Finding aid for the Sonia Sunoo papers 3023

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USC Libraries East Asian Library
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**Language of Material:** English

**Contributing Institution:** USC Libraries East Asian Library

**Title:** Sonia Sunoo papers

**creator:** Sunoo, Sonia Shinn

**Identifier/Call Number:** 3023

**Identifier/Call Number:** 1597

**Physical Description:** 1 Linear Feet1 bankers box

**Date (inclusive):** 1971-1998

**Abstract:** Sonia Shinn Sunoo was a Korean American teacher, researcher, and writer. This small collection consists primarily of Sunoo’s oral history interview transcripts with early Korean immigrant picture brides (mail order brides). The collection also contains research materials regarding this topic in the form of correspondence, clippings, and notes.

**Arrangement**

Folders are arranged alphabetically.

**Scope and Contents**

The Sonia Sunoo papers, 1971-1998, consist primarily of oral history interview transcripts, as well as some research materials in the form of correspondence, clippings, and notes, created and collected by Sunoo and relating to Korean picture brides (mail order brides) who emigrated to the United States in the early 20th century. Shortly after 1910, there were more than 2,000 arranged marriages in the U.S. between older Korean men and younger brides.

This collection collects the interviews Sunoo conducted with these picture brides (all widowed and in their 80s), primarily between the years 1975-1977, as part of the UCLA funded Korean American Oral History Project. These interviews were published by the Korean American Oral History Project in the book "Korea Kaleidoscope: oral histories" in 1982, as well as in Sunoo's 2002 companion book entitled "Korean Picture Brides: 1903-1920: a collection of oral histories", which focuses specifically on the trials and experiences of the first generation of Korean immigrant women in America.

The collection also contains some research materials for Sunoo's Oregon Historical Quarterly published article entitled "Korean Women Pioneers of the Pacific Northwest", as well as general notes, clippings, and correspondence.

**Biographical Note**

Sonia Shinn Sunoo was a Korean American teacher, researcher, and writer. Her father left Korea for the United States in 1903, as part of the very first Koreans to emigrate. He worked on a sugar cane plantation in Hawaii for two years before moving to California. Her mother left Korea at the age of nineteen as a picture bride to marry Sonia’s father. Sonia was born in San Francisco in 1915 and grew up in Chinatown. She went to San Francisco State College where she majored in English and Biology. She also earned a M.A. in Human Development and Early Childhood Education.

In 1943, Sonia married Harold Sunoo. They had two children. Sonia taught Korean language at the University of Washington from 1943 to 1949. In 1951, she received a summer scholarship to attend Stanford for graduate work, but had to leave prior to completing her dissertation due to her husband’s inability to find a job upon returning from overseas. After Harold was still unable to find teaching work, Sonia ended up helping him with his grocery store business in between her own research in the 1970s of Korean picture brides and early Korean immigrants as part of the Korean American Oral History Project. Both Sunoo and her husband also wrote articles in the 1970s and 1980s regarding the first Korean women immigrants in the in the United States. Sunoo’s first book oral histories book was published in 1982.

An interview from 2001 revealed it was Sunoo’s greatest wish to have her book on Korean picture brides published. Sunoo felt these women were courageous pioneers who sought escape and freedom from the Confucian strictures of Korea and that they were often misrepresented in their portrayal simply because they were marrying a stranger in the United States. Sunoo strived to tell the stories of these women’s desire for freedom and education and reveal the true feminist values they represented. "Korean Picture Brides: 1903-1920: a collection of oral histories" was published on May 1, 2002.

**Conditions Governing Access**

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.

**Conditions Governing Use**

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**Preferred Citation**

[Box/Folder# or Item name]. Sonia Sunoo papers, Collection no. 3023, Korean Heritage Library, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Gift of Sonia Sunoo.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Immigrants -- Korea -- 20th century -- Archival resources
Korean American women -- California -- Interviews -- Archival resources
Korean American women authors -- California -- Los Angeles -- Archival resources
Mail order brides -- Korea -- 20th century -- Archival resources
Clippings
Correspondence
Oral histories (document genres)
Notes
Research (documents)

Sunoo, Sonia Shinn -- Archives
Ahn, Philip, 1905-1978

Box 1, Folder 1 Ahn, Young-ho (Joan Ahn - matchmaker, comical story) 1976
Box 1, Folder 2 Ahn, Seung-wha (Korean American oral history project) 1975-12-03
Box 1, Folder 3 Ahn, Philip [clipping] 1975-12-03
Box 1, Folder 4 Cha, Kyong-soo (Park Kyong-sein's sister) 1977-02-18
Box 1, Folder 5 Cha, Song-dal (died in LA 1989) 1975-12-03
Box 1, Folder 6 Chang, Lee Wook, Dr (Korean woman pioneers) 1981-1982
Box 1, Folder 7 Char, Edward (Yong-Chun) Ada (died March 1982) 1975-12-18
Box 1, Folder 8 Charr, Emsen 1975-1982
Box 1, Folder 9 Charr, Evelyn (née Young-sun Kim) 1975-1998
Box 1, Folder 10 Choy, Joseph undated
Box 1, Folder 11 Choy, Nung Yik 1976-07-28
Box 1, Folder 12 Chu, Kuang-Myong 1976-11
Box 1, Folder 13 Chu, Young-Han 1976-01
Box 1, Folder 14 Chun, Ho-taik (1904) 1976-01-31
Box 1, Folder 15 DeYoung, Henry, Dr. 1979
Box 1, Folder 16 DeYoung, Zona (Mrs. Henry de Young) 1979-1985
Box 1, Folder 17 Har, Sang-ok, Mr. and Mrs. Myong-Won (née Sook-ja Woo) 1980-1988
Box 1, Folder 18 Hyun, Chul 1976-01-20
Box 1, Folder 19 Kang, Young-sun, Dr. 1975-1994
Box 1, Folder 20 Kim, Choon-ha (Mrs) 1976-1994
Box 1, Folder 21 Kim, Choon-ha 1976-1983
Box 1, Folder 22 Kim, Dong-woo 1976, 1985
Box 1, Folder 23 Kim, Hei-won, Mrs. 1975-12-08
Box 1, Folder 24 Kim, H. Young-soon, Mrs. 1976
Box 1, Folder 25 Kim, James (wife Sarah refused interview) 1976-1977
Box 1, Folder 26 Kim, Kyeng-bo 1975-12-05
Box 1, Folder 27 Kim, Pil-kwon 1973-06-22
Box 1, Folder 28 Kim, Sarah, Rev. 1976-01-09
Box 1, Folder 29 Kim, Herbert 1976-01-07
Box 1, Folder 30 Kim, Hyong-soon 1977-01-25
Box 1, Folder 31 Kim, Sae-sun 1978
Box 1, Folder 32 Kim, Sam (Kyong-sam) 1971, 1977
Box 1, Folder 33 Kim, Sung-nak, Rev. 1975-1982
Box 1, Folder 34 Kim, Warren 1976
Box 1, Folder 35 Kim, Young-chul 1976-07-16
Box 1, Folder 36 Kown, Yong-ho 1976-01-09
Box 1, Folder 37 Kor Sch-role of Ch-Kmeth [church articles and clippings] 1977-1996
Box 1, Folder 38 Lee, Anna undated
Box 1, Folder 39  Lee, Bom-young 1976-01-02
Box 1, Folder 40  Lee, Chang-hei 1979
Box 1, Folder 41  Lee, Dai Wi, Rev. 1981
Box 1, Folder 42  Lee, Ke-man, Mrs. undated
Box 1, Folder 43  Lee, Mary Kwang-son Paik 1977
Box 1, Folder 44  Lee, Sundo 1976
Box 1, Folder 45  Lee, Thos sang-gi 1975
Box 1, Folder 46  Lee, Wha-mok (Mrs. Sun-do) 1975-12-19
Box 1, Folder 47  Lim, Mable 1975-12-09
Box 1, Folder 48  Lim, Doo Wha (Blanche) 1976
Box 1, Folder 49  Park, Maria (Mrs. Kwanboo, née Lim) undated
Box 1, Folder 50  Namkung, Hyok, Rev 1982-04-27
Box 1, Folder 51  Paik, Myeung-son 1976-1983
Box 1, Folder 52  Park, Ne-qun 1975-1979
Box 1, Folder 53  Park, Julian Rev. and Mrs. Mildred 1977-2002
Box 1, Folder 54  Rhee, Byong-uk 1976
Box 1, Folder 55  Shin, Tong-gi and (Mrs) Han So-je, M.D. 1976-01-12
Box 1, Folder 56  Song, Leo 1975, 1986
Box 1, Folder 57  Sunoo, Rosa 1975-11-28
Box 1, Folder 58  Whang, S., Mrs. 1971, 1977
Box 1, Folder 59  Whang, Sa-sun 1971, 1977
Box 1, Folder 60  Yang, Choo-Eun 1976
Box 1, Folder 61  Yoon, Do-Yun 1975