

Statement of Essential Human Rights Project Records

ALI.04.006

Finding aid prepared by Jordon Steele.

Last updated on April 28, 2011.

University of Pennsylvania, Biddle Law Library, American Law Institute Archives

2008

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Biddle Law Library: American Law Institute Archives
Creator	American Law Institute
Title	Statement of Essential Human Rights Project Records
Call number	ALI.04.006
Date [inclusive]	1924-2008
Extent	4.5 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>In the midst of World War II, the American Law Institute convened a committee in 1941 to study the international community's position regarding human rights law. The committee's charge was to develop a Statement of Essential Human Rights. William Draper Lewis, then Director of the American Law Institute, was chair of the committee and the project's most outspoken advocate, touring the world to deliver speeches on the importance of a code of basic human rights. International in scope and in participation, the committee included representatives from Britain, Canada, China, France, pre-Nazi Germany, Italy, India, Latin America, Poland, Soviet Russia, Spain, and Syria. A version of the Statement of Essential Human Rights was finalized in 1945. The collection, 1929-1987 and undated, includes research material, constitutions, letters, conference and meeting material, drafts, publications, the writings of William Draper Lewis, and other records related to the drafting of the Statement of Essential Human Rights, finalized in 1945. The bulk of the records spans the years 1941 to 1945.</p>

Cite as:

[Identification of item], in the Statement of Essential Human Rights Records, American Law Institute Archives, ALI.04.006, Biddle Law Library, University of Pennsylvania Law School, Philadelphia, PA.

Biography/History

In the midst of World War II, the American Law Institute convened a committee in 1941 to study the international community's position regarding human rights law. The committee's charge was to develop a Statement of Essential Human Rights, whose goal was "to define the indispensable human rights in terms that would be acceptable to men of good will in all nations." William Draper Lewis, then acting director of the American Law Institute, was chair of the committee and the project's most outspoken advocate, touring the world to deliver speeches on the importance of a code of basic human rights. International in scope and in participation, the committee included representatives from Britain, Canada, China, France, pre-Nazi Germany, Italy, India, Latin America, Poland, Soviet Russia, Spain, and Syria.

A version of the Statement of Essential Human Rights was finalized in 1945. However, the document was not formally adopted by the American Law Institute because of disputes over some of the language in the document, particularly regarding the economic rights of individuals. However, the document proved to be lasting influence on the human rights movement that followed, especially in the drafting of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promulgated in 1948.

Scope and Contents

The Statement of Essential Human Rights Records, 1929-1987 and undated, include research material, constitutions, letters, conference and meeting records, drafts, publications, the writings of William Draper Lewis, and other records related to the drafting of the Statement of Essential Human Rights, finalized in 1945. The bulk of the records spans the years 1941 to 1945.

Arrangement note

Arrangement

1. Research Material
2. Constitutions
3. Fundraising Applications
4. William Draper Lewis' Writings
5. Correspondence
6. Conference and Meeting Records
7. Drafting Records
8. Final Versions
9. Ernst Rabel Series
10. Lucie Krassa Series
11. Collateral Studies
12. Other Records

Administrative Information

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Access Restrictions

None.

Use Restrictions

The archives reserves the right to restrict access to material of sensitive nature. Please contact the department for further information.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

First shipment received from the American Law Institute in 1995.

Processing Information note

Preliminary container list prepared by Melissa Backes, 1995-2005.
Reprocessed by Jordon Steele, September 2007.
Encoded by Jordon Steele, May 2008.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- United Nations. General Assembly. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Lewis, William Draper, 1867-1949

SUBJECT(S)

- Human rights

Other Finding Aids note

An item-level container list is available offline in spreadsheet form.

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
RESEARCH MATERIAL, 1929-1943. ABOUT 20 ITEMS.	1	1-20

Scope and Contents note

Articles, letters, and other secondary material used by the committee members as background research for the drafting of the Statement of Essential Human Rights. The documents include information on international human rights initiatives occurring prior to the Statement of Essential Human Rights project, including the Atlantic Charter and the "Four Freedoms" address by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

	Box	Folder
CONSTITUTIONS, 1942-1944 AND UNDATED. ABOUT 30 ITEMS.	1	21-36

Scope and Contents note

Since the Statement of Essential Human Rights was an international effort, this series includes a sampling of constitutions from various countries, including those from Central America, Europe, and the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR).

	Box	Folder
FUNDRAISING APPLICATIONS, 1941-1944. 4 ITEMS.	1	37-40

Scope and Contents note

Applications to fund the Statement of Essential Human Rights project, sent to the American Philosophical Society, the Rockefeller Foundation, the

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Commonwealth Fund.

	Box	Folder
WILLIAM DRAPER LEWIS' WRITINGS, 1941-1944. ABOUT 40 ITEMS.	1	41-44
Scope and Contents note	2	1-17

Speeches, public statements, and memoranda created by William Draper Lewis, committee chair and primary public advocate for the Statement of Essential Human Rights project.

	Box	Folder
CORRESPONDENCE, 1941-1946. ABOUT 2000 ITEMS.	2	18-48
Scope and Contents note	3	1-29

Letters and related records written to and from advisers, experts on international human rights, and organizations participating in the drafting or funding of the project.

	Box	Folder
CONFERENCE AND MEETING RECORDS, 1942-1944 AND UNDATED.	3	30-43
Scope and Contents note		

Minutes, letters, and related records regarding outside conferences to which William Draper Lewis and others attended, and American Law Institute meetings in which the committee members participated during the drafting of Statement of Essential Human Rights.

	Box	Folder
DRAFTING RECORDS, 1941-1944. ABOUT 50 ITEMS.	4	1-40

Scope and Contents note

Drafts, comments, reports to the American Law Institute Council, and related records reflecting the drafting process of the Statement of Essential Human Rights. Aspects represented include the document's Preamble, the Declaration of Fundamental Individual Rights, free competition, personal rights, political rights, procedural rights, property rights, and social rights.

	Box	Folder
FINAL VERSIONS, 1944-1945. 3 ITEMS.	4	41-43

Scope and Contents note

Published versions of the final report submitted to the American Law Institute Council in February 1944, and a pamphlet entitled "Statement of Essential Human Rights," published in 1945. The Statement of Essential Human Rights was never formally adopted by the American Law Institute because of disputes over some of the language in the document, particularly regarding the economic rights of individuals.

	Box	Folder
ERNST RABEL SERIES, 1940-1987. ABOUT 1000 ITEMS.	4	41-44
Scope and Contents note	5	1-14

Chiefly correspondence between William Draper Lewis and other people regarding Ernst Rabel, who emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1939 and was considered an expert in comparative law.

	Box	Folder
LUCIE KRASSA SERIES, 1942-1943. ABOUT 40 ITEMS.	5	15-18

Scope and Contents note

Chiefly commentaries written by Krassa and correspondence between Krassa and William Draper Lewis. Lucie Krassa was a German emigre who performed editorial, translation, and other contract work for the American Law Institute while her husband was teaching at Yale University.

	Box	Folder
COLLATERAL STUDIES, 1942-1946. ABOUT 80 ITEMS.	5	19-22

Arrangement note

Alphabetical by organization or name of publication.

Scope and Contents note

Chiefly letters regarding other organizations that wrote human rights declarations around the time that the American Law Institute was working on its Statement of Essential Human Rights. The organizations represented in this series include the American Bar Association, the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, the International Law of the Future, and the Twentieth Century Fund. The Commission to Study the Organization of Peace was commissioned by the American Bar Association Journal and was researched and written by Judge Manley O. Hudson.

	Box	Folder
OTHER RECORDS, 1923-1946 AND UNDATED. ABOUT 20 ITEMS.	5	23-30

Scope and Contents note

Memoranda, notes, translations, and other unclassified records surrounding

the creation of the Statement of Essential Human Rights.