

World War II Rumor Project Collection

AFC 1945/001

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American Folklife Center, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

1996

Encoded by Glenn R. Gardner and Nora
Yeh, February, 2011

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Collection Summary

Collection Number: AFC 1945/001

Title: World War II Rumor Project Collection

Inclusive Dates: 1942-1943

Repository: Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.home>

Extent (original): 10 boxes (5 linear feet)

Creator: United States. Office of War Information

Language: English

Abstract: Manuscript collection created by the Office of War Information in 1942-1943. Field representatives of various federal agencies in 42 states enlisted individuals who collected rumors generated in the United States during World War II. These individuals or "correspondents" included dentists, beauty shop operators, policemen, proprietors, and librarians who had access to rumors in their communities. Reports were submitted to Dr. Eugene Horowitz at the Bureau of Public Inquiries of OWI, who organized the materials. Rumors, jokes, rhymes, and anecdotes about the war were also collected by teachers from African American and white high school and college students; a few drawings and cartoons are included with the submissions from students.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject listed alphabetically therein.

People

Horowitz, Eugene.

Organizations

United States. Office of War Information, collector.

Subjects

College students--United States--Attitudes.
High school students--United States--Attitudes.
Rumor--United States.
Urban folklore--United States.
World War, 1939-1945--African Americans.
World War, 1939-1945--Anecdotes.
World War, 1939-1945--German Americans.
World War, 1939-1945--Humor.
World War, 1939-1945--Japanese Americans.
World War, 1939-1945--Jews.
World War, 1939-1945--Propaganda.
World War, 1939-1945--Psychological aspects.
World War, 1939-1945--Public opinion.

Form/Genre

Correspondence.
Drawings.
Manuscripts.
Poems.

Scope and Content

The World War II Rumor Project Collection contains manuscript materials compiled by the Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI was established by an Executive order on June 13, 1942, for the purpose of achieving a coordinated governmental war information program. The information program was designed to promote an informed and intelligent understanding of the status and progress of the war effort, war policies, activities, and aims of the United States government. All functions of the Office of Facts and Figures and of the Office of Government Reports, and parts of the functions and related records of two other agencies were transferred to the OWI.

For the World War II Rumor Project, field representatives collected information from community-based correspondents and sent duplicate or triplicate copies of reports of the correspondents to Dr. Eugene Horowitz at the Bureau of Public Inquiries of the OWI. The reports listed rumors and anecdotes that were compiled by Dr. Horowitz and William H. Webber arranged in alphabetical order by states and by subjects.

This collection has two distinct components. The first component involved field representatives of various federal agencies in the United States instructed to enlist individuals in their communities who were willing to write down rumors and send them to the field representatives. These individuals or "correspondents" included dentists, beauty shop operators, policemen, proprietors, and librarians who had access to rumors in their communities.

The second component involved rumors, jokes, rhymes, and anecdotes about the war from high school and college students collected by teachers. Subjects include Adolph Hitler, the Japanese, rationing, and other topics. Includes rhymes and stories composed or recorded by students. Correspondence within the folders indicates that some teachers removed some rumors or jokes in order to "show the best of their pupils." Within the documents, race designations vary. For one school, correspondence indicates that students were not asked to identify their race due to local tensions. However, the papers were taken up in order, and the teacher later added a designation as to the race of the student. The designations for African-American students appear as "Negro," "N," "Colored," "Col," or "C." Designations for white students appear as "White" or "W."

Drawings by high school students and a few World War II cartoons appear in the following folders:

- FOLDER 114
- FOLDER 118
- FOLDER 122
- FOLDER 123
- FOLDER 127

Arrangement of the Records

This collection is arranged in five series:

- Series I: Administrative Information on World War II Rumor Project
- Series II: Administrative Information on Local Rumor-control Projects and Correspondence
- Series III: Rumor Reports Gathered by Correspondents
- Series IV: Rumors from Correspondents and Field Representatives
- Series V: Rumors, Jokes, and Anecdotes from High School and College Students

Access

Collection is open for research; no restrictions on access.

Preferred Citation

World War II Rumor Project Collection (AFC 1945/001), Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Description of Series

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