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**Finding aid to the Los Angeles Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski records,  
1984-1991 Coll2014-048**

Loni Shibuyama

ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

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**Language of Material:** English

**Contributing Institution:** ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

**Title:** Los Angeles Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski records

**creator:** Weathers, Carolyn, 1940-

**Identifier/Call Number:** Coll2014-048

**Physical Description:** 0.4 Linear Feet1 box.

**Date (inclusive):** 1984-1991

**Abstract:** Correspondence, newsletters, clippings, press releases, fliers, court records, notes, typescripts and other material from the Los Angeles Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski, 1984-1991. In 1983, Sharon Kowalski suffered severe brain injuries in a car accident, which left her physically disabled. Kowalski's father, Donald, was initially named Sharon's guardian and cut off visitation from Sharon's longtime partner, Karen Thompson. The materials document the campaign by lesbian activists to raise awareness of the legal battle and lesbian rights; and to raise funds to support Karen Thompson's legal efforts to reestablish visitation rights and be named Sharon Kowalski's guardian.

**Arrangement**

This collection is arranged alphabetically.

**Biographical / Historical**

In 1983, Sharon Kowalski suffered severe brain injuries in a car accident, which left her physically disabled. Kowalski's father, Donald, and her longtime partner Karen Thompson both petitioned to be named Sharon's guardian. Guardianship was granted to Kowalski's father, who cut off visitation from Thompson. Thompson subsequently began a legal battle to reestablish visitation rights and be named Sharon's guardian. In 1991, the Minnesota Court of Appeals granted guardianship to Thompson.

**Conditions Governing Access**

The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.

**Conditions Governing Use**

All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the ONE Archivist. Permission for publication is given on behalf of ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives at USC Libraries as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Gift of Carolyn Weathers, June 20, 2012.

**Preferred Citation**

[Box/folder #, or item name] Los Angeles Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski Records, Coll2014-048, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

**Processing Information**

The materials in this collection were originally part of the Carolyn Weathers Photographs and Papers (Coll2014-008). In 2017, upon request of the donor, the materials were separated from the Weathers collection to become its own Los Angeles Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski Records (Coll2014-048). Collection was originally processed by Kyle Morgan with assistance from volunteers, 2014.

**Scope and Contents**

The collection comprises correspondence, newsletters, clippings, press releases, fliers, court records, notes, typescripts and other material from the Los Angeles Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski, 1984-1991. The materials document the campaign by lesbian activists to raise awareness of gay and lesbian rights; and to raise funds to support Karen Thompson's legal efforts to reestablish visitation rights and be named Sharon Kowalski's guardian.

**Separated Materials**

**Separated to the ONE library**

Thompson, Karen, and Julie Andrzejewski. Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home? San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute Book Company, 1988. (inscribed to Carolyn Weathers and Jenny Wrenn)

**Separated to the ONE Archives poster collection**

National Free Sharon Kowalski Day, Sunday, August 7, 1988, Minnesota.

**Separated to the ONE Archives button collection**

"Bring Sharon Home / D.C. Lesbian Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski. Round, black text on white, red, and yellow background.

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"Free Sharon Kowalski." Round, white text on purple background.

**Separated to the ONE Archives T-shirt collection**

"Bring Sharon Home" next to a stick figure in a wheelchair. White text and purple figure on a black background.

**Separated to the ONE audiovisual collection (regarding the Free Sharon Kowalski movement)**

Clothespin Fever and Lambda Delta Lambda event at Pat Shanahan and Joyce Nordquist's house, April 29, 1988. (audiocassette)

Karen Thompson on West 57th Street, March 4, 1989. (VHS, DVD)

Los Angeles Central Library, Gay and Lesbian Authors, June 6, 1991. (VHS, DVD)

Lifestyle Update, Coast-to-Coast, show #58. (VHS)

Lifetime Commitment: A Portrait of Karen Thompson. (VHS, 33 minutes)

National Organization for Women Second Conference on Lesbian Rights, San Diego, October 8-10, 1988. (3 audiocassettes)

**Other Finding Aids**

Carolyn Weathers Photographs and Papers, Coll2014-008, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

Clothespin Fever Press Records, Coll2013-092, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Lesbian activists

Lesbian couples

Lesbian rights

Lesbians -- Legal status, laws, etc. -- United States -- Cases

Kowalski, Sharon

Thompson, Karen,, 1947-

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**Free Sharon Kowalski records 1984-1991**

Box 1, Folder 4

Box 1, Folder 1-3

Box 1, Folder 5-7

Box 1, Folder 8

Box 1, Folder 9-11

Box 1, Folder 19

Box 1, Folder 13

Box 1, Folder 14

Box 1, Folder 15

Box 1, Folder 16

Box 1, Folder 17

Box 1, Folder 12

Box 1, Folder 18

Box 1

**Clippings 1984-1988**

**Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski 1988-1991**

**Contacts and committees 1988**

**Court proceedings and testimonies 1984-1988**

**Free Sharon Kowalski Day 1988**

**General files 1988-1991**

**Miscellaneous 1988**

**National Lesbian Rights Conference 1988**

**Packets for mailers 1988**

**Phone calls 1987-1988**

**Updates 1987-1989**

**Karen Thompson itinerary, resume, and photographs for a Lambda Delta Lambda and Clothespin Fever Press event 1988**

**West 57th Street television program 1989**

**Rubber stamp of "The L.A. Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski" circa 1988-1989**