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Modjeska Monteith Simkins Papers - Accession 411

Modjeska Monteith Simkins

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**WINTHROP UNIVERSITY
LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

ACCESSION 411

MODJESKA MONTEITH SIMKINS PAPERS

1925, 1956, 1965-1982

3 Boxes, 18 Folders

WINTHROP UNIVERSITY
LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

ACC. NO.: 411
ADDITIONS: _____, _____, _____

PROCESSED BY: Thomas F. Hudson
DATE: October 28, 1982
NO. OF SECTIONS: 4

MODJESKA MONTEITH SIMKINS PAPERS

I

This collection was deposited by Modjeska Monteith Simkins of 2025 Marion Street, Columbia, South Carolina.

Linear feet of shelf space occupied: .75
Approximate number of pieces: 1,500

Restrictions: Open to researchers under the rules and regulations of the Louise Pettus Archives & Special Collections at Winthrop University.

Literary Rights: For information concerning literary rights please contact the Louise Pettus Archives & Special Collections at Winthrop University.

Notices were released to NUCMC on November 19, 1982 (also see the Archives Donor Control File and the Vertical File for additional notices.)

Scope and Content: **The Modjeska Monteith Simkins Papers consist of materials relating to the work of Mrs. Modjeska Monteith Simkins (1899-1992), who was an important Civil Rights leader during the Civil Rights Movement in South Carolina. Included in this collection is a University of North Carolina oral history interview transcript of a 1976 interview of Mrs. Simkins by Jacquelyn Hall, correspondence, political campaign materials, and radio talk scripts by Mrs. Simkins. There are also photocopied newspaper clippings on civil rights issues, newsletters of several civil rights groups, business reports, voting material, and program notes. Of special interest are the 1970 Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Program note, the 1976 Mary McLeod Bethune Program note, and a program note including a biographical sketch of the Reverend Ralph David Abernathy. The collection also includes a number of newspapers. The collection contributes to insight into the life of Mrs. Simkins. For a comprehensive biography of Mrs. Simkins see: *Women Leaders in South Carolina*, Archives Records W409.2 and *Aba Mecha, Barbara Woods, Black Women Activist in Twentieth Century South Carolina: Modjeska Monteith Simkins, 1978*; E185.61 .A33x, Dacus Library, Winthrop University.**

Transfer Item: Duplicates returned to Mrs. Simkins. November 3, 1982.

II

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

MODJESKA MONTEITH SIMKINS

Modjeska Monteith Simkins' birthday was December 5, 1899. She is the second of eight children of Henry and Rachel Monteith according to a penciled note on a biographical sheet in the Modjeska Monteith Simkins Collections. She grew up in an atmosphere permeated by the tragic results of the extremists attitudes that arose during Reconstruction resulting in the segregationist and anti-black triumph during the late 1880s and finally in the 1895 Constitution of South Carolina.

Mrs. Simkins' father, a contract brick-layer, was a foreman under whom whites as well as blacks worked. Part of her childhood experiences was being read to from the newspaper by Mrs. Monteith. Nothing was omitted, the good, the bad, the lynchings. It made a deep impression on the child and developed an energetic fighter for the civil and human rights of everyone who needed help.

Modjeska Monteith Simkins grew up in Benedict College in Columbia. She went to school there from grade one until she graduated from college. She did postgraduate work at Columbia University, the University of Michigan, Morehouse and Michigan State.

Her first job was at Booker T. Washington High School in Columbia. From 1921-1929 she taught mathematics subjects. At Christmas, 1929 she wed Andrew W. Simkins, a widower with five children. Following the rules of school teaching in those days, the new Mrs. Simkins had to resign from teaching. There were to be no married female teachers.

In 1931 Mrs. Simkins began an eleven year association with the South Carolina Tuberculosis Association as Director of Negro Work. The new wife and mother with five step-children, and a merchant husband, became a traveling, teaching, leader in public health. T.B., V.D., infant and maternal mortality were all targets for her program. Mrs. Simkins promoted the annual clinic of the Palmetto Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association. The national T.B. Association gave her a Commendation for the \$42000 raised by blacks in 1941.

In 1944 Modjeska Simkins led a campaign to raise \$100,000 to build Good-Samaritan-Waverly Hospital for blacks in Columbia. Mrs. Simkins' leadership ability took her in organizations such as Southern Conference for Human Welfare, or the Commission into Interracial Cooperation, the Columbia Town Hall Congress and the Richland County Citizens Committee and of course the National Association for the advancement of Colored People (NAACP).



II

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE (cont.)

MODJESKA MONTEITH SIMKINS

The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities, 1965 lists her as participant and member of a number of pro-Communists groups.

For example:

1946: Congress on Civil Rights

1947: United Negro and Allied Veterans of America

1952: American Women for Peace World Peace Council

1962: New York Teachers Union

Mrs. Simkins is not and never was a communist.

The NAACP was organized; Mrs. Simkins became the Secretary for the South Carolina Branch. She did the work as a volunteer. During the years 1941-1956 the members of local branches grew from 10 to 110.

As a leader of the NAACP she helped plan action to bring "constitutional liberty and human dignity" to blacks and others. She was a vigorous leader in state civil liberties struggles. In 1956 her work in the NAACP was abruptly ended. Mrs. Simkins was "ousted" as state secretary for the NAACP.

After 26 years of working with blacks all over South Carolina Mrs. Simkins could claim to know more black people than anyone else in the State. It put her in a favorable position to organize politically. A member of the Republic Party into the 1940s, she became one of the last blacks to join the Democratic Party. Mrs. Simkins ran for City Council in Columbia, the South Carolina House of Representatives, and the City of Columbia School Board.

In 1956, Modjeska Simkins joined her brother at the Victory Savings Bank in Columbia, the only black owned bank in South Carolina. Organized in 1921 it has helped people from all over who have suffered economic hardship for civil rights stands. Mrs. Simkins is still active as Assistant Cashier, member of the Board of Directors and publicity and public relations director. In 1965 her husband Andrew Simkins died.

Modjeska Monteith Simkins has fought for blacks, labor and the rights of the mentally ill. She helped organize the Richland County Citizens Committee to help integrate the schools, buses and other public facilities in Columbia. In *The State*, June 28, 1981 Modjeska Monteith Simkins described herself in these ideas. She is a born scrapper. She is especially interested in scraps in which her own people ought to be. A mistreated person is immediately her friend.

Today the Human Endeavor has a Modjeska Monteith Simkins Award. This alternative charity organization has begun a program to make annually a cash award to a person who has been distinguished in fighting for the causes of the underprivileged. Seldom do people live to see so much of what they worked for come to pass and to be honored while alive by those around them.

II

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE (cont.)

MODJESKA MONTEITH SIMKINS

Modjeska Monteith Simkins can be acid, funny, sharp, always forthright and never dull when she speaks. “The State Democratic Party has not done one thing for minorities locally. All the harm that’s been done to my people has been done by Democrats – without doing a damn thing for them.” On the Republican Party, “After the Democratic Primary was opened to blacks a bunch of creeps took over the Republican Party.” Perhaps the best is the title of her Radio talks. “I woke up this morning with my mind set on Freedom.”

III

DESCRIPTION OF SERIES

<u>Box(es)</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Series</u>	<u>Year(s)</u>
1	1-5	BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL This series contains biographical material on Modjeska Monteith Simkins. Included is newspaper clippings and magazine articles, a report of the UnAmerican Activities Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, and an "Interview with Modjeska Simkins, by Jacquelyn Hall, July 28-31, 1976, Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collections of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill." Also included is correspondence with leading political figures in South Carolina such as Olin D. Johnson, Claytor Arants, Walter Bristow, Norma Russell, and W.J. Bryan Dorn. This series includes radio talks given by Mrs. Simkins over WOIC, Columbia as a representative of the Richland County Citizens Committee. There are also notes taken in preparation for an interview with Mrs. Simkins for the Women Leaders of South Carolina, Oral History Project (W409.2 in Winthrop Archives). Also includes some material on her political campaigns, an unpublished biographical sheet, a number of her personal writings and honors. In chronological order.	1965-1982
1-3	6-13	PAPERS RELATING TO CIVIL RIGHTS This series contains minutes and position paper of the Richland County Citizens Committee, political campaign material of the period as well as photocopies of newspaper clippings on the black struggle for social justice. Other materials include booklets, pamphlets, newsletters, reports on black banks, voter registration, prisons, crime, civil activities, desegregation of schools and other social change programs. The series contains newsletters of the South Carolina Council on Human Relations, also copies of newsletter, Your Schools, of the South Carolina Community Relations Program of the America Friends Service Committee. There are literature and program notes celebrating important black leaders. Of special interest is the 1970, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Service, containing significant quotes of Dr. King, the Mary McLeod Bethune Portrait celebration in 1976, and <i>Maututa</i> , a poem in celebration of black women. One program note includes a brief biography of the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy. In chronological order.	1925, 1956, 1967-1982

III

DESCRIPTION OF SERIES

<u>Box(es)</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Series</u>	<u>Year(s)</u>
3	14-17	VARIOUS REPORTS This series contains reports on health care in South Carolina, a report to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission from the South Carolina Electric and Gas Co., also a brochure of Fort Jackson and a report from the South Carolina Association. In chronological order.	1969-1972, nd
3	18	NEWSPAPERS This series principally contains copies of black operated newspapers. <i>The Chronicle</i> of Charleston, South Carolina, <i>Muhammed Speaks</i> and <i>Bilalian News</i> of Chicago, Illinois, and <i>Black on News</i> , <i>Samuel Sander's Journal</i> , both of Columbia, South Carolina. Also from Columbia is a copy of <i>Harbinger</i> , a social issues newspaper and <i>The State</i> and <i>The State Magazine</i> . In chronological order.	1974-1981