
Inventory of the Elaine Black Yoneda Collection, ca. 1900-1991 (Predominantly 1930-1988)

Accession number: 1992/033 & 1992/055

Labor Archives & Research Center

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San Francisco, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Elaine Black Yoneda Collection,

Date (inclusive): ca. 1900-1991 (Predominantly 1930-1988)

Accession number: 1992/033 & 1992/055

Creator: Yoneda, Elaine Black, 1906-1988

Extent: 3.75 cubic feet

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San Francisco, California 94132

Shelf location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Center's online catalog.

Language: English

Access

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Elaine Black Yoneda Collection, 1992/033 & 1992/055, Labor Archives & Research Center, San Francisco State University.

Introduction

The collection consists of accessions from two donors, Karl Yoneda and Vivian McGuckin Rainieri, the biographer of Elaine Black Yoneda. Material donated to the Labor Archives by Rainieri consists of documents and visual images collected in the process of writing *The Red Angel: The Life and Times of Elaine Black Yoneda, 1906-1988* (N.Y., International Publishers, 1991). Most of the biographical information below is from that work. The accessions, 1992/033 and 1993/017 from Ms Rainieri and 1992/055 from Mr. Yoneda, are grouped together for the convenience of researchers. The collection was processed in fall 1992 by Olive James.

Biographical Notes

Rose Elaine Buchman was born in Connecticut to Nathan Buchman and Mollie Kvetnay, who had met as child laborers in a Russian match factory. Elaine was raised in a predominantly Jewish section of Brooklyn, New York, in a strongly pro-labor (and non-religious) environment. In 1920, the family moved to the San Diego area and in 1924 to Los Angeles. A "spoiled and ornery child," Elaine did not realize till age 15 that her parents actively supported the Russian revolution and related causes --which were apparently of no interest to the teenager. She quit high school in her senior year and took her first job with an elegant residential hotel, where Elaine maintained her own sartorial elegance while the world protested the convictions of Tom Mooney, Warren Billings, J.B.McNamara, Sacco and Vanzetti.

At the urging of her parents, Elaine attended a meeting of the Young Workers League. There she met Edward Francis Russell, Jr., also the child of a labor activist. Neither young person was interested in the movement. They married in 1925. In 1927, daughter Joyce Russell was born.

Intending to go on to dinner and a show, Ed and the 23-year-old Elaine agreed to meet another couple at a demonstration of the unemployed. The demonstration was the first time Elaine saw the Los Angeles "Red Squad" in action, or that her (second) husband-to-be, Karl "Hama" Yoneda, caught sight of her. In answer to a police inquiry, Elaine quickly changed Ed's nickname, Blackie, into a surname; thus, Elaine "Black" came into being.

On March 6, 1930, she went to observe a demonstration, part of a national day of protest over unemployment. She saw police brutalize an elderly woman, learned that the International Labor Defense would defend the woman, and went to offer herself as a witness. Despite Elaine's testimony as to the woman's innocence, the garment worker was convicted. Following this experience in court, Elaine joined the International Labor Defense. In 1931, she took a job with ILD. The next day, "Karl Hama" was arrested and beaten by the police. According to Rainieri:

On the third day after the demonstration, "Red" Hynes [Squad Captain] called the ILD and said, "Come and pick up the Jap, he's dying anyway." Elaine...rushed to the jail, posted bail, and took the badly-injured Hama to a doctor. "He was a bloody mess," Elaine said...The meeting in jail marked the first time that Elaine and Karl exchanged words...He was intrigued...and wrote her a poem while in jail...

Elaine soon became ILD district secretary and, shortly thereafter, she joined the Communist Party. She proudly maintained party membership until her death in 1988, a fact of enduring interest to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As uncertain situations arose with police, Elaine used a number of aliases, including "Betsy Ross." She was involved in ILD activity surrounding a number of agricultural strikes: cotton workers in Tulare, grape workers in Lodi, apple workers in Santa Rosa. Elaine was active in the ILD prisoner support program and made monthly visits to prisoners who included Tom Mooney, Jim McNamara, and others arrested under Criminal Syndicalism laws.

Note

See Series, " Labor Trials/Bail/Defense."

By this time, Elaine had separated from Ed Russell and was living in San Francisco with Karl. They took part in the waterfront activities of 1934. She had an appointment to meet Nick Bordoise when he and Howard Sperry were killed in a police attack on "Bloody Thursday," July 5, 1934. The General Strike followed.

In her fight against the Criminal Syndicalism legislation, Elaine was arrested at the Dolores Park rally of March 1935. She made court appearances with Leo Gallagher and George Anderson. Later that year she was involved with the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Strike in Eureka. Prior to the Dolores Park trial, Karl and Elaine took a train (separate cars, because of the Mann Act) to Washington state, where they could be legally married.

Among Elaine's activities in the late 30s were participation in the Free Tom Mooney movement, National Scottsboro Week, the Angelo Herndon appeal, the Salinas Lettuce Strike, and Spanish Civil War relief. Supported by the Communist Party, Elaine in 1939 ran with Archie Brown ("Black and Brown") for San Francisco Supervisor. Her platform called for free day nurseries, low cost housing, an anti-racism stance, protection of civil rights, and protest against the "Imperialist War" gathering in Europe. The two candidates lost.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Karl and 2-year-old Tommy (named for Tom Mooney) were to be interned; Elaine was not included in the order because she was white. Her daughter Joyce, from her marriage with Ed Russell, was sent to live with Elaine's parents. Elaine insisted on remaining with Karl and baby Tom when they were shipped to Manzanar. The account of those days may be found in her testimony, and Karl's, before the Commission on Wartime Relocation.

Note

See Series, "Japanese American Wartime Relocation."

After Karl was accepted in the U.S. Army, Tommy and Elaine returned to San Francisco. She and her husband began a diligent and revealing correspondence.

Note

See Series, "Correspondence," Folders labeled, "Letters to Karl, 1942-43," and "...1944-45."

After the war, the family bought a chicken ranch near Petaluma. When a Sonoma chapter of the Civil Rights Congress was formed in 1947, Elaine became chair. During the Cold War years, the Yonedas continued their usual political activities; and the FBI continued its surveillance. In 1960 the farm was sold and the Yonedas returned to San Francisco. Elaine was active with ILWU Auxiliary No. 16. She served as officer and regional and international delegate. Karl's mother lived in Hiroshima, and the couple were particularly active in the "Ban the Bomb" and other peace movements. Elaine pursued equal-pay issues, spoke at Negro History Week, celebrated *People's World* benefits, supported striking workers, etc. She became a member of Local 29, AFL-CIO Office and Professional Employees Union (and picketed ILWU).

The Yonedas took part in annual pilgrimages to the site of the Manzanar internment camp. With the Japanese American Citizens League and others, they successfully campaigned for the repeal of Title 2 (emergency detention) of the McCarran Internal Security Act. Rainieri writes that "Elaine's last major work before her death was participation in the campaign for Redress-Reparations for incarcerated Japanese Americans." Elaine Black Yoneda died in San Francisco in 1988. Many tributes from family, friends, and colleagues may be found in the Series "Articles, Clippings, Remembrances."

Scope and Content

The Elaine Black Yoneda Collection is divided into eleven series:

- Series I. Unions and Union Activities
- Series II. Political Activities
- Series III. Labor Trials/Bail/Defense
- Series IV. Japanese Americans
- Series V. Correspondence
- Series VI. Buchman Family
- Series VII. Yoneda Family
- Series VIII. Oral Histories and Interviews
- Series IX. Articles, Clippings, Remembrances
- Series X. FBI Files
- Series XI. Vivian McGuckin Rainieri Research Materials

While the earliest material dates from 1908, the majority of documents cover the 1930s through 70s, with remembrances from the death of Elaine Yoneda in 1988.

Among original documents of particular historical interest are notes for a history of ILWU Auxiliary No. 16 and a report entitled "The ILA and the Courts During the 1934 Strike," the latter compiled by the ILA Defense Committee. It is a carbon typescript with a pencilled list of seaman arrested, country of origin, deportation notes, etc. This report numbers 39 pages.

There is considerable documentation on the internment camp at Manzanar, including the text of a 1942 address to the Commonwealth Club by the camp director. The address was called "Manzanar from the Inside." Other views of the "inside" may be found in the testimonies by Elaine and Karl before the U.S. Commission on Wartime and Civilian Internment, and in the compilation, "A Few Reminders of Manzanar, 1941-1992."

Among family papers may be found a sizeable correspondence from Elaine to Karl during his service in World War II.

Note

A few letters from daughter Joyce appear in Elaine's handwriting. They appear to have been copied by Elaine for re-mailing to Karl.

There are oral histories, photographs, audiotapes, and articles, and a number of tributes gathered in eulogy upon Elaine's death. And there are substantial files from the FBI, secured under the Freedom of Information Act.

Material Cataloged Separately

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- Photographs, 3 folders -Relocated to LARC Photograph Collection #5, "People A-Z," under "Yoneda, Elaine Black"
 - Audiotapes, 13 -Relocated to the LARC Audiotape Collection
 - Pamphlet: *Women's Rights Handbook*, California Department of Justice, Information Pamphlet No. 9, 1976
 - Newspapers, 6 issues of *Union W.A.G.E.*, May-June 1975 through Nov.-Dec/ 1976, nos. 29; 32-35; 38
 - Buttons and badges
 - "Free Mooney" material, including Poster (in LARC Poster Collection), Photo, and Book, E. E. Ward's *The Gentle Dynamiter* (in LARC Reference Collection)

Beside the Yonedas, a number of labor leaders are highlighted in this collection (e.g., Tom Gallagher, "Blackie" Myers, Tom Mooney), particularly in Series 2, "Labor Trials/Bail Defense."

Series I UNIONS AND UNION ACTIVITIES

Box-folder 1/ 1 **Hotel and Restaurant Employees, Strikers Support Committee at St. Francis Square Cooperative 1960**
Box-folder 1/ 2 **ILWU Auxiliary No. 16 - History 1934-1973**
Box-folder 1/ 3 **ILWU Auxiliary No. 16 - History 1962-1987**
Box-folder 1/ 4 **ILWU Auxiliary No. 16 - Financial Records 1959-1976**
Box-folder 1/ 5 **ILWU Federated Auxiliaries 1965-1986**
Box-folder 1/ 6 **Office and Professional Employees Union, local No. 29 1968-1979**
Box-folder 1/ 7 **United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America, Local No. 1412 1943-1951**
Box-folder 1/ 8 **Anti-unionism, Anti-communism, and Mob Violence 1935-1939**

Series II POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Box-folder 1/ 9 **Communist Party 1935-1978**
Box-folder 1/ 10 **Speeches, Reports, Addresses 1974-1985**
Box-folder 1/ 11 **Women for Peace 1975-1979**
Box-folder 1/ 11 **S.f. Election Campaign 1939**

Series III LABOR TRIALS / BAIL/ DEFENSE

Box-folder 2/ 1	Bay Area Movement Bail Fund 1968-1973
Box-folder 2/ 2	Civil Rights College, Bail Fund 1951-1990
Box-folder 2/ 3	Criminal Syndicalism Cases Ca. 1935-1936
Box-folder 2/ 4	Gallagher, Herndon, Black, Jackson, Coleman, Scottsboro 1935-1965
Box-folder 2/ 5	General Strike, 1934, and July 5, "Bloody Thursday" 1934-1989
Box-folder 2/ 6	Humboldt County Lumber Strike 1935-1983
Box-folder 2/ 7	Tom Mooney 1916-1984
Box-folder 2/ 8	International Labor Defense 1935-1980
Box-folder 2/ 9	International Labor Defense Publications 1931-1941
Box-folder 2/ 10	In J. B. Mcnamara 1939-1988
Box-folder 2/ 11	Salinas-watsonville Lettuce Strike 1936-1986

Series IV JAPANESE AMERICANS

Box-folder 3/ 1 **Wartime Relocation 1942-1981**
Box-folder 3/ 2 **Manzanar - Documents, Remembrances, and Pilgrimages 1942-1992**
Box-folder 3/ 3 **Redress, Reparations, Resolutions 1967-1986**
Box-folder 3/ 4 **Japanese American Citizens League 1967-1986**

Series V CORRESPONDENCE

Box-folder 3/ 5	Incoming Correspondence 1965-1985
Box-folder 3/ 6	Outgoing Correspondence 1962-1963
Box-folder 3/ 7	Letters to Karl Yoneda 1942-1943
Box-folder 3/ 8	Letters to Karl Yoneda 1944-1945

Series VI BUCHMAN FAMILY

Box-folder 3/ 9

Buchman Family Papers 1908-1983

Series VII YONEDA FAMILY

Box-folder 3/ 10 Yoneda Family Ephemera 1945-1976

Series VIII ORAL HISTORIES AND INTERVIEWS

Box-folder 4/ 1	Chronologies N.d.
Box-folder 4/ 2	Francie Bernstein (On Wartime Relocation) 1973
Box-folder 4/ 3	Kenneth Kann (On Petaluma Jewish Community) 1977
Box-folder 4/ 4	Lucy Kendall Interview 1976-1977
Box-folder 4/ 5	Lucy Kendall Notes & Correspondence 1976-1977
Box-folder 4/ 6	Alice King & Miriam Feingold (For Earl Warren Project, Roho, U.c.) 1970-1976
Box-folder 4/ 7	Anne Loftis (On Organizing Farm Workers) 1974-1976
Box-folder 4/ 8	Susan Musicant (For <i>Union W.a.g.e.</i>) 1979
Box-folder 4/ 9	Yvonne Yoneda (On World War II Experiences) 1982

Series IX ARTICLES, CLIPPINGS, REMEMBRANCES

Box-folder 4/ 9 **Articles, Clippings, Remembrances 1934-1988**
Box-folder 4/ 10 **Articles, Clippings, Remembrances 1983-1989**

Series X FBI FILES

Box-folder 5/ 1	FBI Files 1940s
Box-folder 5/ 2	FBI Files 1950s
Box-folder 5/ 3	FBI Files 1960s
Box-folder 5/ 4	FBI Files 1960s
Box-folder 5/ 5	FBI Files 1970s
Box-folder 5/ 6	Correspondence 1978-1984
Box-folder 5/ 7	Notes ("Excisions...Falsehoods...Defamation") [N.d.]
Box-folder 5/ 8	Articles and Clippings about 1970-1983

Series XI VIVIAN MCGUCKIN RAINIERI RESEARCH MATERIALS

Box-folder 6/ 1 **Rainieri Research Materials, File 1 of 3 1919-1988**
Box-folder 6/ 2 **Rainieri Research Materials, File 2 of 3 1928-1936**
Box-folder 6/ 3 **Rainieri Research Materials, File 3 of 3 1934-1991**
Box-folder 6/ 4 **Visuals, Pictures, Clippings 1908-1983**
Box-folder 6/ 5 **Anna Damon (Ild) 1944**
Box-folder 6/ 6 **Correspondence with Prof. Herbert Shapiro 1913-1990**
Box-folder 6/ 7 **Memorial Tributes to Elaine Black Yoneda**