St. Louis Vietnam Committee, American Friends Service Committee Records  
(S0164)

Collection Number: S0164

Collection Title: St. Louis Vietnam Committee, American Friends Service Committee Records

Dates: 1966-1971

Creator: St. Louis Vietnam Committee, American Friends Service Committee

Abstract: The American Friends Service Committee was a Society of Friends (Quaker) peace organization. In 1966, the St. Louis chapter set up a local project, the St. Louis Vietnam Committee, to oppose the Vietnam War, especially through public education with guest speakers, political ads, films, and seminars. The collection contains correspondence, meeting minutes, anti-war literature, and information about public speakers.

Collection Size: 0.2 cubic foot  
(7 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis. If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmoireg.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] St. Louis Vietnam Committee, American Friends Service Committee Records (S0164); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The records were donated to the University of Missouri by Marion Weir on June 2, 1982 (Accession No. SA2468).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the St. Louis Vietnam Committee, American Friends Service Committee can be found in the following collections:
Historical Note:

In 1966, the St. Louis chapter of American Friends Service Committee (“AFSC”) created the St. Louis Vietnam Committee (“SLVC”) to organize anti-war resources and work for peace in Southeast Asia. The SLVC was run and financed as a program of the St. Louis AFSC office, with approval of the regional office in Des Moines, Iowa. Besides organizing activists, SLVC engaged in public education and draft counseling training. They maintained a speakers’ bureau, scheduled seminars, and sold anti-war literature.

The Religious Society of Friends (commonly called “Quakers”) is a Christian group that emerged in the 1650s after the English Civil War. Part of their theology, known as the “Peace Testimony,” says that Quakers oppose all violence and war for any reason. Some Quakers founded the American Friends Service Committee in 1917, shortly after the United States joined World War I. Its original and ostensible purpose was to provide “alternative civilian service”—a way for pacifists to have something to do in order to avoid punishment for refusal to participate in conscription. The AFSC gave war relief and medical services and helped with rebuilding, primarily in France. However, the organization’s work after the war expanded to include civil rights and anti-war activism.

The St. Louis Vietnam Committee gave way to the St. Louis Peace Education Committee as the members broadened their scope to pacifism and peace education in general. Some SLVC personnel were also involved in the founding of the St. Louis Peace Information Center (see collection S0136), and the St. Louis chapter of AFSC had office space at the Peace Information Center in the late 1960s.

Arrangement:

The materials are arranged in alphabetical order.

Scope and Content Note:

The St. Louis Vietnam Committee, American Friends Service Committee Records contains correspondence, meeting minutes, anti-war literature, relating to the group’s mission to organize opposition to the Vietnam War through the distribution of anti-war literature and draft counseling training. Materials of interest include positive and negative responses that the group received after it placed a full-page advertisement in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on January 29, 1967, calling for the withdrawal of United States troops and weapons from Vietnam (folders 5 and 6). Other items of interest include information on public lectures that the group sponsored, with speakers such as Russell Johnson, who traveled extensively in Southeast Asia with AFSC;
Thích Nhất Hạnh, the pacifist Buddhist monk; and Arlo Tatum, who had served several sentences in prison as a conscientious objector. Also present are meeting minutes documenting the establishment of the SLVC (folder 3), as well as later meeting minutes of the St. Louis Peace Education Committee (folder 2). Included in the collection are letters of thanks the Committee sent to financial contributors (folder 1). The collection does not contain materials about the founding of the American Friends Service Committee or its St. Louis chapter. The materials in this collection date from 1966 to 1971 and are arranged in alphabetical order.

**Container List:**

- f. 1 Contributions (letters of thanks), 1967-1968
- f. 2 Correspondence, 1966-1971
- f. 3 Minutes, 1966-1967
- f. 4 North Central Regional Office, memos, 1966-1969
- f. 5 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* advertisement, favorable responses, 1967
- f. 6 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* advertisement, negative responses, 1967
- f. 7 Speakers, 1967-1970

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