Finding aid to the Elaine Black Yoneda oral history, 1976-1977, MS 3524

Finding aid prepared by Jaime Henderson
California Historical Society
678 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA, 94105-4014
(415) 357-1848
reference@calhist.org
2011
Title: Elaine Black Yoneda oral history
Date (inclusive): 1976-1977
Collection Identifier: MS 3524
Extent: 1.0 folder
Contributing Institution: California Historical Society
678 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA, 94105-4014
(415) 357-1848
reference@calhist.org
URL: http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/
Physical Location: Collection is stored onsite.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.
Access
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
All requests to reproduce, publish, quote from or otherwise use collection materials must be submitted in writing to the Director of the Library and Archives, North Baker Research Library, California Historical Society, 678 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Consent is given on behalf of the California Historical Society as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission from the copyright owner. Such permission must be obtained from the copyright owner. Restrictions also apply to digital representations of the original materials. Use of digital files is restricted to research and educational purposes.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], Elaine Black Yoneda Oral History, MS 3524, California Historical Society.
Separated Materials
The original sound recording from which the Yoneda oral history was transcribed is stored separately on cassettes 26.1-26.14.
Related Collections
Elaine Black Yoneda Papers, MS 3057
The following oral histories were prepared by Lucille Kendall in her effort to document the lives of women labor activists and radicals for the California Historical Society's "Women in California Collection":
Clemmie Barry Oral History, MS 3251
Helene Powell Oral History, MS 3518
Katherine Rodin Oral History, MS 3517
Louise Lambert Oral History, MS 3520
Marion Brown Sills Oral History, MS 3525
Mildred Edmondson Oral History, MS 3523
Violet Orr Oral History, MS 3516
The following oral histories were prepared under the auspices of "The Twentieth Century Trade Union Woman: Vehicle for Social Change," a project of the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, The University of Michigan-Wayne State University:
Angela Ward Oral History, MS 3536
Caroline Decker Gladstein Oral History, MS 3025
Donor
This oral history was transcribed from an interview with Elaine Black Yoneda conducted by Lucille Kendall for the California Historical Society in 1976-1977.

Biographical Information

Elaine Black Yoneda was born in Manhattan, New York, in 1906 to Russian Jewish immigrants who were members of the Communist Party. When she was a child, Yoneda’s family relocated San Diego, California, where her father ran a dry goods store and Elaine attended local public schools.

Yoneda married her first husband in Los Angeles in 1925. The couple produced Yoneda’s only daughter, Joyce, in 1927. In 1931 Yoneda took a job with the International Labor Defense office as a clerical worker. She quickly became a leader within the ILD after witnessing many violations of civil rights by the Los Angeles Red Squad. With the ILD Yoneda was active in organizing meetings and demonstrations for labor and civil right causes. One of her duties was to bail out individuals who had been jailed for their participation in strikes and demonstrations. She bailed out Japanese American demonstrator Karl Hama Yoneda in 1931 and by the mid-1930s they were married. The couple relocated to San Francisco and had a son, Thomas, in 1939.

Throughout the 1930s Yoneda remained active in the civil rights, labor, and union movements. She joined the Communist Party and became active in the International Longshoremen’s Association’s Defense Committee, educating striking workers about their rights should they be arrested. Yoneda became known as the “Red Angel” for her work in defending union members and labor demonstrators in the San Francisco waterfront and general strike of 1934. She was also nicknamed “Tiger Girl” for her participation on behalf of striking agricultural workers in Salinas, California. Yoneda’s political work throughout the 1930s culminated with her running for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1939. She was defeated.

Upon the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, Yoneda’s husband was sent to the internment camp in Manzanar, California. Yoneda and her son relocated to Southern California while her husband volunteered intelligence for the United States while interned.

The family eventually was reunited and returned to San Francisco, where Yoneda remained active in union, civil rights, and labor movements. She remained involved with a variety of labor organizations, including the International Longshore and Warehouse Union’s Women’s Auxiliary and the Office Workers Union, and various civil rights cases, including the Wilmington Ten. Yoneda persevered in her devotion to political activity up until her death in May 1988, attending a longshoremen’s rally the day before she died of a heart attack.

Scope and Contents

This oral history collection consists of a transcribed copy of Lucille Kendall’s 1976-1977 interview with labor and civil rights activist Elaine Black Yoneda; and an interview history. The Yoneda interview was conducted under the auspices of the California Historical Society’s “Women in California Collection” as part of an oral history project documenting the lives of women labor activists and radicals in California.

The bulk of the Yoneda interview covers her involvement with the International Labor Defense, the International Longshoremen’s Association’s Defense League, her activities as a member of the Communist Party, and her participation in a variety of labor and agricultural strikes and civil rights movements. The interview also covers topics in Yoneda’s personal life, such as her two marriages, her relationship with her children, her family life, and growing up in a Russian Jewish family in Southern California. Yoneda also discusses her experience in an interracial marriage and the role and treatment of women in the labor movement.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Communist Party of the United States of America (Calif.).
International Labor Defense.
International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union.
International Longshoremen's Association.
Employee rights.
General Strike, San Francisco, Calif., 1934
Interracial marriage.
Oral histories.
 Strikes and lockouts--California.
Women labor leaders--California.