



## Southern California Library Labor Resources

Many of the Southern California Library's collections focus on L.A.'s labor history, including papers of organizations and individuals. Highlights from the Library's labor archives are below. The Library also holds thousands of pamphlets, subject files, periodicals, posters, books, videos, and audio materials related to labor issues.

- **Union Files Collection (1920s–1980s):** A collection of materials from over 150 unions spanning the decades from the 1920s through the 1980s. It includes union by-laws, constitutions, contracts and agreements, newsletters, fliers, financial records, minutes, correspondence, reports, organizing materials, manuals, and posters. The majority of the material comes from unions active in the Southern California area, and there is a small amount of Spanish-language material.
- **Leo Gallagher Papers (1920s–1960s):** Leo Gallagher was a civil liberties lawyer who defended labor activists, and served as the lawyer for the International Labor Defense. The collection documents his works, under ILD auspices, as an advocate for labor organizers being prosecuted in the late 1920s and early 1930s under California's Criminal Syndication law. There is also correspondence between Gallagher and JB McNamara, who had been convicted of the 1910 *Los Angeles Times* bombing.
- **Belle Parsons Clewe Papers (1930s):** Belle Persons Clewe was a teacher in the Los Angeles school district from the early part of the century until approximately the late 1930s or early 1940s. As a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, she was active in local peace and disarmament efforts. The bulk of the material in this collection derives from a 1931 incident at Fairfax High School in which Clewe faced charges of "un-Americanism" for involving her students in disarmament issues, leading to her reassignment to another school.
- **Los Angeles Film and Photo League (1930s–1940s):** In the 1930s, the Los Angeles Film and Photo League, a workers collective, produced its own films to document or dramatize issues such as poverty in Los Angeles during the Depression, farm worker strikes (El Monte berry pickers, Kern County cotton workers), and labor demonstrations in San Pedro and San Diego. There are also several short films on the campaign to free Tom Mooney, the California labor activist who was imprisoned—and

eventually pardoned—for a conviction in connection with the bombing of a 1916 parade in San Francisco.

- **Harry Bridges Papers (1930s–1950s):** Harry Bridges was a longshoreman from Australia who immigrated to California and was active on the docks in fighting for labor rights. He was instrumental in getting the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union recognized as the bargaining unit for the entire Pacific coast, and served as its international president from 1937 to 1977. During his long union career, the U.S. government made four unsuccessful attempts to deport Bridges from the United States. This collection documents the long and ultimately successful legal battle to prevent the government from deporting him.
- **Earl Robinson Papers (1930s–1950s):** Composer Earl Robinson wrote classic labor songs such as “Joe Hill,” “Ballad for Americans,” and “The House I Live In.” This collection offers a resource for examining the cultural dimension of labor and progressive movements since the 1930s. It includes documentation of Robinson’s work as a songwriter, and correspondence with his associates and friends, including Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and others in the People’s Song movement.
- **The Hollywood Studio Strike and Hollywood Blacklist Collections (1930s–1950s):** In 1946 and 1947, a series of strikes took place involving the major studios, the rank-and-file federation of the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU), and the more conservative International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE). The CSU was accused of being a Communist front, and ultimately lost the struggle for a democratic labor movement in Hollywood. This was a prelude to the Blacklist that would soon permeate the U.S. film industry, when hundreds of writers, actors, and directors were denied employment because of their political beliefs. The Studio Strike collection includes short-lived strike newspapers, flyers, and other materials created by the CSU and the IATSE. The Blacklist collection includes newspaper and magazine articles of personal accounts, speeches, and obituaries covering the events.
- **Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born and Los Angeles Civil Rights Congress (1930s–1970s):** These collections shed light on the convergence between labor and civil liberties in Southern California. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, both organizations defended Black, Latino, and Asian workers whose civil rights were being undermined, especially after the passage of the 1940 Smith Act, which targeted people accused of advocating to “overthrow” the government, and the 1952 Walter-McCarran Act, which did and still does empower the government to refuse entry into the U.S. to persons that it considers to be “subversives.”

- **California CIO Records (1940s):** Records from the Los Angeles office of the California CIO Council, which occupied a building during the 1940s not far from the Library's current site in South Los Angeles. The office was responsible for conducting research for the state CIO Council, gathering and analyzing information about issues such as collective bargaining, job classifications, wages, unemployment, and the Taft-Hartley Law of 1947, which required union officers to sign loyalty oaths. The law hastened the demise of progressive elements in the CIO, and in 1950 the national CIO revoked the state council's charter.
- **Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles Collection (1940s–1950s):** During the 1940s and 50s, an accusation of "un-American activities" was enough to put your career, and even freedom, in jeopardy. Teachers were among the many that were impacted, and it is estimated that hundreds of teachers in Los Angeles alone lost their jobs. The collection tells the story of eight individual teachers who found themselves on a blacklist. The collections include personal papers of blacklisted teachers, taped radio interviews, oral history transcripts, letters, and legal and other documents.
- **Luisa Moreno and Robert Kenny Collections (1940s–1970s):** Robert Kenny was a civil liberties lawyer, counsel to the Hollywood Ten (screenwriters and directors who were blacklisted during the McCarthy era), and the first president of the Southern California Library's board. His papers provide documentation on the defense of foreign-born labor activists. Of special note is the series on Guatemalan-born Luisa Moreno, a trade union activist who journeyed across the nation from the Great Depression to the Cold War mobilizing seamstresses in Spanish Harlem, cigar rollers in Florida, and cannery women in California. Facing deportation proceedings, she refused to testify against Longshoremen leader Harry Bridges in exchange for staying in the country, and left the U.S. in 1950 under pressure from the government. The Moreno files document the effort to prevent her deportation. The Library also holds other papers relating to Moreno, including her scrapbook.
- **Farm Workers Collection (1940s–1990s):** California's resource-rich lands have been the site of many farm worker struggles over the decades, as workers battled an abusive system of labor contractors. In the 1970s, the United Farm Workers, founded by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, was able to achieve major gains in the fight for fair wages and decent living conditions by gathering widespread support to boycott grapes and lettuce from California growers, bringing growers to the bargaining table. This collection documents the UFW's struggles through reports, writings, correspondence, union documents, fliers, and clippings.
- **Asociacion de Vendedores Ambulantes (Street Vendors Association) Records (1980s–1990s):** In the late 1980's, street vendors—many of them Central American immigrants who were the sole support of their families, with few other options for

making a living—began organizing to legalize street vending in Los Angeles. The vendors, often women, also opened a credit union, and shared educational resources. This collection includes documentation of their fight, including flyers, educational comic books, and records/testimonies of police encounters.

- **Slobodan Dimitrov Photo Collection (1990s):** Beginning in the 1990s, as trade unions were already well into a decline, photographer Slobodan Dimitrov began a project to photograph workers, worker movements, and labor leaders across the Southland, in an effort to capture the changing nature of labor characterized by the decline of a once thriving manufacturing base, rapid growth of the service industry, wide-scale use of outsourcing, and shifts in the workforce as immigrant labor has increased. This collection includes photos on L.A. labor movements, campaigns, and activists, including Justice for Janitors and the New Otani Hotel campaign.
- **Koreatown Immigrant Workers Advocates (1990s–2010s).** KIWA was created in 1992 out of the ashes of the Los Angeles Civil Unrest. It has become one of the most established workers centers in the country and one that organizes across language and ethnicities, working with both Latino and Korean undocumented, low-wage, immigrant workers. Its landmark Assi Market Campaign, documented in the Library's KIWA collection, changed L.A. and labor history. The campaign launched in late 2001 when ten workers from Assi Super, Koreatown's largest Korean supermarket, staged a walk-out to protest their work hours being cut. After a five-year boycott, a year of daily picketing, a media campaign, and other actions taken by workers and community supporters, the powerful employer was finally forced to settle with workers.