A Finding Aid to the
Skirball Institute on American Values Records

Manuscript Collection No. 721
Collection Summary

Title: Skirball Institute on American Values Records
Dates: 1984-2003
Collection Number: MS-721
Repository: The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator: Skirball Institute on American Values
Extent: 8.8 linear feet (22 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material: English and Hebrew

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch
Jack H. Skirball created the Skirball Institute on American Values as an agency of the American Jewish Committee in 1985. Skirball was a successful motion picture producer, entrepreneur and rabbi who wanted to see the Jewish community in this country act as a constructive partner in the realization of the American dream. He perceived a close kinship between traditional Jewish ideals and American values.

Alfred Wolf was chosen by Jack Skirball to head the Institute after his death because of his pioneering accomplishments in bringing together religious leaders of all faiths and developing innovative programs to promote American values. In January 1996, after ten years of leadership, Rabbi Wolf reduced his activities and Eugene Mornell, nationally recognized for his work at the United States Commission on Civil Rights and Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, became Executive Director of the Skirball Institute. The Skirball Institute on American Values was supported entirely by the Skirball Foundation in New York, which funded many educational and philanthropic enterprises.

The Institute worked in different tracks. First, there was its involvement in American values research, which was guided by a “think tank without walls,” comprised of historians, sociologists and ethicists. They developed a framework for a systematic study of the effect of American values on the individual, the family, the community and the nation, with a special emphasis on immigrant populations and their American-born offspring. This study of American values by some of the nation’s leading academicians led to a major publication.

At the other end of the academic spectrum, the Institute conducted the Skirball Essay contest, in which high school students were encouraged to write on how their lives were affected by a value that can be illustrated by a person, event or document in American history. The Institute also offered Skirball Fellowship for students pursuing advanced degrees in an academic field related to American values. In addition, the Institute conducted a number of conferences, including National Seminary Presidents Conference for Catholic, Jewish and Protestant Seminary Presidents, Southern California Seminary Conference, Intentional Conversation, and Skirball Values Award. The institute also published monthly issues of newsletter, Speaking of Values, which addressed a specific question of American values. The format provided journalists and opinion leaders as well as friends of the institute with essays and commentary on the values under discussion.

Another significant activity of the institute was the Project Discovery. Project Discovery was co-sponsored by the Institute and the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Activities of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The enterprises range from dialogues involving priests, rabbis and lay leadership to the innovative use of rabbinic students as interns in Catholic high school; from annual camp conferences for future rabbis, priests and ministers to a permanent interreligious council comprising nine major world religions. A resource manual for Catholic-Jewish relations was also published entitled, A Journey of Discovery.

Scope and Content
The Skirball Institute on American Values was created as an agency of the American Jewish Committee in 1985 by Jack H. Skirball. Materials in the collection include Skirball Institute's official papers, correspondence, major events records. The collection also includes bio-files and photographs of prominent scholars.

Arrangement
Arranged into four (4) series: A. Biographical Files; B. Correspondence; C. Events; D. Institutional Documents.

Terms of Access
The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.
Preferred Citation

Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Skirball Institute on American Values Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-721. Skirball Institute on American Values Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance

Received from Eugene Mornell, Los Angeles, Calif., May 2003.

Processing Information

Processed by Nilanjana Kundu, July 2005.

Index Terms

Personal Names  Skirball, Jack H., 1896-1985
Corporate Names  Skirball Institute on American Values
Media  Photographs

Series A. Biographical Files, 1985-2003

Extent  0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note  Consists of resumes, publications, articles, photographs and correspondence.

Arrangement  The series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Skirball Advisory Board Members bio file including photos.
Box 1. Folder 2. Bergreen, Morris.
Box 1. Folder 3. Dorff, Elliot N.
Box 1. Folder 4. Erburu, Robert.
Box 1. Folder 5. Feldman, Beverly.
Box 1. Folder 6. Heinz, Hanspeter.
Box 1. Folder 7. Lipstadt, Deborah E.
Box 1. Folder 8. Maguire, John David.
Box 1. Folder 9. Mornell, Eugene S.
Box 2. Folder 1. Marayati, Salam Al.
Box 2. Folder 2. Mouw, Richard J.
Box 2. Folder 3. Nash, Gary.
Box 2. Folder 4. Skirball, Audrey.
Box 2. Folder 5. Skirball, Jack.

Series B. Correspondence, 1984-2003

Extent  0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note  Consists of original as well as xerox copies of correspondence.
Arrangement  The series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 3. Folder 1. Advisory Board, 2001-2003
Box 3. Folder 2. American Jewish Committee, Accounting Department, 1985-1994
Box 3. Folder 5. Harris, David.
Box 3. Folder 6. Dr. Kerze, Michael A.
Box 3. Folder 7. Rev. Merrifield, Donald P., S.J.
Box 4. Folder 1. Miscellaneous correspondence.
Box 4. Folder 5. Stassen, Glen.

Series C. Events, 1986-2003

Extent  3.2 linear feet (8 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note  Consists of original as well as xerox copies of correspondence, brochures, program lists, invitations, acceptance letters and photographs.

Arrangement  The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 5. Folder 1. "Fairness in the news media.", 1986 December 10
Box 5. Folder 2. "Old immigrants, new immigrants: challenge and promise.", 1987 March 12
Box 5. Folder 3. "What makes a value American?", 1988
Box 5. Folder 4. Skirball Institute Convocation, 1990 January 24
Box 5. Folder 5. "Altruism as an American value.", 1990 January 24
Box 5. Folder 6. Skirball Institute 5th anniversary dinner, 1990 December
Box 5. Folder 7. "Religious pluralism and the common good.", 1991 February 27
Box 5. Folder 8. "Our challenge for the nineties: preventing religious and ethnic balkanization.", 1993 April 26-28
Box 6. Folder 1. "Religion's role in preserving the environment.", 1994 April 18-20
Box 6. Folder 3. "Religious value in an age of technology.", 1995 April 3-5
Box 6. Folder 4. 10th anniversary of the Skirball Institute of American values, 1995 November 12
Box 7. Folder 1. Preaching, politics, and power: exploring the link between pulpit and ballot box, 1996 April 29 - May 1
Box 7. Folder 2. "The conflict between faith and culture.", 1996 February 22
Box 7. Folder 3. "Developing intellect, character, and spirit in seminary education.", 1997 February 20
Box 7. Folder 4. "Religious values in a diverse society; living with differences of religion, race & culture, 1997 April 14-16
Box 7. Folder 5. "The teaching of religious truth: mine, yours and theirs.", 1998 February 27
Box 7. Folder 6. "Leaders to talk about, can they creatively co-exist.", 1998 October 19-20
Box 7. Folder 7. Apocalyptic visions and utopian dreams, 1998 November 2-8
Box 8. Folder 1. "Faith and American culture.", 1999 February 19
Box 8. Folder 2. An Intentional Conversation at Huntington, 1999 April 21
Box 8. Folder 3. Intentional Conversation, 2000 May 23
Box 8. Folder 4. "Theology in personal and professional practice.", 2000 February 25
Box 8. Folder 6. "Here I am: stories of personal faith.", 2001 March 2
Box 8. Folder 8. "The Seminary after September 11: the questions we have.", 2002 March 1
Box 8. Folder 9. A gathering of ethics faculty, 2002 April 24
Box 9. Folder 1. Intentional conversation, 2002 May 22
Box 9. Folder 2. Ethics conference, 2002 October 17
Box 9. Folder 5. "Living a life that matters.", 2003 March 21
Box 10. Folder 1. Skirball essay contest, 1989
Box 10. Folder 2. Skirball essay contest, 1990
Box 10. Folder 4. Skirball essay contest, 1992
Box 10. Folder 5. Skirball essay contest, 1993
Box 11. Folder 1. Skirball essay contest, 1994
Box 11. Folder 2. Skirball essay contest, 1995
Box 11. Folder 4. Skirball essay contest, 1997
Box 11. Folder 5. Skirball essay contest, 1998
Box 11. Folder 6. Skirball essay contest, 1999
Box 12. Folder 1. Skirball essay contest, 2000
Box 12. Folder 2. Skirball essay contest, 2001
Box 12. Folder 3. Skirball essay contest, 2002
Box 12. Folder 4. Skirball values award, 1997
Box 12. Folder 5. Skirball values award, 2001
Box 12. Folder 6. Skirball values award, 2002
Box 12. Folder 7. Skirball values award, 2003

Series D. Institutional Documents, 1985-2003

Extent 4 linear feet (10 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of budget reports, expenditure files, notes, correspondence, committee reports, minutes, photographs, project reports and publications.

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically by subject.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 13. Folder 1. Address change.
Box 13. Folder 2. Advisory Board.
Box 13. Folder 3. Advisory Board.
Box 13. Folder 5. Advisory Board Executive Committee.
Box 13. Folder 6. Ambassador within.
Box 14. Folder 1. American Jewish Committee.
Box 14. Folder 2. Institute for American values.
Box 14. Folder 3. Articles.
Box 14. Folder 5. Skirball Institute brochure.
Box 14. Folder 7. AJC- Catholic/Jewish ethics and public policy.
Box 14. Folder 10. The common good national interfaith statement.
Box 15. Folder 1. Ethikon Institute.
Box 15. Folder 2. Skirball Institute expenditure.
Box 15. Folder 3. Skirball fellowship on religion and civic life.
Box 15. Folder 4. Skirball conference follow up and evaluation, 1993
Box 15. Folder 5. Skirball conference program, 1994
Box 15. Folder 6. Skirball conference follow up and evaluation, 1994
Box 21. Folder 5. Skirball Institute staff information.
Box 21. Folder 7. Skirball think tank.
Box 22. Folder 2. Youth task force.