
Inventory of the Frontlash San Francisco Collection, 1965-1973

Accession number: 1988/089

Labor Archives & Research Center

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1989

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Descriptive Summary**Title:** Frontlash San Francisco Collection,**Date (inclusive):** 1965-1973**Accession number:** 1988/089**Creator:** Frontlash**Extent:** .5 cubic feet**Repository:** San Francisco State University. Labor Archives & Research Center

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Preferred Citation

Introduction

These records were donated by Mary Quinn of the San Francisco Labor Council in 1988. The collection was processed in 1989 by Gordon Webb; this guide was written in spring 1999 by Joshua Paddison.

History

Frontlash, a nationwide nonprofit student organization, was founded in 1968 to register young voters, especially those in minority and low-income communities, and to "educate citizens on the issues at stake and the need for voting power to change social conditions." [1](#) It was sponsored by the National AFL-CIO, the United States Youth Council, the NAACP Youth Council, and a variety of other foundations and trade unions. Frontlash's 1968 registration campaign, conducted by about one thousand student volunteers across the country, signed up approximately 25,000 new voters nationwide, including 1,000 in Sacramento and 10,000 in Los Angeles. [2](#)

Student activists in San Francisco formed a local chapter of Frontlash in time for its 1970 campaign, called "Frontlash '70." Begun on the San Francisco State College campus, Frontlash San Francisco--headed by Michael C. Grimes--operated out of an office provided by the San Francisco Council on Political Education (COPE) and was funded in large part by the San Francisco Labor Council. [3](#) During Frontlash '70, the San Francisco chapter's two hundred volunteers registered about 7,000 new voters in the 20th Assembly District (South of Market). [4](#)

Also in 1970, national Frontlash's western organizer, David Jessup, moved his headquarters to San Francisco in an office provided by the California state AFL-CIO. [5](#) Frontlash San Francisco frequently worked on voter registration and education drives with the AFL-CIO's political organization, COPE.

In 1971, Frontlash San Francisco registered another 21,000 new voters. After the passage of the Voters Rights Act of 1971, which lowered the federal voting age to eighteen, Frontlash San Francisco participated in a coordinated drive with San Francisco Federation of Teachers Local 61 and the City Wide Youth Council aimed at registering high school and City College students. "With the passage of the eighteen-year-old vote, 11.5 million new voters were made eligible to vote," noted Grimes. [6](#) Although Frontlash was nominally a non-partisan organization, 80 percent of the students it registered signed up as Democrats. [7](#) During the summer of 1971, Frontlash San Francisco volunteers worked voter registration booths at busy street corners, shopping centers, and unemployment offices in low-income neighborhoods, and held a twenty-four-hour registration marathon at the Sports Center Bowl on Mission Street aimed at registering night workers. [8](#)

Frontlash San Francisco registered another 48,000 new voters in time for the presidential election of November 1972. Most of the newly registered voters were working-class youths who, according to David Jessup, "often are bypassed by the more highly publicized drives on campuses." [9](#) About three-fourths registered as Democrats.

What happened to Frontlash San Francisco after the November 1972 election is unknown. The collection ends abruptly in 1972. The number of Frontlash chapters across the country declined throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; as of 1995, only a few remained, with a combined membership of about fifty students. [10](#) Frontlash did resurface in August 1996 to picket Niketowns in half a dozen cities because of the corporation's exploitative labor practices. [11](#)

1"Frontlash '68, A Report and Evaluation," p.1, LARC, San Francisco Frontlash collection, folder 1/11.

2Ibid.

3"Frontlash '70--California," p. 3, folder 1/11.

4"Frontlash--70 Project News," p. 1, folder 1/11.

5 *California State AFL-CIO News*, 10 July 1970.

6 *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3 June 1971, p. 9.

7Ibid.

8Mike Grimes to George Johns, 21 September 1971, folder 1/11; *North Bay Labor Journal*, 22 May 1972, p. 5-D.

9 *San Francisco Labor*, 10 November 1972, p. 4.

10 *Labor Activist*, v. 3 no. 2 (1995).

11 *Nonviolent Activist: The Magazine of the War Resisters League*, Sept.-Oct. 1996.

Scope and Content

The folders in the Frontlash San Francisco collection are arranged alphabetically, and the material within each folder is arranged chronologically.

Included within the collection is correspondence, fund-raising material, and print material (such as newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and posters). Folders are also devoted to specific topics, groups, and projects associated with Frontlash San Francisco, including Israel/Zionism,

the Young People's Socialist League, the Public Housing Authority Project, and the Young Trade Unionist Council.

- Spanish-language voter registration poster with photo of young girl, Political Research Education Project, San Francisco, ca. 1970; relocated to LARC oversize poster collection.
- Six voter registration posters; relocated to LARC poster collection.
- 45 RPM record: "Vote" radio spots, Warner Bros. Records, by Mason Proffit, ca. 1972; relocated to LARC LP collection.
- Various Frontlash posters in LARC poster collection.

Box-folder 1/1 **Correspondence 1970**

Box-folder 1/2 **Correspondence 1971**

Box-folder 1/3 **Correspondence 1972**

Box-folder 1/4 **Correspondence (Re: Registrars Office) 1971-1972**

Box-folder 1/5 **Articles and Newspaper Clippings 1970-1972**

Box-folder 1/6 **Election Day Volunteer Sign-in Sheets 1972**

Box-folder 1/7 **Election Targeting 1971-1972**

Box-folder 1/8 **Frontlash '71 (General) 1971-1972**

Box-folder 1/9 **Fund-raising Materials/Budget 1970-1972**

Box-folder 1/10 **Israel/Zionism 1965-1972**

Box-folder 1/11 **National and Local Reports 1968-1972**

Box-folder 1/12 **Neighborhood Youth Corps 1970-1972**

Box-folder 1/13 **Organizing Notes (College and General) 1970-1971**

Box-folder 1/14 **Organizing Notes (High Schools) 1971-1973**

Box-folder 1/15 **Pamphlets and Handouts 1970-1972**

Box-folder 1/16 **Public Housing Authority Project ca. 1970-1972**

Box-folder 1/17 **Publicity 1971-1972**

Box-folder 1/18 **Young People's Socialist League (Y.P.S.L.)/Anti-War Material 1971**

Box-folder 1/19 **Young Trade Unionist Council ca. 1971**