Alexander Pennes Papers (Committee for Medical Freedom Records), 1946-1968

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Register of the Alexander Pennes Papers (Committee for Medical Freedom Records), 1946-1968

Collection number: MSS 048

Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Alexander Pennes Papers (Committee for Medical Freedom Records), 1946-1968
Date (inclusive): 1946-1968
Collection number: MSS 048
Creator: Pennes, Alexander
Extent: 2 boxes, 1 half-box, 1 legal half-box
1 ½ linear feet
Repository: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research
Los Angeles, CA 90044
Abstract: The majority of this collection concerns the blacklisting of doctors and other medical professionals during the Cold War/McCarthy Era, particularly the dismissal of three doctors by the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles in December 1951.
Language: English.
Provenance
Donated to the Library by Alexander and Rose Pennes in the mid-1980s.

Access
The collection is available for research only at the Library’s facility in Los Angeles. The Library is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Researchers are encouraged to call or email the Library indicating the nature of their research query prior to making a visit.

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**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Alexander Pennes Papers (Committee for Medical Freedom Records), Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles, California.

**Blacklisting and the McCarthy Era**

The Anti-Communist fervor of the Cold War Period and what is commonly referred to as the McCarthy Era serves as a backdrop to this collection. After the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in the ideological battle known as the Cold War. The identification of communists and other radicals through the use of federal and state legislative investigative committees and the punishment of those identified through firing and blacklisting comprised a successful U.S. tactic. The investigations spread from federal and other government employees to the entertainment industry, the professions, labor unions, and the private sector. The major players in these campaigns included, on the Federal level, Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). In California major players included California State Assemblyman (later State Senator) Nelson S. Dilworth, and State Senators Jack B. Tenney and Hugh M. Burns. All three served on the Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California (1945) and first Tenney and later Burns chaired the [California] Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities. After passing the Levering Act, which required loyalty oaths from all state employees, the California Legislature made several attempts at passing legislation that would have required lawyers, physicians and other professionals to take loyalty oaths or lose the right to practice their profession. In 1951 HUAC held hearings into the “Communist Activities Among Professional Groups in the Los Angeles Area.”

**Biography**

Alexander Pennes, M.D. was a prominent Los Angeles physician who was dismissed from St. Joseph's Hospital in Orange, California in September 1951, and from Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles in December, as a result of having his name mentioned in a House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearing. Two other physicians, Dr. Murray Abowitz and Dr. Richard W. Lippman, were dismissed from Cedars of Lebanon the same day. Dr. Abowitz had consulted on the case of a Smith Act defendant, and Dr. Lippman had refused to testify before HUAC. The Committee for Medical Freedom was formed in January 1952 to organize the protest of the Cedars' firings. Rose Pennes, Dr. Pennes' wife, was the Executive Director of the Committee.

In October 1951, Pennes and other doctors were called before the HUAC hearings being held in Los Angeles. Pennes received a certificate from Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms for his appearance before HUAC. Pennes and his wife were actively involved in anti-HUAC organizations. They were also involved in fighting Burns-Tenney and Burns-Chapel legislation attempting to institute loyalty oaths for professionals in California. The Bush-Tenney Bill, SB 1665, would have amended the state Business and Professions code to require the signing of an oath to uphold the Constitution and swearing that he or she did not belong, had not belonged within the last five years, and would not join any organization or party that “advocates the overthrow of the Government of the United States or the State of California by force or violence or other unlawful means.” Signing of the “affidavit” was required for licensure, and lying about past affiliations or joining in the future was made a felony.

Pennes was a progressive physician interested in social welfare and the movements toward creating affordable health coverage. He was one of the founding members of the short-lived (1946-1956) Community Medical Foundation, a prepaid health insurance and group medical practice. The Foundation attracted the attention of the California State Un-American Activities (Burns) Committee in 1954. Pennes remained interested in social and civil rights issues.

**Scope and Content**

This collection contains minutes, correspondence, flyers, petitions, hearing transcripts, testimony, articles, notes, newsletters, and clippings. Though the provenance of this collection is uncertain it appears to contain materials created or collected by Dr. Alexander [Alex] Pennes, and his wife Rose Pennes, including records of the Committee for Medical Freedom which was formed to challenge the loyalty-based dismissals of Pennes, Abowitz, Lippman and other physicians. Rose Pennes was Executive Director of the Committee and Stella (Mrs. Dan) Rugetti served as chairman. The Committee organized letter writing, petitions, and large informational and protest meetings (including one featuring B.Z. Goldberg, columnist for the national Jewish newspaper, *The Day*). Dr. Frank Weymouth of Stanford was also prominent in the protests. Linus Pauling withdrew his name from the protest meeting due to a technical problem. According to one source, Pauling later arranged research projects with Dr. Lippman at the City of Hope Hospital.

The Committee for Medical Freedom and information on the Cedars of Lebanon dismissals make up just under half of the material. The majority of the rest concerns the response of Pennes (and the medical community) to loyalty oath legislation directed at doctors and other professionals (Burns-Tenney and Burns-Chapel Bills), and the Los Angeles HUAC hearings, which focused on professionals. Materials in the collection include copies of testimony from several Dilworth (state) and
HUAC hearings, materials from various anti-HUAC groups including the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms, and speeches, notes, correspondence by Alex Pennes, Frank Weymouth and others.

Other concerns ranged from the execution of the Rosenbergs to concerns over Doctors Draft Bill and the treatment of military doctors who failed loyalty challenges, and a variety of other medically related civil rights issues.

There is one folder of information concerning the Community Medical Foundation (1946-1956), a non-profit pre-paid insurance and group medical practice, and the establishment of the pre-paid system.

**Arrangement**

The collection is divided into 3 series: 1. Committee for Medical Freedom/Cedars of Lebanon, Laws 2. HUAC Hearings and Protests, and 3. Articles And Clippings. One box of legal-sized materials is found at the end of the collection (Box 4). Each folder is listed within the appropriate series in the container list.

**Separated Material**

Two copies of a poster-sized announcement of the BZ Goldberg meeting have been added to the Poster Collection.

**Title:** Smith Act Collection,  
**Date:** 1950s-1960  
**Physical Description:** 5 boxes

**Title:** First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles Records,  
**Date:** 1938-1981  
**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

**Title:** Blacklisted Teachers of Los Angeles Collections,  
**Date:** 1928-1996  
**Physical Description:** 9 Collections

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**Series 1. Committee for Medical Freedom/Cedars of Lebanon, 1947-1957, n.d.**

**Physical Description:** 21 folders

**Scope and Content Note**

This series contains documents created by the committee including minutes, correspondence, flyers, newsletters, and petitions. The committee’s main activity was fighting the dismissals of Drs. Alexander Pennes, Murray Abowitz and Richard W. Lippman from Cedars of Lebanon. Efforts included letters, petition drives, and rallies. Several issues of the Committee’s newsletter Medical Freedom, flyers, action sheets, and some membership and other administrative information are found in the collection. Also included is correspondence about other blacklist cases (Betty Seldon and Dr. Edward Barsky) addressed to the Committee.

Also included in this series is one folder of material on the Community Medical Foundation (1946-1956), the non-profit pre-paid insurance and group medical practice, of which Pennes was a founding member. The folder includes some membership correspondence, donation information, the foundation’s state charter, and a letter announcing the laying down of the foundation. Also included in this folder are the texts of Assembly Bills 800 and 1200, which proposed the prepaid system.

- **Box-folder 1/1** Minutes, 1952-1953
- **Address Lists, n.d.**
- **Box-folder 1/2** Correspondence
- **Box-folder 1/3** Official, 1952-1953
- **Box-folder 1/3-1/8** Address Lists, n.d.
- **Box-folder 1/4** Correspondence
- **Box-folder 1/5** Incoming and Third Party, 1952-1953
- **Box-folder 1/6** Literature Published by Other Organizations, 1952
- **Box-folder 1/7** Abowitz, Lippman, Pennes (includes other documents), 1947-1953, n.d.
- **Box-folder 1/8** B. Z. Goldberg, 1952, n.d.
- **Box-folder 1/9** Jewish Community Council, 1952-1953
- **Box-folder 1/10** Cedars of Lebanon Case and Background, 1952, n.d.
- **Box-folder 1/11** Goldberg Meeting, [1952]
- **Medical Freedom Newsletter, 1952**

Box-folder 1/12

Petitions

Box-folder 1/13

Unsigned, 1952

Box-folder 1/14

Signed: Los Angeles Jewish Community Council, 1952

Box-folder 1/15

Signed: Board of Trustees, Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, 1952

Box-folder 1/16

Executive Directors Files [Rose Pennes], 1952, n.d.

Box-folder 1/17

Fundraising and Membership Materials, 1952-1953

Box-folder 1/18

Materials from Other Organizations, 1952-1953

Box-folder 1/19

Committee for Reinstatement of Betty Selden, 1952-1953

Box-folder 1/20

Dr. Edward Barsky Case [New York], 1952

Box-folder 4/1

Community Medical Foundation (and AB 800 and AB1200), 1945-1957

 Burns-Tenney Bill and Burns-Chapel Bills (SB 1665), 1951, 1955

Box-folder 1/21


Box-folder 4/2

Fact Sheets, 1956, n.d.

Box-folder 1/22

Alex Pennes and HUAC Protest [Includes Speech Notes], 1952, n.d.

Box-folder 2/1

Certificate to A. Pennes for HUAC Testimony, n.d.

Box-folder 4/3

Reverend Stephen H. Fritchman, 1951

Box-folder 2/2

Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms [Rose and Alex Pennes]

Box-folder 2/3

1952-1956

Box

1954

Box-folder 2/4, 4/4

National Committee to Abolish the House Committee on Un-American Activities (NCAHUAC), 1963-1967

Box-folder 2/4

Box-folder 4/4

Box-folder 4/5

Box-folder 4/4
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<thead>
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<td>Reports and Testimony</td>
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<td>2/6-2/7</td>
<td>California State Legislature - Senate Investigating Committee on Education [Dilworth]</td>
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<td>10th Report: The 1951 Hearings, 1952</td>
</tr>
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<td>2/7</td>
<td>11th Report: Opposition to Loyalty, 1953</td>
</tr>
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<td>2/8-2/13</td>
<td>HUAC</td>
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<td>Testimony of Dr. Louise Light Silver [Washington, DC], Jan. 22, 1952</td>
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<td>2/9-2/11</td>
<td>Communist Activities Among Professional Groups in Los Angeles Area (Part 3), Sept. 30, Oct. 1 &amp; 2, 1952</td>
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<td>2/9</td>
<td>[p.329-408], Oct. 2, 1952</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>[p.495-636], Oct. 3, 1952</td>
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<td>2/11</td>
<td>Testimony of Sol Kaplan [Los Angeles], April 8, 1953</td>
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<td>2/12</td>
<td>Medical Committee for Human Rights Confronts HUAC: Testimony of Dr. Quentin D. Young, Oct 3-4, 1968</td>
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<td>2/13</td>
<td>Los Angeles County Medical Association - Doctor's Draft Law/Loyalty Checks, 1953-1954</td>
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<td>Wesley Robert Wells Case [Doctors Appeal Death Row Case], 1954, n.d.</td>
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<td>4/6</td>
<td>Civil Liberties Issues [includes Rosenbergs], 1952-1968, n.d.</td>
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**Physical Description:** 5 folders

**Scope and Content Note**

This series is made up of clippings and various articles, reprints and flyers. The clippings are divided into material on the Cedars of Lebanon Case, on the blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles and elsewhere, and on the HUAC hearings and other issues. The folder of Reprints, Articles and Flyers includes a history of test oaths and various other materials dealing with blacklisting and HUAC. A legal-sized folder contains miscellaneous periodicals including an article on Race Stereotypes in Education by Richard Slobodin, three issues of Now is the Time for DECISION published by the California Emergency Defense Committee (1952), two issues of the American Civil Liberties Union, Southern California Branch's The Open Forum (1952), four issues of I.F. Stone's Weekly (1959-1963), two issues of Variety (1952) and one issue of the Hollywood Review (1954).

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<td>Teachers (L.A. and others), 1952-1953</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>HUAC, etc., 1952-1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7</td>
<td>Press Release, Articles, Misc. Periodicals, 1951-1963</td>
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