

Collection title: Marsha Epstein Collection

Collection ID: EPST

Size: 5.42 linear feet

Date: 1965-2022

Abstract:

Marsha Epstein (b. 1945) is a lifelong LGBT activist, a pioneering medical professional, and a community organizer. The collection contains both personal and professional materials representing Marsha Epstein's life. Included in the collection are personal and professional correspondence, research from throughout her professional medical practice, and materials she created or collected from Los Angeles-based communities of which she was a part including Jewish communities and LGBT activist communities.

Accession information:

Materials were donated to the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive by Marsha Epstein in 2002. This is the second collection of Marsha Epstein's materials donated to the Mazer.

Provenance:

Materials were accumulated throughout the course of Marsha Epstein's personal and professional life.

Restrictions:

The collection is open to researchers. Some items are restricted indefinitely to protect the subject's privacy. Restricted materials are identified on the box level content list of the Finding Aid.

Copyright:

Property rights to the physical objects belong to the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives. All other rights, including copyright, are retained by the creators and their heirs. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine who holds the copyright and pursue the copyright owner or heir for permission to publish where the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives do not hold the copyright.

Biographical sketch:

Marsha Epstein (b. 1945) is a lifelong LGBT activist, a pioneering medical professional, and a community organizer. Marsha was born in Chicago, Illinois. She received her Bachelor's Degree from Reed College in Portland, Oregon in 1965. She attended medical school at University of California, San Francisco where she received a Master of Public Medicine in 1969. Marsha interned at French Hospital in San Francisco from 1969-1970. She studied Health in Epidemiology at University of California, Berkeley and completed a residency in General

Preventive Medicine from 1971-1973. She also completed a Fellowship in Family Planning in the department of obstetrics-gynecology at the University of California at Los Angeles from 1973-1974. During that period Marsha worked in family planning, performing abortions for Los Angeles County.

From 1974-1975, Marsha worked for the women's clinic at the Gay and Lesbian Services Center in Los Angeles. She was the Medical Director of Herself Health Clinic, a women's clinic run by a cooperative of radical lesbians for the women in the community from 1975-1979. From 1978-1982 she ran a private medical practice. She went on to work for the Los Angeles County Public Health System for twenty-eight years, serving as a District Health Officer for Los Angeles County Public Health (1982—2001), Area Medical Director (2001-2007), and then worked with Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention (2007—2010). She was also the co-medical director of Clínica Monseñor Oscar A. Romero Free Clinic, in Los Angeles (1992—1993). Marsha has been a member of California Academy of Preventive Medicine, Southern California Public Health Association, Los Angeles-American Medical Women's Association, American Medical Women's Association, American College Physician Executives and more.

Marsha was introduced to substance abuse recovery through her work as a medical professional and after losing a friend to alcoholism, Marsha became passionately involved in communities and organizations supporting people managing alcohol and substance abuse. Since 2010 Marsha has developed a continuing education program online to educate primary care doctors throughout Los Angeles County about tobacco cessation.

In addition to her prolific career as a medical professional, Marsha Epstein has been an activist for LGBT rights and an advocate for the inclusion of bisexual experiences as part of the history of the gay rights movement. She is a subject in the documentary, "On These Shoulders We Stand," an historical account of early gay life and activism in Los Angeles told by the people who lived it. She is also an active volunteer and participant in the Los Angeles Jewish community through her work with Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC), the world's first synagogue by and for gay and lesbian Jews. Marsha was part of the Adult B'nei Mitzvah Class of 2014 at BCC and was a member of their Board of Directors.

Marsha married Tariq Mahmood in 1975. Their son, Lee Rashad Mahmood Epstein, was born in 1980. Marsha and Tariq divorced in the late 1990s. In 2013 Marsha met Mary Aviyah Farkas and the two were married at Beth Chayim Chadashim in 2014.¹

Scope and content:

¹ Sources include: Kelly Besser, "Finding aid for the Marsha Epstein Papers LSC.2220," last updated January 6, 2021, UCLA Library Special Collections, https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8mg7wqr/entire_text/; "Home," BCC-LA, accessed September 13, 2023, <https://www.bcc-la.org/>; Marsha Epstein, "Adult B'nei Mitzvah Class of 2014," BCC-LA, July 26, 2014, <https://archive.bcc-la.org/adult-bnei-mitzvah-class-of-2014-marsha-epstein-on-murder-and-alcohol/>; "Marsha Ann Epstein," Prabook, accessed September 13, 2023, https://prabook.com/web/marsha_ann_epstein/75658; Mary Aviyah Farkas, "About," eldermuse.net, accessed September 13, 2023, <https://eldermuse.net/about/>.

The collection contains papers, audiovisual material, textiles, objects, ephemera, and publications related to Marsha Epstein's personal and professional life.

The bulk of the collection includes: Marsha's personal and professional correspondence, including correspondence with family, friends, and organizations of which Marsha was a donor or member; Personal papers, which include materials related to Marsha's wedding to Mary Aviyah Farkas; Medical papers, which contain Marsha's medical research and documents related to her medical career; and Community Papers, which include materials related to Beth Chayim Chadasim (BCC) and Marsha's role as a BCC Board Member as well as periodicals, audiovisual materials, textiles and ephemera Marsha created or collected related to organizations and communities of which she was a part such as environmentalist groups, LGBT activist groups, and Jewish communities in the Los Angeles Area.

Processing notes:

Marsha Epstein's materials have been processed in two parts. The first collection of materials was processed in 2015 and is located in UCLA's Special Collections as part of their relationship with the Mazer. [Read the UCLA Special Collections' finding aid for the Marsha Epstein Papers.](#)

The second collection of materials was processed by Vera Tykulsker between August, 2023 and September, 2023 under a California State Grant. This finding aid is a guide to this second part of Marsha Epstein's collection.

The processing archivist has maintained the original order in which Marsha donated the materials. Correspondence has been organized chronologically by year.

Several medical publications donated with the collection that were published by government agencies have been deaccessioned from the collection.

Several of the CDs and DVDs in the collection have been digitized. Digital copies are available for research at the Mazer.

Arrangement:

Series I: Correspondence

Series II: Personal papers

Series III: Medical papers

Series IV: Community papers

Box level contents list:

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Box 1

Series I: Correspondence

Scope and content: Letters and cards to and from Marsha Epstein and her then-husband Tariq Mahmood (1970-1986). Includes personal and professional correspondence as well as correspondence with community groups of which Marsha was a member, donor, or supporter.

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Box 1, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1970-1972
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1973
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1975-76
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1977
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1978
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1979
Box 1, Folder 7	Correspondence, 1980
Box 1, Folder 8	Correspondence, 1981-82
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence, 1983-84
Box 1, Folder 10	Correspondence, 1985-86

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Box 2

Series I: Correspondence

Scope and content: Letters and cards to and from Marsha Epstein, her ex-husband Tariq Mahmood and her wife Mary Aviyah Farkas (1990-2019). Includes personal and professional correspondence as well as correspondence with community groups of which Marsha was a member, donor, or supporter.

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Box 2, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1990-1996
Box 2, Folder 2	Correspondence, 2001-2011
Box 2, Folder 3	Correspondence, 2012-2013
Box 2, Folder 4	Correspondence, 2014

Box 2, Folder 5	Correspondence, 2015
Box 2, Folder 6	Correspondence, 2016
Box 2, Folder 7	Correspondence, 2017
Box 2, Folder 8	Correspondence, 2018
Box 2, Folder 9	Correspondence, 2019

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Box 3

Series I: Correspondence

Scope and content: Letters and cards to and from Marsha Epstein, her ex-husband Tariq Mahmood and her wife Mary Aviyah Farkas (2020-2022 and undated). Includes personal and professional correspondence as well as correspondence with community groups of which Marsha was a member, donor, or supporter.

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Box 3, Folder 1	Correspondence, 2020 [1 of 2]
Box 3, Folder 2	Correspondence, 2020 [2 of 2]
Box 3, Folder 3	Correspondence, 2021
Box 3, Folder 4	Correspondence, 2022
Box 3, Folder 5	Correspondence, undated [1 of 4]
Box 3, Folder 6	Correspondence, undated [2 of 4]
Box 3, Folder 7	Correspondence, undated [3 of 4]
Box 3, Folder 8	Correspondence, undated [4 of 4]

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Box 4

Series II: Personal papers

Scope and content: Photographs, records, ephemera and AV materials related to Marsha's personal life, friends, and family. Miscellaneous materials relate to retirement, graduation, and

wedding celebrations, personality tests, and more. Box also contains material related to the wedding of Mary Aviyah Farkas and Marsha Epstein (2014).

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Box 4, Folder 1	Handwritten notes
Box 4, Folder 2	Memorial materials
Box 4, Folder 3	Travel materials
Box 4, Folder 4	Theater programs and tickets
Box 4, Folder 5	Misc. personal papers
Box 4, Folder 6	IDs and badges
Box 4, Folder 7	Photographs
Box 4, Folder 8	Trip to Cairo photo album, 2007
Box 4, Folder 9	Trip to the Nile photo album, 2007
Box 4, Folder 10	Personal directories and business cards
Box 4, Folder 11	Wedding documents
Box 4, Folder 12	Kellye Singing Scripture Songs CD; The Way of T'ai Chi Ch'uan with Lana Spraker VHS
Box 4, Folder 13	"The Impoverished Students' Book of Cookery, Drinkery, and Housekeepery by Jay F. Rosenberg, 1965

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Box 5

Series III: Medical papers

Scope and content: Research materials Marsha compiled during her medical career including articles, periodicals, and clippings along with Marsha's research notes. Digital files of the articles in the UCLA Extension Mindfulness and Psychotherapy Syllabus CD in Folder 11 are available at the Mazer for research.

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Box 5, Folder 1	Alzheimer's research
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Box 5, Folder 2	Anemia research
Box 5, Folder 3	Cancer research
Box 5, Folder 4	Child abuse research
Box 5, Folder 5	Clinical prevention services research
Box 5, Folder 6	Disaster mental health research
Box 5, Folder 7	L-carnitine research
Box 5, Folder 8	Tobacco research
Box 5, Folder 9	Other research and resources [1 of 3]
Box 5, Folder 10	Other research and resources [2 of 3]
Box 5, Folder 11	Other research and resources [3 of 3]; UCLA Extension Mindfulness and Psychotherapy Syllabus CD

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Box 6

Series III: Medical papers

Scope and content: Materials related to Marsha's medical career. AV material in the box includes: a DVD from National Alliance of Advocates for Buprenorphine Treatment (NAABT); a VHS on the History of LA American Medical Women's Association (LA-AMWA) entitled "How We Began;" a CD of Douglas Frye's "Epidemiologic Trends of HIV/AIDs In LA County" powerpoint (2005); and a CD of Marsha Epstein's powerpoint on Treating Tobacco Addiction for the LA County Department of Public Health (2009). Digital copies of the powerpoints are available at the Mazer for research.

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Box 6, Folder 1	Licenses and certificates
Box 6, Folder 2	Medical school and internship rosters
Box 6, Folder 3	Published works by Marsha Epstein
Box 6, Folder 4	Medical practice papers
Box 6, Folder 5	Notes on professional issues
Box 6, Folder 6	Badges, IDs, patches
Box 6, Folder 7	Drug and alcohol abuse in clinics research funding

- Box 6, Folder 8 Inglewood health council
- Box 6, Folder 9 Fountain Valley Regional Hospital
- Box 6, Folder 10 L-carnitine clinical trial
- Box 6, Folder 11 CME conference tobacco presentation
- Box 6, Folder 12 Association for Multidisciplinary Education and Research in
Substance use and Addiction (AMERSA); NAABT DVD
- Box 6, Folder 13 LA-AMWA VHS; Epidemiologic Trends of HIV/AIDs presentation (2005)
CD; Treating Tobacco Addiction presentation (2009) CD

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Box 7

Series IV: Community papers

Scope and content: Bulk of material consists of papers related to Beth Chayim Chadashim temple and Marsha's role as a donor and Board member including: event programs, thank you letters, prayer books, speeches, meeting minutes, Marsha's Bat Mitzvah certificate, CDs and DVDs of events, and a DVD of a cantors' concert (2011), which has been digitized and is available at the Mazer for research. Materials also include publications and notes related to substance abuse support groups Al-Anon and CEA-HOW. Digitized copies of planning documents for Serenity Bowl, Al-Anon's 2007 conference for which Marsha was on the planning committee, are available at the Mazer for research.

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- Box 7, Folder 1 BCC correspondence, 2014-2022
- Box 7, Folder 2 BCC tickets and badges
- Box 7, Folder 3 BCC publications and programs [1 of 2]
- Box 7, Folder 4 BCC publications and programs [2 of 2]
- Box 7, Folder 5 Miscellaneous BCC papers
- Box 7, Folder 6 BCC CD and DVDs
- Box 8, Folder 7 Al-Anon papers
- Box 8, Folder 8 Al-Anon ephemera and CD

Box 8, Folder 9 CEA-HOW

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Box 8

Series IV: Community papers

Scope and content: Periodicals, ephemera, news articles, resources and objects Marsha contributed to and/or accumulated related to issues and communities with which she was involved, such as Jewish, lesbian, student, and environmentalist communities. Includes publications related to lesbian and feminist community healthcare, which were given to Marsha by Lauris Elhai, a community healthcare worker.

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Box 8, Folder 1	Inner City Outings
Box 8, Folder 2	Sierra Club, Naturalist Notes newsletter, 1999-2009
Box 8, Folder 3	CA Native Plants Society, Toyon newsletter, 2013-2014
Box 8, Folder 4	Sholem Community
Box 8, Folder 5	Red Ribbon Squares
Box 8, Folder 6	Lauris Elhai collection of lesbian and feminist community healthcare resources
Box 8, Folder 7	Fliers and pamphlets
Box 8, Folder 8	Buttons and stickers
Box 8, Folder 9	Jewish prayers and songs
Box 8, Folder 10	Periodicals
Box 8, Folder 11	Newspapers and articles

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Box 9

Series II: Personal papers

Series IV: Community papers

Scope and content: Oversized and flat-lying artifacts, documents and AV including: a Planned Parenthood t-shirt; an LA County Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) shirt and baseball hat; Marsha's personal calendars and directories; Marsha's retirement celebration keepsake (2010); Guestbook from the wedding of Mary Aviyah Farkas and Marsha Epstein (2014); Business cards; election posters; a hand-made thank you card; a copy of Jewish Journal; and an audio reel containing Marsha's pre-abortion counseling ca. 1975-75 at Mid Valley Hospital medical Center - LA County family planning clinic.

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