Finding Aid to the The Working Group Records

Conor Casey, revised by Frances Wratten Kaplan.
Labor Archives and Research Center
1999, revised in 2016
San Francisco State University
J. Paul Leonard Library, Room 460
1630 Holloway Ave
San Francisco 94132-1722
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URL: http://library.sfsu.edu/larc
Title: The Working Group records
Date (inclusive): 1979-2005
Date (bulk): 1991-1999
Creator: California Working Group
Creator: Working Group (Oakland, Calif.)
Extent: 37.5 Cubic Feet (30 cartons)
Collection number: larc.ms.0064
Accession number: 2008/005 and 2009/007
Repository: Labor Archives and Research Center
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Abstract: The Working Group records consist of production, research, outreach, and financial materials generated by The Working Group (TWG), an independent media production company based in Oakland, California. The bulk of the records span the years 1991 to 1999 and were created during the production of three television series related to working people: California Working, We Do the Work, and Livelyhood. The records document the activities of the organization as it produced programs for broadcast on public television. Also included are materials created in the production of documentaries for client organizations, in particular, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) documentary Test of Courage: The Making of a Firefighter.
Location: Materials are stored offsite; requires advance notice.
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English.
Availability
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], The Working Group Records, Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University.
Related Material
The Labor Archives Film and Video Collection contains most of the VHS copies of Livelyhood and We Do the Work and some episodes of California Working. Several of the Working Group's contract productions are also in the video collection. Photographs and negatives have been transferred to the Labor Archives Photograph Collection.
Separated Material
Photographs and negatives were removed and integrated into the Labor Archives Photograph Collection. Videocassettes were integrated into the Labor Archives Film and Videocassette Collection. Tape logs were photocopied and the originals were returned to The Working Group. Photocopies of these files were then integrated into their original folders.
Acquisition Information
The Working Group Records were donated to the Labor Archives and Research Center by Rhian Miller, co-founder of The Working Group, in September 2008 (accession number 2008/005). A second accession was donated by Rhian Miller in February 2009 (accession number 2009/007).
Processing Information
Arrangement

**Organizational / Administrative History**

The Working Group (TWG) is an Oakland-based non-profit media company founded in late 1987 with the goal of producing media focused on labor issues told from the perspective of the worker. TWG first created a local, half-hour news magazine format show, *California Working*, produced by Ed Herzog, Patrice O'Neill, and Rhian Miller. Later renamed *We Do the Work*, the series featured several guest hosts, but eventually Will Durst, comedian and political commentator, became the regular host. The series included occasional documentary specials and also featured the work of other independent filmmakers. The Working Group focused outreach efforts on individual PBS stations all across the country, convincing programming directors at each local affiliate to air the series. Such local distribution often resulted in irregular scheduling and broadcasts being played in non-prime-time slots. After gaining positive recognition with *We Do the Work*, The Working Group approached PBS with a proposal to create a national primetime program, thus guaranteeing it a larger audience and broader exposure in national media markets. With this in mind, The Working Group producers developed *Livelyhood*, a series that differed in format, scope, frequency, and tone from *We Do the Work*. The program, which ran for three seasons and was hosted by Will Durst, examined the impact of globalization and the "new economy" on American workers. In December 1995, The Working Group screened *Not in Our Town*, a half-hour documentary focusing on the residents of Billings, Montana and the community's reaction to hate crimes in their town. The documentary grew into a PBS series and sparked a national movement to combat hate and violence in communities all over the world. The Working Group also produced contract documentaries for PBS, unions, and other organizations.

**Scope and Contents**

The Working Group Collection comprises production, research, outreach, and financial records generated by The Working Group, an independent media production company based in Oakland, California. The Working Group produces locally and nationally distributed documentary television programs related to labor and work issues for broadcast on public television. The bulk of the collection spans the years 1991-1999 and documents the activities of the organization during the production of the half-hour series, *California Working*, later known as *We Do the Work*, and the hour-long series, *Livelyhood*, about the changing nature of work and its place in the lives of American workers. The collection also contains materials created during the production of documentaries made for client organizations, including *Test of Courage: The Making of a Firefighter*.

The records of Series I reflect the administrative activities of the organization, including press releases and clippings related to the history of The Working Group, board meeting agendas, minutes, correspondence, financial statements, documents related to the hiring of staff and interns, and notes of ideas and potential show topics. Series 2 and 3 comprise records generated in the research, planning, production, and promotion of the television series *We Do the Work*, and *Livelyhood*. Includes scripts, budgets, schedules, correspondence, tape logs, planning notes, news clippings, press releases, and feedback from viewers.

Series 4 contains records related to The Working Group's production of contract documentaries for PBS and other organizations. The bulk of the records were created in the production of the hour-long documentary for PBS, *Test of Courage: The Making of a Firefighter*.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Documentary television programs.

Downsizing of organizations -- United States.

Employees -- Effect of technological innovations on.

Fire departments -- California -- Oakland.

Occupational retraining -- United States.

Night work -- United States.

Work and family -- United States.

International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union -- History.

Women -- Employment -- United States.

Labor disputes -- Case studies.

Quality of work life -- United States.

Temporary employment -- United States.

Hate crimes -- United States.

Labor unions -- Organizing -- United States.
Woodard, Alfre, 1953-
Durst, Will
Miller, Rhian
Beatty, Ned
O’Neill, Patrice
Public Broadcasting Service (U.S.)

Series 1: Organizational Files 1987-2005

Physical Description: 149 folders (Carton 1, folders 1-21; Carton 2, folders 1-30; Carton 3, folders 1 to 21; Carton 4, folders 1-39; Carton 5, folders 1-38)

Scope and Content
The Working Group Organization Files comprise the operational and administrative records of The Working Group. These materials reflect the activities of the organization as it sought to research, fund, produce, and promote television documentaries. Series 1 contains a history of The Working Group, resumes of producers, a biography of Will Durst, employee and intern hiring documents, information on acquired works, and film project pitches. Also includes records generated in the day-to-day running of the organization including meeting notes, minutes, correspondence, budget and financial statements, information on funding sources, and production tape logs, scripts, and edit lists. Outreach and publicity materials, including news clippings and press releases, reflect The Working Group’s promotional and fund raising methods.

Arrangement
Arranged as received.

carton 1, folder 1-4
carton 1, folder 5
carton 1, folder 6-14
carton 1, folder 15-18
carton 1, folder 19-21
carton 2, folder 1-3
carton 2, folder 4-28
carton 2, folder 29-30, carton 3, folder 1-10
carton 3, folder 11-18
carton 3, folder 19-21, carton 4, folder 1-6
carton 4, folder 7-39, carton 5, folder 1-38

Background and history 1988-1997

Board member correspondence 1991-1998

Financials 1992-2000

Staff and interns 1990-1997

Notebooks 1990-1999

Membership 1993-1998

Marketing and outreach 1987-2002

Physical Description: Donor info requests, publicity, marketing

Tape orders and sales 1989-1995

Series research and proposals 1994-2005

Crystal Lee Sutton Awards 1994-1997

Joady Awards 1990-2000
Series 2: *Livelyhood 1990-2001*

**Physical Description:** 416 folders (Carton 6, folders 1-40; Carton 7, folders 1-79; Carton 8, folders 1-36; Carton 9, folders 1-67; Carton 10, folders 1-60; Carton 11, folders 1-63; Carton 12, folders 1-57; Carton 13, folders 1-14)

**Scope and Content**
Comprises research, production, press, and outreach materials created from each episode of the television documentary series *Livelyhood*. Includes reports, articles, and subject files that *Livelyhood* producers used in researching episode segments for the series, as well as episode-specific production materials including story pitches, transcripts of interviews, meeting notes, program descriptions, episode development notes, tape logs, edit lists, and travel planning information. Press and outreach materials consist of donor packets, audience polls, event materials, and press clippings from news publications across the United States.

**Arrangement**
Arranged as received. Materials related to specific episodes are arranged in order the episode was broadcast.

**General**
*Livelyhood* premiered on November 1, 1997 and continued for three seasons. In each hour-long episode, host Will Durst focuses on issues related to the changing nature of work and the effect of a global economy on workers in America.

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Subject research files 1990-2001

Physical Description: 0 folders
General research, production, outreach, press, publicity, funding, and event materials for the t.v. series *Livelyhood*. The folders are arranged by topic: Research; Production; and Outreach. Each topical folder grouping is arranged in chronological order.

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Production and planning notes, correspondence, itineraries, and scripts 1994-2001

**Viewer responses 1999-2000**

**Website content 1999-2000**

**Corporate sponsors 1992-1995**

**Film festival submissions 1995-2000**

**Press coverage 1995-2000**

**Work Life poll 1997**

**Ratings and carriage reports 1997-2000**

**Grant applications and funding 1999-2000**

**Media commitments 1997**

**Promotional events 1996-1999**

**Outreach and publicity 1998-2000**

**Correspondence 1999-2000**

**Business and Professional Women (BPW) outreach 1999**

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Episode Files
Season 1, Episode 1: “Shift Change” 1994-1999
Scope and Contents
Materials related to the research and production of season 1, episode 1 of the series Livelyhood. In “Shift Change” viewers meet people who have faced difficult challenges in the workplace.

Scope and Contents
Materials related to the research and production of season 1, episode 2 of the series Livelyhood. “Working Family Values” follows Americans who are balancing jobs and familial obligations. Series 1 premiered on November 1, 1997.

Season 1, Episode 3: “Honey, We Bought the Company” 1998-1999
Scope and Contents
Materials related to the research and production of season 1, episode 3 of the series Livelyhood. “Honey, We Bought the Company” covers the subject of employee-owned businesses in the United States.

Season 1, Episode 4: “Our Towns” 1997-1999
Scope and Contents
Materials related to the research and production of season 1, episode 4 of the series Livelyhood. “Our Towns” profiles the economic development efforts of large cities and small towns across America.

Season 2, Episode 1: “Chipping Off the Old Block” 1997-1999
Scope and Contents
Materials related to the research and production of season 2, episode 1 of the series Livelyhood. “Chipping Off the Old Block” deals with the American work ethic.

Season 2, Episode 2: “Carpool to Nirvana” 1999
Scope and Contents
Materials related to the research and production of season 2, episode 2 of the series Livelyhood. In “Carpool to Nirvana” the host Will Durst searches for the ideal workplace, and ways to get there.

Season 2, Episode 3: “Night Shift” 1997-2000
Scope and Contents
Materials related to the research and production of season 2, episode 3 of the series Livelyhood. “Night Shift” focuses on the 24-7 economy, and follows members of the workforce whose regular shift is from dusk till dawn.

Season 3, Episodes 1 and 2: “Planet Work” (Parts I and II) 2000-2001
Scope and Contents
Materials related to the research and production of season 3, episodes 1 and 2 of the series Livelyhood. “Planet Work: Making the Planet Work” and “Planet Work: Working the Planet” is a two-part episode focusing on workers and globalization.
Series 3: We Do the Work 1984-2002

Physical Description: 523 folders (Carton 13, folders 15-39; Carton 14, folders 1-29; Carton 15, folders 1-49; Carton 16, folders 1-39; Carton 17, folders 1-47; Carton 18, folders 1-84; Carton 19, folders 1-28; Carton 20, folders 1-28; Carton 21, folders 1-19; Carton 22, folders 1-47; Carton 23, folders 1-33; Carton 24, folders 1-19, Carton 25, folders 1-17; Carton 26, folders 1-31; Carton 27, folders 1-28)

Scope and Content
Comprises research, production, press, and outreach materials created from each episode of We Do the Work, a television documentary series focusing on labor issues.

Arrangement
Series 3 is divided into five subseries: Subseries 3.1: California Working; Subseries 3.2: Production; Subseries 3.3: Research; Subseries 3.4: Outreach and Publicity; Subseries 3.5: Episode Files.

General
We Do the Work, a radio show that presents workplace issues from the viewpoint of working people, ran for seven seasons on public television. Each 30 minute documentary episode focuses on a different labor related issue, including free trade, globalization, child labor, women in the workplace, prison labor, unions, and civil rights. Hosts include Will Durst, Lee Grant, Ned Beatty, Ed Asner, Danny Glover, and Alfre Woodard. Produced by Patrice O’Neill and Rhian Miller.

Subseries 3.1: California Working 1984-1992

Physical Description: 35 folders (Carton 13, folders 15-39; Carton 14, folders 1-10)

Arrangement
Arranged as received.

Scope and Contents
California Working was the early title given to the series We Do The Work.

Outreach and Publicity 1984-1992

Physical Description: 22 folders.

Scope and Contents
Includes press releases, program descriptions, publicity packets, feedback letters from viewers, and news clippings for California Working.

Arrangement
Arranged as received.

Production 1984-1988

Physical Description: 4 folders

Arrangement
Arranged as received.

Scope and Contents
Consists of tape logs, scripts, and planning notes related to the production of California Working.

Research 1984-1989

Physical Description: 9 folders

Scope and Contents
Contains articles, notes, clippings, reports, and other supporting research materials related to individual episodes of California Working.

Arrangement
Arranged as received.
Series 3: We Do the Work 1984-2002
Subseries 3.1: California Working 1984-1992

Financial 1988

Physical Description: 1 folder
Scope and Contents
Comprises financial statements, balance sheets, and tax returns.
Arrangement
Arranged as received.

Subseries 3.2: Production 1990-1999

Physical Description: 19 folders (Carton 14, folders 11-29)
Arrangement
Arranged as received.
Scope and Contents
Contains administrative materials generated in the production of the television series We Do the Work, including the mission statement, funding and budget documents, meeting notes and minutes, planning notes, research materials, scripts, episode study guides, tape logs, and transcripts.

Mission statement undated

Meeting minutes and notes circa 1990s

Production and episode planning materials 1991-1997

Budget

Episode study guides circa 1990s


Physical Description: 6 folders (Carton 15, folders 1-6)
Scope and Contents
Contains articles, notes, clippings, reports, and other supporting research materials related to individual episodes of We Do The Work.
Arrangement
Arranged as received.

Navajo miners 1991

General research notes and reports circa 1991-1994
Subseries 3.4: Outreach and Publicity 1984-2002

Physical Description: 216 folders (Carton 15, folders 7-49; Carton 16, folders 1-39; Carton 17, folders 1-47; Carton 18, folders 1-84; Carton 19, folders 1-3)

Arrangement
Arranged as received.

Scope and Contents
Consists of correspondence and promotional materials created to publicize the show and advocate broadcasting of the series in various local and national markets. Includes press releases, mailing lists, episode marketing plans, flyers, promotional brochures for individual episodes, and audience feedback letters and surveys. Also includes clippings documenting the press coverage of We Do the Work, and event materials, including entry forms for film festival such as the Jewish Film Festival and the Mill Valley Film Festival.

carton 15, folder 7-49, carton 16, folder 1-15, carton 16, folder 16-17, carton 16, folder 18-20, carton 16, folder 21, carton 16, folder 22-23, carton 16, folder 24-25, carton 16, folder 26-27, carton 16, folder 28-33, carton 16, folder 34-39, carton 17, folder 1-3, carton 17, folder 4-5, carton 17, folder 6-48, carton 18, folder 1-84, carton 19, folder 1-2, carton 19, folder 3

Audience feedback letters 1989-1997

Survey responses circa 1990-1995

Correspondence 1984-1991

Barbara Boxer commendation 1991

Episode marketing plans 1992-1993

Mailing lists 1991-1993

Festival outreach 1991-1993

Promotional events 1991-1992

Broadcast stations outreach 1991-1996

Episode tape orders 1992-1996

Student letters of response 1996-2002

Press coverage and promotion 1989-1996

Union funding 1993

Subseries 3.5: Episode Files 1984-1999

Physical Description: 247 folders (Carton 19, folders 4-28; Carton 20, folders 1-28; Carton 21, folders 1-19; Carton 22, folders 1-47; Carton 23, folders 1-33; Carton 24, folders 1-19; Carton 25, folders 1-17, Carton 26, folders 1-31; Carton 27, folders 1-28)

Arrangement
Arranged by episode.

Scope and Contents
Comprises records generated from the research, planning, production, and promotion of episodes of We Do The Work.
"Biting the Bullet" 1989-1991
"Booted Out" 1993-1994
"Childcare Workers, Cowgirls, and Mechanics" 1992
"Covering the Workplace" 1994
"Danger at Work" 1995
"Discounted Lives" 1993-1995
"Dying for a Job" 1991-1994
"Family Fuel" 1989
"Framing the Page" 1993
"The Golden Cage" 1993
"Heroes"
"Heroes 2" 1993-1994
"Heroes 3" 1996-1996
"Heroes of the Quake" 1990
"Immigrant Workers" 1995
"Kid Shields" 1995
"Leather Soul" 1994
"Leaving Home" 1992-1994
"Life on the Beam" 1993
"Locked Out in America" 1992-1994
"Looking back: Moments in Labor History" 1994
"Making Tracks: Inside Lionel Trains" 1995
"Navajo Medicine" 1992-1994
Power Switch 1997
"Working Until it Hurts" 1999

"Not in Our Town" 1994-1996

Scope and Contents
Bulk comprises press releases, film festival entry forms, press clipping and outreach materials related to the documentary special Not in Our Town.

General
Not In Our Town, a project of The Working Group, was first broadcast in December 1995 as a half-hour PBS special on the town of Billings, Montana and the community's response to a rash of hate crimes in their town. The program's impact was so great that it led to screenings and town hall meetings in communities all over the United States, and launched a multi-platform movement that combined documentary film, outreach, and grass roots organizing, to mobilize community action against hate and intolerance around the world.
Series 3: We Do the Work 1984-2002
Subseries 3.5: Episode Files 1984-1999

- "Prison Labor/Prison Blues" 1990-1995
  - Rural America 1994
- "Sewing Our Future" 1990-1993
- "Strikestory" 1994
- "Taking Off"

- "This Far By Faith" 1990-1995
- "Ties That Bind" 1984-1995

- "Tools of the Trade" 1995
- "Transit Tech: Brooklyn's Turnaround School" 1992
- "Working Until It Hurts" 1990-1994
- "Workplace Beat" 1995-1997

Series 4: Contract Documentaries 1979-2005

Physical Description: 109 folders (Carton 28, folders 1-24; Carton 29, folders 1-25; Carton 30, folders 1-60)

Scope and Contents
Series 4 comprises records generated from the research, planning, production, and promotion of contract documentaries produced by The Working Group for PBS, unions, and other organizations.

The bulk of the series contains production and research notes for Test of Courage: The Making of a Firefighter, an hour-long documentary produced by Patrice O'Neill, Kyung Sun Yu, and Gary Mercer. The documentary follows a group of young men and women from diverse backgrounds competing to become fire fighters for the Oakland Fire Department.

Arrangement
This series is further divided into two subseries: Subseries 4.1, Documentary Shorts, is arranged in alphabetical order by title of documentary. Subseries 4.2, Test of Courage: The Making of a Firefighter, is arranged as received.
Subseries 4.1: Documentary Shorts 1979-2005

Physical Description: 29 folders (Carton 28, folders 1-24; Carton 29, folders 1-5)

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by title.

Scope and Contents
Records collected and generated by The The Working Group during the research, planning, production, and promotion of documentaries funded by, and created for, various organizations, including the California State Building Trades Council, the Bay Area School-to-Career Action network, the Japanese National Chamber of Commerce, and the AFL-CIO.

carton 28, folder 1-3
AFL-CIO Convention video (AFL-CIO) 1999

carton 28, folder 4
Blue Diamond Strike (Labor Institute of Public Affairs) 1993

OFL-CIO Convention video (AFL-CIO) 1999

Blue Diamond Strike (Labor Institute of Public Affairs) 1993

Building Dreams (Carpenters/Contractors Cooperation Committee) 1991

Jack Henning retirement 1999

Japanese National Chamber of Commerce 50th Anniversary 1999

Lucy Parsons video (Funding Exchange) 1994-1995

New United Motor Manufacturing/St. Francis Hotel (Beagle, Abernathy & Mitchell) 1994

No Butts About It (California State Building Trades Council) 2000-2001

Our Jobs/Our Union (International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers) 1996-1997

Playing For Keeps (California Alliance For Jobs) 1996

Power Switch (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) 1996-1997

Powerful Learning (Bay Area School-to-Career Action Network) 1998

Turbulent Romance (Association of Flight Attendants) 2005

Victory or Extinction (California Building Trades Council) 1997

Voices of Victory/No on Proposition 226 (California State Federation of Labor) 1998

We Stand for Safety (International Association of Machinists) 2005


Physical Description: 80 folders (Carton 29, folders 6-25; Carton 30, folders 1-60)

Arrangement
Arranged as received.

Scope and Contents
Comprises correspondence, budgets, tape logs, shoot schedules, story meeting notes, scene outlines, transcripts, and interview notes generated in the planning and production stages of the PBS documentary, Test of Courage: The Making of a Firefighter. Materials collected by the producers for research purposes include clippings, reports, articles, and notes related to Prop 209, diversity in the workplace, and the role of the fire department in civic life. Also includes a state-by-state outreach plan for promoting the documentary.
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<tr>
<th>Carton/Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>29, Folder 6</td>
<td>Oakland firefighter correspondence 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>29, Folder 7-11</td>
<td>Proposals, story meeting notes, timelines 1998-1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29, Folder 12-16</td>
<td>Financials 1998-1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29, Folder 17</td>
<td>Budget, schedule, content, communications 1999</td>
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<td>29, Folder 18-25, 30, Folder 1-4</td>
<td>Tape logs 1999</td>
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<td>30, Folder 5-11</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>30, Folder 12-13</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>30, Folder 14-25</td>
<td>Transcripts 1999</td>
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<td>30, Folder 26-50</td>
<td>Script, narration 1999</td>
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<td>30, Folder 51-55</td>
<td>General production notes 1999</td>
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<td>30, Folder 56-60</td>
<td>Research articles, clippings, notes 1990-1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>30, Folder 56-60</td>
<td>Firefighter profiles 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30, Folder 56-60</td>
<td>Outreach 1999</td>
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