



## Department of History

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20 May 2010

Dear Hanna Gavendo,

I am writing to follow up on our telephone conversation this morning with a formal request to access the Children's Aid Society records currently archived in the City of Toronto Archives. I would like to access the Society's records for the 1945 to 1975 period.

This request is for the purpose of conducting research into the Chinatown neighbourhood during the post-World War Two era. I am working on a monograph about the social relationships between the lesbian and sex trade workers communities that frequented the area, and Chinese-Canadian residents. In the course of my research on this project I have learned that many of these women engaged in sexual relationships with local Chinese men, and with other men who were drawn to the sex trade in the area. As you might imagine, pregnancy was not uncommon among these women, and because they were single, poor, and without support, or simply unprepared to raise a child, many of these women gave their children up for adoption.

By using the Society's case file, correspondence, and other records, I hope to learn more about these women's experiences, and about how the CAS responded to the particular needs and social conditions many of these women faced. Many were alcohol and drug users, and I imagine were regarded with particular concern by the social workers and other CAS representatives who met them. The CAS records will, I hope, shed more light on social and professional attitudes toward this population, as well as on the challenges of dealing with pregnancy and childbirth in this demographic group.

Because I am not in Toronto and have only limited access to the City of Toronto Archives' description of the CAS holdings, I would like to request access to all the closed records covering the 1945 to 1975 period. If, however, you prefer to limit my access at this time, I am able to identify the following series numbers as records of interest:

Fond 1001 Series 543 Case Records; 536 Speeches; 537 Historical Records; 538.

Once I have a chance to view the finding aids on site, I will be able to send a more complete list, but access to these records will allow me to make a start during my short research trip this June. I would like to have access for a three-year period since I expect to make repeated short trips over the next three years.

Protecting the identities of individuals named in these files is of utmost importance. I have worked with restricted files before at the Archives of Ontario and many of my publications use material from similarly sensitive case files, also from the postwar period. My recent book, *Strangers in Our*



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*Midst: Sexual Deviancy in Postwar Ontario* was published by the University of Toronto Press in 2008 and won an honorable mention for the Canadian Law and Society Book Prize. In this book I drew records from various Ontario prisons that I accessed under the Freedom of Information Act. In short, I have a great deal of experience working with sensitive files and developing systems to anonymize information for publication.

In dealing with the CAS files, I will not use real names when transcribing information in my note-taking. Instead, I will change the names to numbers, and will later create pseudonyms to refer to individual cases. Thus, even if my computer was to be stolen, no one would be able to trace back from my notes information about real individuals without the “key” I use to create a numbering system. This “key,” which associates a letter with a number, I keep on paper in a locked cabinet in my office.

I hope that you are satisfied that this system provides absolute protection of privacy. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach me by email at [echenier@sfu.ca](mailto:echenier@sfu.ca) or by phone at 604-255-9236.

I look forward to your response.

Regards,

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