

Researching Human Rights at the Rockefeller Archive Center

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Abstract

This report details my January 2014 visit to the Rockefeller Archive Center. My research agenda was to investigate how and why the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Brothers Fund supported nongovernmental organizations focused on international violations of human rights. During my time at the Center, I explored two principal topics. First, I searched records related to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund's support for the International League for Human Rights, Amnesty International USA, Freedom House, and the American Civil Liberties Union, four nongovernmental organizations whose human rights activism was central to my research. Second, my visit enabled me to explore the broader role played by the Ford Foundation in supporting human rights organizations in the 1960s and 1970s.

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The Rockefeller Brothers Fund grant records revealed efforts by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Foundation and the Roger Baldwin Foundation, the tax-exempt arm of the ACLU, to secure funding for litigation and First Amendment rights work.¹ In addition to showing the mechanics of the ACLU's activities, memoranda in connection with these grant applications revealed fissures in the organization. For example, in a December 18, 1968 memorandum, Rockefeller Brothers Fund officer Robert W. Scrivner observed: "There has been conflict in the ACLU between persons who might be considered traditional civil libertarians and those who are connected with the more progressive side of 'the Movement.'" ² In contrast to what I had hoped to find, most of the efforts described in the grant records in the late 1960s and early 1970s were domestic, not international in scope. They showed the ACLU's focus on the civil rights movement in the South, the rights of migrant farm workers in the West, and the welfare system.³

In these folders, there were a few documents relevant to my research, including ACLU official Laughlin McDonald's article for *Playgirl* in November 1976 entitled, "The Criminal Indictment of Henry Kissinger." In this piece, he argued that Kissinger could be prosecuted as a war criminal for the way the United States was waging war in Vietnam and for his complicity in trying to prevent Chilean president Salvador Allende's election and then undermining his regime once it was in power.⁴

Furthermore, there were a number of Rockefeller Brothers Fund records related to the International League for the Rights of Man that were useful to my work. Those included annual reviews of the league and its work in the mid- and late-1970s.⁵ I also looked through files regarding the relationship between the Chilean Commission for Human Rights and the International League for Human Rights, the new name for the International League for the Rights of Man.⁶ These records complemented my work in the league's archives at the New York Public Library.

For those interested in the development of American organizations devoted to international human rights, records in the Rockefeller Brothers Fund relating to the formation of the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights will be useful. Although beyond the chronological scope of my study, these records include the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights' lengthy critique of the Department of State's country reports on human rights and other reports authored by the Lawyers Committee.⁷

In the Rockefeller Brothers Fund archives, I also found several reports showing increasing attention to the role that human rights could play in US foreign policy, including "Report of the Conference on Implementing a Human Rights Commitment in United States Foreign Policy" and a document entitled, "Human Rights Groups Are Riding a Wave of Popularity."⁸

Second, undertaking research at the Rockefeller Archive Center enabled me to explore the Ford Foundation archives, particularly the broader role it played in supporting human rights organizations in the 1960s and 1970s. I was principally interested in how the Ford Foundation came to prioritize funding human rights organizations in the 1970s. To that end, I utilized a Ford Foundation publication, *Many Roads to Justice: The Law-Related Work of Ford Foundation Grantees Around the World* (2000), in particular, its chapter on the Southern Cone. Those interested in the Ford Foundation's work on human rights might look into the office files of its Peace and Social Justice Program – Human Rights and International Cooperation. The Ford Foundation's Human Rights and Governance Program started in 1980, beyond the chronological scope of my own research.

More useful to me were a significant body of catalogued reports commissioned by the Ford Foundation, with titles such as: “Human Rights and the Ford Foundation,” “Human Rights: Needs and Priorities,” “Human Rights and Intellectual Freedom,” “Human Rights Paper,” “Human Rights and Intellectual Freedom,” “Draft Report on Human Rights,” “On Human Rights and U.S. Government Policy,” “Human Rights, Freedom, and the Liberal Tradition,” “Draft Report on Human Rights,” and Lowell W. Livezey, “Non-governmental Organizations and the Idea of Human Rights.”⁹ These reports revealed the different ways in which the Ford Foundation conceived of the scope of human rights, how it intersected with US policy (foreign and domestic), and ways in which it might work to advance this agenda.

There were also Ford Foundation reports on the human rights situations of foreign countries including those in Europe, southern Africa, and the southern cone of Latin America. Some of these reports included discussions of how the organization could assist refugees, particularly academics.¹⁰ These reveal more about the human rights work by the Ford Foundation than its conceptualization of the challenges to be taken on more broadly.

Finally, at the Rockefeller Archive Center I also looked for records relating to key figures in my research, including Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg, Senator Frank Church, Representative Donald Edwards, Representative Donald Fraser, and Representative Dante Fascell. My goal was to find material about them that could offer important insight for aspects of my research agenda. Useful to my work were documents relating to Church’s views on foreign aid, including speeches Church sent to Nelson A. Rockefeller such as Church’s speech at the Center for Inter-American Relations, Inc., in 1969, “Foreign Aid Revisited.”¹¹

In the Nelson A. Rockefeller Papers, I was interested in materials related to a 1965 reception by US Ambassador to the United Nations, Arthur J. Goldberg, to honor Mr. and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson. Though not useful to my own work, but perhaps intriguing to scholars of New York state politics may be records from the Hugh Morrow Papers that help chronicle the 1970 gubernatorial campaign of Arthur J. Goldberg. These papers reveal strong criticisms of Goldberg’s statements and

positions. In addition, folders entitled “Arthur Goldberg (Lifted)-Stolen Statements and Schedules, 1970” seem to reveal that the Rockefeller campaign stole materials from the Goldberg campaign during their fight for the Democratic nomination.¹² In the Malcolm Wilson Papers, I also reviewed a critical book about Goldberg entitled *Arthur J. Goldberg: The Old & The New* by Victor Lasky (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1970), which did not mention of his support for human rights but criticized his style as a diplomat.¹³

Research conducted during my January 2014 visit to the Rockefeller Archive contributed to my prize-winning second book, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), and an article in *Diplomatic History*, the flagship publication for historians of US foreign relations: “The 1968 International Year for Human Rights: A Missed Opportunity in the United States,” 42: 5 (November 2018): 831–858.

¹ Folder 378: American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, 1967-1969 #1, Box 53, Record Group: V3, Rockefeller Brothers Fund Grants (RBF Grants), Rockefeller Brothers Fund Archives (RBF Archives), Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC).

² Robert W. Scrivner to RBF Files, December 18, 1968, Folder 378: American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, 1967-1969 #1, Box 53, Record Group: V3, RBF Grants, RBF Archives, RAC.

³ Folder 379: American Civil Liberties Union, 1967-1969 #2, Box 53, Record Group: V3, RBF Grants, RBF Archives, RAC.

⁴ Folder 394: American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, May 1976-December 1976 #1, Box 56, Record Group: V3, RBF Grants, RBF Archives, RAC.

⁵ See, for example, International League for the Rights of Man Annual Review, 1974-1975, Folder 2812, Box 461, Series 1, Record Group 3 (Grant Files), RBF Archives, RAC.

⁶ Folder 8111, Box 1305, Series 2, Record Group 3, RBF Archives, RAC.

⁷ Folder 2817, Box 462, Series 1, Record Group 3 (Grant Files), RBF Archives, RAC.

⁸ Folder 2812, Box 461, Series 1, Record Group 3 (Grant Files), RBF Archives, RAC.

⁹ Catalogued Reports, Ford Foundation Archives, RAC.

¹⁰ Catalogued Reports, Ford Foundation Archives, RAC.

¹¹ Folder 2358 “Speeches, Miscellaneous, 1962-1969,” Box 235, Series L: Projects, Record Group 4: Personal, Nelson A. Rockefeller Papers, RAC.

¹² Folder 789 “Arthur Goldberg, Campaign for Governor, 1970,” Box 71, Series 3: Campaign Files, 1970 Gubernatorial, Hugh Morrow Papers, RAC; and Folders 790-791: “Arthur Goldberg (Lifted)-Stolen Statements and Schedules, 1970,” Box 72, *ibid.*

¹³ Victor Lasky, *Arthur J. Goldberg: The Old & The New* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1970).