
**Frances Robman Eisenberg Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,
1928-1995**

Processed by Julia Bazar

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Register of the Frances Robman Eisenberg Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles, 1928-1995

Collection number: MSS 038

Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

Los Angeles, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Frances Robman Eisenberg Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date (inclusive): 1928-1995

Collection number: MSS 038

Creator: Eisenberg, Frances Robman, 1905-1996

Extent: 4 boxes, 1 oversized box2 linear ft.

Repository: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

Los Angeles, CA 90044

Abstract: Part of the larger Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles Collections, the Frances Robman Eisenberg Papers contain the personal papers of Eisenberg, a blacklisted Los Angeles teacher. The collection contains materials relating to Eisenberg's teaching and tutoring career, and involvement with the US-China Peoples Friendship Association (USCPFA) and other political and social issues, as well as material relating directly to the blacklist.

Language: English.

Provenance

This collection was donated to the library by Frances Robman Eisenberg

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.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

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Historical Context: Blacklisting and the McCarthy Era

The individual collections within the Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles Collection share a common historical framework, the Anti-Communist fervor of the Cold War Period and what is commonly referred to as the McCarthy Era. 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. Of special note are the Levering (1952) and Dilworth (1953) Acts. The Levering Act made refusal to fully cooperate with any state committee grounds for firing a teacher and the Dilworth Act gave local school boards investigating authority and also required that all teachers sign an oath denying any Communist affiliation.

Biography

Frances Robman Eisenberg was a teacher, unionist, and activist fired from the Los Angeles Unified School District for refusing to answer question concerning Communist Party membership before a state committee. She was an active member of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, serving as newsletter editor. Later she was active in the US-China People's Friendship Association (USCPFA) and local (West Hollywood) social and economic issues. She died August 3, 1996. Eisenberg was born June 19, 1905, in Wisconsin. Her parents were Jewish immigrants from Russia and the family moved to Colorado and then to Los Angeles. She attended Los Angeles High School, UCLA (graduating in 1928), and received her teaching credential from USC. She then took a job with the Oakland Unified School District in Northern California. She married Meyer Eisenberg, a widow with three children, in 1931 and returned to Los Angeles.

Eisenberg came to Canoga Park High School as a journalism teacher in 1936. In her 15 years at Canoga Park she supervised an award-winning newspaper (Hunter's Call), taught English and Senior Problems. In 1946, she and a fellow teacher, Blanche Bettington, were called before the Joint Fact Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California (Tenney Committee). A subsequent school board investigation found insufficient evidence for dismissal, but in 1950 she was forced to transfer to Fairfax High School. While at Fairfax, she pioneered in teaching "Negro" history. However in 1952, she was called before the California State Burns Committee investigation of the Los Angeles Housing Authority (she had supported low-income housing). Her refusal to answer questions concerning Communist Party membership and about associates led directly to her firing under the provisions of the recently passed Dilworth Act [see above]. After exhausting her appeals, she left Fairfax High in February 1954. After her dismissal, she was active in the Teachers' Defense Committee (TDC) and Women for Legislative Action. She wrote articles and speeches on education and free speech issues. For the next twenty years she tutored numerous students. Eisenberg and other blacklisted teachers applied for reinstatement in 1977. In 1980, the case was settled, she was awarded three years back pay, and was now considered a retired - instead of a dismissed - teacher.

The Eisenbergs were friends with W.E.B. DuBois and his wife, author Shirley Graham. They were also major supporters of artist Charles White. Eisenberg went to China in 1973 and 1980 and became active in the US-China People's Friendship Association. This led to her teaching a Los Angeles Board of Education Sponsored in-service training workshop for teachers: "Roots of Chinese-American Culture: Exploring the New China." In 1987, she established a scholarship fund at Los Angeles Southwest Community College. Her 90th Birthday Party benefited KPFK Radio and she was actively involved in several other labor and economic issues.

Scope and Content

This collection contains correspondence, legal documents, student papers, articles, clippings, photographs, a 16mm film, and a VHS video cassette. The materials document Frances Robman Eisenberg's work as teacher, tutor, and activist. The collection includes an animated film, *The Man Who Hated Children* produced by the Teachers' Defense Committee (TDC). Of special note are materials concerning her post-teaching activities, including her work with the US-China People's Friendship Association (USCPFA), Los Angeles Southwest Community College, the strike against Canter's Restaurant, and the Coalition for Economic Survival (CES). The collection is not exhaustive and serves more to give a taste of Eisenberg's work and

activities rather than to fully document them. Eisenberg donated the bulk of her papers to UCLA in 1970. The collection also includes some family and personal papers as well as extensive snapshots of family and friends.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into four series: **1: Teaching and Tutoring -- Blacklist, 2: USCPFA, 3: Other Causes and Activities,** and **4: Clippings, Photographs, and Art**

Separated Material

Eisenberg's run of the *L.A. Teacher*, the newsletter of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, has been combined with the run already in the Los Angeles Teachers Union Collection.

Title: Abraham Minkus Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1945-1983

Physical Description: 4 boxes

Title: Florence Sloat Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1959-1991

Physical Description: 1 box

Title: Thomas Fagan Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1989-1990

Physical Description: 3 folders, 5 audio cassettes

Title: Greg Goldin Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1977

Physical Description: 1 box, 15 audio cassette

Title: Ellen Chase Verdries Collection (Interviews/Paper): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1992-1996

Physical Description: 1 (half) box

Title: Jean Benson Wilkinson Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1953-1955

Physical Description: 1 folder

Title: Los Angeles Teachers Union Collection,

Date: 1933-1982

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Title: Dorothy Doyle Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers In Los Angeles,

Date: 1986

Physical Description: 1 audio tape

Title: Clipping Collection: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1967-1982

Physical Description: 1 folder

Bibliography

Kransdorf, Martha. *A Matter of Loyalty: The Los Angeles School Board vs. Frances Eisenberg*, San Francisco: Caddo Press, 1994

Ginger, Ann Fagan and Christiano, David, eds. *The Cold War Against Labor*, Volume Two, Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, 1987

Series 1. **Teaching and Tutoring - Blacklist Years, 1945-1994**

Physical Description: 2 boxes, 2 oversize items, 16mm film and VHS videotape

Scope and Content Note

The largest series in the collection contains material relating to Eisenberg's teaching and tutoring career including materials directly related to her reassignment, firing and court cases, along with correspondence (students, parents, and others), student papers, articles by and about Eisenberg. Included in this series are materials from Fairfax and Canoga Park reunions at which Eisenberg was honored. Also included in this series is a 16mm film (also in VHS format), *The Man Who Hated Children*, produced by the Teachers' Defense Committee (TDC), a TDC protest sign, and a pillow commemorating the protest around Eisenberg's transfer from Canoga Park.

Within the series files are divided into teaching (including reunion materials) and post-teaching (tutoring and other materials). Teaching materials include both material related to her teaching (class materials, correspondence and student papers) and to her reassignment and dismissal (court documents, hearing transcripts, and correspondence with lawyers). Reunion materials include official reunion commemorative books from both Canoga High School and Fairfax High School reunions, correspondence, a personal tribute book given by a class, a copy of remarks given by Eisenberg at a reunion, and other material. See also Lyn Nofziger clipping in Series 4. Tutoring materials include letters Eisenberg sent out when she was first establishing herself as a tutor, and a sampling of papers by her tutorees. Also included in this series is a copy of Eisenberg's FBI file, which she requested in 1977. **The letter requesting the file appears in the Abraham Minkus Collection.**

Box-folder 1/1-1/6
Box-folder 1/1
Box-folder 1/2
Box-folder 1/3

Hearing and Legal Documents

Transfer from Canoga Park to Fairfax -- Documents in Legal Case, 1949-1954
Copies of California Un-American Hearing Reports -- Excerpts, 1947-1959
Testimony in re: Canoga Park: Joint Fact Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California: October 19 and 19, 1946: State Building, Los Angeles, 1946

Box-folder 1/4-1/5

Hearing Canoga Park High School: October 15, 16, and 17, 1946: In the Matter re: Blanche Bettington; Frances Eisenberg [2 folders], 1946

Alternative Form of Materials Available

Document fragile please use photocopied version found in Los Angeles Teachers Union Collection, 1933-1982

Physical Description: (2 boxes),

Contributing Institution: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

Box-folder 1/6
Box-folder 1/7
Box-folder 1/8
Box-folder 1/9
Oversize Item 5
Film Storage 1

Suit for Reinstatement, etc. (Including 1982 Settlement), 1978-1987

Teaching Materials -- Senior Problems Curriculum, etc., 1945-1954

Hunter's Call-- Canoga Park High School Newspaper, 1945

Autograph Book -- Canoga Park [Tribute/Farewell?], [1950?]

Teachers' Defense Committee Sign, n.d.

The Man Who Hated Children, n.d.

Physical Description: 16 mm film

Alternative Form of Materials Available

A VHS Videocassette version is available for viewing. Video tape is located in Video Storage.

Box-folder 1/10
Box-folder 1/11-1/13
Box-folder 1/11
Box-folder 1/12
Box-folder 1/13
Box-folder 1/14
Box-folder 2/1

Paper written for City College Class -- *The Negro in American Literature*, 1952

Correspondence

Francis Solnit, Former Student, 1952-1954

Students and Others -- Support, 1940-1950

1960s and Later, 1962-1990, n.d.

Student Paper, 1952-1953

Canoga Park and Fairfax High School Reunions, 1958-1995

Box-folder 2/2	Fairfax High 30th -- Eisenberg Tribute Book, 1983
Oversize Item 4	Commemorative Photographic Pillow, n.d.
Box-folder 2/3	Tutoring -- Correspondence and Sample Student Papers, 1957-1995, n.d.
Box-folder 2/4-2/5	Activities -- Speeches, Letters
Box-folder 2/4	1943-1965, n.d.
Box-folder 2/5	To Whom It Does Concern and Correspondence with Phil Kerby, 1983
Box-folder 2/6-2/9	Projects by others about Eisenberg Case, 1980-1994
Box-folder 2/6	Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute Book -- Correspondence, 1984-1987
Box-folder 2/7	Lynn Laredo Video Documentary -- Correspondence, 1987
Box-folder 2/8	A Matter of Loyalty and Martha Kransdorf -- Correspondence, 1987-1994
Box-folder 2/9	Miscellaneous Papers, 1980-1994
Box-folder 2/10	Frances R. Eisenberg's FBI File -- FOIA, 1956-1973

Series 2. **US-China People's Friendship Association, 1973-1986, n.d.**

Physical Description: 6 folders

Scope and Content Note

Besides a small collection of flyers and other notices, this series contains materials pertaining to the in-service training workshop for teachers, "Roots of Chinese-American Culture: Exploring the New China," which Eisenberg arranged and taught through the Los Angeles Board of Education. It also includes a notebook containing minutes from the West Los Angeles Chapter of the USCPFA (1974-1976).

Box-folder 2/11	Reports, Correspondence, etc., 1973-1986, n.d.
Box-folder 3/1	Articles/Reports by Eisenberg, 1974-1983
Box-folder 3/2-3/3	LAUSD In-Service Training
Box-folder 3/2	Proposal and Background, 1980
Box-folder 3/3	Class Materials, Evaluations, Reports, 1980
Box-folder 3/4	Flyers/Newsletters, 1975-1977
Box-folder 3/5	Westside-Los Angeles Chapter -- First Minutes, 1974-1976

Series 3. **Other Causes and Activities, 1928-1995, n.d.**

Physical Description: 8 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series includes materials documenting other interests and activities of Eisenberg, especially later in life. It includes information from the Los Angeles Southwest Community College, which she supported, and extensive records from her 90th birthday party, which was a fund-raiser for KPFK Radio. Other organizations and actions mentioned are the strike against Canter's Restaurant ["Speeches and Articles" folder], Sunset House, and the Coalition for Economic Survival (CES) [both in "Miscellaneous Correspondence" folder]. Also included in this section are two files on friends of Eisenberg, the artist Charles White and author Shirley Graham.

Box-folder 3/6	Personal and Family Documents, 1928-1980
Box-folder 3/7	82nd Birthday -- Los Angeles Southwest Community College Benefit, 1987-1990
Box-folder 3/8	90th Birthday Celebration -- KPFK Benefit, 1995
Box-folder 3/9	Speeches and Articles, 1980-1991, n.d.
Box-folder 3/10	Miscellaneous Correspondence, Clippings, Awards, 1968-1995
Box-folder 3/11	Cards, Postcards, Memorial Programs, 1977-1995, n.d.
Box-folder 3/12	Shirley Graham, 1976, n.d.
Box-folder 3/13	Charles White, 1962-1992

Series 4. **Clippings, Photographs, and Art, 1971-1995, n.d.**

Physical Description: 1 box, 3 oversized items

Scope and Content Note

This series spans the collection chronologically and includes clipping files on the blacklist, education, and other issues, as well as photographs of Eisenberg, friends and family. Of special interest are the two sets of clippings on former Canoga Park student and later indicted presidential aide, Lyn Nofziger. The photographs (mostly snapshots) include four small photo albums (three have been removed from the albums but kept in order), which show her 90th birthday party, the Canter's strike and other events. There is a small collection of family photographs, which include two photographs, perhaps of Eisenberg as a child or Eisenberg's parents. One album includes photographs of the Eisenberg son who died serving in World War II. Also included in this series is a pillow made from a photograph protesting her reassignment from Canoga Park, a series of prints, some dedicated to Eisenberg by Gary [Eisenberg?], and a child's artwork.

Box-folder 4/1-4/3
Box-folder 4/1
Box-folder 4/2
Box-folder 4/3
Box-folder 4/4-4/11
, Oversize Item 1
Box-folder 4/4
Box-folder 4/5
Oversize Item 1
Box-folder 4/6-4/9
Box-folder 4/6
Box-folder 4/7
Box-folder 4/8
Box-folder 4/9
Box-folder 4/10
Box-folder 4/11
Oversize Items
2-3
Oversize Item 2
Oversize Item 3

Clippings

Teachers' Cases in California, 1961-1980

Miscellaneous Blacklisting, 1960-1977

Lyn Nofziger, 1987-1988

Photographs

Older Family Photos, n.d.

Shirley Graham and Africa, n.d.

Portrait -- Unidentified African-American Young Man, n.d.

Albums

Bernard Eisenberg's Grave and Canter's Protest (Red), 1991

#1 -- Unidentified [disbound, kept in original order], n.d.

#2 -- Partially Identified [disbound, kept in original order], n.d.

90th Birthday Party -- created by sister-in-law, Millie Robman, 1995

Eisenberg and Identified Photos, 1971-1994, n.d.

Unidentified, n.d.

Artwork 1992, n.d.

Portfolio of Prints by Gary [Eisenberg?] n.d.

Child's Collage/Drawing -- "Matt" 1992