



CLARA THOMAS ARCHIVES

**Inventory of the
Lee Lorch fonds**

Inventory #F0524

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F0524 - Lee Lorch fonds

Fonds/Collection Number: F0524**Title:** Lee Lorch fonds**Dates:** 1935-2007, predominant 1950-1995

Extent: 14.08 m of textual material
 ca. 123 photographs : col. and b&w ; 24 x 15 cm and smaller.
 ca. 40 negatives : col. and b&w ; 35 mm.
 ca. 5 posters : col. and b&w ; 90 x 60 cm and smaller.

**Biographical Sketch/
 Administrative History:** Lee Lorch (20 September 1915-28 February 2014), a mathematician and social activist, is best known for his involvement in the civil rights movement in the United States to desegregate housing and schooling and improve educational opportunities for women and visual minorities, as well as his political persecution by members of the House Committee of Un-American Activities. Lorch was dismissed or forced to resign from various academic positions during the 1950s due to his social activism and Communist sympathies. Born in New York City, Lorch attended Cornell University and later the University of Cincinnati, where he obtained his MA (1936) and PhD (1941) in mathematics. From 1942-1943, Lorch worked as a mathematician for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. He married Grace Lonergan, a Boston area school teacher on 24 December 1943. During World War II, Lorch served in the U.S. Army, working in India and the Pacific. After 1946, the couple eventually settled in New York City with their young daughter in Stuyvesant Town, a private planned housing community whose tenants were veterans. Lorch, by then Assistant Professor at the City College of New York, petitioned the developer, Metropolitan Life, to allow African-Americans to rent units. In 1949, pressure from Metropolitan Life led to Lorch's dismissal from City College. When the family moved so Lorch could teach at Penn State College, they allowed a black family, the Hendrixes, to occupy the apartment in violation of the housing policy. Under pressure, Penn State College dismissed Lorch in April 1950, after which he was hired as Associate Professor at Fisk University, a historically-black institution in Nashville, TN. He became full Professor and Department Chair of Mathematics in 1953. In response to the Brown vs Board of Education ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, the Lorches attempted to enrol their daughter in the closest high school to their home in 1954, which previously had been all-black. As a result, Lorch was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee in September of 1954, where he refused to testify regarding his political affiliations and civil rights activities. Under pressure from its white-dominated board of directors, Fisk University fired Lorch in 1955. The family moved to Little Rock, AK, where Lorch found work at Philander Smith College. On 4 September 1957, during the Little Rock Central High School Crisis, Grace Lorch intervened to protect Elizabeth Eckford (one of the "Little Rock Nine") from an angry white mob. In October Mrs. Lorch was subpoenaed to appear before the United States Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (chaired by Mississippi Senator James Eastland). After receiving death threats and finding dynamite in the family's garage door, Lorch resigned from Fisk. After working as a visiting lecturer at Wesleyan University, Lorch was hired in 1959 by the University Alberta. In 1968, Lorch was hired by York University, where he remained until his official retirement in 1985. Lorch worked throughout the 1960s and 1970s to develop contacts between western and Eastern Bloc mathematicians. He continued to advocate for the rights of women and minorities, particularly within the academic and scientific sphere, and was one of the first academics to challenge mandatory retirement in Canada. Lee Lorch has contributed to the study of the order of magnitude and asymptotic expansion of the Lebesgue constants for various expansions. In partnership with Peter Szego, he also started a new field of study, analyzing the higher monotonicity properties of Sturm-Liouville functions. Lorch was active in various community, political and professional organizations, including the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian and American Mathematical Societies, and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. Lorch passed away on 28 February 2014.

Scope and Content: Fonds consists of Professor Lorch's professorial and personal papers as a mathematician, academic, civil rights activist and humanitarian. Records

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document his life in all these spheres and include the following: correspondence from family, friends, academic colleagues and fellow activists; records of his legal battles at various colleges and universities in the defence of civil rights and academic freedom including challenges from the House Committee on Un-American Activities; records that document his and his wife's activism in landmark American events such as the integration of schools in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1954, and the fight for equal rights for blacks in housing in US cities; professorial records and his work as a respected mathematician and scholar; and related books, journals and pamphlets accumulated by him during his decades of work in these areas. Records have been arranged by the archivist into the following series.

S00389	General correspondence
S00390	Social activism material
S00391	Academic and teaching material
S00392	Published material
S00393	Collected articles
S00394	Personal material

Language of material note: Some material is in Russian, Hungarian and French.

Restrictions on Access and Use: File 2007-054/070(012) is closed until thirty years after death of correspondents.

Finding Aid: File lists available.

URL of Finding Aid: <http://archivesfa.library.yorku.ca/fonds/ON00370-f0000524.htm>

Accruals: The fonds comprises the following accessions: 2007-054, 2009-027, 2010-023, 2010-041, 2013-028. Further accruals may be expected.

Immediate source of acquisition: Donated by Lee Lorch in 2007, 2009 and 2010. Donated by Alice Bartels in 2013.

Other Notes: (RAD 1.8B13) Note on Arrangement. Accession 2007-054 includes material from Lorch's York University office, as well as files from his home office.

Other Notes: (RAD 1.8B13) Note on Arrangement. Accession 2009-027 includes materials donated from Lorch's home, including a large assortment of photographs.

Other Notes: (RAD 1.8B13) Note on Arrangement. Accessions 2010-023 and 2010-041 were sorted by a third party prior to donation based on subject matter.

Provenance Access Points: Lorch, Lee

Date of creation: 2008/11/10

Date of last revision: 2014/03/02