
Register of the Abraham Minkus Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles, 1945-1983

Collection number: MSS 040

Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

Los Angeles, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Abraham Minkus Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date (inclusive): 1945-1983

Collection number: MSS 040

Creator: Minkus, Albert

Extent: 4 boxes

1 1/2 linear feet

Repository: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research

Los Angeles, CA 90044

Abstract: Part of the larger Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles Collections, the Abraham Minkus Papers contain the materials created or collected by Minkus, a blacklisted Los Angeles teacher. The collection contains materials relating to Minkus' dismissal and subsequent lawsuits, as well as information on the cases of other blacklisted L.A. teachers.

Language: English

Provenance

The materials in this collection were donated to the Library by Abraham Minkus.

Access

The collection is available for research only at the Library's facility in Los Angeles. The Library is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Researchers are encouraged to call or email the Library indicating the nature of their research query prior to making a visit.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Abraham Minkus Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles, California.

Historical Context: Blacklisting and the McCarthy Era

The individual collections within the Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles Collection share a common historical framework, the Anti-Communist fervor of the Cold War Period and what is commonly referred to as the McCarthy Era. After the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in the ideological battle known as the Cold War. The identification of communists and other radicals through the use of federal and state legislative investigative committees and the punishment of those identified through firing and blacklisting comprised a successful U.S. tactic. The investigations spread from federal and other government employees to the entertainment industry, the professions, labor unions, and the private sector. The major players in these campaigns included, on the Federal level, Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). In California major players included California State Assemblyman (later State Senator) Nelson S. Dilworth, and State Senators Jack B. Tenney and Hugh M. Burns. All three served on the Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California (1945) and first Tenney and later Burns chaired the [California] Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities. Of special note are the Levering (1952) and Dilworth (1953) Acts. The Levering Act made refusal to fully cooperate with any state committee grounds for firing a teacher and the Dilworth Act gave local school boards investigating authority and also required that all teachers sign an oath denying any Communist affiliation.

Biography

Abraham Minkus was a major figure in the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers. A tenured teacher, Minkus was suspended and then dismissed from his job as an elementary school teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District after invoking the Fifth and First Amendments during a House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) Hearing held in March 1953. He unsuccessfully fought the dismissal all the way to the California Supreme Court. In 1977, he was a party to several suits seeking reinstatement and back pay for himself and other blacklisted teachers.

Minkus was born in 1914 in Chicago of immigrant parents. He graduated from high school in Chicago and moved to Los Angeles in 1932, graduating from UCLA with a Bachelor's in Education in 1934. He served as vice-president of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers for ten years. Active on a number of educational and progressive issues he was not only dismissed from teaching, but received bomb threats and hate-letters threatening his children. Unable to teach, he worked as a salesman under an assumed name.

Scope and Content

This collection contains correspondence, clippings, legal documents, and miscellaneous notes and documents relating to Minkus' dismissal and subsequent lawsuits. Also, included in the collection are documents relating to the dismissal and court cases of a number of other Los Angeles teachers and one Hawaiian teacher. Other Los Angeles teachers mentioned include: David Arkin, Alice Ball, Minna Cooper, Frances Eisenberg, Serril Gerber, Leon Goldin, Claire Kaye, Solly Rubenstein, June Sirell, Harry Shepro, and Jean Wilkinson. Except for a few biographical sketches and four Gerber family wills, the collection deals only with the blacklisting aspect of the lives of those mentioned.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into three series: Abraham Minkus, Other Los Angeles Teachers, and Other Documents.

Title: Frances Robman Eisenberg: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1928-1995

Physical Description: 4 boxes and 1 oversize box

Title: Florence Sloat Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1959-1991

Physical Description: 1 box

Title: Thomas Fagan Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1989-1990

Physical Description: 3 folders, 5 audio cassettes

Title: Greg Goldin Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1977

Physical Description: 1 box, 15 audio cassettes

Title: Ellen Chase Verdries Collection (Interviews/Paper): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1992-1996

Physical Description: 1 (half) box

Title: Jean Benson Wilkinson Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1953-1955

Physical Description: 1 folder

Title: Los Angeles Teachers Union Collection,

Date: 1933-1982

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Title: Dorothy Doyle Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers In Los Angeles,

Date: 1986

Physical Description: 1 audio tape

Title: Clipping Collection: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles,

Date: 1967-1982

Physical Description: 1 folder

Series 1. **Abraham Minkus, 1943-1983****Physical Description:** 19 folders**Scope and Content Note**

This series includes correspondence with Minkus' lawyers and the U.S. Department of Justice, Minkus' FBI file, notes, other documents, and case files from Minkus' several lawsuits. The lawsuits include: Los Angeles City School Board vs. Abraham Minkus (1953-1955), Abraham Minkus vs. Los Angeles City School Board (1977), Abraham Minkus and Serril Gerber vs. Los Angeles City School Board (1977), and Minkus, Gerber, Eisenberg, Arkin, Sirell and Cooper vs. Los Angeles City School Board (1977). A portion of Gerald L. K. Smith's FBI file is also included in this section. Smith was a proponent of "Christian American Nationalism," a "race-baiter" and a "native fascist." The file details a protest of a Smith speech in 1945 by, among others, Minkus and Charlotta Bass.

Box-folder 1/1-1/5	Correspondence
Box-folder 1/1	County of Los Angeles, 1977-1982
Box-folder 1/2	Law Offices of Melvin D. Morgan, 1981-1982
Box-folder 1/3-1/4	Law Offices of Silverton, Miller and Narvid [2 folders], 1977-1983
Box-folder 1/5	U.S. Department of Justice, 1978
Box-folder 1/6-1/7	FBI Files
Box-folder 1/6	Abraham Minkus, 1943-1968
Box-folder 1/7	Protest at Gerald L.K. Smith Speech, 1945
Box-folder 1/8	Meeting Notes, 1954, 1977, n.d.
Box-folder 1/9	Miscellaneous, 1953-1981, n.d.
Box-folder 1/10-2/7	Legal Documents
Box-folder 1/10	Statements, 1977, 1979, n.d.
Box-folder 1/11	Testimony, 1953
Box-folder 1/12-2/1	Los Angeles City Board of Education (LACBE) vs. Abraham Minkus
1/12	1953
2/1	1953-1954
Box-folder 2/2	Abraham Minkus vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1955, 1977
Box-folder 2/3-2/4	Minkus and Gerber vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education
2/3	1951, 1977-1980
2/4	1953, 1979-1980
Box-folder 2/5	Minkus, Gerber, Eisenberg, Arkin, Sirell and Cooper vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1977-1981
Box-folder 2/6	Declarations -- Minkus, Arkin, Cooper, and Sirell, [1977?]
Box-folder 2/7	Settlement Agreement -- Minkus, et al., 1982

Series 2. Other Los Angeles Teachers, 1953-1980

Physical Description: 17 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series includes legal documents, biographical sketches, income statements, and other materials relating to other Los Angeles teachers who were blacklisted. Of special interest is the miscellaneous material on Frances Eisenberg, which includes her letter requesting a copy of her FBI file (the actual file is in her collection).

Arrangement

Files are arranged alphabetically by teacher.

- Box-folder 2/8-2/9 **David Arkin**
- Box-folder 2/8 **Los Angeles City Board of Education vs., 1953-1955**
- Box-folder 2/9 **Miscellaneous, [1977?]**
- Box-folder 2/10 **Alice Ball vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1968**
- Box-folder 3/1-3/3 **Minna Cooper**
- Box-folder 3/1 **Los Angeles City Board of Education vs., 1954-1955**
- Box-folder 3/2 **Los Angeles City Board of Education vs. Cooper, Goldin, Sirell, Kaye, Rubenstein, and Arkin, [1954?]**
- Box-folder 3/3 **Miscellaneous, [1978?]**
- Box-folder 3/4-3/6 **Frances Robman Eisenberg**
- Box-folder 3/4 **Los Angeles City Board of Education vs., 1953-1955, 1977**
- Box-folder 3/5 **Eisenberg, Arkin, and Sirrell vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1978-1979**
- Box-folder 3/6 **Miscellaneous, 1975-1980**
- Box-folder 3/7 **Clarence and Doris Gerber -- Wills, 1977**
- Box-folder 3/8-3/11 **Serril Gerber**
- Box-folder 3/8 **Los Angeles City Board of Education vs., 1953-1954**
- Box-folder 3/9 **vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1953, 1977**
- Box-folder 3/10 **Retirement, 1974-1975, n.d.**
- Box-folder 3/11 **Miscellaneous [Includes Wills for Serril and Lillian], 1976-1979**
- Box-folder 3/12 **Harry Shepro -- Biography, 1954**
- Box-folder 3/13 **Los Angeles Board of Education vs. June Sirell, 1953-1955**
- Box-folder 3/14 **Jean B. Wilkinson -- History of Case, [1954?]**

Series 3. Other Documents, 1947-1982

Physical Description: 16 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series includes subject and background files related to the blacklisting and court cases as well as two issues of the *L.A. Teacher*, newspaper clippings, and materials on a teacher blacklisting case from Hawaii (John Reinecke and Aiko Reinecke vs. State of Hawaii).

Box-folder 3/15	Assembly Bills, 1959-1978
Box-folder 3/16	Code of Civil Procedure, n.d.
Box-folder 3/17	Communist Party, 1953-1959
Box-folder 3/18	Compensation Cases, 1975-1976, n.d.
Box-folder 4/1	Employee Rights, 1961, n.d.
Box-folder 4/2	Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education, 1954-1980, n.d.
Box-folder 4/3	Loyalty Oaths, 1948, 1953, n.d.
Box-folder 4/4-4/5	Teachers
Box-folder 4/4	Dismissal, 1964, 1966
Box-folder 4/5	Resignation, [1957?]
Box-folder 4/6	Reinecke vs. State of Hawaii, 1976-1978
Box-folder 4/7-4/8	Miscellaneous Cases [2 folders], 1945-1976, n.d.
Box-folder 4/9	<i>L.A. Teacher</i>, 1953, 1954
Box-folder 4/10-4/12	Clippings [3 folders], 1947-1982