



Smithsonian

Anacostia Community Museum

Marie Satenik Nahikian papers

ACMA.06-123

ACM Staff

This project received support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

2021 August

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Collection Overview | |
| Administrative Information | 1 |
| Biographical / Historical | 1 |
| Scope and Contents | 2 |
| Names and Subjects | |
| Container Listing | |
| Series 1: Biographical | 4 |
| Series 2: Adams Morgan Organization | 6 |
| Series 3: Campaign Materials | 7 |

Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Anacostia Community Museum Archives |
| Title: | Marie Satenik Nahikian papers |
| Date: | 1971-1998 |
| Identifier: | ACMA.06-123 |
| Creator: | Nahikian, Marie Satenik, 1946- |
| Extent: | 5.83 Linear feet (5 boxes) |
| Language: | English . |

Administrative Information

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Amelia J. Verkerk in 2022.

Preferred Citation

Marie Satenik Nahikian papers, Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Marie Satenik Nahikian.

Restrictions

Use of the materials requires an appointment. Please contact the archivist at acmarchives@si.edu.

Conditions Governing Use

The Marie Satenik Nahikian papers are the physical property of the Anacostia Community Museum. Literary and copyright belong to the author/creator or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, and to obtain permission to publish or reproduce, contact the Museum Archives.

Biographical / Historical

Marie Satenik Nahikian was a co-founder and the first Executive Director of the Adams Morgan Organization (AMO, founded in 1972). Before Washington, DC had Home Rule, AMO put into practice a local, elected self-governance structure that advocated for issues of concern to residents of the Adams Morgan neighborhood. AMO served as the main model for the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions that were created when Home Rule was implemented in Washington, DC. Marie S. Nahikian, particularly through her work with AMO, was a staunch advocate and partial architect of three landmark pieces of tenant rights and anti-displacement legislation in DC: the 1975 Rental Accommodations Act, the 1978 Residential Real Property Transfer Excise Tax, and the 1980 Rental Housing Conversion and Sale Act.

Nahikian was elected Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for ANC-1C (in Adams Morgan) and twice ran for D.C. City Council (unsuccessfully). She was appointed by Mayor Walter Washington (1915-2003) to serve two terms as a Tenant Commissioner on the D.C. Rental Accommodations Commission. She later served under Mayor Marion

Barry (1936-2014) as head of the Tenant Purchase Program that enabled largely low- and moderate-income tenants to purchase and become cooperative owners of their buildings.

After leaving Washington, DC, she went on to work for Mayors in Philadelphia and New York City. Nahikian also worked in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development under President Barack Obama.

In 2023, Marie Satenik Nahikian hosts the Usable Past podcast, where activists share their stories of past and present organizing to create better lives for as many people as possible.

Scope and Contents

The papers of community organizer and affordable housing developer Marie Satenik Nahikian measure 3.46 linear feet and date from 1971 to 1998. The collection contains correspondence; certificates; photographs; newsletters; campaign ephemera; editions of various Washington, DC community newspapers; as well as recordings of Nahikian's speeches. The bulk of the collection contains documents pertaining to Nahikian's work with the Adams Morgan Organization.

Scope and Contents

The papers of community organizer and affordable housing developer Marie Satenik Nahikian measure 3.46 linear feet and date from 1971 to 1998. The collection includes copies of the *Rock Creek Monitor*, the newspaper of Dupont Circle, Adams Morgan and Mt. Pleasant communities of Washington, DC. Present in the collection are also proclamations, newspaper clippings, writings by Nahikian and materials related to her role for Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for ANC-1C (in Adams Morgan) and unsuccessful campaign for D.C. City Council.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Community Organizations
- Community activists
- Newspapers -- Washington (D.C.).
- Urban Life

Types of Materials:

- Audio cassettes -- 20th century
- Contact sheets
- Photographs -- Black-and-white negatives -- 20th century

Names:

- Barry, Marion, 1936-2014
- Clarke, David "Dave", 1943-1997
- Fauntroy, Walter Edward, Jr. (1933)
- Hill, Fannie, 1923-1987
- Pierce, Walter C., 1946-1991
- Pinkett, Flaxie Madison, 1918-1995
- Shackleton, Polly, 1910-1997

Shia, Nancy, 1947-
Sizemore, Barbara, 1927-2004
Washington, Walter E., 1915-2003

Places:

Adams Morgan (Washington, D.C.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical

Scope and Contents: This series consists of the personal papers and memorabilia of Marie S. Nahikian which document her life in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C., as well as her writing and her work as an editor for Harper's Weekly. Marie Satenik Nahikian was born on October 24, 1946, in Asheville, NC to Robert and Irma Nahikian. Nahikian attended the Women's College of North Carolina (now known as University of North Carolina at Greensboro) from 1964-1969, where she was first involved in community organizing. She moved to Washington D.C. in the fall of 1969 and began working for the United States Student Press Association. In 1972, Nahikian co-founded and became the first Executive Director of the Adams Morgan Organization. For the next several years, she dedicated herself to community organizing in her neighborhood and across Washington D.C., with the goal of bettering tenants' rights and fighting "land speculation." She moved out of Washington D.C. in 1985.

This series also contains newspaper articles featuring Nahikian and her career as a community organizer in Adams Morgan. Family and friends are featured in this series, including Fannie Hill and Josephine "Jo" Butler.

Oversize Box 4,
Folder 12 "The Adams Morgan Organization Supplement" article by Nahikian, circa 1970s

Box 1, Folder 1 Correspondence, 1974-1980

Box 1, Folder 2 Certificates, 1975-1983

Oversize Box 4,
Folder 1 Certificates, 1976, 1978

Oversize Box 4,
Folder 2 Proclamation, 1982

Oversize Box 4,
Folder 3 Proclamation, 1985

Box 1, Folder 3 "Commercial Rehab Works," article by Nahikian, undated, undated

Box 1, Folder 4 "Off Our Backs," article featuring Nahikian, 1972

Oversize Box 4,
Folder 13 "Harper's Weekly," edited by Nahikian, 1975 May 25

Oversize Box 4,
Folder 14 "Is Southwest An Armed Camp?" article by Nahikian, 1976 March 25-31

Box 1, Folder 6 "Quest: A Feminist Quarterly," article featuring Nahikian, 1978 Fall

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| Box 1, Folder 7 | "The Washington Post," article featuring Nahikian, 1978 August 18 |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | "Grassroots Women Speak," article featuring Nahikian, 1981 June |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | "Latino Festival," article featuring Nahikian, 1982 July-August |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | "Speech to Feminist Alliance and Friends," featuring Nahikian, 1982 November 12 |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | Obituaries, 1969, 1979, 1991, 1997, 2012 |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Wedding invitation, 1979 August 12 |
| Box 1, Folder 13 | Party invitations, 1981-1983 |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | Tributes to Nahikian, 1985 |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | Block party flyer, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 16 | Photographic copies of pinback buttons, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 17 | Fannie Hill materials, 1986, undated |

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Adams Morgan Organization

Scope and Contents: This series is the largest in the collection and consists of materials related to Marie Nahikian's involvement with the Adams Morgan Organization (AMO) and general administrative documents related to the organization. The series is divided into three subseries: Correspondence, Administrative Files, and Printed Materials. The Correspondence subseries includes correspondence between members of AMO, such as Walter Pierce and David Clarke, and various political figures, including former D.C. mayors Marion Barry and Walter Washington. The Administrative subseries houses materials regarding the running of AMO, such as the legal and financial information of the organization. The Printed Materials subseries contains materials related to housing policy and newspapers about AMO and the Adams Morgan neighborhood.

Subseries 2.1: Correspondence

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|------------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 18 | Correspondence, 1974-1977 |
| Box 1, Folder 19 | Correspondence, 1974-1975 |
| Box 1, Folder 20 | Correspondence, 1975-1976 |
| Box 1, Folder 21 | Correspondence with Mayor Marion Barry, 1975 |
| Box 1, Folder 22 | Correspondence, 1976-1977 |

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Campaign Materials

Scope and Contents: This series contains materials regarding Nahikian's successful run for Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for ANC-1C (in Adams Morgan) and her two campaigns for D.C. city council in 1978 and 1982. These materials mostly consist of flyers and newspapers about the elections. Other materials include bumper stickers, press materials, and campaign endorsements from Congressman Walter Fauntroy and Senator Edward Kennedy.

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|---------------------------|---|
| Box 2, Folder 25 | Newspaper clippings, 1973, 1978, 1982 |
| Box 2, Folder 26 | Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner flyers, 1974-1975 |
| Box 2, Folder 27 | Press releases, 1975, 1978 Language: Spanish; Castilian. |
| Box 2, Folder 28 | Press materials, 1977-1978, 1982 |
| Box 2, Folder 29 | D.C. City Council Confirmation announcement, 1977 |
| Oversize Box 4, Folder 9 | "The Washington Star" clipping, 1978 July 17 |
| Oversize Box 4, Folder 38 | "The Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade", 1978 August |
| Oversize Box 4, Folder 39 | "1978 Election Guide", 1978 |
| Oversize Box 4, Folder 40 | "The Voter's Guide", 1978 |
| Oversize Box 4, Folder 10 | Campaign endorsements, 1978 |
| Box 2, Folder 32 | Bumper stickers, 1978, 1982 |
| Oversize Box 4, Folder 41 | "Columbia Road", 1982 July |
| Box 2, Folder 33 | Letter from Katie Davis about "Goodbye" song, 1985 |

[Return to Table of Contents](#)