Register of the Jean Benson Wilkinson Papers Blacklisted Teachers In Los Angeles, 1953-1955

Collection number: MSS 044

Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

Los Angeles, California

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Jean Benson Wilkinson Papers Blacklisted Teachers In Los Angeles,
Date (inclusive): 1953-1955
Collection number: MSS 044
Creator: Wilkinson, Jean Benson
Extent: 1 folder
Repository: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research
Los Angeles, CA 90044
Language: English.
Provenance
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

Jean Benson Wilkinson Papers
Blacklisted Teachers In Los Angeles, 1953-1955
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

Jean Benson Wilkinson was teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District and wife of Frank Wilkinson, an officer of the Los Angeles City Housing Authority. Jean Wilkinson was dismissed as a teacher after refusing to answer questions before a California State Burns Committee hearing which was investigating her husband. In 1953, the Los Angeles City School Board sued for her dismissal.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of one folder containing correspondence, legal brief, and statement by the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers pertaining to the blacklisting of Jean Benson Wilkinson.

Title: Frances Robman Eisenberg: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,
Date: 1928-1995
Physical Description: 4 boxes and 1 oversize box
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: Greg Goldin Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,
Date: 1977
Physical Description: 1 box, 15 audio cassettes
Title: Ellen Chase Verdries Collection (Interviews/Paper): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,
Date: 1992-1996
Physical Description: 1 (half) box
Title: Thomas Fagan Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,
Date: 1989-1990
Physical Description: 3 folders, 5 audio cassettes
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