

Congress's Library Preserves Kameny's Papers

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In a ceremony in the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, Dr. Deanna Marcum, Associate Librarian, received the gift of the papers of Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, leading activist in the struggle for gay civil rights. The collection includes Dr. Kameny's personal papers as well as documents of the Mattachine Society of Washington, and other documents and images pertaining to the many topical areas addressed during Dr. Kameny's civil rights campaign.

Dr. Harry Rubinstein of the National Museum of American History received the gift of historic picket signs used by the Mattachine Society of Washington in pickets at the White House, Pentagon, Civil Service Commission and at Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

Dudley Clendinen introduced Dr. Kameny characterizing him as "Patton as gay activist." During his introduction, Clendinen noted that Dr. Kameny was from Brooklyn. Dr. Kameny loudly interrupted Clendinen to say "Queens! Not Brooklyn." Beginning his remarks, Dr. Kameny claimed an obscure constitutional right of senior citizens to ramble. Dr. Kameny noted that the transfer of his papers marked not only preservation of his personal history but also the story of gay and lesbian citizens for their civil rights.

The accession of the Kameny papers marks the first manuscript collection of an American gay or lesbian civil rights leader to be preserved by the Library of Congress.

Former Congressman Michael Huffington, Dr. Deanna Marcum, Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, and Dr. Harry Rubinstein at the transfer of the collection



Charles Francis, one of the organizers of the Kameny Papers Project, displaying papers from the collection.



Dr. Deanna Marcum accepting the collection for the Library of Congress.



Dr. Kameny and Dr Harry Rubinstein of the National Museum of American History with one of the picket signs to be housed at the museum.



Dr. Kameny with a few of the 70,000 items in the collection.



Dr. Kameny spoke briefly to the guests remarking that the collection was not just his personal story but also the story of “how gay and lesbian Americans have joined the American mainstream story of expanded civil rights.”



Press Release

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Gay Civil Rights Pioneer Frank Kameny Presents Lifetime Papers and Historic Artifacts to the Nation

**Library of Congress and Smithsonian's National Museum of American History
to Preserve Half-Century of Rare Documents and Picket Signs**

Washington, D.C. October 6, 2006 – In a ceremony today held at the U.S. Library of Congress, long-time civil rights activist Franklin Edward Kameny officially presented more than 70,000 letters, documents and memorabilia to the nation. The gift represents a lifetime of Kameny's personal papers destined for the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress along with several rare protest and picket signs to be made part of the permanent collections of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

In addition to these gifts to the federal repositories, many of the remaining picket and protest signs will be donated to gay and lesbian history archives throughout the United States for their collections.

"Nearly fifty years ago, the United States Government banned me from employment in public service because I am a homosexual," Kameny said. "This archive is not simply my story; it also shows how gay and lesbian Americans have joined the American mainstream story of expanded civil liberties in the 20th century. Today, by accepting these papers, the nation preserves not only our history but marks how far gay and lesbian Americans have traveled on the road to civil equality."

To make this once-in-a-lifetime gift possible, a volunteer donor group offered to support Kameny and his wishes. With advancing years and limited means, Frank Kameny was not eligible for a federal tax deduction, as is common with such an extraordinary donation. Following an expert appraisal of the documents, several individuals and groups stepped forward to partner with Frank Kameny and to establish the brief-lived Kameny Papers Project (details at www.kamenypapers.org). It also has long been Kameny's wish to ensure the papers – once stored in his Washington, D.C. attic – remain in the Nation's Capital, his home for over five decades and that they ultimately are made available to all for historical research.

The gift was made possible through an original matching grant from a former Member of Congress, the Honorable Michael Huffington, as well as additional generous contributions from organizations and individuals including The Human Rights Campaign, Gill Foundation, Bohnett Foundation, Log Cabin Republicans, and the Liberty Education Fund as well as Donald Capoccia, Charles Francis, Mel Heifetz, Gregory King, Elizabeth Koontz, Jonathan Rauch, Ellen Ratner and Stephen Salny, as well as pro bono contributions from Joiner Law Firm, Attorney Michele Zavos, and Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. Richard Rosendall serves as 'attorney-in-fact' for the Kameny Papers Project.

The Kameny archive includes thousands of pages of letters, government correspondence, testimony, photographs, picket signs and other memorabilia (www.kamenypapers.org). The Kameny papers trace the arc of the gay civil equality movement in the U.S. through Kameny's life and activism from the 1950s to the present. The collection includes original photographs of gay men and women picketing the White House in 1965 along with the original picket signs; the original policy statement of the U.S. Civil Service Commission (1966) explaining to Kameny the legal arguments why homosexuals "are not suitable for federal employment"; documents tracing the formation and advocacy of The Mattachine Society of Washington; documents from the American Psychiatric Association and the fight to "de-list" homosexuality as a mental illness; and impassioned testimony by Dr. Kameny in defense of scores of homosexuals being stripped of security clearances, and fired from their government jobs.

The Kameny papers now become part of the nation's repository of personal papers in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress where they will become available to historians and researchers after they are processed by the Library. The Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress includes the original letters and papers of great Americans from all walks of life---from Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman and Abraham Lincoln to Susan B. Anthony and Bayard Rustin and a thousand other historic figures.

Many of Kameny's original picket signs carried in front of the White House, the Pentagon and the U.S. Civil Service Commission will be made part of the political history collections of the National Museum of American History. There they will join similar artifacts such as abolition broadsheets, suffragist banners and civil rights protest signs collected from groups around the country.