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David Abrahamsen Papers, 1902-1981

MS# 0004

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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Creator

David Abrahamsen, 1903-2002

Title and dates

David Abrahamsen Papers, 1902-1981

Abstract

Papers relating primarily to the research and interviews which Abrahamsen conducted while writing *Nixon vs. Nixon: An Emotional Tragedy*, and to his close relationship and correspondence with convicted multiple murderer David Berkowitz.

Size

2.5 linear ft. (5 document boxes)

Call number

MS# 0004

Location

Columbia University
Butler Library, 6th Floor
Rare Book and Manuscript Library

535 West 114th Street
New York, NY 10027

Language(s) of material

English

Biographical Note



Psychiatrist and author whose specialty was the study of criminal psychology. Abrahamsen is best-known for his book length studies of Richard Nixon and David Berkowitz, the infamous "Son of Sam" serial killer. A native of Norway (born in Trondheim, Norway in 1903), Abrahamsen worked in Europe before emigrating to the United States in 1940 where he became a research associate at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons (1944-1953) and director of scientific research at Sing Sing prison in New York (1948-52). In 1966 Abrahamsen was appointed medical and psychiatric director of Columbia University's Foundation for the Prevention of Addictive Diseases. Abrahamsen taught in various New York universities and wrote many studies on criminology.

Abrahamsen's printed works include:

The road to emotional maturity. Pp. 388. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall [1958]

The mind and death of a genius. Pp. viii, (3)-228, illus., facs. New York: Columbia University Press, 1946

Who are the guilty? A study of education and crime. Pp. 340. New York: Rinehart [1952]

The murdering mind. [1st ed.] Pp. 245. New York: Harper & Row [1973]

The psychology of crime. Pp. 358. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960

Murder & madness: the secret life of Jack the Ripper. Pp. xv, 219, illus., map. New York: D. I. Fine, c1992

The mind of the accused: a psychiatrist in the courtroom. Pp. 224. New York: Simon and Schuster, c1983

Description

Papers relating primarily to the research and interviews which Abrahamsen conducted while writing *Nixon vs. Nixon: An Emotional Tragedy*, and to his close relationship and correspondence with convicted multiple murderer David Berkowitz. There are over 140 letters to Abrahamsen from Berkowitz, who was known as "Son of Sam" and the "44-Calibre Killer" for the succession of killings of young people in New York City in the mid-1970s.

The papers also reflect Abrahamsen's interest in psychologist Otto Weininger, in politics (particularly Adlai E. Stevenson's 1952 campaign) and in other famous crimes such as the Leopold/Loeb kidnapping and murder of Bobby Franks.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in Five series.

[Series I: Cataloged Correspondence](#)

PAGES 5-7

[Series II: Cataloged Manuscripts](#)

PAGE 7

[Series III: Miscellaneous](#)

PAGE 7

[Series IV: Columbia University Forum for the Study and Prevention of Crime](#)

PAGES 7-8

[Series V: *Nixon vs. Nixon*](#)

PAGE 8

ACCESS AND USE

Access

This collection has no restrictions.

This collection is located on-site.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

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ACQUISITION AND APPRAISAL

Provenance and Acquisition

Gift of Dr. David Abrahamsen, 1982

Accrual of Records

No additions are expected.

PROCESSING AND OTHER INFORMATION

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Mary B. Bowling. Finding aid written by Mary B. Bowling in March 1982.

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid adheres to that prescribed by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*

Encoding

Finding aid written in English.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); David Abrahamsen Papers; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

Subject Headings

These papers have been indexed in the Columbia University Library online catalog using the following terms. Those seeking related materials should search under these terms.

Abrahamsen, David, 1903-
Berkowitz, David Richard, 1953-
Butler, Nicholas Murray, 1862-1947
Criminal psychology
Ernst, Morris Leopold, 1888-1976
Frankfurter, Felix, 1882-1965.
Franks, Bobby, 1909-1924
Freud, Sigmund, 1856-1939
Lehman, Herbert H. (Herbert Henry), 1878-1963.
Leopold, Nathan Freudenthal, 1904-1971
Loeb, Richard A., 1905 or 6-1936.
Luce, Clare Boothe, 1903-1987
Mumford, Lewis, 1895-1990
Murder--Case studies
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-
Photoprints
Psychiatrists
Schiff, Dorothy, 1903-1989
Stevenson, Adlai E. (Adlai Ewing), 1900-1965
Weininger, Otto, 1929-

Box

Series I: Cataloged Correspondence

- 1 Berkowitz, David, 1953-
To David Abrahamsen
Attica and Dannemora, NY, 1979-1981
33 autograph letters signed
3 autograph letters
100 typed letters signed
7 typed letters

Berkowitz, David, 1953-
To Harold W. McGraw, Jr.
Attica, NY, 21 Feb. 1979
1 typed letter signed

Berkowitz, David, 1953-
To [Dee Channel]
Attica, NY, 23 April 1979
3 page typed letters signed (copy)

Berkowitz, David, 1953-
To Bernice [De Nota]
[Attica, NY], 5 Aug. 1979
2 page typed letters signed (carbon)

Berkowitz, David, 1953-
To [Lawrence D.] Klausner
Attica, NY, 10 Jan. 1980
1 page typed letter signed

Berkowitz, David, 1953-
To [Lawrence D.] Klausner
Attica, NY, 19 Jan. 1980
2 page typed letter signed (carbon)

Berkowitz, David, 1953-
Attica, NY,
31 Aug. 1980, 1 page typed letter signed (with envelope)

Berkowitz, David, 1953-
To William Sisselman
Attica, NY, 7 Oct. 1980
1 page typed letter signed
- 2 Brett, George P., Jr.
To David Abrahamsen
New York, March 1947 and 20 March 1947.
2 typed letter signed

Butler, Nicholas Murray
To David Abrahamsen

Box

New York, 30 Oct. 1945
1 page typed letter signed

Ernst, Morris Leopold
To David Abrahamsen.
New York, 11 April 1949
1 page typed letter signed

Frankfurter, Felix
To David Abrahamsen
Washington, 20 Oct. 1945
1 page typed letter signed

Freud, Sigmund
To David Abrahamsen.
Vienna and London, 14 March - 11 June 1939
2 typed letter signed

Lehman, Herbert H.
To David Abrahamsen.
Washington, 22 Sept. 1952.
1 page typed letter signed

Leopold, Nathan F., Jr.
To David Abrahamsen
[v.p.], 1958-1965.
3 typed letters signed

Luce, Clare Boothe
To David Abrahamsen
Washington, 6 Dec. 1945.
1 page typed letter signed

Menninger, Karl
To David Abrahamsen
Topeka, Kansas, 31 Oct. 1945
1 page typed letter signed

Mumford, Lewis
To David Abrahamsen
Hanover, New Hampshire, 17 Dec. 1945
1 page autograph letter signed

Nevins, Allen
To David Abrahamsen
New York, 11 Nov. 1952
1 page typed letter signed

Schiff, Dorothy
To David Abrahamsen
New York, 17 Sept. 1952

Box

1 page typed letter signed

Stevenson, Adlai Ewing
To David Abrahamsen
Springfield, Ill, 3 Jan. - 20 Nov. 1952
6 typed letters signed

West, Jessamyn
To David Abrahamsen
Napa, California, 1974-1976
3 autograph letters signed
2 typed letters signed

Series II: Cataloged Manuscripts

2 Berkowitz, David
Childhood
[Attica, N.Y.], [ca. May 1979]
4 page autograph manuscript

Berkowitz, David
From the Book *Starkweather*.
[Attica, N.Y.], [ca. May 1979]
8 page autograph and typed manuscript signed

Abrahamsen, David
Interview of David Berkowitz
[Attica, N.Y.], 17 May 1979
9 page autograph manuscript signed

Berkowitz, David
Notarized affidavits authorizing use of his conversations and letters
[Attica, N.Y.], 17 May 1979
2 page autograph document signed

Series III: Miscellaneous

2 Berkowitz, David
Miscellaneous items
[n.p., n.d.]

5 Abrahamsen, David
Presentation volume: Copies of a selection of letters from the collection, presented to
Michael Sovern of Columbia University
NY, 25 February 1982
1 volume

Series IV: Columbia University Forum for the Study and Prevention of Crime

2 Leopold, Nathan F., Jr.
Related items

Box

- [n.p.], 1957-1967
- 2 Stevenson, Adlai Ewing
Related items
[n.p.], 1952
- 2 Weininger, Otto
Related material
[n.p., n.d.]
- Series V: *Nixon vs. Nixon*
- 3 Correspondence
Hiss case
Interviews
[n.p., n.d.]
- Nixon, Richard M.
Genealogy
[n.p., n.d.]
- Nixon, Richard M.
Childhood; youth; education; finances, and military history
[n.p., n.d.]
- Miscellaneous items
Printed material
[n.p., n.d.]
- 4 Nixon family
Photographs and Printed material
[v.p., n.d.]
- Abrahamsen, David
A Psychoanalytical Inquest: Richard Nixon
[n.p., n.d.]
500 pages photocopy of typescript on which *Nixon vs. Nixon* was based