

**Answers to questions not addressed during the Exonerate Ethel  
Campaign Call on April 26, 2016**

*(All responses come from Robert Meeropol unless otherwise noted.)*

1. Do you have contact with anyone in the administration?

We have indirect contact with people in the White House Counsel's office through two sources. We have not utilized these conduits because we are waiting for the campaign to gather momentum. We welcome suggestions from anyone who has direct contacts in the White House Counsel's office.

2. Who constitutes our "opponents" at this time?

There are several hawkish, neoliberal, cold warrior historians and journalists who attempt to attack everything my brother and I say or do. They include historians Ronald Radosh, Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, Steven Usdin and journalist Allen Hornblum. They have written books about the Rosenberg Case, related Cold War cases or about Soviet spying in general. They contend that McCarthyism may have been overblown, but a witch hunt was justified because there were witches - including Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. They have academic and professional credibility tied up in the thesis they promote, and are likely to publish articles attacking the campaign once it starts attracting notice in the fall. Beyond that, Roy Cohn was Donald Trump's lawyer and mentor, and right-wing outlets like Fox, and radio blowhards like Glenn Beck will probably attack us.

3. Is there any point in reexamining the conduct of the trial for the public?

The trial gets reexamined in various high schools, colleges and law schools. We will continue to do what we can to promote this, but I can't predict whether a significant segment of the public will ever be interested enough in a 65-year-old trial to reexamine its conduct carefully.

4. Will the exoneration of Ethel counter the Cold War lie that dissidents are Moscow agents?

Probably not. The people who promote the idea that McCarthy era dissenters were communists and traitors will probably reject Ethel's exoneration, and characterize it as another communist-inspired plot. However, Ethel's exoneration would contribute to the growing cultural understanding that McCarthyism included unwarranted repression of dissidents.

5. Has anyone approached Bernie Sanders on Ethel's case? I expect he'll still have a voice despite the unlikelihood of his victory, and that he'd fall on the correct side.

No one has approached Bernie. I've never met him, but I know people who know him. Right now he has a lot on his plate, but come September, we'd be wise to ask for his endorsement.

6. What do we now know about what Julius did and why he got arrested and charged? What are the information sources?

I urge people who want to know more about what Julius did to read Walter Schneir's posthumously published book, *Final Verdict*, Melville House, 2010. This 180 page, easy-to-read, book is the most accurate description of what Julius did. I summarized the book's thesis in a three-part blog that you can find on the Rosenberg Case Overview section of the Rosenberg Fund for Children's website (<http://www.rfc.org/blog/cat/Final%20Verdict>). If you want to dig more deeply, you can find Vassiliev's notebooks at the Woodrow Wilson Center's website (<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/86/vassiliev-notebooks>). There are nine "notebooks," each 150 to 200 pages long. They are typed versions of notes hand copied from the KGB archive by a Russian defector. Julius' activities are referred to in several of these notebooks, but since all information about my parents comes from English translations of hand written Russian notes, taken from Russian language KGB files that were decrypted from double encrypted, Russian translations of reports, supposedly provided by Julius Rosenberg, it is impossible to verify their accuracy.

7. I'm curious about Ethel and Julius' early participation in the CPUSA. The 1930s was a ripe time for many progressives to join the party, but when did they become active members? Did they join on their own, were they invited, or recruited? Although Khrushchev denounced Stalin in 1956, did your parents have any inkling of the purges? Was Ethel still an active party member at the time of her arrest?

Like so many in that era, my parents never admitted Communist Party membership. We know that the FBI burglarized the lower Manhattan CP office to obtain a list of party members in 1944, and Julius's name appeared on that list. We do not know when they joined the party, but we presume it was in the late 1930's. We also presume that they joined on their own. As far as we know both Ethel and Julius were still party members when they were arrested, but Ethel, who had two small children, was less active once her sons were born. It's doubtful they believed anything they read about Stalin's purges. Their prison correspondence contains no criticism of Stalin, and of course, they were killed three years before Khrushchev's revelations.

8. I read recently where - if it is to be believed - many Jewish folks (not involved in any way) felt a certain "uneasiness" due to the criminal acts of Bernard Madoff, also a Jew. This sense of a collective feeling of shame/dishonor/disgrace by a group for the misbehavior of someone of their group is certainly something we Mexicans feel notwithstanding an awareness that group guilt should not follow specific acts by particular members of that group. How did members of the Jewish community feel about what was going on with the Rosenbergs? It seems like there were Jewish people on all sides: defendants, family members, prosecutors, judges, defense attorneys, supporters etc. How about detractors?

The Jewish community was divided. The mainstream, seeking Americanization, was terrified that all Jews would be seen as communists and traitors, and so viewed the Rosenbergs as pariahs. The case took place just five years after the revelations of the Holocaust, so they were particularly fearful. A Jewish judge tried to prove his loyalty to America by issuing the death sentence. However, the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case was founded by secular Jews and had the support of many in the Jewish community. When my brother and I first started speaking publicly about our parents' case we only received a few invitations to address synagogues and Jewish Community Centers, but now that the Soviet Union is fading history, Jewish groups are more accommodating. Even some very orthodox Jewish communities have become interested in exposing the anti-Semitism of the case.

9. I had the dubious "pleasure" of being booed as Roy Cohn in 1970 on Broadway in "Inquest." Morton Sobell came to the opening after just having been released. Our director, the late Alan Schneider, made sure we delved deeply into all the facts available at the time plus the trial transcript. It was obvious to us all that a miscarriage of justice had been done, right up to the refusal of both Truman and Eisenhower to commute the sentences at the last minute. Luckily, we had two very courageous producers, Lee Guber and Shelly Gross, who put themselves on the line to bring your parents story to the Broadway public. Since we now live in a much more celebrity society, I believe the way to maximize the exposure and the ultimate outcome of your effort is to recruit a major celebrity willing to do what Guber and Gross did 46 years ago and lend his or her name to the cause. It won't be easy, but there may be a celebrity out there courageous enough to take a stand for our future justice.

Thank you for your comment. I never saw *Inquest*, although I did know the playwright Don Freed (now deceased), and read the play. We are already trying to line up celebrity support. Given how he's galvanized millions of young people, as I wrote in answer to a prior question, Bernie Sanders might be the best endorsement we can get at this time.