Finding Aid for the Barbara Macdonald papers, 1912-2002 LSC.2159

Finding aid prepared by Processed by Stacy Wood; updated by Sabrina Ponce, 2017; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

UCLA Library Special Collections
Room A1713, Charles E. Young Research Library
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Online finding aid last updated 24 August 2017.
Title: Barbara Macdonald papers
Identifier/Call Number: LSC.2159
Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.8 linear feet (4 document boxes, 1 shoe box)
Date (inclusive): 1912-2002
Abstract: Barbara Macdonald (1913-2000) was a social worker, lesbian feminist activist and ageism activist. Her work was the inspiration for the First West Coast Conference of Old Lesbians in 1987. Out of the conference came the creation of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, a national organization seeking to end the ageism experienced by old women. This collection contains Macdonald's published and unpublished talks, drafts, notes, ephemera, promotional material and publisher's correspondence. The collection also includes materials by and about author and activist Cynthia Rich, Macdonald's partner and coauthor of their book *Look Me in the Eye*.
Language of Materials: Materials are in English, with a small amount in Japanese (noted below).
Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.
Creator: MacDonald, Barbara, 1913-2000
Conditions Governing Access
COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF: Open for research. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.
Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Barbara Macdonald papers (Collection 2159). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
Acquisition Information
This collection is part of an outreach and collection-building partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW), and UCLA Library.
Processing History
Sponsor
The June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive at UCLA is an outreach and collection-building partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW), and UCLA Library. These collections expand the pool of primary source materials available to researchers and to the community at large. This partnership was initiated by CSW and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to inventory, organize, preserve, and digitize more than eighty Mazer collections pertaining to lesbian and feminist activism and writings.
UCLA Catalog Record ID
UCLA Catalog Record ID: 7400256
Biography
Barbara Anne (Charles) Macdonald, social worker, lesbian feminist activist, and author, was born on September 11, 1913, to Emily Lister (Baker) Charles and Fred Henly Charles in Pomona, California. She grew up around La Habra, California. At the age of fifteen, she left home permanently and began supporting herself as a domestic worker in Long Beach, California. In 1930 Macdonald married Elmo Davis; the marriage lasted five years. She attended Long Beach Junior College (1931-1932), Santa Ana Junior College (1932-1937) where she was almost expelled for being a lesbian, and the University of California, Berkeley (1938-1940). She paid for her education by working as a stunt parachute jumper about which she was the subject of numerous articles in The Santa Ana Register, which called her "intrepid and daring." Macdonald married John Macdonald in 1941; the marriage was very brief.
After leaving the University of California, Berkeley, Macdonald worked at WPA Vallejo (Calif.) Housing Authority. From 1950 to 1953 she attended the University of Washington where she received a B.A. and a M.S.W. Upon graduation she moved to Wenatchee, Washington, and worked as a supervisor for Child Welfare Services. In 1957 she moved to Morgantown, West Virginia, and commuted to the University of Pennsylvania where she worked on a 3rd year certificate in psychiatric social work. Subsequently she worked as a clinical social worker in pediatrics at the University of Maryland and taught at the medical school. She lived in Baltimore from 1964 to 1967 and worked as a school social worker in Baltimore public schools. During this time, she took up sailing and bought the sailboat "Mighty Mouse." In 1967 she moved to Connecticut where she worked as a consultant for the Bureau of Pupil Personnel and Special Education for the state of Connecticut. Macdonald and her companion Ethel Weeden, also a social worker, took a year's leave to travel the country in a Volkswagen bus. They followed that with a trip via freighter to Asia. Macdonald retired in 1974 as a social worker.

That same year, while living in Connecticut, she took a feminist writing workshop at Goddard-Cambridge Graduate School in Cambridge, Mass. The workshop was taught by Cynthia Rich, who later became Macdonald's domestic partner of 26 years. Over the next twenty-five years, Macdonald's work appeared frequently in lesbian and feminist publications such as Equal Times, Lesbian Ethics, Ms., New Directions, New Women's Times, Sinister Wisdom, and Sojourner. She received national recognition for her writings. In 1980, she covered the UN Mid-Decade Conference on Women in Copenhagen for Equal Times. In 1983, along with Rich, Macdonald co-authored Look Me in the Eye: Old Women, Aging and Ageism. The book, which appeared in two expanded editions (1991, 2001), combined her personal experiences of ageism with ground-breaking lesbian feminist theory, and was named by Ms. as one of 35 classics of the second wave of feminism. It also was widely anthologized for women's studies courses and was translated into Japanese in 1995. Macdonald was a frequent speaker at lesbian and feminist organizations, universities, and organizations of social workers nationally and internationally, including the UN Conference on Women at Huairou, China, in 1995. She was the keynote speaker at the National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta in 1991 and gave a plenary address at the National Women's Studies Conference in 1985. Her work was the inspiration for the First West Coast Conference of Old Lesbians in 1987. She served on its planning committee and gave the keynote address. Out of the conference came the creation of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, a national organization seeking to end the ageism experienced by old women. Macdonald died June 15, 2000, of Alzheimer's disease.

Scope and Content
The collection contains Macdonald's published and unpublished talks, drafts, notes, ephemera, promotional material and publisher's correspondence. The collection also includes materials by and about author and activist Cynthia Rich, Macdonald's partner and coauthor of their book Look Me in the Eye.

Organization and Arrangement
Materials arranged into the following series:
- Series 1: Barbara Macdonald
- Series 2: Cynthia Rich
- Series 3: Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
COLLECTION CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

Old Lesbians Organizing for Change records
Papers of Cynthia Rich and Barbara Macdonald
Audiotape Collection of Cynthia Rich and Barbara Macdonald
Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE) Records

Subjects and Indexing Terms
June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive at UCLA.
June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives.
MacDonald, Barbara, 1913-2000 -- Archives.
Rich, Cynthia -- Archives.
Ageism--United States.
Lesbian feminism.
Women authors, American--Archives.
Series 1: Barbara Macdonald circa 1957-2000

Scope and Content
Series includes correspondence, published articles, personal journals, and assorted materials documenting the work and life of Barbara Macdonald.

Organization and Arrangement
Materials arranged by type, therein chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 1  
**Correspondence: CERES and SAGE 1982-1983**

Scope and Content
Correspondence with various people and publications about responses to questionnaires issued by San Francisco State University's Center for Research and Education in Sexuality (CERES) and Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE), an organization committed to providing support and a social network to elderly members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Box 1, Folder 2  
**Correspondence: Researchers and publishers 1982-1996**

Box 1, Folder 3  
**Correspondence: Silent Pioneers 1983 May - 1984 April**

Box 1, Folder 4  
**Correspondence: Acting Our Age 1986-1987**

Scope and Contents note
Correspondence with Michal Aviad about the Older Women’s Film Project, *Acting Our Age*, and an article from the *San Francisco Examiner* about the film.

Box 1, Folder 5  
**Correspondence: Sherry Thomas 1989 March - 1990 May**

Scope and Contents note

Box 1, Folder 6  
**Correspondence: Sarah Hoagland 1989 December - 1995 November**

Scope and Contents note
Correspondence as well as “From Liberation to Care...Have I missed Something? Care, Ageism and Feminist Ethics” by Sarah Lucia Hoagland.

Box 1, Folder 7  
**Correspondence: Publishers 1989-1996**

Box 1, Folder 8  
**Published articles by Barbara Macdonald 1980-1991**

Scope and Contents note
Includes articles published in *off our backs*, *Sojourner: The Women’s Forum*, *New Women's Times Feminist Review*, and *Equal Times*, as well as a paper delivered as a talk to the Lesbian and Gay Freedom Democratic Caucus in Santa Cruz.

Box 1, Folders 9-10  
**Published articles: *Ms. Magazine* 1990 July - 1996 May**

Scope and Contents note
Clippings, the May/June 1991 issue, letters to the editor and other correspondence regarding *Ms. Magazine*.

Box 1, Folder 11  
**Published articles: Beijing and Tokyo 1995**

Language of Materials: One article is in Japanese.
Scope and Contents note

Box 1, Folder 12  
**Personal materials: Journals 1957-1981**

Box 1, Folder 13  
**Personal materials: Household expenses 1979 July - 1989 September**
Series 1: Barbara Macdonald circa 1957-2000

Box 1, Folder 14  Unpublished talks: Barbara Macdonald circa 1983-1989
  Scope and Contents note
  - "Social Work: Feminism in the Slow Lane?" - From the Top of the Hill - given at the Sixth Annual Lesbian Physicians Conference - Talk for Look Me in the Eye

Box 2, Folder 1  Assorted notes circa 1983-2000
  Scope and Content
  Drafts of correspondence, a speech, and other notes on articles about feminism and ageism.

Box 2, Folder 2  Questionnaire: Radical feminism 1987
  Scope and Content
  Includes a photocopy of a poem by Barbara Macdonald writing as Barbara Charles.

Box 2, Folder 3  Writer's Workshop materials undated
  Scope and Content
  Work written for the Writer's Workshop taught by - and during which Macdonald met - Cynthia Rich.

  Scope and Content
  Series includes literary work, correspondence, and material documenting the career and life of Cynthia Rich.
  Organization and Arrangement
  Materials arranged in chronological order

Box 2, Folder 4  Therapy materials and notes 1986
Box 2, Folder 5  Employment 1990-1994
  Scope and Contents note
  Resumes, letters, performance reviews.

Box 2, Folder 6  Desert Years programs 1990-1991
  Scope and Contents note
  Flyers, program from Second Annual Lambda Literary Awards, correspondence, and reviews of Desert Years by Cynthia Rich.

Box 2, Folder 7  Poetry 2002
Box 2, Folder 8  Correspondence: Alice Matzkin 2000 October - 2002 January
  Scope and Contents note
  Correspondence between Alice Matzkin and Cynthia Rich as well as a Ms. Magazine spread of Matzkin's paintings.
### Series 3: Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich circa 1912-2002

**Scope and Content**
Series includes reviews of *Look Me in the Eye*, resumes, correspondence, books, photographs, audiocassettes, and other materials documenting the work and relationship of Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich.

**Organization and Arrangement**
Materials arranged by type and in chronological order, with the exception of materials about *Look Me in the Eye* (placed at the beginning) and photos and audiocassettes (placed at the end).

**Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements**
COLLECTION CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

#### Box 2, Folder 9
**Look Me in the Eye: Publicity 1983-1993**

**Scope and Content**
Includes a photograph of members of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change taken during the "March on Washington 1993."

#### Box 2, Folder 10
**Look Me in the Eye: Reviews and clippings 1983-2003**

**Scope and Contents note**
Reviews of and clippings about *Look Me in the Eye*.

#### Box 2, Folder 11
**Look Me in the Eye: Japanese translation circa 1994**

**Scope and Contents note**
Includes a copy of the book, book reviews, and a magazine, all in Japanese.

#### Box 2, Folder 12

**Scope and Contents note**

#### Box 3, Folder 1
**CVs and resumes circa 1975-2001**

#### Box 3, Folders 2-3
**Correspondence: Assorted correspondents 1981-2002**

#### Box 3, Folders 4-5
**Books by Cynthia Rich and Barbara Macdonald 1984-1991**

#### Box 3, Folder 6
**Assorted materials 1987-1995**

**Scope and Content**
Assorted publications by Macdonald, Rich, Gloria Steinem, and Margaret Cruikshank. Also included are an awards program, a speech, and correspondence among other materials.

#### Box 3, Folder 7
**Newspaper clippings 1988-1990**

**Language of Materials:** One clipping is in Japanese.

**Scope and Content**
Assorted clippings collected by, but not written by, Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich.

#### Box 3, Folder 8
**Assorted fliers and clippings circa 1991-2002**

**Language of Materials:** One clipping is in Japanese.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 9</th>
<th>Events: Fliers circa 1992-1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Contents note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flyer for talks and events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 10</th>
<th>Sympathy cards 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Contents note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters, cards and note to Cynthia Rich upon the passing of her partner Barbara Macdonald.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 11</th>
<th>Obituaries and memorials 2000 June - 2001 January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Contents note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obituaries and memorials for Barbara Macdonald, including her death certificate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 12, Box 4, Folder 1</th>
<th>Photos and narrative 1912-1973</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes interfiled with photographs written by Cynthia Rich. Includes a resume and a typewritten copy of Barbara's Story and Mindfall, compiled by Rich using Macdonald's autobiographical writing.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folders 2-3</th>
<th>Photos 1981-1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes an issue of The San Diego Union with articles about the campsite that appears to be the subject of some of the photographs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder 4, Box 5</th>
<th>Slides (photographs) 1987</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contains 14 audiocassettes recording interviews with Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich, writers' workshops, conference speeches, and book readings among other programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Box 5</th>
<th>Audiocassettes 1979-1992</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content</td>
</tr>
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Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

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