

# Civil rights activist denounces FBI surveillance

By Brooke Brannon  
Emerald Contributor

He was followed by the FBI for almost 50 years, and he has served time in a federal prison. He's not a drug-runner or an international spy. He says he doesn't even jaywalk.

However, Frank Wilkinson has spent most of his life working for civil rights in Los Angeles and in the Southeast, and that's why the FBI spent \$17 million gathering enough information on Wilkinson to fill 132,000 pages in their files.

Wilkinson was at the University earlier this week to talk to students in several classes. He told of his experiences and denounced the racial bias and disregard for civil rights he says characterize FBI operations.

Wilkinson said surveillance affected not just him, but his entire family.

"There were real dangers and real hardships for my kids," he said. "Because of my blacklisting, I didn't have the money to pay for my kids to go to college."

Wilkinson, 77, did not know until 1979 that he had been under constant FBI surveillance since 1942, when he was working for the Los Angeles Housing Authority to integrate low-income housing.

The surveillance continued until 1980, when he and the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit against the FBI. In 1987, the bureau was forbidden from following him again, and as part of a settlement he was allowed to read parts of his FBI file.

From documents in his file, Wilkinson discovered the FBI had made an attempt on his life while investigating his association with the civil rights movement — a discovery that shocked rather than angered him, he said.

Wilkinson's work in civil rights got him in trouble with

the government more than once. He was fired from his housing authority job in 1952 after he would not answer questions from a California Senate Committee about his political associations.

"Why did I have to prove I was loyal when I was leading a campaign to make LA free of slums?" he asked. "It wasn't a real constitutional reaction, it was a moral reaction, indignancy."

In 1958, he refused to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Three years later, he was imprisoned in the Louisburg Federal Peni-

tentiary for nine months because of that "crime."

Martin Luther King Jr., who worked with Wilkinson in the civil rights movement, took Wilkinson to dinner before he left to serve his sentence.

The FBI's surveillance during this time was not just passive observation, Wilkinson said. "In 1956, they went to COINTELPRO — disruption. That was an FBI program, not just to survey but to disrupt my work."

His wife, Jean, a social studies teacher for 14 years, was fired at the high point of her career: guilty by association, Wil-

kinson said.

Wilkinson said he believes that the FBI should be restricted solely to investigating federal crimes, rather than wasting time and money trailing political groups or individuals who disagree with the government. Commonly targeted groups include environmental, civil rights, pacifist and religious groups, he said.

If Wilkinson wasn't looking for a fight in 1942, he is now. He travels to 35 or 40 states each year, speaking about FBI violations of the First Amendment and garnering support for the ACLU.

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**FANTASIA** [G] 11:35 2:15 4:55 7:35 10:05 IN STEREO

**CLASS ACTION** [R] 11:55 2:25 4:55 7:25 9:55 IN STEREO

**THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS** [R] 11:30 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00

**TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES II** [PG] 12:30 2:40 4:50 7:00 9:10

**OUT FOR JUSTICE** [R] 12:45 2:55 5:05 7:15 9:25 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:10

NOT DOUBLE FEATURE

**WHITE FANG** [PG] 12:00 2:35 5:00 IN STEREO

**KING HALPH** [PG] 7:30 9:50 IN STEREO

DOUBLE FEATURE

**AWAKENINGS** [PG-13] 12:10 5:05 10:00 IN STEREO

**LA STORY** [PG-13] 2:50 7:45 IN STEREO

DOUBLE FEATURE

**NOTHING BUT TROUBLE** [PG-13] 12:05 4:50 9:35 IN STEREO

**KINDERGARTEN COP** [PG-13] 2:20 7:05 IN STEREO

DOUBLE FEATURE

**GREEN CARD** [PG-13] 11:40 4:40 9:40 IN STEREO

**GUILTY BY SUSPICION** [PG-13] 2:10 7:10 IN STEREO

NOT DOUBLE FEATURE

**TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES II** [PG] 1:10 3:20 5:30 IN STEREO

**PERFECT WEAPON** [R] 7:40 9:45 IN STEREO

NOT DOUBLE FEATURE

**SHIPWRECKED** [PG] 12:55 3:05 5:15 IN STEREO

**IF LOOKS COULD KILL** [PG-13] 7:25 9:35 IN STEREO