Register of the Ethel and Julius Rosenberg Papers, 1952-1979

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Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research
6120 S. Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90044
Phone: (323) 759-6063
Fax: (323) 759-2252
Email: archives@socallib.org
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Collection number: MSS 008

Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

Los Angeles, California

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Mary F. Tyler

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Ethel and Julius Rosenberg Papers,
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Creator: Rosenberg, Ethel
Rosenberg, Julius
Extent: 5 document cases
1 1/2 cubic feet
Repository: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research.
Los Angeles, California
Language: English.

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History
In the early 1950’s, the fate of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, convicted and sentenced to death on charges of having given information on the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union, became an international cause. Viewed by many supporters as victims of Cold War hysteria and anti-communism, the Rosenbergs were the focus of an intensive effort by a number of organizations which attempted to save their lives through mass protests, petitions, and publication. Convicted in March
1951, they were initially given an execution date of April 5 of the same year. Through a number of legal and political
maneuvers, their execution was delayed for another two years.

The Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case was established in October 1951 with William A. Reuben as its
provisional chairman. In February 1952 Joseph Brainin became the chairman and David Alman the executive secretary. The
organization issued pamphlets attempting to provide new evidence that could be used to demand a new trial and calling
into question the legitimacy of the original trial and the death sentence. Clemency petitions were filed and letter campaigns
to Presidents Truman and Eisenhower were undertaken.

The Los Angeles Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case was a branch of the National Committee, and carried
on similar work on a local level. The Los Angeles Committee also lobbied Senators and representatives of Congress and
elicited support from community and labor organizations. Sophie Davidson was the Los Angeles chair.

The local committee provided support for a number of national actions, such as the National Clemency Gathering held in
Washington D.C., when the Rosenberg's supporters rallied to try and obtain a stay of execution, this time when the
execution was scheduled for January 12, 1953. The execution was postponed after a successful appeal to a higher court.

Other committees and conferences were formed around the Rosenberg case. In May 1953, a Conference of Inquiry was
held, sponsored by such people as Rabbi Abraham Cronbach and Mary Church Terrell on the national level and by Rev.
Stephen and Frances Fritchman, Robert W. Kenny, Robert S. Morris, John and Belle Clewe, Linus Pauling, and Dorothy and
Daniel Marshall at the local level.

Despite the efforts of such groups as the Non-Partisan Committee for Clemency which was probably the organization that
had called for the conference, the numerous defense committees were unable to prevent the execution of the Rosenbergs.
They were executed at Sing Sing Prison, Ossining, New York on June 19, 1953.

Following the executions, the national and Los Angeles committees continued to operate, directing their attention to
freeing Morton Sobell, who had been convicted along with the Rosenbergs. The committees, now the Rosenberg-Sobell
National and Los Angeles Committees (or variations on that title) worked to free Sobell who had received a thirty-year
prison sentence.

The Committee to Free Morton Sobell arose from the National Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell, a separate
organizations from the National Committee to secure Justice in the Rosenberg-Sobell Case. The Committee to Free Morton
Sobell, cochaired by Sobell's wife Helen and mother Rose, seems to have started in the mid-1960s. The Sobell committees
continued their campaigns in Sobell's behalf until he was released in January 1969.

In 1973, Michael and Robert Meeropol, the Rosenbergs' sons, who had been small children at the time of their parents'
execution, publicly identified themselves and spearheaded a campaign to vindicate them. They formed the National
Committee to Re-open the Rosenberg Case, a major focus of which has been the release, under the Freedom of Information
Act, of the FBI and other government files on the Rosenbergs.

**Scope and Content**

The collection is arranged by series GENERAL FILE, ORGANIZATIONS, IRWIN EDELMAN-FYKE FARMER, MORTON SOBELL and
the COMMITTEE TO RE-OPEN THE ROSENBERG CASE. It may be presumed that a majority of the collection is material from
the Los Angeles Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case and its counterpart in the defense of Martin Sobell. The
FOIA, Inc. and the Committee to Re-open the Rosenberg Case are form fundraising letters and other material received in
the mail and donated to SCL by concerned individuals. The papers are arranged in chronological order.

The GENERAL FILE series (box 1, folders 1-13) contains items that are in some way related to the organizational activities of
the Rosenberg committees or materials that may have been useful to the various committees on the Rosenbergs. They also
may have been papers of the committees, but cannot be identified as such. This would include handwritten notes on
adjendas, programs and various addresses for contacts or mailing lists. This series contains legal documents, Amicus
Curiae Brief by the National Lawyers Guild, correspondence not necessarily representing the committees. There are letters
petitioning President Eisenhower for clemency for the Rosenbergs, letters to the editors, a letter listing the reasons why the
Rosenbergs should be granted executive clemency and a letter to Anna Louise Strong from Harry Pierce dated August 1,
1953 criticizing her position on Irwin Edelman. There is also a draft and final copy of a letter dated December 23, 1952 by
Robert W. Kenny, Chaim Shapiro and William B. Estermann to their fellow lawyers asking for their support in writing the
President of the United States in requesting clemency for the Rosenbergs.

This series also contains pamphlets and articles about the Rosenbergs written by various individuals and organizations
other than the National and Los Angeles Committees to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case. There are also reports on the
Rosenbergs, poems, dedications, lists of Congress representatives and Senators, announcements of meetings and vigils,
pledges to support the Rosenbergs, statements on the death of the Rosenbergs, lists of supporters, book reviews on books
about the Rosenbergs, sample form letters, telegrams and postcards to be signed and sent to Presidents Truman and
Eisenhower to appeal for executive clemency for the Rosenbergs. There are also photographs of Julius and Ethel
Rosenberg. There is a photograph of a meeting and proofs of flyers and petitions. Some minutes are included in the collection from the Bay Area Rosenberg Committee.

The Rosenbergs had two children Michael and Robert. There is a print of their young sons given as a gift dated December 1953. There was a trust fund set up for the Rosenberg children and the Southern California Trust Fund Committee for Rosenberg Children held a mass meeting to help raise funds. There is a flyer in the series announcing this meeting in 1954 with Emanuel Bloch, defense lawyer for the Rosenbergs, speaking on behalf of the Trust Fund Committee. There is also a mimeographed copy of In The Matter of the Application for Letters of Guardianship of the Person and Property of Michael Allen Rosenberg, an infant under the age of fourteen years. This document gives the history of the Rosenberg children from the time of their parents arrest until 1954.

The files on ORGANIZATIONS (boxes 2 and 3) are materials from the Los Angeles Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case and the materials they received from other organizations which the Los Angeles Committee may have been directly or indirectly involved. The files are divided into their respective committees. The records from the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case are materials sent to the local committees through the course of the Rosenberg case, while the committees were in operation, for distribution or for committee information. The National Committee was (originally?) located at 17 Murray St in New York with William Reuben, Provisional Chairman. The office moved to 246 Fifth Avenue with Joseph Brainin as Chairman and David Alman, Executive Secretary. Eventually, the New York Committee moved to 1050 Sixth Avenue.

The ORGANIZATIONS series contains many of the pamphlets that were issued by the New York office. These pamphlets call for support, funds and appeals for clemency in the Rosenberg case. They also contain information about the Rosenbergs and facts about their case to further the cause for clemency.

The committees held rallies, mass meetings, disseminated information about the Rosenbergs and urged people to write the proper authorities to appeal for clemency. This series contains the flyers, articles, excerpts and reprints of articles, statements, blank petitions on behalf of the Rosenbergs, and a copy of the audit of the books and records from November 1951 to August 31, 1953 for the National Committee.

The National Committee formed local committees such as the one in Los Angeles in which Sophie Davidson was chair. The Los Angeles Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case was located at 515 W. 41st Place, Los Angeles than at 406 S. Main Street and eventually at 355 S. Broadway.

The Los Angeles Committee distributed pamphlets from the New York office, but they also wrote their own pamphlets. The series contains copies of drafts for prospective pamphlets in addition to pamphlets in their final form. There are flyers announcing rallies, mass meetings, press releases, blank letterheads, a copy of the financial report from November 1, 1952 to February 6, 1953, and a carbon copy of a letter dated February 25, 1952 announcing the formation of the Los Angeles Committee.

There was a mass meeting held in Washington, D.C. on January 3, 1953 called the National Clemency Gathering sponsored by the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case. The ORGANIZATIONS series contains a copy of instructions on what issues to talk about when granted an interview, telegrams to Sophie Davidson in reference to arrival times, reports from Washington, D.C.; the reports in part refer to different organizations and individuals who are and who are not supportive in the Rosenberg case. There are also materials on the Conference of Inquiry held at the Nikabob Restaurant in Los Angeles on May 16, 1953. The contents include the statement of purpose, list of sponsors, source material for panel discussions, of which there is a statement by Dr. Harold C. Urey and a memorandum on the testimony of David Greenglass, brother of Ethel Rosenberg.

Another organization called itself the Citizens Committee for Clemency for the Rosenbergs, also known as the Non-Partison Committee for Clemency to Ethel and Julius Rosenberg which was located at 1234 W. 40th Place in Los Angeles. The blank letterheads list Reverend Glen Randolph, Mr. Daniel Marshall, Reverend Hugh Weston, Mr. Joseph Steinberg as the honorary chairman and Mrs. Terry Duxler as the secretary of this organization. This section contains material that refer to the structure of the organization, list of the people who attended one of their meetings, blank petitions, flyers announcing mass meetings or appealing for public support for clemency for the Rosenbergs. There is also some correspondence between Dr. Urey and Daniel Marshall in reference to a mass meeting and the use of the Rosenberg case by communists.

There were some events sponsored by a coalition of some of these committees. One such event was a prayer meeting held on June 8, 1953. The ORGANIZATIONS series includes a report and publicity for the meeting. Some of the speakers for the meeting were Rabbi Dr. Meyer Sharff, Dr. George A. Warmer, Sr., Reverend Hugh Weston and Daniel Marshall.

There were some people who acted upon their own in the Rosenberg case. One such person was Irwin Edelman and his lawyer Fyke Farmer.

The FYKE FARMER-ERWIN EDELMAN series contain correspondence or copies of correspondence calling for Writ of Habeas Corpus, questioning the sentence given the Rosenbergs and a letter stating the Rosenbergs should have been tried by the

Mr. Edelman was critical of the Rosenberg committees. The files contain a mimeographed open letters criticizing David and Emily Alman and Joseph Brainin questioning their leadership in the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case. Mr. Edelman accuses them of being ...more concerned with the prestige of the committee and the collection of funds than with the lives of the Rosenbergs. There are also other letters critical of other Rosenberg committees. Mr. Edelman wrote pamphlets which are included in this series.

Mr. Edelman as late as 1967 was still writing about the Rosenbergs and the injustice connected with their case of which some of these articles are included in the series.

The next series MORTON SOBELL (boxes 3 and 4) contains the material of the committees to free Morton Sobell. There are the reports of the conference to set up committees in Morton Sobell's name, the structures and strategies of the Rosenberg-Sobell Committee, Morton Sobell's endorsement, reports from the West Coast Regional Conference, other reports issued by the committees, agendas, pamphlets, press releases, flyers, memorandums, a newsletter issued by the New York office, requests for speakers, appeals for funds, blank petitions, calls for conferences, newspapers, minutes of several meetings which include a report of the Chicago Conference (October 10 and 11, 1953) in which Daniel Marshall was named chair to represent the Western committees, Emily Alman was selected National Organizational Secretary and Dr. Toucher became National Treasurer.

The correspondence file in the MORTON SOBELL series contains several letters from Fred H. Steinmetz protesting the miscarriage of justice in the Morton Sobell case. There is also a letter from Morton Sobell to Dorothy Healy dated 1975.

The copies of the legal briefs in this series are petitions and appeals from Morton Sobell to the Supreme Court of the United States and the United States District Court Southern District of New York dating form 1963 to 1967. There is also an Amicus Curiae Brief in support of Sobell and a copy of a letters denying Sobell petition for a Writ of Certiorari.

Some of the names of the national committees, but used the same address at 1050 Sixth Avenue, New York are: The National Rosenberg-Sobell Committee, National Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell in the Rosenberg Case, The National Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell, The National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg-Sobell Case. The Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell aka Sobell Committee was located at 940 Broadway, New York City; Rose Sobell and Helen Sobell were co-chairs.

The Los Angeles Committee was located at 355 S. Broadway. The committee was called the Los Angeles Rosenberg-Sobell Committee, aka the Los Angeles Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell and the Los Angeles Sobell Committee.

The Los Angeles Sobell Committee aka the Los Angeles Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell was located at 468 N. Western Avenue and later at 462 N. Western Avenue.

The COMMITTEE TO RE-OPEN THE ROSENBERG CASE series (box 4) contains material from the committees formed around Michael and Robert Meeropol in their efforts to vindicate their parents. The files contain appeal letters for funds and support, rally programs, pamphlets, book reviews, newsletters issued by the Los Angeles Committe to Re-Open the Rosenberg Case and the Bay Area Committee to Re-Open the Rosenberg Case, leaflets, press releases, copies of newspaper articles in reference to domestic spying by the CIA, articles by the Meeropols and of them, a bumper sticker, and a speech delivered by Robert Meeropol for a rally held on February 2, 1975.

Part of the COMMITTEE TO RE-OPEN THE ROSENBERG CASE series contains some of the material form FOIA, Inc. (Fund for Open Information and Accountability, Inc.). There is a form letter dated March 1978 from the Meeropol's announcing the formation and the purpose of this organization. FOIA, Inc. is the only organization that the Meeropol's considered legitimate for soliciting funds on their behalf to obtain the FBI files on the Rosenbergs.


Bibliography


GENERAL FILE

| Box 1, Folder 1 | Notes and Address. [1952-1953]? |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | No. 687. Petition for Writ of Certiorari. 1952. |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | National Lawyers Guild. Correspondence. 1952-1953. |
Box 1, Folder 4  General Correspondence. 1952-1953.
Box 1, Folder 6  Photographs and Proofs. 1952-1953.
Box 1, Folder 9  From Letters, Telegrams. 1952-1593.
Box 1, Folder 10  Prints of Michael and Robert Rosenberg. 1953.
Box 1, Folder 11  Copy of Application of Guardianship for Michael and Robert Rosenberg. 1954.
Box 1, Folder 12  Southern California Trust Fund for Rosenberg Children. 1954.
Box 1, Folder 13  Notes on the Rosenberg Case. [1956?].

ORGANIZATIONS

Box 2, Folder 1-4  National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case:
Box 2, Folder 1  Pamphlets. [1952-1953?].
Box 2, Folder 2  Leaflets, Flyers, Newsletters. 1952-1953.
Box 2, Folder 3-4  Transcript of Record. Vols. 1 & 2. Eight books. 1952.
Box 2, Folder 5-6  Los Angeles Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case. 515 W. 41st Place, Los Angeles:
Box 2, Folder 5  Pamphlets. 1952.
Box 2, Folder 6  Leaflets, Flyers, General Literature, Correspondence. 1952.
Box 2, Folder 7-8  406 S. Main Street, Los Angeles:
Box 2, Folder 7  Leaflets, Pamphlets, General Literature, Correspondence. December 1952-February 1953.
Box 2-3  355 S. Broadway, Room 404, Los Angeles:
Box 2, Folder 9  Pamphlets. 1953.
Box 3, Folder 1  Leaflets, Flyers, General Literature. 1953.
Box 3, Folder 2  Speech? Nd.
Box 3, Folder 3  Conference of Inquiry. May 1953.
Box 3, Folder 4  Citizens Committee for Clemency for the Rosenbergs. General Literature. 1953.
Box 3, Folder 5  Joint Co-ordination of Committees. Leaflets, Reports. 1953.

IRWIN EDELMAN-FYKE FARMER

Box 3, Folder 6  Summary of Letter to the President on Case. Fyke Farmer. 1953.
Box 3, Folder 7  General Literature. Fyke Farmer. 1953.
Box 3, Folder 9  Committee for Peace and Freedom. ERGO. November 1966, April 1967.

MORTON SOBEL

Box 3, Folder 10  National Conference of Rosenberg-Sobell Committees. October 1953.
Box 3, Folder 11  West-Coast Regional Conference Rosenberg-Sobell Committee. November 1953.
Box 3, Folder 12  General Literature. 1950s, 1960.
Box 4, Folder 1-2  Los Angeles Sobell Committee:
Box 4, Folder 2  Correspondence. 1955, 1975.

COMMITTEE TO RE-OPEN THE ROSENBERG CASE

Box 4, Folder 7  National Committee to Re-Open the Rosenberg Case. 1974-1981.
Box 4, Folder 8  Los Angeles Committee to Re-Open the Rosenberg Case. 1974-1978.
Box 4, Folder 10  FOIA, Inc. 1978.