both COH and UCRS. It also contains notes, newsclippings, and correspondence on controversies surrounding Black Jack, Malcolm Terrace and the St. Louis County General Land Use Plan. The papers also include notes and correspondence on the abortion clinic in University City and Kay Drey's involvement with University City schools. The papers do not contain any material on Kay Drey's activities as an opponent of nuclear power. The collection is arranged alphabetically by subject categories. Some of the collection is separated by form, including conference materials, some correspondence, newsclippings and notes.

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1. Abortion Clinic, 1973-1975
2. American Friends Service Committee Equal Opportunity in Housing Report, 1967
3. Analysis of General Construction Activity and Residential Construction in Missouri, 1975
4. Black Families in White Neighborhoods, 1974
5. Black Jack, 1970-1976, 1979-1981
6. Black Jack Appellate Decision, 1974
7. Black Jack, Judge Meredith Trial, 1974-1976
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18. County Open Housing, Fund Appeal Draft, 1973
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21. County Open Housing, LaFayette Town, Bagby Displacement, 1977
22. County Open Housing, Literature, 1971-1975, nd.
23. County Open Housing, Newsletters, 1971-1975, nd.
24. County Open Housing, County Open Housing, Publicity, 1970-1974
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38. Metropolitan Housing Corporation, Women's Guild, "The Guild, "The Enablers, " 1968
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71. St. Louis County Budget Process Workshop, 1975
72. St. Louis County Department of Planning, 1973-1974
73. St. Louis County Fact Book, 1972
74. St. Louis General Land Use Plan, 1973-1974
75. St. Louis General Land Use Plan, 1974
76. St. Louis General Land Use Plan, Correspondence, 1973

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82. St. Louis County General Land Use Plan, Summary, 1973; Public Forum, 1980
83. St. Louis County Office of Community Development, 1974
84. St. Louis County Uniform Building Codes, 1973-1974
85. St. Louis Housing: A Regional Problem, Report, 1972
86. Savings and Loan Lending Activity in St. Louis, 1975
87. Seattle Housing Rehabilitation, 1974
88. Street and Other Public Works Services in St. Louis County, Report, 1974
89. Suburban Action, 1976
90. Survey of Public Attitudes Toward Community Development and Citizen Participation in St. Louis County, 1976
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92. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearing in St. Louis, 1/14-17, 1970

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99. University City, 75th Anniversary, April, 1981
100. University City, Street Map, January, 1978
101. University City, Tax Assessment, 1975
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103. University City Residential Service, Ad Hoc Committee
104. University City Residential Service, Apartment Owners, nd.
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