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# CIA on Trial Project Records

1976-1989

1 box (0.5 linear feet)

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In 1986 demonstrations against CIA recruitment on the University's campus led by activists Abbie Hoffman and Amy Carter, daughter of former President Jimmy Carter, resulted in the takeover of two school buildings and more than sixty arrests. The CIA on Trial Project was a group established in Amherst to support the individuals arrested as well as to raise funds for their legal defense. News clippings covering the protests, fliers, memos from the University's administration, and correspondence with Chancellor Duffey capture the mood on campus during and after the protests.

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## Background on CIA on Trial Project Records

During the 1980s, the CIA played an active role in the political instability of Central America, particularly in Nicaragua, where it provided funding and arms to the Contras, a militant right-wing group in opposition to Sandinista rule. Despite a ban by Congress, the United States covertly continued to funnel military and financial support into the Contras through Iran. The conflict between the two groups was a part of the Nicaraguan Revolution, *Revolución Nicaragüense* in Spanish, which began in the 1960s with rising opposition against the Somoza dictatorship. The dictatorship originally put the Sandinistas in power, and ended in 1990 following an election in compliance with the Tela Accord. In 1986, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled against the United States, and in favor of Nicaragua, stating that the United States had violated international law in their support of the Contras. The ICJ rewarded Nicaragua reparations, which the United States chose not to pay.

Public opinion of the CIA and of the Reagan administration worsened dramatically. Amidst this turbulent political climate, a CIA recruiter came to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst to hold an information session and interview pre-selected candidates. This was met with considerable backlash from students who viewed the recruiter on campus as an act of compliancy with the CIA's actions, and in response several protests were organized. The information session was cancelled following demonstrators swarming the Career Center. The next day, a group of demonstrators occupied the Affirmative Action Office in the Whitmore Administration Building, wanting to speak to senior university staff. Eleven students were arrested after refusing to leave the office, and were loaded onto a bus to be taken to District Court. Those not arrested began to throw themselves in front of the bus in an attempt to stop it. About a week and a half later, a rally was held at the Student Union, which then began to move towards Whitmore, which soon was closed and locked in response. Up to 100 demonstrators instead occupied Munson Hall, the closest unlocked building, for several hours. Sixty people who refused to leave after a court order was issued were arrested for trespassing, and eight more were arrested for disorderly conduct outside of the building. Abbie Hoffman and Amy Carter were among those arrested. Protests continued without any arrests in the following week.

The trial of those arrested at Munson Hall was extremely publicized, drawing attention for the drama of the jury selection process, the famous defendants and their defense, and the ramifications of the ruling. The defendants were acquitted of trespassing and disorderly conduct after claiming that the CIA's crimes justified their actions, in which they effectively "put the CIA on trial." Their acquittal was seen as a sign that "middle America doesn't want the CIA doing what they're doing."

## Scope of collection

This collection captures the mood on and surrounding campus through a considerable number of newspaper clippings from the Pioneer Valley and from across the country. There are also documents regarding the trespassing trial, the CIA's activity in Central America, particularly Nicaragua, and Chancellor Duffey office's response and correspondence.

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## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Acquired From Stephen Resnick, April 2006.

### Related Material

See also the [Activism of the 1980s Photograph Collection \(PH 012\)](#), and Box 6 of the [Radical Student Union Records \(RG 45/80/R1\)](#).

### Processing Information

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### Language:

English

### Copyright and Use (More information )

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## Search terms

### Subjects

Activists--Massachusetts  
Carter, Amy  
Student movements  
University of Massachusetts Amherst--History

### Contributors

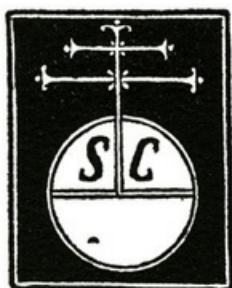
CIA on Trial Project [\[main entry\]](#)

### Genres and formats

Clippings (information artifacts)  
Newspapers

### Link to similar SCUA collections

Massachusetts (West)  
Social change  
UMass (1947-)



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