

Ralph H. Gundlach papers, 1918-1974

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Gundlach, Ralph H. (Ralph Harrelson), 1902-1978
Title	Ralph H. Gundlach papers
Dates	1918-1974 (inclusive) 1918 1974 1936-1974 (bulk) 1936 1974
Quantity	1.47 cubic feet (4 boxes)
Collection Number	0686 (Accession No. 0686-003)
Summary	Former University of Washington professor who was fired in 1949 because of his affiliation with the Communist Party
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	Open to all users.
Languages	English

Biographical Note

Ralph Harrelson Gundlach was an associate professor of psychology who taught at the University of Washington from 1927 until January 1949, when he was fired following hearings held by the Washington Legislature's Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities and by the U.W. Faculty Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom. The dismissal of Gundlach and two other U.W. professors—the first formally acknowledged faculty firings in the United States for Communist-related activities—set a precedent for the rest of the country to follow in the 1950s.

Gundlach was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1902. He enrolled at the University of Washington in 1920, received a B.A. in political science in 1924, and an M.A. in psychology in 1925. He then went to the University of Illinois where, in the summer of 1927, he completed all requirements for a Ph.D. except for his dissertation. He left to become a lecturer at the U.W. but returned to Illinois temporarily in December 1927 to finish his Ph.D., which he was awarded in 1928. Gundlach continued to teach at the U.W., was promoted to assistant professor in 1930, and to associate professor in 1937. He developed a reputation as a leader in his field and spent summers teaching at other institutions, including the University of California, Berkeley (1939 and during a leave of absence from the U.W., 1942-44); the University of Southern California (1940); the University of British Columbia (1944); the University of Iowa (1945); and New York University (1946).

Gundlach found himself at the center of controversy throughout his career at the University. In 1944 the U.S. government wanted him to evaluate servicemen, but the Civil Service Commission failed to

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give him a security clearance because they thought he might be a Communist sympathizer. At the U.W. Gundlach often became the center of negative attention because of his field of study and methods of teaching. Dean Edwin Guthrie, also a psychologist at the University, disagreed sharply with many of Gundlach's practices and became his nemesis throughout the 1940s. Practices such as distributing questionnaires on race relations and anti-Semitism met with disapproval from Guthrie and other members of the faculty and administration. Another incident involved a 1946 survey that Gundlach sent to reporters in Washington D.C., asking their opinions of Washington's Congressmen. The results were favorable for Hugh DeLacy, and Gundlach leaked the information. After DeLacy publicized the results and attributed them to a U.W. survey, Gundlach found himself criticized for improper conduct and for hindering the school's efforts to remain aloof from partisan politics. The scope of Gundlach's teaching also irked some faculty at the University who thought his psychology courses dwelt too heavily on political and economic theory and infringed on the territory of other departments. This disapproval came despite the recognition Gundlach had received as a leader in his field and his service as President of the Western Psychological Association. These controversies had tangible results for Gundlach, who did not receive promotions when he was eligible or get a salary increase when the University restored faculty salaries to pre-Depression levels.

Redbaiting became a dominant feature of Washington politics during the election of 1946, and it did not take long before it affected the University. Albert F. Canwell was elected as a freshman Legislator in that year and later created the Interim Committee on Un-American Activities (better known as the Canwell Committee). In July 1948, this committee held hearings on the Communist activities of University faculty. The Committee subpoenaed numerous faculty members whom it suspected might be members of the Communist party or Communist sympathizers. Originally Gundlach was one of nine professors who announced they would not respond to the orders, but soon became the first to recant. In his testimony before the Committee, Gundlach refused to answer questions about his political affiliations.

Although the Canwell Committee could not fire Gundlach, his behavior at the hearings led to more problems. The eleven-member Faculty Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom met between October and December 1948 to consider the cases of Gundlach and five other professors. Although it did not have final authority, this committee was charged with conducting an investigation and making a recommendation to U.W. President Raymond B. Allen and the Board of Regents. Gundlach had a lawyer at the hearings and continued his evasive behavior, arguing that because he had never been a member of the Communist party, the charges did not apply to him. At the hearings, members of the Communist party testified that Gundlach had been present at meetings with them and that they had assumed he was at least a Communist sympathizer. The committee concluded that membership in the Communist party did not warrant dismissal and recommended that two professors who admitted their Communism remain on the faculty; the committee came to a different conclusion regarding Gundlach. The faculty committee found no evidence to show that he was or was not a Communist, but they said they were dissatisfied with his "evasive" and "self-serving" testimony, and that he was surely a party "sympathizer." The committee decided that the University should fire Gundlach because he had failed to answer President Allen's questions directly, which showed a neglect of duty toward the University. Also, the committee expressed its displeasure with Gundlach's "biased" research in social psychology. The committee did not recommend firing any of the other professors, even those who were currently members of the Communist party.

The Board of Regents was to decide the fate of Gundlach and the two party members, but first President Allen made his own recommendations. Allen advised the regents to follow the advice of the tenure committee and fire Gundlach, but he also recommended firing Herbert Phillips and Joseph Butterworth, the two professors who were active Communists. Allen agreed with the tenure committee that two professors who had renounced their Communist views, Garland Ethel and Harold Eby, should be allowed to continue teaching. Allen refused to pass judgment on Melvin Jacobs, who had renounced

his former Communist membership but had once denied his previous involvement. In January 1949, the regents followed Allen's advice and fired Gundlach, Butterworth, and Phillips, and placed Ethel, Eby, and Jacobs on two-year probation. Gundlach's situation then worsened when he was convicted of contempt of a legislative committee for his uncooperativeness with the Canwell Committee. For this offense the court fined him \$250 and sentenced him to thirty days in jail.

Gundlach made many attempts to clear his name and punish those who had ended his career at the University. After his firing in 1949, Gundlach brought suit against President Allen and several New York newspapers for articles in which Allen was quoted as saying that the three faculty members (which would include Gundlach) were dismissed for being members of the Communist party. Allen claimed he had been misquoted; the newspapers printed retractions; and Gundlach withdrew the suit. Gundlach sought a lawyer to file a tenure lawsuit against the U.W., but the attorneys Gundlach approached deemed the case to have insufficient legal grounds. Gundlach and a friend at Amherst College, Colston Warne, also lobbied the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to conduct a speedy investigation of the U.W. dismissals, but nothing came of these efforts until seven years later. At that time the Association decided it was too late for censure.

Despite his unsuccessful efforts to litigate against the University, Gundlach continued to be a recognized leader in his field. Shortly after his firing from the University, he received scholarly endorsements from various professional organizations, including the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the Consumers Union, and the American Psychological Association. The Association conducted a peer survey in 1954 which resulted in responses which tended to verify Gundlach's objectivity and professionalism. He prospered as a private psychotherapist in New York City and worked as a consultant to the New York Medical College. Gundlach continued to publish extensively in psychology journals and, in his own words, continued working for "lost causes," such as Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, for which Gundlach and other psychologists submitted a brief.

Gundlach retired to Great Britain in 1973 and died in London on August 15, 1978.

Content Description

The papers include letters, speeches and writings, court papers, notes, ephemera, and newspaper clippings. The accession contains subject series and subgroups dealing mainly with the investigations into Gundlach's alleged Communist activities, with his dismissal from the University, the subsequent lawsuits, and his attempts to exonerate himself. Subject series are included for some of the organizations which Gundlach supported and critics labeled as communist fronts, such as the Consumers Union. Gundlach's support of Spanish Civil War refugees is also documented. Among the other subject series is one on Paul Robeson, with whom Gundlach established a friendship, and another on George Hewitt, an informant for the Canwell Committee. The Hewitt series consists largely of letters in which Gundlach attempts to exonerate himself and debunk Hewitt's testimony. The subject series, "What is a Communist?" (Gundlach's title), is comprised of materials sometimes used in his applied psychology classes before the Canwell hearings. "Saga of Federal Clearance," also entitled by Gundlach, documents his unsuccessful attempts to obtain a position with the U.S. government. The subgroup, U.W. Seattle Repertory

Playhouse Archives Fund, documents Gundlach's efforts to help raise funds for the preparation of a chronicle of the Playhouse, which ceased to function in 1951 because of financial problems brought on largely by loss of business following Canwell Committee investigations. The speeches and writings

included in several of the subject series and subgroups contain Gundlach's explanations or remarks describing the particular subject series or subgroup

Major correspondents include Raymond B. Allen; K. L. Chang; Hugh DeLacy; Gundlach's wife, Bonnie Bird Gundlach; Florence B. James, director of the Seattle Repertory Playhouse; Anny (Anci) Koppel; Arthur Langlie; Bernis Thompson; Colston E. Warne; the American Association of University Professors; the American Psychological Association; the Spanish Refugee Appeal of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee; the University of Washington; and the U.W. School of Drama.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Creator's literary rights transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Information regarding a particular subject may be found in several subject series and subgroups of the papers. Items regarding the Spanish Civil War, for example, can be found in Outgoing Letters; in the subject series, Adoption of an Orphan of the Spanish Civil War; Committee to Aid Spanish Republicans; and the Medical Bureau and North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy; and in the subgroup, the Spanish Refugee Appeal of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee.

Acquisition Information

Gundlach donated the papers on February 7, 1967, and in August 1974.

Processing Note

Accession nos. 0686-001 and 686-002 were merged April 20, 1998, to form accession no. 0686-003, for which a new inventory was created.

Related Materials

Manuscripts and University Archives has the papers of several other faculty members and administrators who were involved in the Communist hearings and controversies. See also U.W. Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom, accession nos. 70-30 and 78-24 for records of the committee's investigations of Gundlach and other faculty.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Personal Papers

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1	Outgoing Letter - Re Political Asylum For Spanish Nationals [view]	1948
General Correspondence		
Box/Folder		
1/2	James, Burton	1948
1/2	James, Florence [view]	1948-1974
1/3	Misc. [view]	1939-1973
Speeches And Writings		
Box/Folder		
1/4	Remarks on period from 1939 to 1943 [view]	1967
1/5	Remarks on the Rosenberg Case	undated
Subject Series		
Box/Folder		
1/6	Adoption of an Orphan of the Spanish Civil War [view]	1939-1946
American Association of University Professors		
Box/Folder		
1/7	General Correspondence [view]	1948-1956
1/8	Speeches and Writings - "Supplementary Statement of Ralph H. Gundlach Concerning His Dismissal from the University of Washington" [view]	1949
1/9	Speeches and Writings of Others	1950
1/10	Reports - "Academic Freedom, Tenure"	1947

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	American Psychological Association	
Box/Folder		
1/11	General Correspondence	1949-1956
1/12	Reports Of Gundlach - "Report on Developments"	1950
1/13	Reports Of Others - "On the Dismissal of Dr. Ralph H. Gundlach from The University of Washington" [view]	1951
1/14	Survey - "Of Opinions of the Published Work of Ralph Gundlach"	1954
1/15	Newsletters	1952-1954
Box/Folder		
1/16	Committee to Aid Spanish Republicans	1946
	Consumer's Union	
Box/Folder		
1/17	Incoming Letters (A-Z)	1938-1943
1/18	Speeches and Writings - Remarks on Consumer's Union	1967
1/19	Newsletters	1940-1943
1/20	Clippings	1939-1943
Box/Folder		
1/21	Hewitt, George [view]	1948-1954
	Indusco, Inc., (american Committee In Aid Of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives)	
Box/Folder		
1/22	General Correspondence	1946-1949

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/23	Speeches and Writings - Remarks on Indusco, Inc.	1967
1/24	Reports	1946
1/25	Lists - Books Sent to China	1948
1/26	Photographs - Of a Chinese Indusco, Inc. Member	1949
1/27	Clippings	1944-1945
Box/Folder		
1/28	Libel Suit Against Allen and NYC Papers [view]	1949
	Medical Bureau and North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy	
Box/Folder		
1/29	General Correspondence	1942
1/30	Legislation	1945
1/31	Pamphlets	1943
1/32	Photo Brochure	1939
1/33	Newsletters	1946
1/34	Clippings	1945-1946
	Robeson, Paul	
Box/Folder		
1/35	General Correspondence	1947, 1967-1971
1/36	Speeches and Writings - "Some Anecdotes, 1945-47"	1971
1/37	List - "Dates of Certain Events Relating to Paul Robeson"	1968
1/38	Song - "Paul Robeson" By Jacobo Carcamo	1955

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/39	Clippings	1963, 68
	"Saga of Federal Clearance"	
Box/Folder		
2/1	General Correspondence	1944-1948
2/2	Questionnaires - re Communist Background	1944
2/3	Job Description - Specialist For Psychology, P-6	undated
2/4	Ephemera	1943
Box/Folder		
2/5	Survey of House of Representatives Correspondents	1946
2/6	Tenure Suit	1949-1952
	UW Issues	
	General Correspondence	
Box/Folder		
2/7	Allen, Raymond B.	1948-1949
2/8	Bird, Bonnie	1948-1949
2/9	Misc.	1936-1962
2/10	Of Others	1948-1949
2/11	Unidentified	1948
Box/Folder		
2/12	Reports	1949
2/13	Speeches and Writings	1948

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2/14	Complaints - Edward H. Lauer vs. Ralph H. Gundlach	undated
2/15	Lists	undated
2/16	Programs and Announcements	1948
2/17	News Releases	1948
2/18	Newsletters	1948
2/19	Notes	undated
2/20	Clippings	1949
	"What is a Communist"	
Box/Folder		
2/21	Speeches and Writings - Of Others	1934-1948
2/22	Legislation - New York Act That Proposes to Bar Subversive Educators From Employment	1949
2/23	Comic Book - <i>Is This Tomorrow: America Under Communism!</i>	1947
2/24	List - Subversive Organizations and Schools	undated
2/25	Pamphlets	undated
2/26	Clippings	1946-1949
2/27	Ephemera	undated
Box/Folder		
2/28	WWI and WWII Material	1918-1945
Court Papers		
Box/Folder		
3/1,2	State of Washington vs. Ralph Gundlach	1949-1950

Container(s)	Description	Dates
3/3	Julius Rosenberg and Ethel Rosenberg vs. U.S.	1952
Box/Folder		
3/4	Questionnaires - Re Adult Education	1947-1948
3/5	Legislation - Re Adult Education	1945
3/6	Publications - <i>The Players Magazine</i>	1941-1942
3/7	Ephemera	1950

Davis (marian) Scholarship Fund, 1963-1973

Box-folder3/8

Pacific Northwest Labor School

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
3/9	Organizational Features	1944-1946
3/10	General Correspondence	1945-1947
3/11	Minutes - Of The Seattle Labor School Conference	1945
3/12	Catalogues And Curricula	1946-1947
3/13	Newsletters	1949
3/14	Subject Series - Wea Summer School	1946

Spanish Refugee Appeal Of The Joint Anti-fascist Refugee Committee

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
4/1	Organizational Features	1944

Container(s)	Description	Dates
General Correspondence		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
4/2	Spanish Refugee Appeal	1945-1954
4/3	Misc.	1946-1955
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
4/4	Speeches And Writings - Of Others	1945-1946
4/5	Pamphlets	1945
4/6	Programs And Announcements	1938
4/7	Notes	1945
4/8	News Releases	1945-1947
4/9	Clippings	1945-1946

Uw. Seattle Repertory Playhouse Archives Fund (see Also: General Correspondence - James, Florence.), 1968-1973

Box-folder4/10-11

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Anti-communist movements--Washington (State)--History

Personal Names :

Gundlach, Ralph H. (Ralph Harrelson), 1902-1978--Archives

Hewitt, George

Robeson, Paul, 1898-1976

Corporate Names :

Consumers Union of United States

Seattle Repertory Playhouse

Geographical Names :

Washington (State)--History--1889-

Washington (State)--Politics and government--1889-1950

Other Creators :

Personal Names :

Allen, Raymond B. (Raymond Bernard), 1902-1986

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<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv11935>

(creator)

Bird, Bonnie

(creator)

James, Burton W

(creator)

James, Florence Bean, 1892-1988

(creator)

Wener family

(creator)

Corporate Names :

American Association of University Professors

(creator)

American Psychological Association

(creator)

Indusco, Inc. (New York)

(creator)

Marian Davis Scholarship Fund. Trustees

(creator)

Medical Bureau and North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy

(creator)

Pacific Northwest Labor School

(creator)

University of Washington. Seattle Repertory Playhouse Archives Fund

(creator)

University of Washington. University Archives

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

University Archives/Faculty Papers (University of Washington)

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