

ASRIEL AND MASCHA BERKMANN PAPERS, CIRCA 1900-1989
2016.202.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
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Descriptive summary

Title: Asriel and Mascha Berkman papers

Dates: circa 1900-1989 (bulk, 1945-1948)

Accession number: 2016.202.1

Creator: Berkman, Asriel (Prostki :Poland)
Berkman, Mascha (Raseiniai :Lithuania)

Extent: 0.5 Linear feet (12 folders)

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW,
Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: The collection contains documents, correspondence, and photographs relating to Asriel and Mascha Berkman's experiences in concentration camps during the Holocaust, and in Munich, Germany after the war. Included are identification documents; immigration papers; documents regarding Asriel's involvement with the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bavaria and the Jewish Committee Munich; correspondence; an affidavit signed by 30 prisoners at Dachau concentration camp stating that Asriel was also there and worked to help his fellow prisoners; a document stating that no paperwork exists regarding Mascha's parents, Hershel and Rachel Rutstein; and post-war photographs of Asriel and Mascha Berkman along with pre-war photographs of unidentified friends and family members.

Languages: German, English, Russian, Yiddish

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Asriel and Mascha Berkmann papers (2016.202.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The Asriel and Mascha Berkmann papers were donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Paul Berkman in 2013.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at collections.ushmm.org for further information.

Processing history: Adam Fielding, April 2016

Biographical note

Mascha Berkman (née Rutstein, later Marsha Berkman, 1920-2007) was born in Raseiniai, Lithuania to Rachel (née Seidman) and Hershel Rutstein. She had three brothers, Benjamin, Henry, and Israel. Her father was a cobbler, but died when Mascha was 2 years old. Her mother supported the family by cooking and cleaning for other families. The children were not able to go to school, and Mascha began working at 13. She soon began working in a deli. While working there, she was introduced to Hillel Senjor, a widower with a small child. She agreed to marry him, and they had a daughter, Cecilia, in 1940. In 1941, Mascha, Hillel, Cecilia, and Mascha's mother Rachel were sent to the Kaunas ghetto in Lithuania. Mascha did forced labor work on a military airport. They were then sent to Kauen-Šančiai subcamp after the ghetto was turned into the Kaunas concentration camp. Her daughter was taken from her in 1943 and perished with many other children from the camp. In 1944, Hillel was sent to Dachau concentration camp, and perished on the march. Mascha and her mother were sent to Stutthof concentration camp. After the camp was liberated by the Red Army in 1945, Mascha and her mother were separated. Mascha went to Łódź, Poland briefly, and then went back to Lithuania to search for surviving family members. She found her brother Israel, but not her mother. She went Munich, Germany with the intention of immigrating to Israel. However, she then met Asriel Berkman, whom she had met before in the Kaunas ghetto. They married in 1947, and immigrated to the United States in 1948. They settled in Los Angeles, California, and Mascha worked in the wardrobe department of Paramount Studios. Her husband, Asriel owned an upholstery store. She and Asriel had one son, Paul.

Mascha's brother Benjamin perished in the Holocaust. Her other brothers, Henry and Israel, both fled to Russia and survived. Her mother Rachel eventually joined Mascha in the United States.

Asriel Berkman (later Philip Berkman, 1908-1983) was born in Prostken, Germany (now Prostki, Poland) to Paul and Luba (née Endelmann) Berkman. His father worked as a chicken importer. He lived in Berlin, Germany and Lithuania before the war. He was married and had a child, both of whom perished during the Holocaust. During the war, he was in the Kaunas ghetto and the Kauen-Šančiai subcamp before being sent to the Kaufering subcamp of Dachau. While at Kaufering, he was a kapo, and worked making bricks. He used his position to help his fellow prisoners in any way he could. After the war, he lived in Munich, and worked as the head of a factory. He was also involved with the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bavaria and the Jewish Committee Munich. He married Mascha Rutstein in 1947, and they moved to the United States in 1948.

Scope and content of collection

The collection contains documents, correspondence, and photographs relating to Asriel and Mascha Berkman's experiences in concentration camps during the Holocaust, and in Munich, Germany after the war. Included are identification documents; immigration papers; documents regarding Asriel's

involvement with the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bavaria and the Jewish Committee Munich; correspondence; an affidavit signed by 30 prisoners at Dachau concentration camp stating that Asriel was also there and worked to help his fellow prisoners; a document stating that no paperwork exists regarding Mascha's parents, Hershel and Rachel Rutstein; and post-war photographs of Asriel and Mascha Berkmann along with pre-war photographs of unidentified friends and family members.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged alphabetically as one series.

Indexing terms

Person:

Berkmann, Asriel, 1908-1983
Berkmann, Mascha, 1920-2007

Corporate:

Dachau (Concentration camp)
Kauen-Schanzen (Concentration camp)
Stutthof (Concentration camp)
Kaufering (Concentration camp)

Topical Subject:

World War, 1939-1945--Concentration camps--Germany.
Jewish families--Lithuania.
Kapos.
Emigration & immigration--United States--1940-1950.
Holocaust survivors--Germany--Dachau.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)

Geography:

Raseiniai (Lithuania)
Munich (Germany)
Kaunas (Lithuania)

Genre/Form:

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Folder	Title
	Berkmann, Asriel:
1	Affidavit regarding Asriel Berkmann at Dachau concentration camp, 1947
2	Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bavaria, 1945-1946
3	Correspondence, 1945-1978
4	Identification papers, 1947-1983
5	Immigration papers, 1948-1954
	Berkmann, Mascha:
6	Correspondence, 1968-1989

7	Identification papers, 1947-1948
8	Immigration papers, 1948-1954
9	Jewish Committee Munich, 1947-1948
10	Photographs: Berkman, Asriel and Mascha, 1946-circa 1948
11	Photographs: Friends and family, circa 1900-circa 1948 <i>Two negatives of portraits moved to cold storage</i>
12	Rutstein, Hershel and Rachel: Marriage document, 1958