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Semel, Elisabeth; Collection

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M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

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Summary Information

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| Repository: | M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives |
| Title: | Elisabeth Semel Papers |
| ID: | apap332 |
| Date [inclusive]: | 1977-2012 |
| Physical Description: | 8.66 cubic ft. |
| Physical Location: | The materials are located onsite in the department. |
| Language of the Material: | English . |
| Abstract: | Elisabeth Semel's papers primarily consist of articles published from the 1990s to early 2000s used by Semel in her research and work concerning the death penalty. |

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Identification of specific item, series, box, folder, Elisabeth Semel Papers, 1977-2012. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York (hereafter referred to as the Semel Papers).

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Biographical History

Elisabeth A. Semel began her law career when she graduated from the School of Law at the University of California, Davis in 1975. She practiced privately from 1980 to 1997, working solo until she created Semel and Feldman as a partner in 1983. In 1997 she began serving as the director of the American Bar Association Death Penalty Representation Project in Washington, D.C., where she remained until 2001.

When Semel left D.C., she returned to California to become an Acting Clinical Professor at Law at Berkeley Law. In 2005 she became the first director of the Berkeley Law Death Penalty Clinic, and a Clinical Professor at Law, positions that she holds today. At the Clinic, Semel supervises students who represent clients facing the death penalty during all stages of the proceedings. Her research focuses on the role of race in the administration of the death penalty, and includes representation in juries.

Over the course of her career, Semel has published many articles and opinion pieces on the subject of the death penalty and related criminal justice topics. She often comments in mainstream media on current death penalty topics and issues, particularly the rights of those facing a death sentence. She has received several awards including the Outstanding Legal Service Award from the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty in 2008, and most recently the Death Penalty Focus Abolition Award in 2011.

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Scope and Contents

Semel's papers, for the most part, contain articles about the death penalty published over the last few decades. The articles cover either specific state or federal cases, or issues related to the death penalty such as race, mental illness, or public opinion. The collection also includes court transcripts from select cases, and a couple of surveys performed regarding the death penalty.

The collection has been divided into two series; one for specific cases arranged by state and the other for topics related to the death penalty. Within Series 1, all federal cases have been placed under "Federal" first, then arranged alphabetically by the title of the file.

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Arrangement of the Collection

The collection is organized into the following series: Cases and Issues and Topics.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

Revision Description

Encoded in EAD by Sharon Wolff 2015

Processing Information

Processed in 2015 by Sharon Wolff.

Access

Access to this record group is unrestricted.

Copyright

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Acquisition Information

Donated by Elisabeth Semel in 2012.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Death Penalty
- Capital punishment
- Discrimination in capital punishment
- Articles
- Criminal court records
- Transcripts
- Semel, Elisabeth A.

Collection Inventory

Cases and Surveys, 1981-2012

Physical Description: 5.66 cubic ft.

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Contents

This series contains articles pertaining to specific cases, arranged by state and then by last name of the case subject. The list includes the District of Columbia and is missing four states: Alaska, North Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming. California is the most represented, carrying more extensive materials in the cases of Robert Alton Harris, Michael Morales, and Darrell "Young Elk" Rich. Similarly, Texas contains more material for Juan Garza and Thomas Miller-El. Federal cases are filed under "Federal" and then arranged alphabetically from there with the section consisting mainly of death penalty surveys, material on Timothy McVeigh, and a few other federal cases. Various surveys that have been conducted on the death penalty are included along with the articles.

| Title/Description | Instances | |
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| ACLU - Alabama Death Penalty Study, October, 2005 | Box 1 (1-Cases and Surveys) | Folder 1 |
| ACLU - The Hidden Death Tax, Undated | Box 1 (1-Cases and Surveys) | Folder 2 |
| ACLU - Death by Geography, Undated | Box 1 (1-Cases and Surveys) | Folder 3 |
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| California - Death Penalty Statistics, 19931995-199620022006-2008Undated | Box 1 (1-Cases and Surveys) | Folder 21 |
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Physical Description: 3 cubic ft.

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Contents

This series contains articles covering different issues dealing with the death penalty including costs, public opinion, and race. The largest sections are counsel, mental retardation, and opinions, with articles from the 1990s to the early 2000s. Notably, the opinion section contains articles on international opinion as well as domestic views on the death penalty.

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