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## **Abramowitz, Howard; Papers**

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M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Howard Abramowitz Papers
<b>ID:</b>	apap062
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1937-1985
<b>Physical Description:</b>	0.6 cubic ft.
<b>Physical Location:</b>	The materials are located onsite in the department.
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Abstract:</b>	This collection contains research files created by and several typescript essays written by sociologist Howard D. Abramowitz. The collection amply documents his interest in the American labor movement and, in particular, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and sheds light on the scholarly research that he completed during the final years of his life.

### Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Identification of specific item, series, box, folder, Howard Abramowitz Papers, 1937-1985. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York (hereafter referred to as the Abramowitz Papers).

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## Biographical History

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Howard David Abramowitz was born in Newark, New Jersey on June 18, 1930. He graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn and received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Brooklyn College.

In 1951, Abramowitz, who had been active in left-wing politics since his early teens, was drafted and sent to Korea. He won a Silver Star, was given a certificate of honorable separation and, as required by U.S. law, entered the Enlisted Reserve. Two years later, the U.S. Army concluded that he was a

security risk owing to his membership in the Communist Party in 1948-49 and issued him an undesirable discharge. Abramowitz and co-defendant John Henry Harmon III filed suit, and in 1958 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that soldiers' discharges must be based solely on their military service records. As a result, the U.S. Army upgraded Abramowitz's and Harmon's discharges to honorable and reviewed the discharges of 720 other former soldiers.

Abramowitz earned a master's degree in economics from the New School of Social Research, and completed his Ph.D. at New York University. He worked for a brief time as a researcher for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and at New York University's Institute of Industrial Relations. In 1964, he began teaching sociology at Skidmore College (Saratoga Springs, N.Y.), where he remained until his death.

While at Skidmore, Abramowitz researched the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the Red Scare that followed the First World War and was working on a book on the Red Scare at the time of his death. He was also an active supporter of the peace movement, civil libertarianism, the civil rights movement, and anti-poverty initiatives. In addition, he edited a Saratoga Springs alternative newspaper, the Spa City Spectator, and planned a 1989 conference on economic diversification and employment issues.

Abramowitz died of lung cancer on April 9, 1990 at the age of fifty-nine. He was survived by his wife, Barbara Joslyn Abramowitz, his children, Karen Abramowitz Kinbar and Adam Abramowitz, and his stepchildren, Amy Joslyn and Nicholas Joslyn.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection contains research files created by and several typescript essays written by sociologist Howard D. Abramowitz. The collection amply documents his interest in the American labor movement and, in particular, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and sheds light on the scholarly research that he completed during the final years of his life.

Some of the materials in this collection may be of interest to scholars of the CIO. The collection contains a carbon copy of a twenty-six page letter that CIO head Philip Murray wrote to President Harry S. Truman urging him to veto the Taft-Hartley Act, a transcript of a 1937 radio speech that United Auto Workers (UAW) President Walter P. Reuther delivered in his capacity as a CIO Vice President, and photocopies of internal CIO documents concerning the CIO's 1949 expulsion of the United Furniture Workers (UFW) and the UFW's 1950 return to the CIO.

The collection also contains information about several of the CIO's constituent unions and about CIO leaders' attitudes toward Communists within their unions. Documents detailing the activities the UAW include the transcript of Reuther's 1937 speech mentioned above, copies of correspondence (1945) between Reuther and UAW Fair Practices Committee head George W. Crockett concerning the insertion of clauses barring racial discrimination in UAW contracts, copies of press clippings about Crockett's work, a typescript copy of a position paper issued by UAW president Leonard Woodcock in 1964, and a typescript copy of a biography of Reuther written by left-wing UAW activist John W. Anderson.

Materials concerning the UFW include carbon copies and photocopies of reports (1940, 1950) detailing the results of representation elections, photocopies of fliers and internal documents concerning the UFW's 1949 expulsion from the CIO on the grounds that it was Communist-dominated and its 1950 return to the CIO, and newsletters (1973-74) published by UFW Local 140 (Bronx County, New York). Documents concerning the United Mine Workers of America include carbon copies and photocopies of letters (1937, 1938) detailing President John Brophy's attitude toward Communist activists in the CIO and photocopied portions of Brophy's typescript autobiography, *Twenty-five Years in the CIO*. Some of the UAW and UFW materials in the collection are photocopies of documents held by the Archive of Labor History and Urban Affairs, University Archives, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. The Woodcock position paper and the biography of Reuther were given to Abramowitz by John W. Anderson.

The collection lacks information about Abramowitz's lawsuit against the U.S. Army, which culminated in the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling (*Harmon v. Bruckner*) that the armed forces could not downgrade soldiers' discharges on account of political activities undertaken prior to induction. Also absent are documents that would illuminate Abramowitz's personal life, furnish detailed information about his lifelong involvement in left-wing causes, or how he used his research on the CIO in his scholarly writings or classroom lectures. However, the collection does contain several typescript versions of two published articles about the Red Scare of 1919-20 Abramowitz wrote during the final years of his life.

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## Arrangement of the Collection

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The collection is arranged in two series: CIO Research Files and Writings.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

### Revision Description

Converted to EAD Encoded in EAD by Jodi Boyle 2015 December 2015

## Processing Information

Processed in 1999 November 3 by Bonita L. Weddle.

## Acquisition Information

All items in this manuscript group were donated to the University Libraries, M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives by Allen Kifer in 1990 September.

## Access

Access to this record group is unrestricted.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Labor
- Communism -- New York (State) -- New York -- History -- 20th century
- Labor unions and communism -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Files by subject
- Abramowitz, Howard, 1930-1990
- Reuther, Walter, 1907-1970

- Congress of Industrial Organizations (U.S.) -- History

## Collection Inventory

### CIO Research Files, 1937-1974

Physical Description: 0.35 cubic ft.

#### Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

#### Scope and Contents

This series contains material that Abramowitz collected while researching the history of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Among the highlights in this collection are carbon copies and photocopies of letters (1937-39) concerning the attitudes of CIO leaders John Brophy and Philip Murray toward Communists active in CIO unions, a partial photocopy of Brophy's typescript autobiography (1948), and a carbon copy of a twenty-six page letter Murray wrote to President Harry S. Truman urging him to veto the Taft-Hartley Act (1947). The collection also contains a number of important documents concerning the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Walter Reuther, among them transcripts of a 1945 speech that Reuther delivered, documents concerning racial discrimination and UAW Fair Employment Practices Committee Executive Director George W. Crockett, a typescript of UAW contract demands presented to the General Motors Corporation in 1964, and a typescript (c.1970) of John W. Anderson's scathing biography of Reuther. Other materials of interest document the United Furniture Workers (UFW): copies of representation election reports (1940, 1950), photocopied fliers and internal CIO documents concerning the UFW's 1949 expulsion from the CIO on the grounds that it was "Communist dominated" and its 1950 return to the CIO fold, and newsletters (1973-74) published by UFW Local 140 (Bronx County, New York). Also included are Abramowitz's notes on his oral-history interviews (1973, 1974) of an anti-Communist International Union of Electrical Workers activist identified only as "Raskin."

Title/Description	Instances	
Brophy, John, 1937-1948	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 1
Murray, Philip, 1937-1938194019471950	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 2
United Furniture Workers (UFW), 1940-1946	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 3
United Furniture Workers (UFW), 1949-1974	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 4
United Automobile Workers (UAW), 1945	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 5

Position Paper of Leonard Woodcock-1964 UAW Negotiations, 1964

	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 6
Anderson, "Walter P. Reuther," folder 1 (unpub. TS) (1 of 3), ca. 1970	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 7
Anderson, "Walter P. Reuther," folder 2 (unpub. TS), (2 of 3), ca. 1970	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 8
Anderson, "Walter P. Reuther," folder 3 (unpub. TS), (3 of 3), ca. 1970	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 9
Notes from Interviews with Raskin, 1973-1974	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 10
Photograph of James Matles and others, Undated	Box 1 (1-CIO Research Files)	Folder 11

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## Writings, 1980-1985

Physical Description: 0.15 cubic ft.

### Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

### Scope and Contents

This series consists of various typescript versions of two articles concerning the persecution of socialists and communists after the First World War. Some were written for presentation at various scholarly conferences and others in anticipation of publication. The first article, which concerned anti-radical activity in three communities in upstate New York, was published as "The Democratic Elitism of Dye and Ziegler: Traditional Elitist Anti-Democratic Theory in Modern Garb?" by the Eastern Sociological Society in 1981. The final version of the second article, which concerned the Red Scare in Detroit and other cities, appeared in *Popular Culture and Political Change in Modern America* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), a collection of essays edited by Ronald Edsforth and Larry Bennett. One of the later drafts contains Edsforth's and Bennett's extensive comments and suggestions.

Title/Description	Instances	
"The Democratic Elitism of Dye and Ziegler; or, We Should Be Thankful for Elite Domination" (unpub. TS), ca. 1980	Box 1 (2-Writings)	Folder 12
"The Democratic Elitism of Dye and Ziegler: Traditional Elitist Anti-Democratic Theory in Modern Garb?" (unpub. TS), 1981	Box 1 (2-Writings)	Folder 13
The Red Scare of 1919-1920 a Mass Hysteria? A Look at Detroit, Principally, but at Other Places, Too (unpub. TS), ca. 1982	Box 1 (2-Writings)	Folder 14



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"The Red Scare of Detroit: Was There a Public Hysteria?" (unpub. TS), 1983	Box 1 (2-Writings)	Folder 15
"Historians and the Red Scare of 1919-1920 in Detroit as a Mass Hysteria: Coney Island Mirror or Accurate Reflection?" (unpub. TS), 1983	Box 1 (2-Writings)	Folder 16
"The Red Scare of 1919-1920" (unpub. TS) and comments, ca. 1985	Box 1 (2-Writings)	Folder 17
"The Press and the Red Scare of 1919-1920" (unpub. TS), ca. 1985	Box 1 (2-Writings)	Folder 18

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