

Women Mobilized for Change

**How Black Women Reshaped Fair
Housing Activism in Late-1960s
Chicago**

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SOURCES

WMC's organizational papers at the University of Illinois Chicago's special collections library.

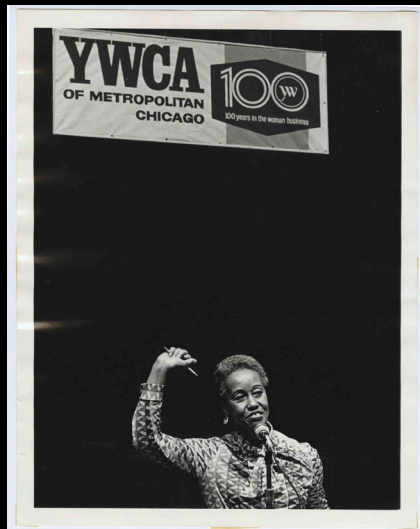
“Coretta: My Life, My Love, My Legacy” by Coretta Scott King

“King of the North: Martin Luther King's Life of Struggle Outside the South” by Jeanne Theoharis

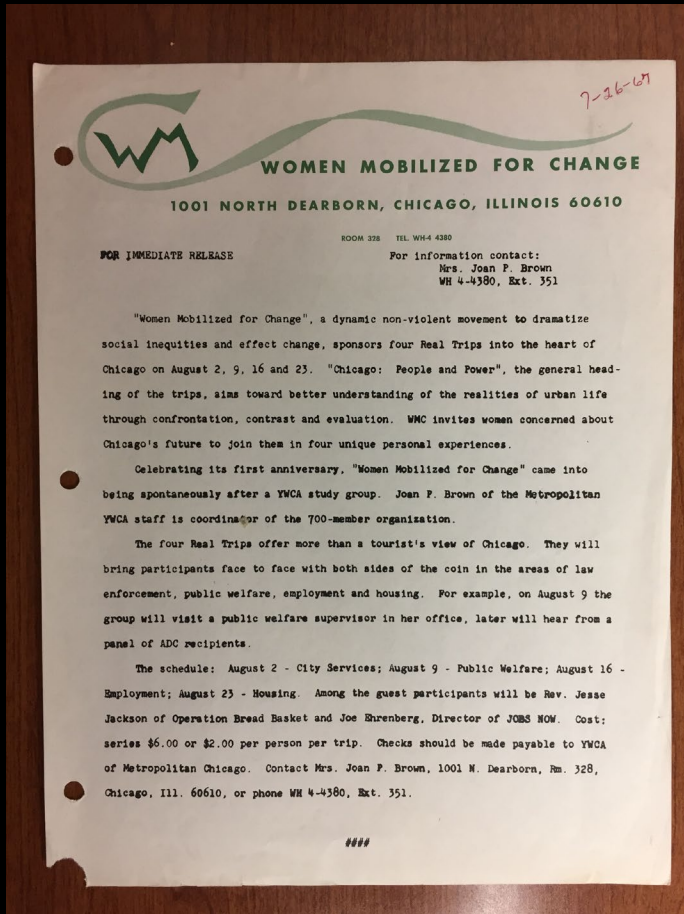
WOMEN MOBILIZED FOR CHANGE (WMC) OVERVIEW



- Women's civil rights organization, established in July 1966 to support the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM), a fair housing campaign co-led by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Based at the downtown Chicago YWCA and facilitated by Joan Brown and Doris Wilson.
- Black and white members from Chicago and surrounding suburbs. 700 members at its peak.



OVERVIEW (CON'T)



- Like other women's groups, played a supportive role to a male-dominated civil rights organization.
- In the beginning, WMC pressured government and business leaders, including mayor Daley, to meet King's fair housing demands.
- After King's departure, in August 1966, WMC transitioned into a grassroots organization focused on the effects of segregation on women and children.
- In 1967, WMC launched its first major civil rights campaign, a food justice project.

CHICAGO FREEDOM MOVEMENT

- January 1966, King family moved to Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood.
- King had partnered with Al Raby, of Coordination Council of Community Organizations (CCCO), known best for school desegregation efforts, to form the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM).
- Two goals: to improve housing conditions in Black communities and open working-class white neighborhoods to Black people.



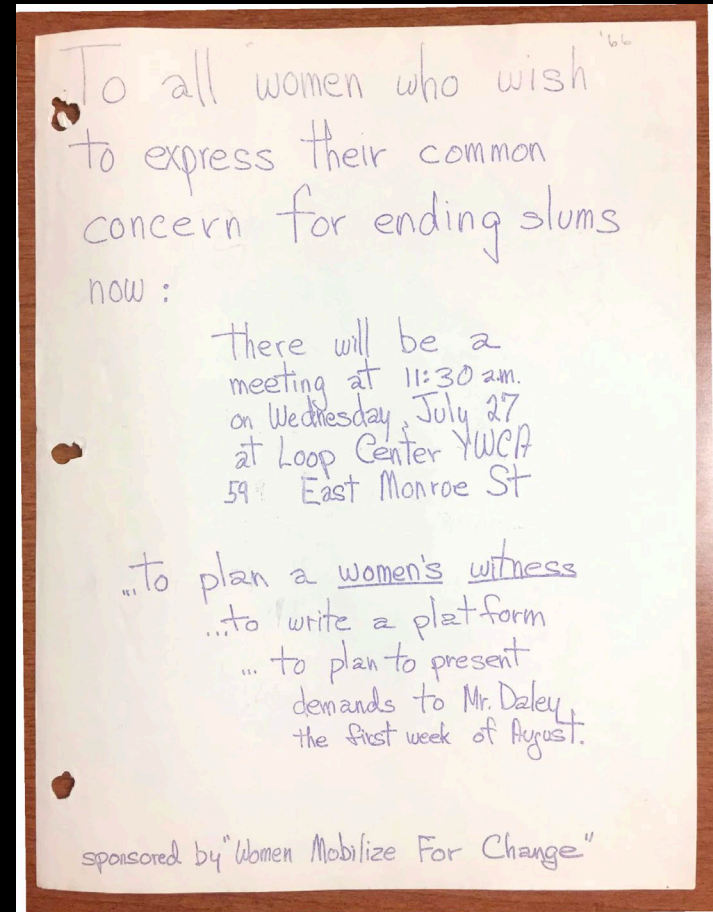
Soldier Field Launch



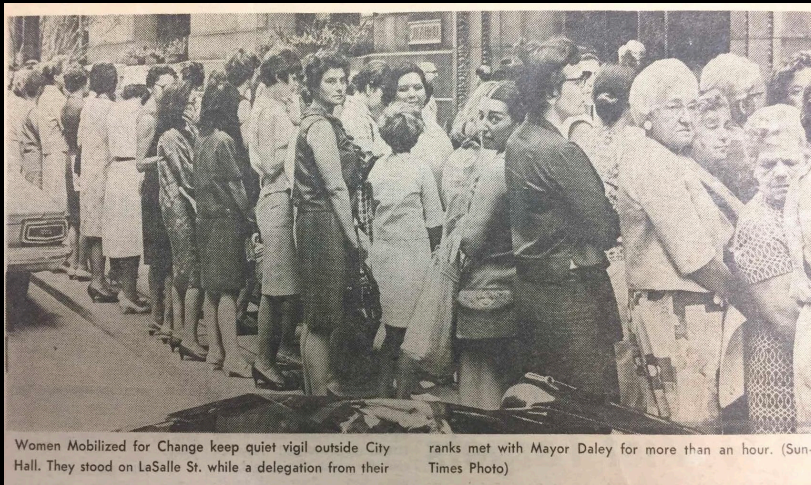
- July 10, CFM holds rally to announce it's agenda, 35,000 people attend, low turnout attributed to 98-degree heat.
- MLK speaks last and reads 14 demands to improve Black life, fair housing is top concern.
- Leads march to city hall to deliver the list to the mayor.
- July 12-15, police shut-off fire hydrants, sparking the westside uprising.

JULY 15 MEETING W/ SCOTT KING

- July 15, group of women from the YWCA meet with Coretta Scott King.
- They are concerned about the violent uprising.
- King urges them to get involved, inspiring the formation of WMC.



MAYOR DALEY MEETING



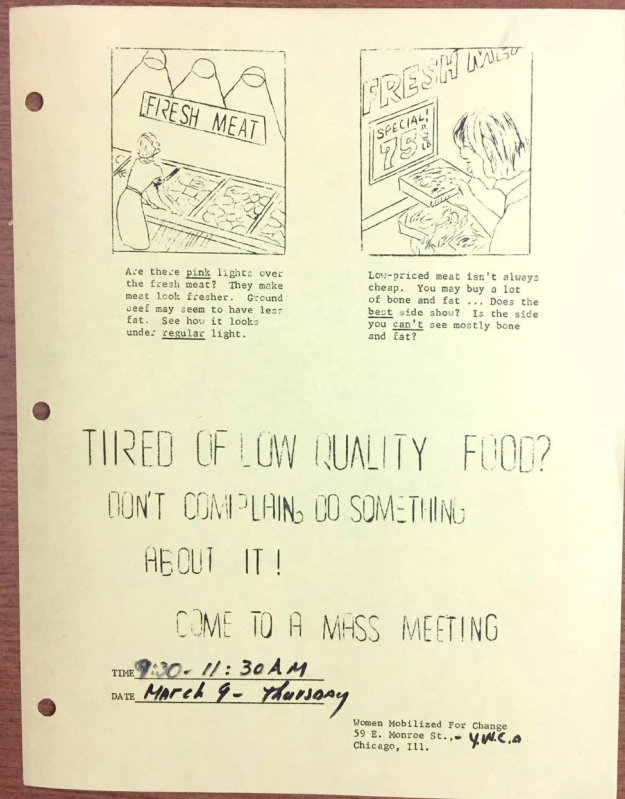
- WMC set-up meetings with government and business leaders to advocate for the CFM.
- Their first political act was to send a delegation to meet with Chicago's powerful Mayor Richard Daley, to demand an end to housing discrimination.
- Additionally, members held a silent vigil outside of city hall to draw attention from media and onlookers.

July-August, King's Housing Marches + Summit



- WMC also participated in King's housing marches.
- In late August 1966, they attended the summit meeting between King and Daley, at the Palmer House.
- Daley conceded to King's demands. King agreed to end the marches.

SPRING 1967, FOOD JUSTICE PROJECT



- Daley's refusal to enforce the summit agreement pushed WMC away from seeking top-down solutions.
- Instead, they embrace community organizing and bottom-up solutions.
- This shift aligns WMC with an expanding Black power movement, that places a high priority on Black self-determination.
- The group's first campaign prioritizes the effects of housing segregation on women and children.
- WMC organizes residents in low-income areas to demand fresh and nutritious food options from grocery store owners.
- Additionally, residents learn to pressure government agencies to inspect and enforce food safety in neighborhood grocery stores.

CONCLUSION

- WMC evolved overtime
- In the beginning the group sought change through Chicago's elite government and business powerbrokers.
- After King's departure, the women turned to grassroots organizing and community driven change.
- The shift affected the activists personally. They felt liberated to take control of their own destiny.

THE END