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## **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

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Online finding aid last updated 24 August 2017.

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**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 This collection contains Macdonald's published and unpublished talks, drafts, notes, ephemera, promotional material and publisher's correspondence.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**

Property rights to the physical object belong to the UCLA Library Special Collections. Literary rights, including copyright, are retained by the creators and their heirs. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine who holds the copyright and pursue the copyright owner or his or her heir for permission to publish where The UC Regents do not hold the copyright.

#### **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**

Gift of Cynthia Rich, 2013. Gift of Barbara Macdonald.

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**

Processed by Stacy Wood, 2013. Description enhanced and further physical processing completed by Sabrina Ponce in 2017.

#### **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.

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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**

Correspondence with Sherry Thomas of Spinsters/Aunt Lute Publishers before publication of the New Expanded Edition (1991) of *Look Me in the Eye*.

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,

**Published articles: *Ms. Magazine* 1990 July - 1996 May**

Folders 9-10

**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**

Contains an issue of the Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC) Reporter with the article "Report from Beijing" by Barbara Macdonald in December of 1995, clippings from a Japanese journal and "Old Women's Human Rights: A Report at Beijing" for *Sojourner* in January of 1996.

Box 1, Folder 12

**Personal materials: Journals 1957-1981**

Box 1, Folder 13

**Personal materials: Household expenses 1979 July - 1989 September**

- 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.
- Series 2: Cynthia Rich 1986-2002**  
    **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 Matzkins 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

**Unpublished talks: Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich circa 1974 - 2002**

**Scope and Contents note**

Talk from Justice for Janitors demonstration in San Diego in 2001 - Older Wiser Lesbians (OWL) talk in 2001 -The Crone Show - program notes - "Activism" - talk for Cal State Long Beach in 2002 - "Organizing for Social Change" - talk for Cal State Long Beach in 2002 - Clipping about Demonstration at Las Colinas Women's Detention Facility in 2001 as well as photocopies of photographs - From a Hut in the Forest - Maine talk - Health and Economic Needs of Old Women: Major Issues 1988 - Ageism in ourselves and in our Services -For Goddard Workshop in 1974 - Penn State - Introducing Angela Bowen in 1992

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.

- Box 3, Folder 9      **Events: Fliers circa 1992-1995**  
                                 **Scope and Contents note**  
                                 Flyer for talks and events.
- Box 3, Folder 10      **Sympathy cards 2000**  
                                 **Scope and Contents note**  
                                 Letters, cards and note to Cynthia Rich upon the passing of her partner Barbara Macdonald.
- Box 3, Folder 11      **Obituaries and memorials 2000 June - 2001 January**  
                                 **Scope and Contents note**  
                                 Obituaries and memorials for Barbara Macdonald, including her death certificate.
- Box 3, Folder 12,  
Box 4, Folder 1      **Photos and narrative 1912-1973**  
                                 **Scope and Content**  
                                 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.
- Box 4, Folders 2-3      **Photos 1981-1990**  
                                 **Scope and Content**  
                                 Includes an issue of *The San Diego Union* with articles about the campsite that appears to be the subject of some of the photographs.
- Box 4, Folder 4  
Box 5      **Slides (photographs) 1987**  
                                 **Audiocassettes 1979-1992**  
                                 **Scope and Content**  
                                 Contains 14 audiocassettes recording interviews with Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich, writers' workshops, conference speeches, and book readings among other programs.  
                                 **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.