Lawyer: pressure needed to get Rosenberg files

By Deb Bockhahn

"Massive public pressure is needed to open the files for the Rosenberg case," said Bonnie Brower, lawyer for Robert and Michael Meeropol, sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

Brower spoke Thursday at the *Power and Conspiracy in America: Who's in Control?* symposium, sponsored by Union Program Council.

Twenty-three years after the Rosenberg trial, a National Committee to Reopen the Rosenberg Case (NCRRC) has been organized to "expose the truth about the case and establish that the Rosenbergs were totally innocent."

On June 19, 1953, the Rosenbergs were executed after being convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage. They were accused of trying to obtain national defense information for the Soviet Union.

Clear parents

In December 1975, Michael and Robert Meeropol hired five lawyers to try to clear the names of their parents by obtaining all files involved in the case. According to Brower, the committee has received only 33,000 of the estimated 800,000 files involved with the case.

"Those we do have access to have been heavily deleted," she said. "Sometimes to the point that any relevant information has been removed.

"The files should be made available under the Freedom of Information Act, but as things stand now, there is no freedom of information unless you're rich. There are also so many obstacles with seeking information from agencies such as the CIA, Energy Research and Development Agency and the State Department, that people just quit trying."

Although she said she doesn't know if the committee will ever get the entire story, "our appetite has been whetted by the documents and information we have gathered, so we don't intend to quit. It's important to keep trying, because they must have something to hide by the fact they're not releasing the information."

Negative feedback

NCRRC has received negative feedback from the American Bar Association (ABA), Brower said.

"They (ABA) aren't interested in finding out the fact of the case because they've already decided that the trial was fair–so naturally they aren't backing the move," she added.

She said the most opposition is coming from a committee headed by Simon Riffkin, a federal judge at the time of the Rosenberg trial. Brower said Riffkin has defended the Rosenberg trial judge, Irving R. Kaufman.

"Kaufman has failed to speak in defense of himse." and uses Riffkin as his mouthpiece in the media," she added.

NCRRC has 36 chapters in the U.S., and Brower said she expects one to be established at UNL.

NCRRC petitioned the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to prohibit the federal government from destroying the files.

NCRRC asked the court to prepare inventories and schedules of the files. The court granted this but would not impound the files, as the group also asked.

Brower said the five lawyers involved in the case and Michael and Robert Meeropol haven't decided what damages, if any, they will try to collect.

"I don't even know if we would collect any damages, but the important thing is to get the truth out. We think there was a cover-up and a frame-up, and we want to expose it," Brower said.

Photo by Ted Kirk

Bonnie Brower, who is fighting to obtain public release of files about Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, spoke Thursday at the *Power and Conspiracy in America: Who's in Control?* symposium.

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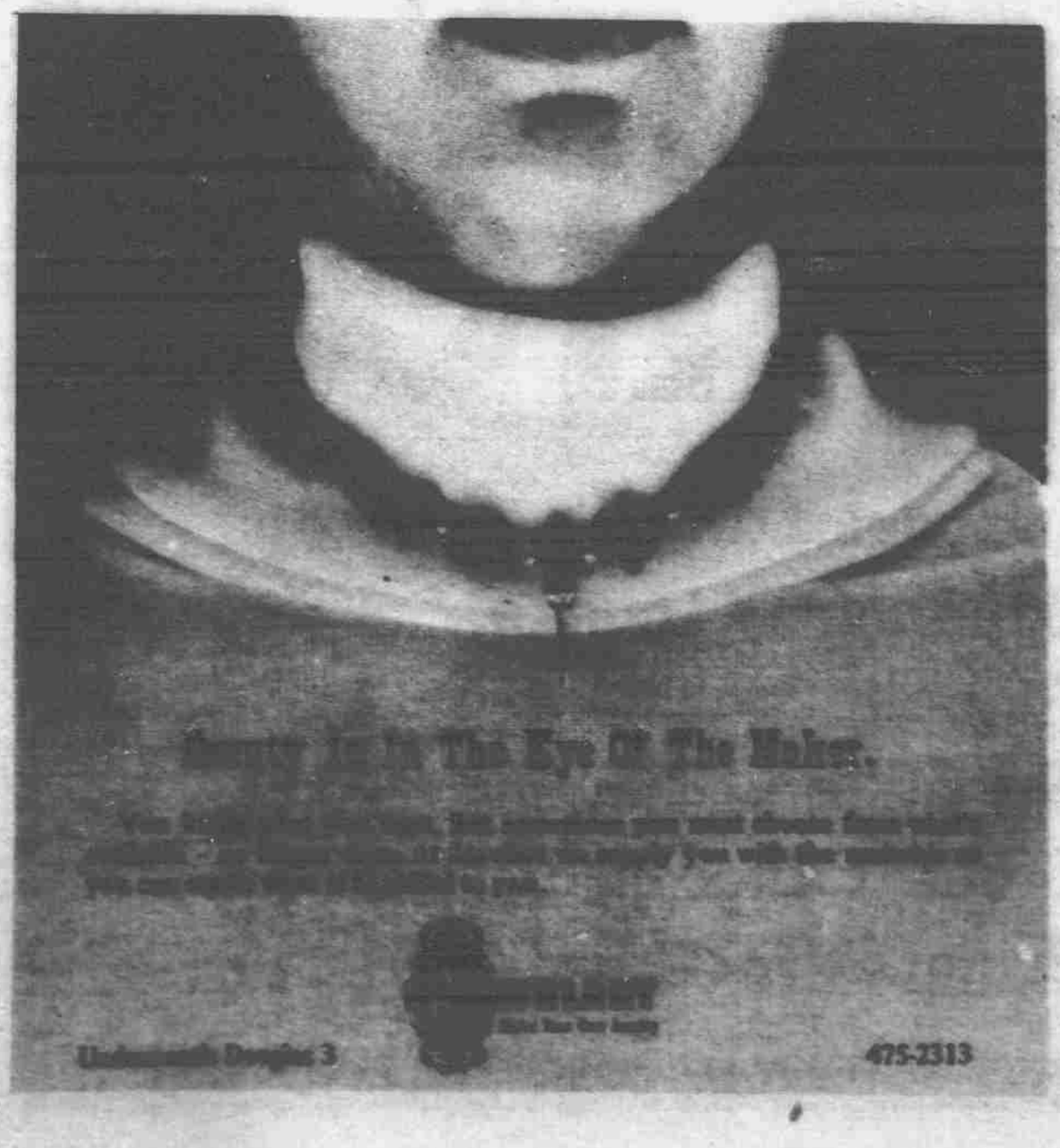

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