

Robert L. Bender Papers, 1959-2005



Overview of the Collection

Title:	Robert L. Bender Papers, 1959-2005
Creator:	Robert Louis Bender (1939-2019)
Accession:	PPL-MSS-2006-003
Size:	7.5 linear feet of records, comprised of: One (1) records storage box One (1) document box One (1) small artifact box Three (3) oversize boxes
Repository:	Plainfield Public Library, Local History Department, 800 Park Avenue, Plainfield, NJ 07060
Abstract:	The Papers of Robert L. Bender, a Democrat and political activist, document his work with various non-profit organizations in Plainfield, NJ during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The collection includes correspondence, meeting agendas and minutes, pamphlets, flyers, newsletters and other publications, press releases, political statements, petitions, photographs, and newspaper clippings.
Language:	The records are in English.

Biographical Information

Robert Louis Bender was born on April 30, 1939, in Philadelphia, PA. He graduated from Temple University in 1960 with a B.S. in business. He became a member of Rutgers Committee for Free Speech in 1965.

Mr. Bender was the executive director of N.J. Council, Americans for Democratic Action from 1962-1964, and executive secretary of the Washington Chapter from 1961 to 1962. He was in the U.S. Army from February to August 1961 and employed by the U.S. Post Office from August 1957 to January 1961. He was a member of the NAACP and the Democratic Party.

Bob passed away on April 21, 2019. He is remembered fondly by family and friends. Rebecca Williams, then Freeholder, now Union County Commissioner, remembered Bob in her [blog post from April 24, 2019](#).

Robert Louis Bender (1939-2019)

Published in Sun-Sentinel on Apr. 26, 2019

April 30, 1939 – April 21, 2019 Bob Bender was born in Philadelphia, PA, to Ray and Sylvia Berlin Bender, older brother of Annette Bender of Mass. He attended Philadelphia public schools, graduating from the magnet Central High School and received his bachelors in economics from Temple University in 1960. After basic training from his enlistment in the Army reserves, Bob went to Washington DC to work for Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), then moved to Newark, New Jersey to become state ADA director. In Newark, he joined the Congress Of Racial Equality and met Patty Ganley. They were married in 1963, after what Bob describes as "a picket line romance" complete with organizing buses to the March on Washington. In 1964, the couple moved to Plainfield while both were in graduate school at Rutgers and Patty directed the Greater Plainfield Senior Citizens Center. Bob completed his coursework in the graduate program, but left school to focus on anti-war and civil rights activism. Bob enjoyed singing. He was a founder member of the Solidarity Singers of the Industrial Union Council, providing "street heat" for labor and social justice pickets and rallies. He was a member of the Clearwater Walkabout Chorus, focused on environmentalism, with Pete Seeger. In the living room with friends and family, he tinkered on the piano. In 1972 Bob and Patty helped found a progressive, community school-Children of the Rainbow-where they would send their children for several years. Professionally, Bob worked in anti-poverty non-profit community organizations including the New Jersey Puerto Rican Congress, the Spanish Community Organization of Plainfield and Model Cities. His last 14 years of work were as Executive Director of Accountants for the Public Interest New Jersey, providing non-profit accounting services to non-profit organizations and needy individuals. He had been an active member of many New Jersey groups including New Jersey Peace Action, the Ethical Culture Society of Maplewood, and the New Democrats of Plainfield. He served as the Democratic Third Ward leader in Plainfield. After moving to Florida in 2005, Bob organized the labor outreach committee of Occupy Fort Lauderdale, then became active with the Broward Black Lives Matter Alliance, most recently working to repeal Florida's racist stand your ground legislation. He participated in the Unitarian Universalists Congregation of Fort Lauderdale and sang in the choir. Bob started an email list serve for years with events for progressives in South Florida, before being blacklisted from gmail for repeated violations of the spam policy. Google was not the only entity that found fault with Bob's activities. The feds were also involved. He was arrested in Los Alamos, New Mexico protesting against nuclear weapons (with Patty and actor Martin Sheen) in the 1990s and in Georgia (again with troublemaker Patty and comrade Ed Lewinson) calling for closure of the Fort Benning "school of assassins." Bob enjoyed swimming and water aerobics at Century Village. He and Patty traveled to Cuba and Nicaragua, China, London and Alaska. They visited with Patty's relatives in Canada. For the past several decades, Bob and Patty spent time during the summer at World Fellowship in New Hampshire. He is survived by his wife Patty Ganley Bender, sister Annette Bender, sons Nat and Daniel, daughter-in-law Gita DasBender, grandsons Deven and Reyen, nephew Matthew Schrot, niece Rebecca Schrot and grandnephew Ryan.

Historical Information

This collection documents several local organizations in Plainfield, NJ with which Robert Bender was affiliated, either as a member, an employee or a consultant.

The [American Civil Liberties Union](#) (ACLU) is a non-profit organization that focuses on legislative lobbying. Its stated mission is "to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to every person in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States." The ACLU has local affiliates and chapters, and it is the Union County Chapter with which Bob Bender was affiliated.

The 3rd Ward [Democratic Committee](#) is the local county branch of the NJ State Democratic Committee. It is composed of democratic council members, committee members, and ward/district representatives.

The [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#) (NAACP) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest, largest and most widely recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization.

The Plainfield Block Association, specifically the West 7th / Hobart / Monroe Block Association, is a neighborhood association in which a group of local home owners advocate for or organize activities for this specific neighborhood. Two important concerns during the time of these papers were a local drug dealing operation and a house being used as a bordello. Members would meet regularly at each other's homes to discuss block issues. Often, members of law enforcement would attend the meetings and share knowledge about investigations or safety measures.

NJ SANE / Peace Action were founded in 1957 as SANE (Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy). It is currently the nation's largest peace organization. [New Jersey Peace Action \(NJPA\)](#), based in Bloomfield, was a founding chapter and has always been among the nation's most active. Several local groups throughout northern New Jersey are affiliated with NJPA. Today, there are more than 35 Peace Action state affiliates across America. Peace Action has a national office which lobbies for legislation in Washington, DC.

[Americans for Democratic Action](#) is an independent liberal lobbying organization. It was founded in 1947 by Eleanor Roosevelt, economist John Kenneth Galbraith, and former Senator and Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1942 as the Committee of Racial Equality by an interracial group of students in Chicago, many of whom were members of the Chicago branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a pacifist organization seeking to change racist attitudes. The founders of CORE were deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of nonviolent resistance. The National Headquarters is located in New York City.

The [Education Law Center](#) is a non-profit agency founded in 1973 by Rutgers law professor, Paul Tractenberg. It advocates on behalf of public school children for access to an equal and adequate education under state and federal laws. ELC's work is based on a core value: if given the opportunity, all children can achieve high academic standards to prepare them for citizenship and to compete in the economy.

[AmeriCorps VISTA](#) is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. Founded as Volunteers in Service to America in 1965 and incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993, VISTA has been on the front lines in the fight against poverty in America for more than 40 years.

The Plainfield Area Draft Information & Counseling Center was formed to assist young men in making a decision about the draft for the war in Vietnam. The Plainfield center was based on similar centers located in New Brunswick and Princeton.

Scope and Contents

The Robert L. Bender Papers include a variety of materials dating from 1959 to 2005, with bulk dates of 1965 to 1970. Records include email, letters, meeting agendas, minutes and notes, pamphlets, flyers, newsletters and other publications, press releases, political statements, petitions, and newspaper clippings. It is composed of paper documents that are typed and hand-written. There are also two boxes containing mostly color photographs of local Plainfield adults and children. The photos were taken during the 1970s at the Rainbow School or while on School outings. Most are undated, but some are identified.

Arrangement

The Robert L. Bender Papers are arranged into 12 series:

- Series 1:** American Civil Liberties Union (A.C.L.U.)
- Series 2:** Democratic Committee, 3rd Ward
- Series 3:** NAACP (see also: CORE)
- Series 4:** Plainfield Block Association
- Series 5:** NJ SANE/Peace
- Series 6:** American Democratic Action
- Series 7:** Plainfield Joint Defense Committee
- Series 8:** Congress of Racial Equality / CORE (see also: NAACP)
- Series 9:** Education Law Center (Newark)
- Series 10:** VISTA Housing
- Series 11:** Plainfield Area Draft Information & Counseling Center
- Series 12:** Frost Campaign (David Frost)
- Series 13:** Children of the Rainbow
- Series 14:** Miscellaneous

Index Terms

People:

Bender, Robert L.
 Bender, Patty
 Frost, David
 Genovese, Eugene
 Green, Gerry
 Lattimore Everett C. (mayor)
 Merritt, George

Organizations:

American Civil Liberties Union
 Americans for Democratic Action
 Children of the Rainbow
 Congress of Racial Equality / CORE

Education Law Center (Newark)
NJ SANE/Peace Action
Plainfield Area Draft Information & Counseling Center
Plainfield Block Association
Plainfield Democratic Committee, 3rd Ward
Plainfield Joint Defense Committee
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Volunteers in Service to America / VISTA (AmeriCorps)

Places:

Plainfield (N.J.)
Newark (N.J.)

Subjects:

Civil liberties
Education & Schools
Educational Resources – Big Rock Candy Mountain
Free Speech
Government
Plainfield, NJ – history
Politics
Race relations
Vietnam

Related Items

[Records of the Children of the Rainbow, 1968-2003](#)

[Records of the Spanish Community Organization of Plainfield \(S.C.O.P.\), 1969-1980](#)

[Plainfield Science Education Coalition](#)

[American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\), Union County Chapter](#) (additional material)

Plainfield Area NAACP (additional material)

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

This collection consists of paper documents that do not require any additional technology for access.

Series Description

Series 1: American Civil Liberties Union (A.C.L.U.) [1959-1966, undated, with gaps]

Series Description

Series 1 contains letters, handwritten notes, pamphlets, press releases, announcements, memos, newsletters, printed material, and newspaper clippings related to the [American Civil Liberties](#)

[Union](#). Bob Bender was an employee of the ACLU in Union County during the 1960s. Subjects in this series include: Rutgers University's Committee for Free Speech, Professor Eugene Genovese and the "Rutgers Teach-In," the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, the House Un-American Activities Committee, newspaper clippings, and a short run of the *Rutgers Daily Targum* newspaper. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 1 is arranged chronologically by subject, and fills six folders; "Civil Liberties" publication in oversize Box 4.

Series 2: Democratic Committee, 3rd Ward [1964-1983, undated, with gaps]

Series Description

Series 2 contains correspondence, handwritten letters and notes, meeting minutes and agenda items, press releases, local ward maps, publication, and newspaper clippings. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed papers. Bender was the Committee's Third Ward Leader.

Arrangement

Series 2 is arranged chronologically, and fills four folders; "Plainfield's Changing Times" publication in oversize Box 4.

Series 3: NAACP [1965] (see also: CORE)

Series Description

Series 3 contains documents related to the Union County [NAACP](#). Bob Bender was temporary chairman of the Block Committee Project in 1965. Records include memos, letters, notes, and newspaper clippings. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 3 is predominantly arranged chronologically by subject, and fills two folders.

Series 4: Plainfield Block Association [1977-2005, undated, with gaps]

Series Description

Series 4 contains documents related to the Plainfield Block Association – West 7th / Monroe / Hubbard Avenue blocks. Bob Bender was recording secretary for a number of years. Records include meeting announcements & agendas, minutes, email and letters, member/neighbor lists, police safety and security pamphlets, instructional guidelines, business cards, handwritten notes, and newspaper clippings.

Arrangement

Series 4 is arranged chronologically, and fills four folders.

Series 5: NJ SANE/Peace [1962-1967]

Series Description

Series 5 contains documents related to [NJ SANE/Peace Action](#). Bob Bender was the executive director in 1963. Records include letters and memos, policy papers, pamphlets, flyers, membership lists, handwritten notes, and newspaper clippings. There are also several issues of three publications/newsletters: NJ Correspondent, SANE State, and Union County SANE Newsletter. This series is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 5 is arranged chronologically, and fills five folders; a poster for the National Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy is in oversize Box 4.

Series 6: Americans for Democratic Action [1959-1970]

Series Description

Series 6 contains documents related to the [Americans for Democratic Action](#) organization. Bob Bender was the executive director and executive vice chairman of the SDA in 1959. Records include letters, newsletters, publications, notes, and newspaper clippings. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents. There is a brief run of the ADA newsletter, *Liberal Lines*.

Arrangement

Series 6 is arranged chronologically, and fills two folders.

Series 7: Plainfield Joint Defense Committee [1968-1983]

Series Description

Series 7 contains documents related to the Plainfield Joint Defense Committee. Bob Bender worked on behalf of George Merritt's clemency efforts in 1978. Records include meeting notes, letters, brochures, and petitions. It is composed of handwritten and typed paper documents regarding George Merritt's petition to Governor Brendan Byrne for executive clemency. Also included in this series is one button pin with a picture of Merritt and the slogan "Free George Merritt."

Arrangement

Series 7 is arranged chronologically, and fills one folder.

Series 8: Congress of Racial Equality / CORE [1963] (see also: NAACP)

Series Description

Series 8 contains documents related to the [Congress of Racial Equality](#) or CORE. Bob Bender was employment chairman in 1963. Records include meeting minutes and notes, letters, special reports, city plans, publications, drafted statements, and newspaper clippings. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 8 is arranged chronologically, and fills two folders.

Series 9: Education Law Center (Newark) [1980-1981]**Series Description**

Series 9 contains documents related to the [Education Law Center in Newark](#), NJ. These papers were those of Patty Bender, documenting the school funding lawsuit by her (and others) in 1980. Records include notes, memos, and a few newspaper clippings. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 9 is arranged chronologically, and fills one folder.

Series 10: Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Housing [1970]**Series Description**

Series 10 contains documents related to the VISTA Housing program in North Plainfield. Bob Bender was Coordinator in 1970. Records include letters, memos, notes, flyers, and purpose & scope proposals. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents. VISTA is now [AmeriCorps/VISTA](#) - the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty.

Arrangement

Series 10 is arranged chronologically, and fills one folder.

Series 11: Plainfield Area Draft Information & Counseling Center [1965-1968]**Series Description**

Series 11 contains documents related to the creation of the Plainfield Area Draft Information & Counseling Center. Records include letters, publications and pamphlets, notes, four issues of the *Viet Report*, a Vietnam fact sheet, and a few newspaper clippings. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 11 is arranged chronologically, and fills one folder.

Series 12: Frost Campaign (David Frost) [1966]**Series Description**

Series 12 contains documents related to the 1966 Campaign for David Frost. David Frost sought the Democratic Party nomination for US Senator in 1966. Records include political statements, position papers, flyers, and an event seating plan. It is composed solely of handwritten and typed paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 12 is arranged chronologically, and fills one folder.

Series 13: Children of the Rainbow [undated, circa 1972-1978, 2002]**Series Description**

Series 13 contains color and B&W photographs (some are mounted) taken at the Children of the Rainbow School during the 1970s. Images are of affiliated people – students, parents, teachers, interns, board members, etc, many of whom are identified. Some of the photos document School trips and outings. Other events include children's' birthday parties and board meetings. There is an envelope containing a home-made photo album of a trip the Benders took in 2002. This series is composed of photographs, of various sizes, and negatives.

Arrangement

Series 13 is arranged chronologically, and fills one small artifact box and one oversize box.

Series 14: Miscellaneous [undated, circa 1970-1998]**Series Description**

Series 14 contains miscellaneous, mostly oversized, items such as calendars, posters, and publications. This series includes seven issues of *Big Rock Candy Mountain: Resources for Our Education*. There is a run of *The Voice* newspaper from 1969 to 1972. There is also a VHS copy of the film *Poverty Outlaw* and political buttons. This series is composed of paper documents and publications, a video tape, and button pins.

Arrangement

Series 14 is arranged by size and fills three boxes.

Administrative Information**Access & Restrictions**

The Robert L. Bender Papers available for research.

Access is restricted to materials prepared by the Local History department staff. All materials must be viewed in the Plainfield Room and may not be removed to another area of the library without permission of the Library Director or designee. Materials must be handled carefully and kept in order. Materials must not be leaned upon, altered, folded, ripped, or traced upon. Marks may not be added or erased from materials. Materials must be returned directly to Local History department staff and inspected before the researcher leaves the Plainfield Room.

One photocopy may be made (by Plainfield Public Library staff) of each document for the purpose of research; official Local History departmental reproduction fees may apply. Permission to publish must be obtained by the Plainfield Public Library Board of Trustees as delegated to the Library Director. Permission to publish does not constitute a copyright clearance. The researcher is responsible for further copyright restrictions. The Plainfield Public Library is not responsible for the misuse of copyrighted material.

Preferred Citation

Identification of item; Date (if noted); "Robert L. Bender Papers", Box and Folder Number, Local History Department, Plainfield Public Library, Plainfield, New Jersey.

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated in October 2007 by Mr. Robert L. Bender.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Sarah Hull in May 2009. The finding aid was written and encoded by Sarah Hull in June 2009 and updated by Sally Weiner in September 2024. Finding aid content follows the guidelines suggested by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: American Civil Liberties Union (A.C.L.U.) [1959-1966, undated, with gaps]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	1	A.C.L.U.	1965
	2	A.C.L.U. Committee for Free Speech	1965
	3	A.C.L.U. Emergency Civil Liberties Committee	1965-1966
	4	A.C.L.U. House Un-American Activities Committee	1965-1966
	5	A.C.L.U. Clippings	1959, 1965
4		A.C.L.U. "Civil Liberties"	1965-1966

Series 2: Democratic Committee, 3rd Ward [1964-1983, undated, with gaps]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	7	Democratic Committee	1981-1983
	8	Democratic Committee. Constitution	1983
	9	Democratic Committee. Clippings	1981-1983
	10	Democratic Committee. Notes	1981-1983, undated
4		Democratic Committee. "Plainfield's Changing Times"	1964-1965

Series 3: NAACP [1965] (see also: CORE)

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	11	NAACP	1965
	12	NAACP. Clippings	1965

Series 4: Plainfield Block Association [1977-2005, undated, with gaps]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	13	Plainfield Block Association	1977-2001
	14	Plainfield Block Association	1977-2001
	15	Plainfield Block Association. Clippings	1977-2001
	15a	Plainfield Block Association	2004-2005

Series 5: NJ SANE/Peace Action [1962-1967]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
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1	16	NJ SANE/Peace Action	1962-1966
	17	NJ SANE/Peace Action. "NJ Correspondent"	1966-1967
	18	NJ SANE/Peace Action. "SANE State"	1965
	19	NJ SANE/Peace Action. "Union County SANE" Newsletter	1966
4	20	NJ SANE/Peace Action. Clippings	1964-1966
		National SANE. Poster	1967

Series 6: Americans for Democratic Action [1959-1970]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	21	Americans for Democratic Action	1959-1970
	22	Americans for Democratic Action. "Liberal Lines"	1965-1966

Series 7: Plainfield Joint Defense Committee [1968-1983]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	23	Plainfield Joint Defense Committee	1968-1983

Series 8: Congress of Racial Equality / CORE [1963] (see also: NAACP)

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	24	Congress of Racial Equality	1963
	25	Congress of Racial Equality. Clippings	1963

Series 9: Education Law Center (Newark) [1980-1981]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	26	Education Law Center	1980-1981

Series 10: Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Housing [1970]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	27	VISTA Housing	1970

Series 11: Plainfield Area Draft Information & Counseling Center [1965-1968]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	28	Plainfield Area Draft Information & Counseling Center	1965-1968

Series 12: Frost Campaign (David Frost) [1966]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	29	Frost Campaign	1966

Series 13: Children of the Rainbow [undated, circa 1972-1978, 2002]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
2		Photographs taken at the Rainbow School	undated

Series 14: Miscellaneous [1963-1998, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	30	Miscellaneous items. (2) 1983 calendars; "Raspberry: How to Start Your Own School"	1970, 1983
4		Plainfield Sample Ballot, 4 th Ward	1966
		Courier News Special Report: "Plainfield, U.S.A.: Blueprint for the '80s"	July 23, 1980
		"Daily World" (1 issue)	March 19, 1970
		"New American" (1 issue)	Nov. 30, 1964
		"Jersey Monitor" (1 issue)	July 13, 1963
		Economic Human Rights Campaign poster	1998
		"Big Rock Candy Mountain: Resources for Our Education" (7 issues)	1970-1972
		"Deschool Primer No. 3: Your City Has Been Kidnapped"	1972
5		"The Voice"	1969-1972, with gaps
6	1	"Poverty Outlaw" VHS	1997
	2	Roosevelt Day programs	1963-1966
	3	Community Services Administration pamphlet	1975
	4	"Objectives 77: A Community Shaping Change," Plainfield booklet	1977
	5	"Plainfield Studies and Restudied," Planning Division or City Hall report	July 13, 1970
	6	Plainfield Area Organizations - listed alphabetically	1993
	7	Notes (Post-Its)	undated
	8	Political buttons	undated