

HERITAGE

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIBRARY FOR SOCIAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH



Summer-Fall 1995

New Mural in Place for SCL Wall of Honor

Artist Eva Cockcroft recently completed a stunning 11 x 7-foot mural at the Library to the right of the SCL Wall of Honor, which will be dedicated Saturday, December 9. This new interior mural marks the second of her murals to grace a SCL wall; the first is "Women and the Labor Movement in California," across the front of the SCL building.

Working with the Library staff and board, Eva designed her most recent SCL mural to show people literally on the move for justice and equality. An open book at the center of the piece displays a quote from Eugene Debs. The faces of marchers within and around the book symbolize the Library's mission to document the history of people in struggle. The mural stands as a tribute to the individuals and organizations, past and present, who carry on the fight for justice in the workplace, the community, and around the world.

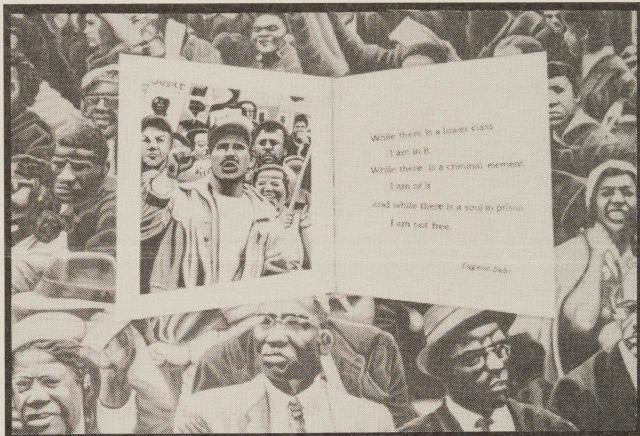
There is still time before the December dedication for you to purchase a brick on the Wall of Honor and pay a long-lasting tribute to someone who has inspired you. The deadline is November 1st. Bricks are \$250, \$500, or \$1,000. Each brick has room for the name of an honoree (if you wish to name a person or group), your name, and a brief message (the larger bricks naturally have room for more text!).

Some SCL friends are purchasing bricks jointly with friends or family members. Sue Kunitomi Embrey, a member of our board, for example, is raising money from friends to honor the late James Omura, a leader against the U.S. government's violation of the rights and liberties of Japanese-Americans in World War II. There are many Southern California activists who deeply deserve a place on SCL's Wall of Honor and whose history is archived at the Library: Charlotta Bass, Luisa Moreno, Frances Williams, Reuben Borough, Leo Gallagher, Stephen Fritchman, to name a few.

Please consider joining with others to honor some of these local heroes in the civil rights, labor and peace

movements. Or choose someone else whose own life has had a great impact on your own.

Call the Library staff if you want to pledge a brick (listing of bricks purchased or pledged on next page). While we will continue to add bricks to the Wall on an annual basis, you have a chance to build the



SCL Wall of Honor mural by Eva Cockcroft

foundation if you buy a brick during this calendar year. Let us hear from you soon!

Rose Chernin, In Memoriam

Veteran Los Angeles activist Rose Chernin, who crusaded for immigrants' rights for decades, died September 8 at the age of 94.

Rose founded and led the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born and the Committee for the Defense of the Bill of Rights. Active in the Communist Party for many years, Rose was targeted under the Smith Act in the '50s. Her legacy survives at SCL in the archives of the committees she headed and in the L.A. Smith Act Collection.

Kim Chernin, Rose's daughter, wrote about her relationship with her mother in the book, *In My Mother's House*, a memoir published in 1983.

**BRICKS PURCHASED OR
PLEDGED FOR THE SCL
WALL OF HONOR AS OF
SEPTEMBER 1, 1995**

Ruth Abraham
 J. Marx Ayres
in memory of his parents
 Sydney Brisker
in memory of Estelle Brisker
 Michael Cowan & Sandra Zickefoose
*commemorating their meeting at
SCL*
 Mike Davis
in memory of his parents
 Bill & Dorothy Doyle
 Howard Feldman
 Ruth Forrest
in memory of Jack Forrest
 Sue Kunitomi Embrey & Friends
in memory of James Omura
 Marvin & Muriel Goldsmith & Norma
 Newman
in memory of Florence Sloat
 Eric Gordon
for his 50th birthday
 Elenore Bogiggian Hittelman
in memory of Bob Kenny
 Bernard Hochman
in memory of his wife Bea
 David Kunzle
in memory of Aline Kunzle
 August & Rena Maymudes
in memory of their parents
 Alice Greenfield McGrath
in memory of Carey McWilliams
 Sherman Pearl and Meredith Gordon
 Bob & Ruth Peck
in memory of their parents
 John Shannon
in memory of Arne Swaback
 Tillie Stein
in memory of Ruth "Gish" Rosenthal
 Donna & Frank Wilkinson
in memory of their parents
 Allan & Hildegarde Wilkinson
*in honor of their father Allan and
brother Frank*
 Irving & Beatrice Zeiger
in honor of Pete Seeger

Madge Bellamy Bequest to SCL

In August the Library received a generous bequest from the recently settled estate of 1920s silent screen star Madge Bellamy. Ms. Bellamy, who was born Margaret Philpott, died in January 1990 at the age of 89.

In her public life, there was little indication of Ms. Bellamy's political views. However, the Library can only be grateful that a woman portrayed in the press as an empty-headed silent screen ingenue or a tempestuous Hollywood flame, also had a social conscience. In her posthumously published autobiography, *A Darling of the Twenties: Madge Bellamy*, she wrote of her life-long belief in "a socialist society" and in "one world without nationalism and with equality, regardless of race; without religion, or any mystical beliefs — just plain brotherhood on earth."

We would like to thank Rena Maymudes for her efforts in settling the Bellamy estate. When you are thinking about your will, please consider what it might mean to future generations if you add a bequest to the Library.

New Board Members Elected

Donna Wilkinson Heads SCL

At the Library's annual meeting in May, Donna Wilkinson was elected President of the Library board. Donna has been the organizer and motivator extraordinaire for many SCL projects (including the last several annual dinners).

She succeeded Jerry Persky, who had ably led the Library for the preceding four years. Luckily for SCL, Jerry has remained on the Steering Committee, where he continues to contribute his good judgment, humor, and sense of realism to Library matters.

The Library is fortunate to have two new faces on the board: Patricia Oliansky and Goetz Wolff. Pat has had a wide range of fundraising and leadership experience, most recently as president of the Los Angeles Mozart Orchestra. The board took immediate advantage of her energy and enthusiasm by electing her unanimously to head the Library's Fundraising Committee.

Goetz also was very quickly drafted into heading up an SCL Committee. He now co-chairs, with SCL board member Susan Philips, the Library's Outreach Committee.

A longtime activist and consultant on employment and economic development, Goetz is deeply involved with two exciting organizing initiatives that hold great promise for Los Angeles: the Los Angeles Manufacturing Action Project (LAMAP) and the development of a Popular Education Center here along the model of the Highlander Center in Tennessee.

Have you sent your Gift Card today?

If you have trouble thinking of the perfect gift for a friend or family member, remember we have elegant gift cards that make a meaningful contribution to SCL and honor those in whose name the donations are made. Contributions are tax-deductible. For more information contact the Library at (213) 759-6063.

August Heat

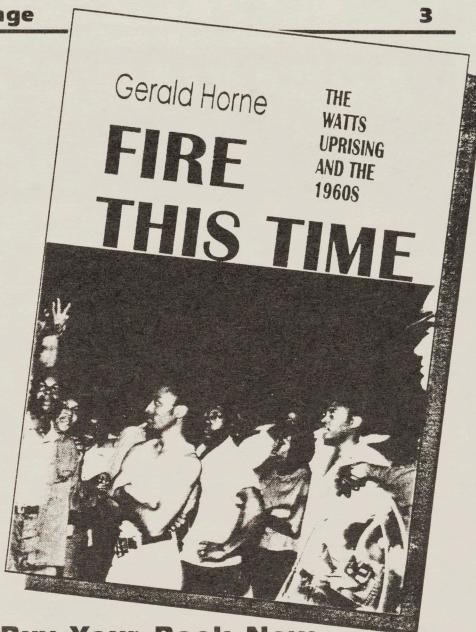
Some 100 people attended a discussion at SCL on Saturday, August 12th on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Watts rebellion, and the publication of Gerald Horne's new book, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s*.

A panel of community activists and scholars — moderated by Joe Hicks with Denise Fairchild, Mike Davis, Clyde Woods, and Horne himself — offered a wide-ranging discussion on the lasting significance of that time period.

Using the book as a springboard, the panelists provided pithy comments and observations on the past and the current political landscape. Davis mentioned how Watts '65 was a moment of empowerment for the black community; people ran the police *out* of the community, and subsequently there was a flowering of indigenous cultural forms, a Watts Renaissance if you will.

Fairchild, echoing points Horne had raised in the book, talked about the sexism within the movement, and the necessity to constantly struggle against these tendencies. She advocated for women to take the forefront in the grassroots social change arena.

Another tenet in Horne's book is that by 1965, organizations such as the NAACP were becoming increasingly detached from the aspirations of working-class black folks, who made up the majority of the L.A. African American population. Having helped facilitate the emergence of a black middle class in the late '40s and '50s, the NAACP and other mainstream black organizations purged Communists and other leftists from their ranks. Moreover, these groups pursued a strategy which gave preference to litigation over militant mass action, thereby contributing to the political, social and economic frustrations in communities like Watts.



Buy Your Book Now

The program around Gerald Horne's book was such a success, we held back a few to give everyone an opportunity to purchase a copy. The book is only \$24.95 (a 20% savings over the normal retail price) with an additional postage and handling fee of \$5.00. Send a check payable to the Southern California Library to get your copy of this bestseller.

Wish List

The Library is in dire need of a computer to continue our cataloging work. Our ideal is a Pentium 100 MHz; 16 MB memory, 1275 MB HD, Quad Speed CD ROM drive, 14" color non-interlaced monitor, 14.4 internal fax-modem and, of course, Windows 95. The most we can wish for is a 486DX66, 16 MB memory, 840 MB HD, Quad Speed CD ROM drive, etc. If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Library in the form of a new computer or money to purchase one, call SCL immediately at (213) 759-6063.

SCL is Southern California's archive for radicalism and social change. We are open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (213) 759-6063 Fax: (213) 759-2252
Newsletter — Gary Phillips, John Shannon, co-editors; Sarah Cooper and Mary Tyler

ORGANIZING LOS ANGELES — AGAIN

This is an especially tumultuous and hopeful time in the labor movement nationally and locally. The Kirkland era at the AFL-CIO is coming to an end. The UAW, the Steelworkers, and the Machinists will merge before the year 2000 to form the largest union within the AFL-CIO. The old garment industry unions — the ILGWU and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers — have joined forces to become UNITE (Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees).

Here in L.A. organizing among hotel workers, janitors, and drywallers in the last five years has given a boost to the vision of a unionized workforce for the city. And recently the discovery that Thai garment workers were being held in virtual slavery in an El Monte apartment complex has drawn long-overdue media attention to the L.A. garment industry.

Because of the Library's commitment to documenting Los Angeles labor history, including history as it is being made today, we offer two commentaries to help situate the recent El Monte scandal in a struggle that has gone on for years.

First is a piece on the L.A. CIO Council by Kenneth Burt, a Sacramento-based historian who has used the Library extensively for his research. Second is testimony presented August 25 to a California legislative hearing by the L.A. Organizing Project of UNITE.

Taken together these two articles point to the power that a militant labor movement in Los Angeles has had and can have again.

L. A. CIO Council Provides Model for Progressive Multi-Cultural Struggle

The Los Angeles Industrial Union Council, CIO (1937-1950) is one of the most important pieces of our collective social history. For more than a decade, the CIO Council — which came to represent 100,000 workers — was on the forefront of social change, and a powerful voice for workers and racial and ethnic minorities.

Creating such a movement today is critical to the successful organizing of immigrant and minority workers, particularly the impending multi-union drive campaign along the Alameda Corridor. A massive

victory in this campaign has the potential to transform both the existing labor movement and politics in Los Angeles.

In 1937, L.A. was still the Citadel of the Open Shop. Only the longshoremen had succeeded in defying the business establishment (due largely to the 1934 San Francisco General Strike). Moreover, L.A. was a city dominated economically, politically and numerically by WASPs, many from the Midwest and South.

In this less than hospitable environment, the CIO began to organize tens of thousands of workers in auto, steel, rubber and the small electrical industry; major organizing campaigns soon followed in shipbuilding and aerospace. Secondary targets included light industry, the service sector and government.

Channeling the energy of newly empowered workers, the CIO helped to modify the dominant political culture by replacing anti-labor politicians with supporters. The L.A. CIO Council played a leading role in the 1938 election of Governor Olson and Mayor Bowron, the 1939 election of a new city council majority, and the 1940 defeat of the anti-labor district attorney.

The Council also created a progressive culture that revolved around the three-story CIO Building: dances, picnics and rallies supplemented meetings, leafleting and picketing. There were parades, fundraisers and activities to defend Harry Bridges and other activists facing deportation.

The CIO also bypassed the Hearst and Chandler-owned newspapers and created its own communication network. The Council sponsored a fifteen minute daily radio program, "Our Daily Bread." Union members also received a weekly Southern California edition of the state CIO's *Labor Herald*.

Council Secretary Phillip "Slim" Connelly, the former president of the L.A. Newspaper Guild, and an Irish Catholic, served as the principal staff person. Oscar Fuss was subsequently added as Legislative Coordinator. The son of Eastern European Jews, he had organized farm workers and the unemployed in the Workers Alliance. In the context of the period, they represented a break with the past in terms of both their politics and ethnic heritage.

The Council also moved to incorporate Latinos and African Americans into the union movement. James

Daugherty, then organizing in the all-white utility industry, recalls a meeting in 1939 where Connelly urged him and other labor leaders to pressure employers to hire more minority workers, which they did. Latinos and African Americans also obtained positions of prominence in the CIO Council and affiliated locals, particularly those unions with a significant minority membership.

Latinos, most of whom had come to L.A. following the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, were the largest minority group. Frank Lopez, with the Furniture Workers, was elected Council Vice President in 1938. The Council was also an early supporter of the Spanish-Speaking Peoples Congress. By 1940, Bert Corona, newly elected president of the ILWU Warehouse Workers, and Luisa Moreno, who became an International Vice President of the Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers (FTA) and Vice President of the California CIO Council, were both prominent labor leaders.

African Americans were also early members of the CIO. In the late 1930s the Council worked with the National Negro Congress and the NAACP. In the early forties, African Americans became a special focus for civil rights and labor organizing as tens of thousands migrated to L.A. from the South to fill positions created by the wartime expansion of industry and endured both discrimination and a severe shortage in housing.

One of the early African American labor and political leaders was Augustus Hawkins. Hawkins, a shipyard worker who gained the state assembly as an End Poverty in California (EPIC) candidate, served for a time as the State CIO Political Action Director. He is best known as the architect of the eventually successful labor-community campaign for a state Fair Employment Practices Commission.

The racial-ethnic angle was key to a number of successful CIO organizing drives. At Wilson & Co., the

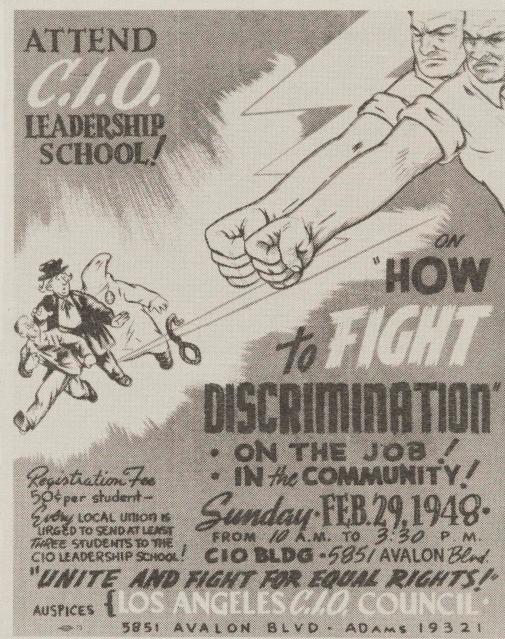
last of the Big Four packinghouses to be organized, African American workers were recruited by Revels Clayton, Vice President of the California CIO Council and the Chair of the state CIO Minority Committee. Refugio Martinez, an International Organizer for the Packinghouse Workers, focused on Mexican Americans.

The CIO Council also formed a number of Anti-Discrimination and Minority Committees, and encouraged its affiliates to negotiate non-discrimination clauses in union contracts, promote minorities on the job and within the union, and to coalesce with community groups.

Highlights of the Council's focus on civil rights include the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, where a number of CIO leaders played prominent roles, including Mexican American UE staffer Joe Marty, who preceded Carey McWilliams as the group's chair. The CIO also took the lead in opening up wartime housing and defense jobs for African Americans.

In recognition of the Council's pathbreaking work on behalf of ethnic and racial minorities, Connelly received the Blessed Martin De Porres Award for 1946 from the liberal Catholic Interracial Council of Los Angeles.

cont'd on page seven



From the ILWU archives, San Francisco

Excerpts from the Statement of the L.A. Organizing Project of UNITE at legislative hearings in El Monte chaired by California State Senator Hilda Solis, August 25, 1995

The discovery of a sweatshop in El Monte, where workers have been held for years in semi-slavery, has drawn horrified attention to the Los Angeles apparel industry. While conditions in this shop were especially deplorable, the situation for *most* workers in the contracting shops of the industry [is] only a cut above semi-slavery. The suffering of these workers does not attract the same kind of public outcry or media attention, but it should.

The reality for most garment workers is a job where the pay is below the poverty line and families have to struggle to survive. The industry relies largely on piece-rate, meaning that workers only get paid for the pieces they sew. They are provided no benefits: no paid vacations, no sick leave, no health coverage, no paid holidays. Although the piece-rate system appears to gear wages to productivity, in reality piece rates are often cut if workers become "too productive," thereby keeping the average wage forever low.

The apparel industry depends upon a system of contracting out the work. This system has created thousands of small shops scattered across the Los Angeles basin. Not only do [they] enable a goodly proportion of the industry to evade the law, they also enable manufacturers and retailers — the true profit centers of the industry — to claim they have no responsibility for the conditions under which their goods are produced. Meanwhile, contracting shops that avoid public scrutiny can engage in all kinds of abuses, from not abiding by basic wage and hour law[s], to personal abuse of employees, to the insistence on illegal homework to the maintenance of a dangerously unsafe working environment.

Manufacturers create, maintain, and control this system of exploitation and then cry crocodile tears when the suffering becomes known to the public. It is the manufacturers who seek (and often finance) the proliferation of contract shops. They then set prices for garments that create the cut-throat competition between contractors that results in all the abuses. This is the dirty secret of the industry. Claims of ignorance and non-responsibility by both manufacturers and retailers for the conditions of the workers who sew their garments are totally hypocritical.

The one development that would bring reform to this industry, the self-organization of the workers in a union, is categorically opposed by the industry.

The contractor is not the primary cause of low standards in this industry, but rather, the manufacturers and retailers who force *him* to serve as the front line of worker abuse and of anti-unionism. He is protecting *them*, and it is *they* who are, in effect, driving him out of business.

Note the fundamental contradiction entailed in this position. On the one hand, industry leaders and their government supporters claim that they want to clean up sweatshops. Of course they deplore the semi-slavery found in the El Monte shop, and they even deplore the flagrant violation of labor standards that prevails in at least one-third of the region's garment factories. Yet when it comes to the one solution that would surely work: the empowerment of the workers through unionization, the industry (and government supporters) recoil in horror, because this will drive up costs! You can't have it both ways. **Sweatshops will not disappear without a rise in labor costs.**

The apparel industry is not alone in using a largely immigrant workforce, working in sweatshop-like conditions, to enrich the people at the top. This gross inequality fosters many of the social ills the middle class complains of: crime, racial tensions, riots, and extreme social alienation. These problems will not be solved unless the workers of this city have more power to protect themselves and demand a fair recompense for their work.

Without unionization, this city will become increasingly polarized and increasingly unlivable for everyone.

L.A. CIO cont'd from page five

The Council also sought to protect recently hired minority workers who were vulnerable to post-WWII layoffs. In urging attendance at a 1948 Council-sponsored Leadership School on "How to Fight Discrimination," Connally wrote, "[Union] delegations will be most effective if they include both the so-called 'white' leaders as well as those who may be Negro or Mexican or Japanese, or of some other minority."

And in a precursor to affirmative action established twenty-five years later, a conference committee recommended that "locals consider special seniority adjustments for minority workers such as that granted veterans." Such a step was needed because "minority workers have little seniority because they have been employed in most plants only since the needs of the war broke down the door to their employment."

— Kenneth C. Burt

Photo © 1995 Judy Branfman



Members of Common Threads demonstrating at a Guess store in Beverly Hills on July 14, in support of garment workers who were striking a Guess subcontractor, Good Time/Song of California.

Common Threads, formed less than a year ago, is a coalition of women who are committed to supporting garment workers in their efforts to unionize and are trying to widen community involvement in the struggles of L.A.'s working poor.

Guess no longer uses the subcontractor, but at the time the label was targeted because it was the largest and best known manufacturer/retailer using Good Time/Song of California. **Common Threads** developed a poster that contrasted a garment worker (\$3.50 an hour) and a modishly photographed pair of jeans (\$75 a pair) with the intervening slogan "Guess

who pockets the difference?" The poster was pasted up widely on the west side and in the garment district downtown.

Artists and others involved with **Common Threads** plan more poster campaigns, demonstrations and events. If you are interested in joining their campaign or having someone from the group talk to your school or organization, leave a message with the group's voice mail: (310) 967-5122.

New Collections

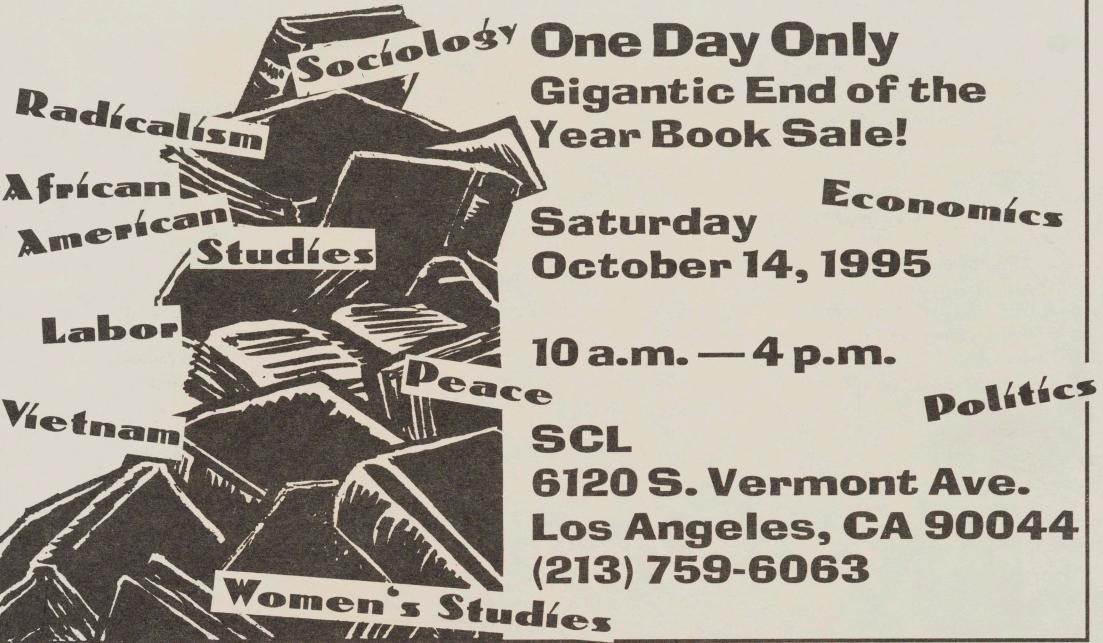
Several new collections have been donated to SCL.

Francesca Taylor has given us materials from her involvement with the *Southern California Catholics for Free Choice* (SCCFC). They include minutes, articles, speeches, and materials regarding the SCCFC's activities around reproductive freedom.

We have also received a collection on the **Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union** (ACTWU), which recently merged with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) to form UNITE (Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees). At the time of ACTWU's move, retired ACTWU staff person, Miriam Ludwig, arranged for some of the papers to come to the Library. Thanks to Miriam and Ruth Miller, we also received the papers of the Los Angeles chapter of the *Coalition of Labor Union Women* (CLUW).

Jean Cohen came to SCL's event on August 12 to hear the program around Gerald Horne's new book *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s*. A week later she gave us copies of the court transcripts on school desegregation in Los Angeles. They add to our collections on the Integration Project previously donated by Dorothy Doyle, Jackie Goldberg, and Sharon Stricker.

Thanks to Wendell Collins and Saundra Sharpe, the Library is the recipient of the papers of **Frances Williams**, whose death last year touched us all. They chronicle her life as an activist, especially her involvement in South African politics and as a beloved actress most remembered for her role in the television series *Frank's Place*. The last time she visited the Library was in 1991 for the dedication of Eva Cockcroft's mural "Women and the Labor Movement in California." Ms. Williams spoke at the event on another important community activist and journalist, Charlotta Bass. Our condolences to the friends and family of Frances Williams.



The Southern California Library
for Social Studies and Research
6120 S. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90044

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LOS ANGELES, CA
PERMIT NO. 1759

Address Correction Requested

Robin Dunitz
10556 Almayo Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90064