

HANDOUT: FAMILY HISTORY AND THE FOIA: RESEARCHING 20TH CENTURY FBI RECORDS

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How To Submit A FOIA (Basic Steps)

- **SUBMIT YOUR REQUEST TO THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (FBI) IF:**
 - STARTING WITH BASIC INFORMATION, INCLUDING: NAMES OF RELATIVES, ORGANIZATION RELATIVES ARE/WERE ASSOCIATED WITH, SUBJECT OF FILE YOU ARE LOOKING FOR
 - REQUESTER CONTACT INFORMATION (PHYSICAL MAILING ADDRESS, TELEPHONE, EMAIL)
- **SUBMIT YOUR REQUEST TO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES (NARA) IF:**
 - YOU HAVE A CASE FILE NUMBER(S), DATE SPAN, REASONABLE DESCRIPTION OF THE RECORDS REQUESTED
 - REQUESTER CONTACT INFORMATION (PHYSICAL MAILING ADDRESS, TELEPHONE, EMAIL)

WHAT YOU MAY FIND IN THE FBI CASE FILE

- TEXTUAL RECORDS, INCLUDING: TRANSCRIPTS, STATEMENTS, LETTERS, TELEGRAMS, NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, ETC.
- NON-TEXTUAL RECORDS- PHOTOGRAPHS, NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, ETC.
- EXEMPTIONS – PORTIONS OF THE FILE THAT MAY BE WITHHELD OR REDACTED
- CROSS REFERENCES – OTHER CASE FILE NUMBERS OR SUBJECTS MAY BE CITED THROUGHOUT THE FILE THAT MAY BE RESPONSIVE TO YOUR SUBJECT AND/OR LEAD TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

HELPFUL LINKS

- FBI FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PAGE: <http://www.fbi.gov/foia/>
- NATIONAL ARCHIVES FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PAGE: <http://www.archives.gov/foia/>
 - FOIA GUIDE: <http://www.archives.gov/foia/foia-guide.html>
- NATIONAL ARCHIVES FBI RESEARCH PAGE: <http://www.archives.gov/research/investigations/fbi/>
 - CLASSIFICATION 31 – WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC ACT (THE MANN ACT):
<http://www.archives.gov/research/investigations/fbi/classifications/031-white-slave-traffic.html>
 - CLASSIFICATION 44 – CIVIL RIGHTS:
<http://www.archives.gov/research/investigations/fbi/classifications/044-civil-rights.html>
 - CLASSIFICATION 65 – ESPIONAGE:
<http://www.archives.gov/research/investigations/fbi/classifications/065-espionage.html>
 - CLASSIFICATION 100 – DOMESTIC SECURITY:
<http://www.archives.gov/research/investigations/fbi/classifications/100-domestic-security.html>

HELPFUL LINKS (CONTINUED)

- CLASSIFICATION 105 – FOREIGN COUNTERINTELLIGENCE:
<http://www.archives.gov/research/investigations/fbi/classifications/105-counterintelligence.html>
- CLASSIFICATION 157 – CIVIL UNREST:
<http://www.archives.gov/research/investigations/fbi/classifications/157-civil-unrest.html>
- SOCIAL SECURITY DEATH INDEX: <http://www.deathindexes.com/ssdi.html>
- NARA ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOG: <http://www.archives.gov/research/search/>
- TEXT MESSAGE: NARA BLOG <http://blogs.archives.gov/TextMessage/2010/12/23/foia-the-other-%e2%80%9cf%e2%80%9d-word-accessing-fbi-records/>

KEY TERMS

- CASE FILE – A FILE COMPILED REGARDING THE INVESTIGATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANIZATION
- CLASSIFICATION – CASE FILES ARE ORGANIZED ACCORDING TO THE FBI CENTRAL RECORDS SYSTEM, WHICH HAS CREATED OVER 200 CATEGORIES. EACH CLASSIFICATION IS SPECIFIC TO A MAIN SUBJECT FOR WHICH INDIVIDUAL CASE FILES PERTAIN. COMMON CLASSIFICATIONS THAT MAY BE USED BY GENEALOGISTS INCLUDE (CLASSIFICATIONS IN BOLD ARE THE MOST COMMON AT NARA):
 - 7 – KIDNAPPING
 - 23 – PROHIBITION
 - **31 – WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC ACT (THE MANN ACT)**
 - **44 – CIVIL RIGHTS**
 - 61 – TREASON
 - **65 – ESPIONAGE**
 - **100 – DOMESTIC SECURITY**
 - **105 – FOREIGN COUNTERINTELLIGENCE**
 - **157 – CIVIL UNREST**
- EXEMPTIONS – REASONS FOR WHICH INFORMATION MAY BE WITHHELD; COMMON EXEMPTIONS ARE:
 - (B)(6) – PERSONNEL AND MEDICAL FILES WHICH WOULD CONSTITUTE AN INVASION OF PRIVACY
 - (B)(7)(A-E) – INFORMATION COMPILED FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT PURPOSES
- FOIA – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT
- PII – PERSONAL IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING NARA'S HOLDINGS PLEASE VISIT WWW.ARCHIVES.GOV