Guide to the

Constance Wrench Papers
On Violence and Extremism


Record Group 12: Local Records

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE
Constance Wrench, like many other concerned citizens, has spent numerous years trying to put an end to violence arising from intolerance. While she was president of the Braddock Heights Community Association, Mrs. Wrench and her community were roused to action when they learned in the spring of 1980 that a Ku Klux Klan (KKK) rally was planned for Braddock Heights in Frederick County, Maryland. A local Klan member decided at this time to break away from the Baltimore organization, and applied for and received a permit from Frederick County to hold rallies. When the community became aware that the Klan would begin to hold rallies in their town, many members began to petition for a revocation of the permit. When the NAACP learned of these plans, its members argued that everyone should be able to attend the rallies because the county issued the permit. NAACP member Lord Aubens received permission from the court to attend a rally, angering many of the Klansmen. Because of the emotions aroused, state police were needed to keep order. Concerned with the growing incidents of intolerance and hate, Maryland Governor Harry Hughes decided that the state should begin to monitor the movements of the Klan and other organizations that advocated violence and extremism. He asked Constance Ross Beims, a member of his cabinet, to put together a group of officials from all three branches of the state government. In March 1981, he established the Task Force on Violence and Extremism. Because of her interest in controlling violence arising from intolerance, Constance Wrench attended meetings of the Task Force and was asked to participate in the Task Force’s work. The Task Force was charged with ensuring that the agencies of state government did not condone or tolerate acts of intimidation or bigotry; developing a system of law enforcement, human relation, and education programs to address this issue and a standardized system of reporting incidents of violence or intimidation due to racial, religious, or ethnic reasons; and pursuing programs in the areas of education, victim assistance, and prevention at the local level.

In 1984, with financial support from the state, the Task Force set up a National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence to study and respond to violence motivated by racial, religious, and ethnic prejudice. The Institute provided such services as research, community assistance, analysis, and response, and served as a clearinghouse to collect, analyze, and disseminate accurate information on incidents of racially, ethnically, and religiously motivated violence and extremism. The Institute’s goals were to enable communities to respond effectively to these incidents and to improve intergroup relations. Constance Wrench was a member of the feasibility committee and an incorporator for the Institute. However, when Governor Hughes left office the Task Force and Institute were disbanded. Constance Wrench continued to follow the Klan through the news media.
PROVENANCE
Constance Wrench donated this collection to the Mount St. Mary’s Archives in 2001 (Acc. #2001-35). Another folder of clippings and publications which she accumulated over the intervening time was donated by Mrs. Wrench in June 2002 (Acc. #2002-28).

PROCESSING NOTE
Processing procedures consisted of discarding unnecessary duplicates, binders, and routine transmittals. Artifacts, photographs, and oversized documents were removed from the original location in their assigned series and housed separately. Separation sheets were inserted in the original location within the folder to indicate the new location of records placed elsewhere.

Preservation photocopying of newspaper clippings was performed whenever feasible. Records in folders were arranged, unless otherwise noted, in forward chronological order, with undated records appearing at the end of the folder.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE
This collection consists of 2.75 feet of correspondence, newspaper clippings, personal notes, surveys, studies and reports, minutes, conference handouts, legislation concerning violence and extremism, publications, programs, articles, and educational materials and subject files relating to the control and prevention of violence and extremism. Materials in the collection range in date from 1965, 1975 to 1987, and 1998 to 2002 and were accrued primarily during Mrs. Wrench’s participation in the Governor’s Task Force on Violence and Extremism.

The collection is arranged in six series:

Series I: Conferences
Series II: Task Force
Series III: Institute
Series IV: Subject Files
Series V: Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)
Series VI: Clippings.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

This series contains information on the conferences that Constance Wrench attended on the subject of violence and extremism: the Cove (Coalition Opposed to Violence and Extremism) Conference (1981), the HRC Statewide Conference (1981), and the University of Maryland’s Conference on Violence and Extremism (1982). The Cove Conference folder contains a copy of
Governor Harry Hughes’ speech, a report on and analysis of the sessions, and lists of attendees. The HRC Conference folder contains an analysis of state legislation and policies, procedures, and forms for filing discrimination complaints. The University of Maryland folder includes a 1981 Historical Fact Sheet on the KKK, myths and facts on the Klan, a fact sheet on hate and violence incidents in Maryland for 1981, the March 1981 Intelligence Report of the SPLC, an account of Baltimore’s response to hate crimes, and clippings. This folder also contains papers given at the conference on the psychosocial and political perspectives on violence and extremism.

The folders in this series are arranged in alphabetical order.

Series II: Task Force, 1981-1987, n.d. (0.5 ft.)
This series consists of the Task Force’s minutes, meeting notes, correspondence, surveys, and reports. Governor Hughes established the Task Force in 1981 to ensure that the agencies of state government did not condone or tolerate acts of intimidation or bigotry; to develop a system of law enforcement, human relation, and education programs to address this issue and a standardized system of reporting incidents of violence or intimidation due to racial, religious, or ethnic reasons; and to pursue programs in the areas of education, victim assistance, and prevention at the local level. The group was also charged with coordinating and tracking local initiatives for the prevention and control of violence and extremism. With the Governor’s support, the Task Force was instrumental in proposing and then establishing a National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence to study and respond to violence motivated by racial, religious, and ethnic prejudice. The group issued its final report in 1987.

Materials in this series were accrued from the participation of Mrs. Wrench, which began in the fall of 1981. The minutes and meeting notes of the Task Force range from 1981 to 1985. Surveys were conducted in 1981 and 1982 to determine the level of racial violence in other states, and the results and analysis can be found in the Survey folder. The series also contains interim reports for January and February 1983, the January 1987 final report of the Task Force, and copies of legislation proposed to control or prevent incidents of violence and extremism. The goals and responsibilities of the Task Force are described in a December 7, 1981, letter from Chairperson Constance Ross Beims to William C. Ruark, which can be found in the first Minutes folder. Lists of the Institute’s Board of Directors and the Advisory Board can be found in the Minutes folder for 1984 and 1985. The series also documents the formation of the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, since Mrs. Wrench served on the committee which studied its feasibility and proposed its establishment. The Task Force also hammered out standardized procedures for reporting hate incidents and developed a uniform crime reporting form for the entire state to try to gauge the actual level of such incidents, and this process is also documented in the files, which contain several of these reports. The Task Force gathered information on local efforts to provide tolerance education in the state’s public school systems and to spread the word about successful programs. The group worked closely with the National...
Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) and initiated reporting of incidents of hate and extremism in the state’s correction system.

The folders in this series are arranged in chronological order.

Series III: Institute, 1981-1986, n.d. (0.3 ft.)
The Governor’s Task Force on Violence and Extremism established the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence. In 1981 the Task Force sent questionnaires to Iowa, Wyoming, Connecticut, Idaho, North Dakota, Tennessee, and other states requesting information on violence in each state. Responses indicated that Maryland was in the forefront in addressing these issues, and the Task Force perceived a need for a national institute to provide accurate information about and effective responses to incidents of hate and violence. At Governor Hughes’ urging, the Maryland State Legislature provided $200,000 per year for three years, and he lent his support to raising funds to make up the shortfall. The Institute was incorporated in 1984, and office space was provided by the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus.

This series includes letters written to the Task Force from the governors of these states, as well as the institute’s budget, press releases, correspondence, resumes and applications, and the personal notes of Constance Wrench. The series also contains a feasibility report for the establishment of the Institute that was presented to the Task Force on June 1, 1983, and the January 1984 proposal for its formation.

The folders of this series are arranged in alphabetical order. The Candidates folder is restricted because it discusses confidential personnel matters, and the Correspondence folder is restricted because it discusses a juvenile justice system court case.

Series IV: Subject Files, 1975-1984, n.d. (0.3 ft.)
This series contains essays, legislation, a survey, correspondence, pamphlets, press releases, personal notes, and information from the Community and School Together (C.A.S.T.) Project. The Legislation folder contains copies of bills proposed in Maryland and other states geared towards the prevention and control of incidents of violence and extremism. The series also contains materials, including a curriculum guide, on the teaching of prevention of violence and extremism in the classroom, which can be found in the Education folder. The Correspondence folder consists primarily of the letters of Mrs. Wrench, and describes both successful and ineffectual responses to hate incidents. This folder also documents George A. Kleve’s anti-Catholic lobbying efforts.

The KKK folder contains bibliographies and personal notes compiled by Constance Wrench. This series also contains three issues of The Klansman, the newsletter of the Klan, and an issue of Facts, published by the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith.
This series is arranged in alphabetical order.

**Series V: Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), 1998-2002 (1.5 ft.)**

The folders in this series are arranged in alphabetical order. SPLC Reports were removed to Oversize Box 1, RG 12.

**Series VI: Clippings, 1965, 1978-2002 (.15 ft.)**
This series contains clippings from newspapers articles that were collected by Constance Wrench, as well as typed copies of a few letters she wrote to the editor. The clippings document the Klan’s activities locally, statewide, and nationally; its legal disputes and publicity and recruitment tactics; other manifestations of violence and extremism; and the opposition they encountered. The clippings also detail the internal disputes of the local Klan. The Braddock Heights folder contains clippings relating to the leadership dispute between Sam Royer and Anthony LaRicci, the Klan rallies on the property of member David Ament, and the response of the community and the NAACP and their efforts to ban Klan rallies. The Inside Extremist Organizations folder contains inside stories told by ex-Klan members and infiltrators, and describes how the Klan uses the press to create publicity and further its goals. The folder entitled Klan Activities-US contains several articles on the communist party-sponsored “Death to the Klan Rally” in Greensboro, NC, in 1979, when violence perpetrated by Klan and neo-Nazi groups resulted in the death of five communists. More information on this subject can also be found in the folder marked Opposition to Klan and Rallies. The Klan Activities-US folder also holds clippings on the retrial and conviction of Bobby Frank Cherry for the 1966 church bombing in Alabama that killed four girls. Details of the November 6, 1982, Klan rally in Montgomery County, Maryland, and the resulting anti-Klan marches in Washington, DC, and Silver Spring, Maryland, can be found in the folder titled Klan Activities-Md. The Extremism in Maryland folder provides accounts of racially-motivated hate incidents primarily in Montgomery County and Hagerstown. The Discrimination folder details acts of violence and evidence of discrimination against African Americans, Jews, and homosexuals. The series also contains information on neo-Nazi and white extremist groups, as well as Klan leaders Bill Wilkinson, David Duke, and a local man who resigned from the Klan after serving as a Wizard, Roger Kelly.

Folders in this series are arranged in alphabetical order.
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BOX INVENTORY

Box 1

Series I: Conferences


Series II: Task Force

Minutes and Meeting Notes, 1981-1983
Minutes and Meetings, 1984-1986, n.d.
Uniform Crime Reports, 1981-1985

Box 2

Reports, January-February, 1983
Report To The Committee to Study the Feasibility of a National Institute on Violence and Extremism, April 1, 1983

Series III: Institute

Candidates, 1982-1984, n.d. RESTRICTED
Conference Program, 1986
Correspondence, 1981-1984, n.d. RESTRICTED
Incorporation, 1983-1984
Proposal, 1984

Series IV: Subject Files


Box 3

Facts, 1979

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KKK References and Personal Notes, n.d.
U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1981-1983

Series V: Southern Poverty Law Center (SPCLC)

Intelligence Reports, 1998-2001
SPLC Reports, 1998-2002
Teaching Tolerance, 1998-2002

Series VI: Clippings

Braddock Heights, 1980-1985
History, 1978-1984
Martin Luther King Services, 1980
NAACP Response to the Klan, 1980-1982

Box 4

Other Organizations, 1982-1984, 1997-2002