

# **Guide to the Congressional Union Records**

## **RG 15.1**

**Finding aid prepared by Dawn Walsh**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Sarah Lawrence College Archives

June 2003

Sarah Lawrence College Archives

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Sarah Lawrence College Archives
<b>Title</b>	Congressional Union Records
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	Bulk, 1981-1982
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1980-1987
<b>Extent</b>	3.5 linear feet 3 record cartons, 1 artifact box
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Mixed materials [Oversize]</b>	2
<b>Mixed materials [Oversize]</b>	1
<b>Mixed materials [Box]</b>	4
<b>Text [Carton]</b>	3
<b>Text [Carton]</b>	2
<b>Text [Carton]</b>	1

## Historical note

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Formed in the Fall of 1980 by graduates of the Women's History Program at Sarah Lawrence College, and incorporated as a non-profit organization in June of 1981, the Congressional Union (CU) was an organization of feminist historians and activists named in honor of the militant woman suffrage group created by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns in 1914 and which later became the National Woman's Party. The Congressional Union sought to recapture the non-violent, but militant, spirit of the suffragists in order to advance feminist issues, namely the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. The founders advocated a "woman-first" political strategy. For their platform, they used the 1977 National Women's Conference Plan of Action.

The leadership of the CU was comprised of an Executive and an Advisory Committee. All decisions about structure and strategy were to be made by the Executive Committee. The Advisory Committee's role was to suggest strategy and tactics for the Executive Committee's consideration and to help to create and sustain the growth of the CU.

Founded in Bronxville, NY, the CU soon developed a D.C. Chapter and a Northwest Chapter. However, membership consisted of women from across the nation. The CU sponsored sixteen actions in all, the first being a silent, banner-carrying procession on the eve of President Reagan's inauguration (January 19, 1981) and the last being the participation in the National Day of Mourning (June 30, 1982) when the ERA failed to win passage.

Founding member Pam Elam, and others, then tried unsuccessfully to produce a film about militant suffrage and its connections with the ERA. The CU also became an active member of the New York Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights. However, with the failure to ratify the ERA and the inability to obtain foundation funding to support the film and other projects of interest, the CU dissolved its non-profit corporation status on April 1, 1984.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The collection contains a wide and extensive range of documents covering the full time span of the organization including its philosophy, structure and tactics, actions, press releases, finances, internal conflicts, membership, correspondence, newsletters, media coverage, and tape recordings.

The collection also contains personal papers of two key figures of the CU: co-founder Pam Elam and, to a lesser extent, D.C. Chapter leader Sonia Johnson.

Also included are documents linking the CU to the broader activist and scholarly realms, including newsletters from other feminist organizations and program material for women's history conferences.

The two oversized folders contain political campaign broadsides for Miriam Friedlander, Sonia Johnson, the Mondale/Ferraro ticket, and the Collins/Beshear ticket. The folders also contain oversized materials removed from the record carton as well as Congressional Union flags.

Files arranged alphabetically by subject heading.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Information**

Sarah Lawrence College Archives June 2003

### **Revision Description**

Processed June 2003 by Dawn Walsh. Materials added and finding aid updated in June 2012 by Sarah Pinard. Finding aid entered in Archivists' Toolkit in June 2012 by Sarah Pinard. June 2012

### **Conditions Governing Access note**

Copyright resides with donor, Pamela Elam. The materials are unrestricted and reproduction is allowed by Sarah Lawrence College and by researchers who satisfy its general requirements for use of unpublished materials.

### **Acquisition note**

Donated by Pamela Elam, M.A. Women's History '80, in December 2001

### **Existence and Location of Originals note**

Original microfilm of History of Women, reel 963, is located at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America.

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## **Related Materials**

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### **Separated Materials note**

The following cassette tape recordings of lectures given by Sonia Johnson have been removed and rehoused in the Audiovisual Collection: From Housewife to Heretic, April 10, 1981 (C 1474-1475), From Housewife to Heretic, March 6, 1983 (C 1472), untitled lecture, March 7, 1983 (C 1473)

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Corporate Name(s)

- Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights.
- Congressional Union.
- National Women's Party.
- Sarah Lawrence College. Women's History.

### Genre(s)

- Buttons (information artifacts)
- Correspondence
- Flags
- Megaphones
- Microfilms
- Newsletters
- Rubber Stamps

### Personal Name(s)

- Elam, Pamela
- Johnson, Sonia

### Subject(s)

- Equal Rights Amendments

## Collection Inventory

	<b>Carton</b>
Abortion	1
Actions - Buttons	1
Actions - Mormon Temple Protest November 17, 1980	1
Actions - Silent Procession January 19, 1981	1
Action - NOW Inaugural Watch January 20 1981	1
Actions - Women's Rights Day in Congress February 4, 1981	1
Actions - White House Vigil February 4, 1981	1
Actions - National Women's Independence Day July 4, 1981	
	<b>Oversize</b>
Graphic materials	1
	<b>Carton</b>
Text	1

### Separated Materials note

National Women's Independence Day Celebration posters were removed and housed in the Oversize folder 1.

**Carton**

Actions - National Women's Independence Day July 4, 1981

1

Actions - National Women's Independence Day July 4, 1981

1

Actions - Women's Equality Day August 26, 1981

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Text

**Carton**

1

Graphic materials

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**Oversize**

1

**Separated Materials note**

Posters for the Women's Equality Day were removed and housed in the Oversize folder 1.

**Carton**

Actions - White House Demonstration October 11, 1981

1

Actions - White House Demonstration November 11, 1981

1

Actions - Christmas Tree Lighting December 17, 1981

1

Actions - Mormon Temple Protest January 9, 1982

1

Actions - White House Demonstration January 11, 1982

1



Actions - Susan B. Anthony Birthday February 15, 1982	1
Actions - National Day of Mourning June 30, 1982	1
Actions- Take Back the Night September 24,1983	1
Advisory and Executive Committee	1
Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights	1
Conferences - 5th Berkshire 1981	1
Conferences - 6th Berkshire 1984	1
Conferences - 7th Berkshire 1987	1
Conferences - Summer Institute in Women's History 1979	1
Conferences - Homemakers Equal Rights Association 1982	1
Conferences - National Women's Conference Committee 1982	1
Conferences - 1st Annual Women Gathering 1983	1
Conferences - 6th Annual National Women's Studies Association 1984	1
Conferences - Smithsonian American Historical Association 1985	1

Congressional Union - D.C. Chapter	1
Congressional Union - Donated Papers	1
Congressional Union - General	1
Congressional Union - Northwest Chapter	1
Elam, Pam - Correspondence and Biographical	1
Elam, Pam - Sarah Lawrence College Master's Thesis	1
Elam, Pam - Sarah Lawrence College Class Materials	1
Elam, Pam - Sarah Lawrence College Class Materials	1
Elam, Pam - Sarah Lawrence College Class Materials	1
Elam, Pam - Authored Works	1
Film Proposal - General Description	2
Film Proposal - Grant Applications	2
Film Proposal - Letters of Request and Reply	2
Finances - Bank Statements	2

Finances - Dues and Miscellaneous	2
Finances - IRS and Tax Returns	2
Incorporation and Dissolution thereof	2

Johnson, Sonia - Miscellaneous Personal Papers

	<b>Oversize</b>
Graphic materials	1
	<b>Carton</b>
Text	2

**Separated Materials note**

Sonia Johnson posters were removed and are housed in the Oversize folder 1.

	<b>Carton</b>
Kentucky Pro ERA Alliance	2
Mailing Lists	2
Media Coverage - General, C.U.	2
Media Coverage - General, ERA	2
Membership - Index Card Listings	2

Membership - Index Card Listings	2
Membership - Pledge Cards	2
Membership - Pledge Forms	2
Membership - Pledge Forms	2
Membership - Letters of Request and Inquiry	2
National Organization for Women	2
National Woman's Party - Miscellaneous	3
National Woman's Party - Newsletters	3
National Woman's Party - Convention 1981	3
National Women's Conference Committee	3
National Women's History Week	3
Newsletters - C.U. Vol. 1, No. 2 1981	3
Newsletters - C.U. Vol. 1, No. 1 1981	3
Newsletters - C.U. Vol. 2, No. 1 1982	3

Newsletters - C.U. Vol. 2, No. 2 1982	3
Newsletters - Creative Women's Collective	3
Newsletters - Elizabeth Cady Stanton Foundation	3
Newsletters - E.X.P.O.S.E.	3
Newsletters - Federally Employed Women	3
Newsletters - Feminist Connection	3
Newsletters - Frontline	3
Newsletters - Gay Life	3
Newsletters - Longest Revolution	3
Newsletters - Moral Majority Report	3
Newsletters - New Women's Times	3
Newsletters - N.O.W.	3
Newsletters - National Women's Hall of Fame	3
Newsletters - National Women's Political Caucus	3

Newsletters - National Women's Studies Association	3
Newsletters - Organization of American Historians	3
Newsletters - Plexus	3
Newsletters - Report, University of Wisconsin	3
Newsletters - Rising Up	3
Newsletters - Sojourner	3
Newsletters - Spokeswoman	3
Newsletters - Woman Activist	3
Newsletters - Women Today	3
Newsletters - Women's Campaign Fund	3
Newsletters - Women's Studies International	3
Newsletters - Women's Voices	3
	<b>Oversize</b>
Political Broadsides 1980s	1
	<b>Carton</b>

Resources - Bibliographies	3
Resources - Black Women's History Project	3
Resources - Miscellaneous Guides	3
Resources - Research Publications	3
Suffrage History - Elizabeth Robins	3
Suffrage History - English Suffrage Campaign	3
Suffrage History - 1913-1917	3
Suffrage History - 1918-1920	3
Suffrage History - American Suffrage Campaign	3
Suffrage History - American Suffrage Campaign	3
Suffrage History - Anti-Suffrage Campaign	3
Suffrage History - Anti-Suffrage Campaign	3
Suffrage History - Miscellaneous	
	<b>Carton</b>
	3
Text	

**Oversize**

Graphic materials

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1

**Separated Materials note**

1977 Alice Paul poster from TABS journal was removed and housed in the Oversize folder 1.

**Box**

History of Women - Microfilm Reel 963

4

Congressional Union P.O. Address Stamp

4

Megaphone (aka "The Power Horn")

4

**Oversize**

Congressional Union Flags undated

2