



# **Ford Foundation records, National Affairs Division, Vice President, Office Files of Mitchell Sviridoff**

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Rockefeller Archive Center

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## Table of Contents

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Summary Information .....	3
Biographical/Historical note .....	4
Scope and Contents note .....	5
Arrangement .....	6
Administrative Information .....	6
Related Materials .....	7
Controlled Access Headings .....	8
Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements note .....	8
Collection Inventory .....	8
Administrative Subject Files .....	8
Chronological Correspondence Files .....	24

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Rockefeller Archive Center
<b>Creator:</b>	Ford Foundation
<b>Title:</b>	Ford Foundation records, National Affairs Division, Vice President, Office Files of Mitchell Sviridoff
<b>ID:</b>	FA577
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1966-1980
<b>Physical Description:</b>	14.8 Cubic Feet
<b>Physical Description:</b>	(37 Hollinger document boxes)
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>Mitchell Sviridoff served as Vice President for National Affairs from 1967 to 1980. As Vice President, he supported the establishment of programs intended to address the problems of American cities – including poverty, substandard government services, and racial and economic inequality in the justice system. His tenure spanned an important era of social change in American history that included the Civil Rights Movement, the women’s rights movement, and the economic downturn of the 1970s. His files illuminate the Foundation’s role in forwarding the social and economic justice goals of these movements as well as its actions and responses to national economic crisis. The Office Files of Mitchell Sviridoff consists of subject files and chronological files. There are subject files for the House Ways and Means Committee and the Tax Reform Act of 1969, the New York City Financial Crisis (1975-1976), the Energy Policy Project (1972-1973), the Welfare Policy Project (1975-1977), the Task Force on Women (1972-1974), the Race and Ethnicity Task Force (1972-1974); Supported Work Programs (1973-1978), and Hispanic Immigration (1979-1980). The chronological files largely pertain to grant activities.</p>

### Preferred Citation note

Information regarding the Rockefeller Archive Center's preferred elements and forms of citation can be found at <http://www.rockarch.org/research/citations.php>

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Biographical/Historical note

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The Foundation's work in urban poverty began with the establishment of the Public Affairs Program in 1952. One of the goals of the new program was to push for greater equality of opportunity for minority groups. In 1965, a National Affairs Division was created to focus on some of the deep-rooted problems facing American society. The program areas under this new National Affairs Division included Social Development, and Urban and Metropolitan Development. The United States and International Affairs Program (USIAP) replaced the National Affairs Division in 1981 after a Foundation-wide reorganization.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Biographical/Historical note

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Mitchell Sviridoff was born in New Haven, Connecticut on November 4, 1918. After graduating high school and vocational school, Mr. Sviridoff worked at an aircraft parts assembly plant in Stratford, Connecticut. He held various positions in the labor movement and eventually rose to become President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. Between 1962 and 1966, he served as Executive Director of Community Progress Inc. (CPI) based in New Haven, Connecticut. CPI, an antipoverty organization founded through a Ford Foundation seed grant, funded grassroots programs in education, employment, housing, youth development, and social services. It quickly became a national model for its human-centered, community-based approach to urban renewal, which focused on providing disadvantaged individuals with the resources, education and employment opportunities they needed for advancement.

In 1966, he became the first Administrator of the New York City Human Resources Administration and was charged with consolidating the City's numerous assistance programs serving low-income communities. During his nine-month tenure, problems developed with staff over intolerable working conditions and he became disenchanted with the agency's unwieldy bureaucratic structure and inertia. He left in 1967 to accept the position of Vice President for National Affairs at the Ford Foundation.

As Vice President for National Affairs, Mr. Sviridoff established a number of programs intended to address the problems of American cities – including poverty, poor quality and delivery of government services, and racial and economic inequality in the justice system. Several of these programs later became separate, free-standing non-profit organizations such as the Vera Institute for Criminal Justice, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, and the Police Foundation.

In addition to his oversight over the Foundation's work with urban renewal, Mr. Sviridoff served as a contact and facilitator between the Foundation and various city, state and the federal governments. These

contacts led to his service as a policy advisor to the Nixon Administration on job creation and energy policy during the crises of the 1970s.

In 1980, Mr. Sviridoff left the Ford Foundation to accept a position as the first President of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, a non-profit organization established by the Foundation to fund grassroots community development efforts. He left Local Initiatives in 1985 to teach at the New School for Social Research. There, he also directed the Kaplan Center for New York City Affairs at the Milano Graduate School, and founded the School's Community Development Research Center. Mr. Sviridoff died on October 21, 2000, at age 81.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Scope and Contents note

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The Office Files of Mitchell Sviridoff document his work as Vice President of the National Affairs Program from 1967 to 1980. His tenure spanned an important era of social change in American history that included the Civil Rights Movement, the women's rights movement, and the economic downturn of the 1970s. Mr. Sviridoff's files reveal the Foundation's role in forwarding the social and economic justice goals of these movements, and its actions and responses to national economic crisis.

The largest group of Mr. Sviridoff's subject files pertains to the House Ways and Means Committee and the Tax Reform Act of 1969. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 sought to curb perceived abuses by wealthy private individuals seeking to shelter their taxable assets by taking advantage of federal tax breaks for charitable institutions. The law impacted the way in which many foundations operated, requiring them to pay out annually in awarded grants a minimum of 5% of their total assets.

Provisions in the law which limited the discretionary autonomy of private foundations in directly awarding grants to individuals and to further political causes were of particular concern to the Ford Foundation. Representatives of the Foundation were called before the House Ways and Means Committee to testify about the proposed reform, which the Foundation opposed because of accusations that it awarded funds for political rather than philanthropic purposes. Perceived to be at stake was the Foundation's work in the Civil Rights Movement and particularly its support for voter registration drives and organizations such as the North Carolina Foundation (1969). The Foundation's awarding of individual study and travel grants to several of Senator Robert F. Kennedy's legislative aides also were questioned.

Documents relating to the Tax Reform Act include correspondence between the Foundation and grantees inquiring whether they had 501(c)(3) status and testimony by Ford President McGeorge Bundy before the House Ways and Means Committee (1969). They also include internal memoranda and reports about the potential impact and possible responses to the Act, statistics from each program listing all grants affected and why, and clippings with references to the Foundation's position and views.

Another set of files details the Foundation's response to the national economic crisis, particularly as it affected New York City from 1975 to 1976. The economic downturn and resulting cuts in municipal funds for social services programs led the Foundation to collaborate with the City and other private

foundations to seek ways to help to meet the increased need. The files contain documents and materials from meetings of the multi-foundation Task Force on the New York City Crisis (1976).

Information about the Foundation's response to the energy crisis of the 1970s can also be found in the files. The rise in energy costs precipitated the Foundation's support for the Energy Policy Project (1972-1973), which was funded as a Delegated Authority Project (DAP). Mr. Sviridoff also served as a member of the Nixon Administration's Energy Policy Advisory Committee (1972-1973).

Mr. Sviridoff's subject files also document the Foundation's increasing support for work related to advancing women's rights. Many of these files pertain to the Foundation's Task Force on Women (1972-1974) and the establishment of a women's program in National Affairs. The files contain reports and papers about the changing attitudes toward women and their role in American society and memoranda describe the recruitment of women within the Foundation and among other philanthropic organizations. There are also proposals from organizations requesting seed grants for projects, including Gloria Steinem's Ms. Foundation (1978-1980).

Additional subjects addressed in the files include job creation strategies developed in partnership with the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (1974-1980) including programs for "supported work" (1973-1978); Hispanic immigration to the United States (1979-1980); and the establishment of a Police Foundation to encourage alternative and more effective strategies for policing and interacting with communities (1970-1980).

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Arrangement

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The records are arranged into two series.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

Rockefeller Archive Center

15 Dayton Avenue  
Sleepy Hollow 10591  
[archive@rockarch.org](mailto:archive@rockarch.org)

URL: <http://www.rockarch.org>

## **Processing Information note**

The original volume of 21 cubic feet accessioned by the Ford Foundation Archives in 2004, was reduced during processing to 12.3 cubic feet.

Duplicates, reference files, grant proposals, and files that addressed purely financial matters were not retained.

## **Conditions Governing Access note**

Material more than ten years old is open for scholarly research.

Select individual files are restricted, as noted. Permission to access these files must be obtained from the Ford Foundation before scholarly access is permitted.

## **Conditions Governing Use note**

Completion of a use agreement is required prior to providing scholarly access. See RAC Head of Reference (or applicable designee) for details. Ford Foundation holds title, copyright and literary rights in the collection, in so far as it holds them. The Rockefeller Archive Center has authority to grant permission to cite and publish material from the collection for scholarly purposes. Permission to publish extensive excerpts, or material in its entirety, will be referred to the Ford Foundation.

## **Immediate Source of Acquisition note**

Ford Foundation archive was deposited at RAC in 2011. Ford Foundation records, correspondence, reports, program files and officers papers were transferred to, and accessioned by, RAC beginning in 2011. Accessions continue as necessary.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## **Related Materials**

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### **Separated Materials note**

Appendix A: Reports – Unpublished reports written by Ford Foundation staff and consultants were removed from their original folders, scanned and transferred to the Archives' collection of staff and consultant reports. See Appendix A for a list of these reports and their specific assigned number. The reports are listed in alphabetical order by author. The assigned number may be used to access reports in the online catalog.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Controlled Access Headings

- Ford Foundation

## Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements note

Materials requiring specialized equipment for access (film, audio, video, slides) may be restricted from scholarly research dependent on availability of the applicable equipment. Brittle or damaged items, or materials otherwise in need of preservation care, may be restricted from scholarly research at the discretion of the RAC Head of Archival Services/RAC Head of Reference.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Collection Inventory

### Administrative Subject Files, 1966-1980

box not  
specified

#### Scope and Contents

This series consists of subject files. Mr. Sviridoff kept files on grantees and grant projects; the work of his program officers; Ford Foundation policy, program areas and task forces; and external projects, task forces and committees on which he worked. There are also files pertaining to his interests and work and individuals within and without the Foundation with whom he corresponded. Mr. Sviridoff's subject files include the House Ways and Means Committee and the Tax Reform Act of 1969, the New York City Financial Crisis (1975-1976), the Energy Policy Project (1972-1973), the Welfare Policy Project (1975-1977), the Task Force on Women (1972-1974), the Race and Ethnicity Task Force (1972-1974), Supported Work Programs (1973-1978), and Hispanic Immigration (1979-1980).

#### Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Title/Description

Instances



(The) American Assembly -- Correspondence Re: Proposed Forum Topics and Reports, 1973-1980	box 1	folder 1
American Bankers Association -- Resource Panel of the Bankers Committee on Urban Affairs -- Correspondence Re: Meetings, Proposal, 1968-1969	box 1	folder 2
American Ditchley Foundation -- Correspondence Re: Conferences and Meetings, Minutes, 1969-1970	box 1	folder 3
Armsey, James W. -- Memoranda Re: Evaluations of Proposals to Fund Black Colleges, 1968-1969	box 1	folder 4
Atterbury, B. P. -- Memoranda Evaluating and Discerning Ford Foundation Interest in Funding Various Projects, 1968-1969	box 1	folder 5
B-General -- Brookings Institution, etc., 1975-1980	box 1	folder 6
Baltimore Trustee Visit, Jun 27-28, 1978	box 1	folder 7
"Banks and Black Capitalism" (report by David M. Schulte), Sep 1970	box 1	folder 8
Bay Area Urban League Address, San Francisco, CA (speech by Mitchell Sviridoff), Apr 10, 1979	box 1	folder 9
Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation -- Memoranda, Statistics, 1971-1980	box 1	folder 10
Berresford, Susan -- Memoranda, Reports, Background, 1973-1979	box 1	folder 11
Bohrson, Ralph G. -- Memoranda Re: Leadership Development Program, Report, Proposal, 1968	box 1	folder 12
Boston-Fenway Program, Inc., 1978-1979	box 1	folder 13
C-General -- Merrimon Cuninggim, Community News Service, etc. (1 of 2), 1973-1975	box 2	folder 1
C-General -- Children's Defense Fund, Congressional Tour, etc. (2 of 2), 1975-1979	box 2	folder 2
Chafkin, Sol -- Report and Clippings on Nutrition, Background on Community Development Corporations, 1977-1980	box 2	folder 3
Chalmers, Ellison -- Racial Negotiations Project -- Project Statement, Conference Notes, 1969-1970	box 2	folder 4
Changing Status of Minorities -- Memoranda and Background on Ford Foundation Project for Reviewing Status of Minorities, 1973	box 2	folder 5
Community Development -- Memoranda, Reports and Background on Ford Foundation's Work in Community Development (1 of 2), 1971-1972	box 2	folder 6
Community Development -- Memoranda, Reports and Background on Ford Foundation's Work in Community Development (2 of 2), 1972-1978	box 2	folder 7

Conference on Community Development, Ford Foundation -- Reports, Jun 15-16, 1971	box 2	folder 8
(2nd) Conference on Community Development, Ford Foundation -- Report, Nov 3-4, 1971	box 3	folder 1
Conference on National Unity, Sterling Forest Gardens, NY -- Papers, Attendee List (1 of 2), Nov 19-20, 1969	box 3	folder 2
Conference on National Unity, Sterling Forest Gardens, NY -- Papers, Attendee List ( 2 of 2), Nov 19-20, 1969	box 3	folder 3
Conflict Resolution in Higher Education, Ford Foundation Advisory Committee -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Reports, Background (1 of 2), 1977-1978	box 3	folder 4
Conflict Resolution in Higher Education, Ford Foundation Advisory Committee -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Reports, Background (2 of 2), 1979-1980	box 3	folder 5
Congress of Racial Equity (CORE) -- Memoranda Re: Grants, Report on Racial Violence in Cleveland, 1967-1969	box 3	folder 6
Cooney, Thomas Jr. -- Memoranda and Correspondence Re: Grantees and Ford Foundation Affirmative Action Policy, 1966-1972	box 3	folder 7
Corrections -- Memoranda, Correspondence and Reports on Correctional Information Service and Criminal Justice Publications (1 of 2), 1971-1976	box 4	folder 1
Corrections -- Memoranda, Correspondence and Reports on Correctional Information Service and Criminal Justice Publications (2 of 2), 1977-1980	box 4	folder 2
D-General -- Education and Urban Programs, etc., 1971-1980	box 4	folder 3
Day Care -- Memoranda, Reports on Child Care Program Development (1 of 2), 1971-1976	box 4	folder 4
Day Care -- Memoranda, Reports on Ford Foundation Day Care Policy, Child Care Demonstration Project (2 of 2), 1976-1979	box 4	folder 5
Dependent Organizations -- Memoranda and Reports on Ford Foundation Division of National Affairs Dependent Organizations, 1972-1975	box 4	folder 6
"The Disconnected: Factors Affecting the Participation of Urban Minorities in the Registration and Voting Process" (research paper by Penn Kimball), 1970	box 5	folder 1
Donahue, Tom -- Memoranda and Reports on Labor Unions in Education, 1975	box 5	folder 2
Dressner, Howard R. -- Memoranda Re: Ford Foundation Policy on Affirmative Action, Lobbying, Foundation Bylaws, etc., 1976-1980	box 5	folder 3
Drug Abuse Council -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Grant Background (1 of 2), 1970-1973	box 5	folder 4

Drug Abuse Council -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Grant Background (2 of 2), 1974-1980	box 5	folder 5
E-General -- Medgar Evers Fund, etc., 1975-1980	box 5	folder 6
East Central Committee for Opportunity (ECCO) -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Background on Grand Jury Investigation, 1974-1977	box 5	folder 7
EASYRIDE (Vera Institute) -- Project Background, 1977	box 5	folder 8
Edley, Christopher -- Correspondence and Memoranda Re: Law and Crime, Background, 1968-1972	box 5	folder 9
Education and Public Policy -- Memoranda Re: Law Center, etc., 1978-1980	box 6	folder 1
ELDERWORKS -- Memoranda, Background, 1979	box 6	folder 2
Ellis, Jim -- Correspondence, Speech for Washington State Convention of Leagues of Women Voters, 1975	box 6	folder 3
Energy Crisis -- Memoranda, Background on Energy Saving, 1979	box 6	folder 4
Energy Policy Advisory Committee -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Reports, Background (1 of 2), Jan-Jul 1972	box 6	folder 5
Energy Policy Advisory Committee -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Reports, Background, Aug 1972-1973	box 6	folder 6
Energy Policy Project -- Memoranda, Proposals, Background (1 of 2), 1975-1980	box 6	folder 7
Energy Policy Project -- Reports (2 of 2), 1980	box 6	folder 8
Environmental Policy -- Memoranda Re: Grants for Environmental Conflict Resolution, Report on Foundation Strategy, 1973-1979	box 6	folder 9
Esser, George H. -- North Carolina Fund -- Memoranda Re: Evaluations of Projects, Meeting Minutes, Reports of North Carolina Protests and Events (1 of 3), 1968-1969	box 6	folder 10
Esser, George H. -- North Carolina Fund -- Memoranda Re: Evaluations of Projects, Meeting Minutes, Reports of North Carolina Protests and Events (2 of 3), 1968-1969	box 7	folder 1
Esser, George H. -- North Carolina Fund -- Memoranda Re: Termination of NCF, Program Objectives, Move to Southern Regional Council (3 of 3), 1970-1974	box 7	folder 2
Etzioni, Amitai -- Background Re: Leadership, Military Service, 1979-1980	box 7	folder 3
F-General -- Trustees' Future Program Planning Project, etc., 1969-1980	box 7	folder 4
Financial Reviews of Foundation Grantees, 1973-1980	box 7	folder 5
Ford Foundation Conference on White Workers, Mar 8, 1971	box 7	folder 6

Ford Foundation Press Releases, 1973-1980	box 7	folder 7
Friendly, Fred W. -- Memoranda Re: Public Television Funding, Seminars, Columbia University School of Journalism, etc., 1968-1978	box 8	folder 1
Fund for the City of New York -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Reports, Proposals, 1968-1979	box 8	folder 2
G-General -- Rural Initiative, Black Cooperative Movement and Israel, etc. (1 of 2), 1971-1977	box 8	folder 3
G-General -- Papers on American Governance, etc. (2 of 2), 1977-1980	box 8	folder 4
Ginzberg, Eli -- End of Tour Report on Ford Foundation in India, Correspondence (1 of 2), 1971-1973	box 8	folder 5
Ginzberg, Eli -- Memoranda Re: Human Resources, Papers on Manpower Policy (2 of 2), 1974-1979	box 8	folder 6
Gormbley, William -- Memoranda Re: Ford Foundation Pension Plan, 1978-1979	box 8	folder 7
Greeley, Andrew M. -- Memoranda and Correspondence Re: Controversy over Article on American Values and Ethics, 1974-1978	box 8	folder 8
Grinker, William -- Memoranda and Background on Electoral Process, 1970-1973	box 8	folder 9
H-General -- Health and Human Welfare correspondence and reports, etc. (1 of 2), 1971-1978	box 9	folder 1
H-General -- Department of Housing and Urban Development, Teenage Mothers, etc. (2 of 2), 1979	box 9	folder 2
Haas, Walter A., Jr. -- Correspondence Re: Public Advocates, Inc. and Support for Public Interest Law, 1971	box 9	folder 3
Hagler, Jon L. -- Ford Foundation Financial Report, Report on International Portfolio Diversification, 1978	box 9	folder 4
Harrison, Gordon -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Background on Program Advisor, Environmental Policy, etc. (1 of 2), 1969-1971	box 9	folder 5
Harrison, Gordon -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Background on Program Advisor, Environmental Policy, etc. (2 of 2), 1971-1973	box 9	folder 6
House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (1 of 9), 1969	box 9	folder 7
House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (2 of 9), 1969	box 9	folder 8
House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (3 of 9), 1969	box 10	folder 1
House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (4 of 9), 1969	box 10	folder 2

House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (5 of 9), 1969	box 10	folder 3
House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (6 of 9), 1969	box 10	folder 4
House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (7 of 9), 1969	box 10	folder 5
House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (8 of 9), 1969	box 10	folder 6
House Ways and Means Committee Tax Reform Law of 1969 -- Impact on Ford Foundation Grantmaking (9 of 9), 1969	box 10	folder 7
Housing -- Grant Information on National Project on Housing and Urban Law (1 of 2), 1967-1968	box 11	folder 1
Housing -- Reports and Publications on Ford Foundation Housing Programs (2 of 2), 1972-1979	box 11	folder 2
Howe, Harold II -- Writings on Economics of Helping the Poor, Higher Education and Minorities, etc., 1975-1979	box 11	folder 3
Human Resources Administration -- Proposal for Career Development Program, Memoranda, 1967-1968	box 11	folder 4
Human Resources Administration, Community Development Agency -- Correspondence, Proposals (1 of 2), 1967	box 11	folder 5
Human Resources Administration, Community Development Agency -- Correspondence, Proposals (2 of 2), 1968	box 11	folder 6
I-General -- Institute for Civil Justice, Israel, etc., 1968-1979	box 11	folder 7
Immigration -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Reports on International Migration and Refugees (1 of 4), 1979-Mar 1980	box 12	folder 1
Immigration -- Memoranda and Paper on Hispanic Americans (2 of 4), May-Dec 1980	box 12	folder 2
Immigration -- "Mexican and Caribbean Migration to the United States" (report by Wayne A. Cornelius) (3 of 4), Apr 1979	box 12	folder 3
Immigration -- "Mexican and Caribbean Migration to the United States" (report by Wayne A. Cornelius) (4 of 4), Apr 1979	box 12	folder 4
Indians [American, Northeast] -- Gay Head, MA Lawsuit, 1976-1977	box 12	folder 5
Institute for Community Studies, Queens College -- Correspondence, Proposal, Papers, 1968-1970	box 12	folder 6
Institute for Congress -- Correspondence Re: Grant Support, 1973-1976	box 12	folder 7
Institute for Law and Social Research (INSLAW) -- Memoranda and Correspondence Re: Grant, 1976-1978	box 13	folder 1
Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution -- Correspondence Re: Grant Support, 1975-1977	box 13	folder 2

Intermediate School 201 (I.S. 201) Demonstration Project -- Correspondence, Proposals, Clippings, 1967-1969	box 13	folder 3
International Division, Ford Foundation -- Memoranda Re: Budget, 1979-1980	box 13	folder 4
Internship Program at Ford Foundation Division of National Affairs, 1977-1980	box 13	folder 5
J-General -- Jobs, etc., 1970-1980	box 13	folder 6
Jaffe, Sanford -- Memoranda Re: Cable Television and Other Grant Proposals, 1968-1979	box 13	folder 7
James Weldon Johnson Community Center -- Correspondence, Papers, 1967-1969	box 13	folder 8
Job Creation Strategy -- Correspondence and Reports on Ford Foundation and Government Strategies (1 of 2), 1975-1976	box 13	folder 9
Job Creation Strategy -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Reports, Background (2 of 2), 1976-1977	box 14	folder 1
Job Satisfaction -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Reports on Ford Foundation Studies (1 of 3), 1972	box 14	folder 2
Job Satisfaction -- Sviridoff/Ford Foundation Interest in Work Studies (2 of 3), 1973	box 14	folder 3
Job Satisfaction -- Worker Alienation (3 of 3), 1973-1974	box 14	folder 4
Joint Center for Political Studies -- Correspondence Re: Carl Stokes, 1977-1979	box 14	folder 5
Juvenile and Children's Programs -- Correspondence and Reports on Child Advocacy, Nutrition, etc. (1 of 4), 1974-1975	box 14	folder 6
Juvenile and Children's Programs -- Correspondence and Background on Childhood Education (2 of 4), 1975	box 15	folder 1
Juvenile and Children's Programs -- Correspondence and Memoranda Re: Juvenile Delinquency (3 of 4), 1975-1976	box 15	folder 2
Juvenile and Children's Programs -- Correspondence, Proposals, Reports, Background (4 of 4), 1976-1977	box 15	folder 3
Juvenile Justice -- Correspondence Re: Vera Institute Report, 1976-1979	box 15	folder 4
K-General -- Ted Kennedy, etc., 1971-1980	box 15	folder 5
K- Martin Luther King Jr. Center -- Memoranda and Correspondence Re: Grant Support, 1968-1979	box 15	folder 6
Kelly, Eamon -- Memoranda Re: Program Officers, Social Development, PRIs, etc., 1969-1979	box 15	folder 7
L-General -- Levi-Strauss Foundation, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), etc. (1 of 2), 1971-1978	box 15	folder 8

L-General -- Labor History, St. Louis Desegregation, etc. (2 of 2), 1978-1980	box 16	folder 1
Looters Project, Jul 1977 -- Memoranda and Report on New York City Blackout Looting, 1977-1978	box 16	folder 2
M-General -- Minority Underrepresentation in Higher Education, Anita Miller on Urban Reinvestment, etc. (1 of 2), 1973-1977	box 16	folder 3
M-General -- Nuclear Safety Manual After Three Mile Island, Migrant Workers, etc. (2 of 2), 1978-1980	box 16	folder 4
Mangum, Garth L. -- Correspondence on Ghettos, Legal Charges Against Mangum, 1978	box 16	folder 5
Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation -- Correspondence, Report on Supported Work (1 of 3), 1974-1977	box 16	folder 6
Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation -- Demonstration Project for Teenage Mothers (2 of 3), 1977-1979	box 16	folder 7
Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation -- Supported Work, Congressional Hearings (3 of 3), 1979-1980	box 16	folder 8
Maternity Leave Policy -- Memoranda Re: Ford Foundation Policy, 1979	box 16	folder 9
May, Edgar -- Correspondence and Background on Drug Abuse and Treatment Programs, etc., 1971-1980	box 16	folder 10
Miami-Dade County Riot -- White House Task Force Report, 1980	box 17	folder 1
Minority Economic Small Business Investment Corporations (MESBICs) -- Background on Ford Foundation Support, 1970-1971	box 17	folder 2
Monitoring Reports of Ford Foundation Programs and Grantees (1 of 3), 1971	box 17	folder 3
Monitoring Reports of Ford Foundation Programs and Grantees (2 of 3), 1971-1973	box 17	folder 4
Monitoring Reports of Ford Foundation Programs and Grantees (3 of 3), 1973-1976	box 17	folder 5
Mott Foundation -- Correspondence, Proposal for Educational and Service Enrichment for Youth Employment and Demonstration Project, 1979-1980	box 17	folder 6
Moynihan, Daniel P. -- Correspondence Re: Urban Renewal, Background on Moynihan, 1973-1980	box 17	folder 7
Ms. Foundation -- Correspondence with Gloria Steinem et al. Re: Ford Foundation Support, 1978-1980	box 17	folder 8
N-General -- New World Foundation, National Institute for Dispute Resolution, etc., 1975-1980	box 18	folder 1
National Academy of Public Administration -- Memoranda, Background, Reevaluation of Proposal Status, 1970-1973	box 18	folder 2

National Advisory Council of Minority Business Enterprise -- Minority Bank Deposits, etc., 1969-1974	box 18	folder 3
National Affairs -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Reports on Ford Foundation, Organization Chart, 1968-1978	box 18	folder 4
National Affairs Budget -- Memoranda, Reports (1 of 2), 1971-1978	box 18	folder 5
National Affairs Budget -- Memoranda, Reports (2 of 2), 1979-1980	box 18	folder 6
National Affairs Committee Meeting Re: Conflict Resolution, etc. -- Memoranda, Reports, Minutes, 1979-1980	box 18	folder 7
National Affairs Reports on National Affairs Programs (1 of 2), 1971-1981	box 18	folder 8
National Affairs Reports (2 of 2), 1980	box 19	folder 1
National Affairs Retreat -- Reports, Memoranda Re: Grant Process and Evaluations, Feb 1971	box 19	folder 2
National Assembly for Social Policy and Development -- Correspondence, Proposal, 1968-1969	box 19	folder 3
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) -- Correspondence Re: Mississippi Civil Suit Appeal, 1976	box 19	folder 4
National Center for Voluntary Action -- Proposal, Evaluation, Denial of Request, Feb-Apr 1972	box 19	folder 5
National Commission on Employment and Labor Statistics -- Discouraged Workers, Meetings, etc. (1 of 2), 1978-1979	box 19	folder 6
National Commission on Employment and Labor Statistics -- Federal Government Reports (2 of 2), 1979-1980	box 19	folder 7
National Urban Coalition -- Memoranda and Correspondence Re: Grant, 1972-1977	box 19	folder 8
National Urban League -- Correspondence, Proposal, Speeches and Writings by Vernon Jordan (1 of 2), 1968-1974	box 20	folder 1
National Urban League -- Correspondence, Speeches and Writings by Vernon Jordan (2 of 2), 1975-1980	box 20	folder 2
New Haven, CT -- Correspondence, Background on Urban Service Corps, 1976	box 20	folder 3
New Jersey Community Action Training Institute -- Correspondence, Training Manuals (1 of 2), 1968-1970	box 20	folder 4
New Jersey Community Action Training Institute -- Training Manuals for Anti-Poverty Community Action Workers (2 of 2), 1968	box 20	folder 5
New York City Financial Crisis -- Implications for Ford Foundation -- Memoranda Re: Meetings, Background on Ford Foundation New York City Grants, 1975	box 20	folder 6



New York City Financial Crisis -- New York Community Trust Multi-Foundation Meeting on City's Financial Crisis, 1975-1976	box 20	folder 7
New York City Financial Crisis -- Task Force on the New York City Crisis -- Correspondence, Working Documents, Minutes, Clippings, 1975-1976	box 20	folder 8
North Carolina Fund -- Memoranda Re: Senate Investigation of Ford Foundation and NCF, 1969	box 20	folder 9
Nutrition -- Memoranda, Reports, Background for Ford Foundation Program Development (1 of 2), 1974-1979	box 21	folder 1
Nutrition -- Memoranda, Reports, Background for Ford Foundation Program Development (2 of 2), 1979-1980	box 21	folder 2
O-General -- Opportunity Funding Corporation, Office of Minority Business Enterprise, etc., 1969-1980	box 21	folder 3
Oakland Economic Development Council -- Correspondence and Memoranda Re: Grants to City of Oakland, 1971-1972	box 21	folder 4
Occupational Safety and Health -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Report on Workplace Health, 1974-1976	box 21	folder 5
Office of Environmental Mediation, University of Washington -- Correspondence, Paper on Defining Environmental Mediation, 1977-1979	box 21	folder 6
Oppenheimer-Nicolau, Siobhan -- Reports and Memoranda Re: Foundation Work with Hispanic Americans, 1969-1980	box 21	folder 7
Oral History Project, Ford Foundation -- Correspondence and Agreement for Sviridoff's Interview, 1974-1977	box 21	folder 8
Organized Crime Conference -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Background on Ford Foundation Organized Crime Project (1 of 2), 1970-1977	box 21	folder 9
Organized Crime Conference -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Background on Ford Foundation Organized Crime Project (2 of 2), 1978-1979	box 22	folder 1
P-General -- Private Industry Council, Puerto Rican Defense, Productivity, etc., 1976-1980	box 22	folder 2
P- Committee on Public Policy -- Memoranda, Reports, Meetings, Grant Discussions (1 of 3), 1975-1978	box 22	folder 3
P- Committee on Public Policy -- Meeting Minutes, Ford Foundation Program Review (2 of 3), 1979	box 22	folder 4
P- Committee on Public Policy -- Meeting Minutes, Reports on Ethnic Tensions in Asia, Military Service and Society, etc. (3 of 3), 1980	box 22	folder 5
P- Corporation for Public/Private Ventures -- Board Meetings, Reports on Corporation Activities, Background, 1977-1980	box 22	folder 6

P- School District of Philadelphia -- Correspondence Re: Proposal, Papers on Education by Graham S. Finney, 1965-1969	box 23	folder 1
P- University of Pennsylvania Center for Urban Research and Experiment -- Urban Strategies Project Working Papers, 1969	box 23	folder 2
Paris Office -- Paris Conference Background Papers, Role of National Affairs Office Overseas (1 of 2), 1970-1975	box 23	folder 3
Paris Office -- Paris Conference Information, Observations of Paris (2 of 2), 1977-1980	box 23	folder 4
Patman, Wright -- Correspondence, Memoranda, Background on Federal Law on Tax-Exempt Foundations, 1971-1974	box 23	folder 5
Police Foundation -- Report on NYPD Consolidation, Response to Ford Foundation Trustees (1 of 3), 1970-1976	box 23	folder 6
Police Foundation -- Ford Foundation Grant Support, Report on Police in Amsterdam (2 of 3), 1976-1977	box 23	folder 7
Police Foundation -- Grantee Evaluation, Board of Directors (3 of 3), 1977-1980	box 23	folder 8
President's Advisory Council on Minority Business Enterprise -- Background Papers (1 of 2), 1970	box 24	folder 1
President's Advisory Council on Minority Business Enterprise -- Minutes, Status Updates on Council Activities (2 of 2), 1972-1974	box 24	folder 2
Program Related Investments -- Ford Foundation Program Review and Budget Statement (1 of 2), 1971-1976	box 24	folder 3
Program Related Investments -- Ford Foundation Review of PRIs and PRI Consultants (2 of 2), 1977-1980	box 24	folder 4
Public Agenda Foundation -- Proposal, Grant Review and Related Memoranda, 1977-1980	box 24	folder 5
Public Interest Law -- Information Paper, Grants Involving Litigation, Background (1 of 2), 1970-1971	box 24	folder 6
Public Interest Law -- Correspondence and Memoranda Re: Grants, Report on Public Interest Law Conference (2 of 2), 1972-1980	box 24	folder 7
Pugh, Douglas -- Memoranda, Report on Minority Contractors Bonding Program, 1968-1969	box 24	folder 8
PUSH for Excellence, Inc. -- Correspondence with Jesse Jackson, Proposal, Site Visit, Grant and Grantee Reviews, 1976-1980	box 24	folder 9
Quality of Work Center & Quality of Working Life -- Memoranda, Correspondence, 1974-1975	box 25	folder 1
Quevedo, Edward T. (Director of Human Resources Institute, Claremont Colleges) -- Correspondence Re: Questions about Grant, 1972	box 25	folder 2
R-General -- Racial Policy Issues Meeting, Royalty Income from Ford Foundation Publications, etc. (1 of 2), 1971-1979	box 25	folder 3

R-General -- Aspen Institute Projects, Rural America Task Force, etc. (2 of 2), 1979-1980	box 25	folder 4
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- "Discussion: Basic Research Needs in Race and Ethnicity" (report by Shirley Teper), Jan 25, 1974	box 25	folder 5
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Proposal, 1973-1974	box 25	folder 6
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- Meeting Agenda and Background, 1972-1973	box 25	folder 7
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- "Past and Present Foundation Funded Research on Race and Ethnicity", Aug 1973	box 25	folder 8
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- Preliminary Paper to Race and Ethnicity Staff Study, Oct 25, 1972	box 25	folder 9
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- "Race and Ethnicity Task Force Memorandum and First Set of Background Papers", Dec 4, 1972	box 25	folder 10
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- "Race and Ethnicity Task Force Readings", Jun 1973	box 26	folder 1
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- "Research on Race and Ethnicity: Reports on Federal (and some other) Agencies" (1 of 2), Aug 1973	box 26	folder 2
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- "Research on Race and Ethnicity: Reports on Federal (and some other) Agencies" (2 of 2), Aug 1973	box 26	folder 3
Race and Ethnicity Task Force -- "Studies in Racial, Cultural, and Political Pluralism" (information paper), Memoranda, 1974	box 26	folder 4
RAND Corporation/Institute -- Memoranda, Correspondence Re: Studies of New York City Government, Proposition 13, etc., 1968-1979	box 26	folder 5
Resources and Environment -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Papers on Ford Foundation Program, 1972-1980	box 26	folder 6
Retirement and Thrift Plan -- Ford Foundation Personnel Handbooks, Memoranda, Reports (1 of 2), 1972-1978	box 26	folder 7
Retirement and Thrift Plan -- Ford Foundation Personnel Handbooks, Memoranda, Reports (2 of 2), 1978-1980	box 26	folder 8
Rubinger, Michael -- Memoranda, Paper on Local Foundations, 1970-1971	box 26	folder 9
S-General -- The Child in Development Planning, U.S. Policy Towards Southern Africa, etc. (1 of 2), 1973-1977	box 27	folder 1
S-General -- Donna E. Shalala, Sloan Commission on Government and Higher Education, etc. (2 of 2), 1978-1980	box 27	folder 2
Schrank, Robert -- Memoranda, Papers, Field Reports, Program and Proposal Evaluations of Labor Projects etc. (1 of 3), 1969	box 27	folder 3

Schrank, Robert -- Memoranda, Papers, Field Reports, Program and Proposal Evaluations of Labor Projects etc. (2 of 3), 1969	box 27	folder 4
Schrank, Robert -- Memoranda, Papers, Field Reports, Program and Proposal Evaluations of Labor Projects etc. (3 of 3), 1969	box 27	folder 5
Schrank, Robert -- Memoranda, Papers, Field Reports, Program and Proposal Evaluations of Labor Projects etc. (1 of 4), 1971-1972	box 27	folder 6
Schrank, Robert -- Memoranda, Papers, Field Reports, Program and Proposal Evaluations of Labor Projects etc. (2 of 4), 1972-1973	box 27	folder 7
Schrank, Robert -- Memoranda, Papers, Field Reports, Program and Proposal Evaluations of Labor Projects etc. (3 of 4), 1973-1977	box 27	folder 8
Schrank, Robert -- Memoranda, Papers, Field Reports, Program and Proposal Evaluations of Labor Projects etc. (4 of 4), 1978-1980	box 28	folder 1
Seessel, Thomas V. -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Papers, Reports, Evaluations, 1971-1980	box 28	folder 2
Self-Dealing by Certain Grantees, Report of an Inquiry into Possibility of, 1971	box 28	folder 3
Silberman, Charles E. -- <u>Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice</u> (book) -- Correspondence, Comments, Clippings, 1971-1980	box 28	folder 4
Smith, Theodore M. -- Memoranda Re: Internal Policy on Closing Out Backlog of Inactive Grants and Information on Individual Awards, Jun-Jul 1975	box 28	folder 5
Social Development, Office of -- Memoranda Re: Budget and Staff Policy, Staff Meeting Minutes, 1968-1972	box 28	folder 6
South Bronx -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Board of Trustees Site Visit, Grant DAP Action (1 of 2), 1979	box 28	folder 7
South Bronx -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Board of Trustees Site Visit, Grant DAP Action (2 of 2), 1980	box 28	folder 8
Southern Regional Council -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Reports on Employment in Rural South, etc., 1975-1980	box 28	folder 9
Southern Rural Development -- Summary of Task Force Report, Correspondence, Jan 1977	box 28	folder 10
Stephenson, Edwin P. -- Memoranda and Correspondence Re: Work as Consultant, 1967-1969	box 29	folder 1
Stern Family Fund, David R. Hunter -- Correspondence, Papers on Urban Poverty, Racial Inequality etc., 1968-1972	box 29	folder 2
Sturz, Herbert -- Memoranda and Correspondence Re: Minorities in Construction Industry, Redevelopment of Times Square, etc., 1978-1979	box 29	folder 3

Sugarman, Jule M. -- Correspondence, Testimony, Proposal for a Decennial-Sabbatical Plan, 1975-1976	box 29	folder 4
Supported Work -- Correspondence, Reports, Papers (1 of 2), 1973-1976	box 29	folder 5
Supported Work -- Correspondence, Reports, Papers (2 of 2), 1977-1978	box 29	folder 6
Supported Work -- Ford Foundation Advisory Group on Supported Work Meeting, Washington, DC, Apr 4-5, 1974	box 29	folder 7
Supported Work Programs -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Papers, 1973-1974	box 29	folder 8
Sviridoff, Mitchell -- Papers, Speeches on Urban Policy etc., 1977-1979	box 29	folder 9
Swedish Workers -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Report, 1975	box 29	folder 10
T-General -- Kitty Teltsch Interview Questions etc., 1977-1980	box 29	folder 11
Taconic Foundation -- Memoranda and Correspondence Re: Youth Energy Corps, 1980	box 29	folder 12
Teenage Pregnancy -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Papers, Reports, 1975-1980	box 29	folder 13
Transitional Employment Enterprises, Inc. -- Memoranda, Correspondence Re: Supported Work, etc., 1979-1980	box 29	folder 14
U-General -- Urban Environment Foundation, etc., 1972-1976	box 30	folder 1
United States Conference of Mayors -- Correspondence, Clippings, Proposal for Labor Management Relations Center, 1969-1978	box 30	folder 2
United Farm Workers National Service Center -- Correspondence Re: Criticism and Support for Awarding of Grant, 1970-1971	box 30	folder 3
Urban America, Inc. -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Minutes, Papers on New Towns, Affordable Housing etc., 1967-1970	box 30	folder 4
Urban Institute -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Evaluation of Institute, Speech on Inflation and Unemployment, 1973-1980	box 30	folder 5
V-General -- Voter Education Project, etc., 1968-1980	box 30	folder 6
Vera Institute of Justice -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Reports, Background (1 of 2), 1965-1978	box 30	folder 7
Vera Institute of Justice -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Reports, Background (2 of 2), 1979-1980	box 30	folder 8
W-General -- Thomas J. Wattlely , Jr., Wildcat Service Corporation, etc., 1974-1980	box 31	folder 1
Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Ted Watkins -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Evaluations of Shop Rite Markets (1 of 2), 1971-1972	box 31	folder 2

Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Ted Watkins -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Evaluations of Shop Rite Markets (2 of 2), 1972-1980	box 31	folder 3
Welfare -- Reports and Research on Welfare in New York City (1 of 2), 1967	box 31	folder 4
Welfare -- Reports and Research on Welfare in New York City (2 of 2), 1967-1968	box 31	folder 5
Welfare Policy Meeting -- Memoranda, Background for Meeting, Jul 27, 1976	box 31	folder 6
Welfare Policy Project -- "Attitudes Toward Public Welfare Programs and Recipients" (survey by Natalie Jaffe), Spring 1977	box 31	folder 7
Welfare Policy Project -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Proposals, 1975-1977	box 31	folder 8
Welfare Policy Project -- Papers, Clippings, Correspondence Re: Papers (1 of 2), 1976-1977	box 31	folder 9
Welfare Policy Project -- Papers, Clippings, Correspondence Re: Papers (2 of 2), 1976-1977	box 32	folder 1
Welfare Policy Project -- Project Description, DAP Proposal, 1976	box 32	folder 2
Welfare Policy Project -- Summaries of Welfare Policy Papers, Spring 1977	box 32	folder 3
Welfare Reform -- Correspondence, Concept Paper on Job Creation and Equity Programs, 1976	box 32	folder 4
White House Conference "To Fulfill These Rights" -- Conference Report, Speeches, Working Paper on National Action Programs, Jun 1-2, 1966	box 32	folder 5
Whiting, Basil J. -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Papers, Reports on Occupational Safety, Public Policy and Social Organization Duties, etc., 1971-1980	box 32	folder 6
Winnick, Louis -- Memoranda, Papers, Reports on American Governance, Visit to Sri Lanka, etc., 1968-1980	box 32	folder 7
Women -- "Attitude Survey Concerning the Role of Women at the Ford Foundation", Dec 1970	box 32	folder 8
Women -- "The Changing Role of Women in U.S. Society" (report by Siobhan Oppenheimer-Nicolau), 1972	box 32	folder 9
Women -- "Long Overdue: Full Partnership for Women in American Society" (report by Esther Peterson), Bio, Transcript of Presentation at Ford, Oct 1971	box 32	folder 10
Women -- Memoranda, Proposals, 1971-1972	box 33	folder 1
Women -- Memoranda and Proposals Re: Feminist Law Firms, 1971-1973	box 33	folder 2
Women -- "Recommendations for Women's Programs" [in Division of National Affairs], Oct 1971	box 33	folder 3

Women -- "Survey of Foundation and Government Grants for Women's Rights and Opportunities, 1971-1975", Nov 1975	box 33	folder 4
Women -- Task Force on Women -- Memoranda, Papers, Articles (1 of 3), 1972	box 33	folder 5
Women -- Task Force on Women -- Memoranda, Papers, Articles (2 of 3), 1973	box 33	folder 6
Women -- Task Force on Women -- Memoranda, Papers, Articles (3 of 3), 1973-1974	box 33	folder 7
Women -- "The Women's Movement and Foundations" (transcript of meeting at Carnegie Building, NY, NY), Sep 17, 1971	box 33	folder 8
Women -- Women's Programs and Women at Ford Foundation -- Memoranda, 1970-1973	box 34	folder 1
Women's Programs -- Memoranda, Meeting Agenda, Papers, Reports (1 of 5), 1970-1976	box 34	folder 2
Women's Programs -- Memoranda, Meeting Agenda, Papers, Reports (2 of 5), 1977-1979	box 34	folder 3
Women's Programs -- Memoranda, Meeting Agenda, Papers, Reports (3 of 5), 1979	box 34	folder 4
Women's Programs -- Memoranda, Meeting Agenda, Papers, Reports (4 of 5), 1979-1980	box 34	folder 5
Women's Programs -- Memoranda, Meeting Agenda, Papers, Reports (5 of 5), 1980	box 34	folder 6
Work in America Institute -- Correspondence, Meeting Summaries, Report on Job Strategies for Urban Youth, 1978-1980	box 34	folder 7
Yankelovich, Daniel -- Public Agenda Foundation -- Memoranda, Papers on Attitudes Toward Economic Policy etc., 1977-1980	box 35	folder 1
Yerres, France -- Association for Cultural Development Conference on Industrial Housing, Symposium on Integrated Facilities for Community Educational and Cultural Activities, 1970-1971	box 35	folder 2
Young, Milton -- Correspondence, Proposal to Continue Designing a New System of Educational Experiences for a Total Community (1 of 2), 1968	box 35	folder 3
Young, Milton -- Correspondence, Proposal to Continue Designing a New System of Educational Experiences for a Total Community (2 of 2), 1968	box 35	folder 4
Youth Employment -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Papers, Reports, 1978-1980	box 35	folder 5
Youth Employment and Demonstration Project, Graham Finney -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Proposals, Field Reports (1 of 2), 1977	box 35	folder 6

Youth Employment and Demonstration Project, Graham Finney -- Memoranda, Correspondence, Proposals, Field Reports (2 of 2), 1977-1979	box 35	folder 7
Youth Unemployment -- Correspondence Re: Projects, Papers, 1976-1977	box 35	folder 8
Youth Unemployment Problems Meeting at Ford Foundation -- Minutes, Invitation List, Nov 16, 1977	box 35	folder 9
Z-General -- Zion Investment Associates, John E. Zuccotti, etc., 1973-1976	box 35	folder 10

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Chronological Correspondence Files, 1975-1978

box not specified

### Scope and Contents

This series consists of Mr. Sviridoff's chronological files. While the majority of correspondence is between Mr. Sviridoff and then-current, former or potential grant recipients, the files also contain memoranda between Foundation staff concerning grant modifications, reports on grantees by program officers, and accounts of telephone conversations and meetings, among other subjects. Some correspondence describes broader Foundation policies. For example, one letter, dated October 22, 1975, contains an overview of the policy guiding the Foundation's funding of work in women's rights in order to explain the reasons for rejecting a request from Equal Rights Advocates, Inc. to eliminate the matching funds requirement.

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence 1975, 1975	box 36	folder 1
Correspondence 1976 (1 of 2), Jan-Sep 1976	box 36	folder 2
Correspondence 1976 (2 of 2), Oct-Dec 1976	box 36	folder 3
Correspondence 1977, 1977	box 36	folder 4
Correspondence 1978, 1978	box 36	folder 5

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)