

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/PRIVACY ACTS SECTION
COVER SHEET

SUBJECT: BILLIE HOLIDAY

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

JAN 25 1949

TELETYPE

Mr. Tolson	✓
Mr. Clegg	
Mr. Glavin	
Mr. Ladd	
Mr. Nichols	
Mr. Rosen	
Mr. Tracy	
Mr. Egan	
Mr. Gurnea	
Mr. Harbo	
Mr. Mohr	
Mr. Pennington	
Mr. Quinn Tamm	
Mr. Nease	
Miss Gandy	

FDI, SAN FRANCISCO

1-25-49 #289,489 6-58 PM PST

CFB

DIRECTOR

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 12/8/88 BY SP5 CLEB/GJ

EXTREMELY URGENT, IMMEDIATE ATTENTION INSPECTOR JOHN MOHR.

BILLIE HOLIDAY, NARCOTICS MATTER. REUR TELEPHONE CONVERSATION TODAY.

A CONFIDENTIAL SOURCE IN THE FEDERAL NARCOTICS BUREAU ADVISES THAT

BILLIE HOLIDAY AND HER HUSBAND, JOSEPH LEVY, WERE ARRESTED AT ONE

FIFTY FIVE P.M., JANUARY TWENTY TWO LAST. SOURCE STATES THAT HOLIDAY AND

LEVY ARE KNOWN USERS OF NARCOTICS AND HAVE BEEN UNDER CLOSE OBSERVATION

BY FEDERAL BUREAU OF NARCOTICS DURING THEIR TOUR WHILE IN UTAH

AND CALIFORNIA. INSTANT RAID LED BY [REDACTED] DISTRICT

SUPERVISOR, FEDERAL BUREAU OF NARCOTICS, AND PARTICIPATED IN BY AGENTS

[REDACTED] AND SFPD SPECIAL SERVICE DETAIL OFFICERS

[REDACTED] INSTANT RAID TOOK PLACE AT THE HOTEL

MARK TWAIN, THREE FOUR FIVE TAYLOR, ROOM SIX NAUGHT TWO, SAN

FRANCISCO. HOLIDAY WAS INTERCEPTED BY SUPERVISOR [REDACTED] AS SHE

ATTEMPTED TO DESTROY MAKESHIFT OPIUM PIPE AND BUNDLE OF OPIUM IN

TOILET BOWL OF HER ROOM. A PORTION OF THE PIPE, WHICH CONSISTED OF

A RUBBER HOSE AND A GLASS JAR WAS RECOVERED ON THE FLOOR OF THE

BATHROOM BY [REDACTED] AND THE BUNDLE OF OPIUM FROM THE BOWL.

RECORDED 100/12-17-49

THIS RAID

WAS MADE ON HOLIDAY AND LEVY WHEN IT WAS KNOWN BY THE NARCOTICS BUREAU

AT SAN FRANCISCO THAT THEY WERE LIVING TOGETHER AT INSTANT HOTEL.

NARCOTICS BUREAU POSSIBLY NO DEFINITE INFO...

FEB 14 1949

PAGE TWO

OF ANY NARCOTICS IN THEIR POSSESSION BUT PRESUMED THAT SINCE
THEY WERE TOGETHER THEY PROBABLY POSSESSED SOME NARCOTICS,
AND ACCORDINGLY THEY REQUESTED THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SAN FRANCISCO
POLICE DEPARTMENT IN CONDUCTING THIS RAID BECAUSE OF MORE LIBERAL
STATE LAWS COVERING SEARCHES AND SEIZURES. THE SOURCE STATES THAT
BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HOLIDAY IT HAS BEEN THE POLICY OF HIS
BUREAU TO DISCREDIT INDIVIDUALS OF THIS CALIBER USING NARCOTICS.
BECAUSE OF THEIR NOTORIETY IT OFFERED EXCUSES TO MINOR USERS. SOURCE
STATES THAT RAID WAS A LEGITIMATE RAID BASED ON ABOVE AND THAT CLAIMED
QUOTE FRAME UP UNQUOTE WAS AS MUCH FOR PULLICITY PURPOSES AS IT
WAS TO AVERT THE SUSPICION OF GUILT FROM HER INASMUCH AS SHE WAS
CAUGHT IN POSSESSION OF THE MAKESHIFT PIPE. [REDACTED] HEAD
OF SPECIAL SERVICES DETAIL, TOGETHER WITH OFFICER [REDACTED]
WERE CONTACTED AND THEY ADVISED SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME INFORMATION
AS SET FORTH ABOVE. HOLIDAY IS CHARGED WITH POSSESSION OF OPIUM AND
IS BEING TRIED IN MUNICIPAL COURT. HER HEARING IS SET FOR FEBRUARY
TWO NEXT. NO FURTHER ACTION BEING TAKEN.

KIMBALL

END AND ACK PLS

1019PM OK FBI WA LS

cc Rosen

574

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

JAN 27 1949

TELEMETER

Mr. Tolson	✓
Mr. Clegg	✓
Mr. Glavin	✓
Mr. Ladd	✓
Mr. Nichols	✓
Mr. Rosen	✓
Mr. Tracy	✓
Mr. Egan	✓
Mr. Gurnea	✓
Mr. Harbo	✓
Mr. Hendon	✓
Mr. Jones	✓
Mr. Quinn Tamm	✓
Mr. Nease	✓
Miss Gandy	✓

WASHINGTON FROM SFRAN S2 1-27-49 12-33 PM

DIRECTOR ROUTINE -REPEAT-

ATTENTION - INSPECTOR JOHN MOHR

BILLIE HOLIDAY, NARCOTICS MATTER. RMYTEL JAN. TWENTY FIVE LAST. A SQUIB APPEARING IN COLUMN OF HERB CAEN, LOCAL GOSSIP COLUMNIST OF SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, ISSUE OF JAN. TWENTY SEVEN READS "CHANTOOSE BILLIE HOLIDAY, OUT ON BAIL AFTER BEING NABBED ON A NARCOTICS CHARGE SAT., HAD A PACKED HOUSE AS USUAL AT CAFE SOCIETY UPTOWN TUES. NIGHT -- BUT THE CUSTOMER WHO MUST-VE INTRIGUED HER MOST WAS A GENT WHO SAT AT RINGSIDE THROUGH TWO SHOWS AND EVEN MADE A COUPLE OF REQUESTS. COL. GEORGE H. WHITE, BOSS OF THE FEDERAL NARCOTICS BUREAU HERE.."

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 11/28/88 BY SP5CJ/EBG

SE 28

KIMBALL

RECORDED - 80

12-1720-2

62 FEB 11 1949

FEB 11 1949

EX-16

CRIME

Hotel Elysee
60 East 54th Street
New York, N. Y.
February 9, 1949

J. Edgar Hoover
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

I am ashamed of my unpardonable delay in writing to thank you a thousand times for the kindness, consideration and courtesy, in fact all the nicest adjectives in the book, for the trouble you took re our telephone conversation in connection with Billie Holiday.

I tremble when I think of my audacity in approaching you at all with so little to recommend me except the esteem, admiration and high regard my father held for you. I would never have dared to ask him or you a favor for myself but knowing your true humanitarian spirit it seemed quite natural at the time to go to the top man. As my Negro mammy used to say - "When you pray you pray to God don't you?".

I have met Billie Holiday but twice in my life but admire her immensely as an artist and feel the most profound compassion for her knowing as I do the unfortunate circumstances of her background. Although my intention is not to condone her weaknesses I certainly understand the eccentricities of her behaviour because she is essentially a child at heart whose troubles have made her psychologically unable to cope with the world in which she finds herself. Her vital need is more medical than the confinement of four walls.

However guilty she may be, whatever penalty she may be required to pay for her frailties, poor thing, you I know did everything within the law to lighten her burden. Bless you for this.

Kindest regards,

Tallulah Bankhead

Tallulah Bankhead

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 11/28/78 BY SP5 CI/RBG

*ack
2/11/49
✓*

~~DEFERRED~~

RECORDED - 92 12-17-53

February 11, 1949

12-1720-3

INDEXED - 92

Miss Tallulah Bankhead
Hotel Elysee
60 East 54th Street
New York, New York

Dear Tallulah:

I have received your kind letter of February 9 and was very glad indeed to hear from you. Your kind comments are greatly appreciated, and I trust that you will not hesitate to call on me at any time you think I might be of assistance to you.

Hoping to see you in the not too distant future and with kindest regards,

Sincerely,

RECEIVED - DIRECTOR
FEB 11 4 30 PM '49
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

RECEIVED - DIRECTOR
FEB 11 3 55 PM '49
F B I
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

- Mr. Tolson _____
- Mr. Clegg _____
- Mr. Glavin _____
- Mr. Ladd _____
- Mr. Nichols _____
- Mr. Rosen _____
- Mr. Tracy _____
- Mr. Egan _____
- Mr. Gurnea _____
- Mr. Harbo _____
- Mr. Mohr _____
- Mr. Pennington _____
- Mr. Quinn Tamm _____
- Tele. Room _____
- Mr. Nease _____
- Miss Gandy _____

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION
MAILED 3
FEB 11 1949 P.M.
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RECEIVED - DIRECTOR
FEB 11 2 15 PM '49
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 11/26/88 BY SP5CJ/RBG

Billie Holiday, Singer, Held In Coast Dope Raid

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 22 (UP). Dusky blues singer Billie Holiday and her agent were arrested in a "tenderloin district" hotel room in downtown San Francisco today and charged with possession of opium.

The 29-year-old star of radio, night clubs and recordings was booked at the Hall of Justice with John Levy, 40, of New York and Los Angeles, and both were released on \$500 bail each.

Charge: Opium Found

Police charged a vial of opium was found in her apartment. Both promptly denied they knew the opium was there.

A five-man squad of officers, including federal agent Gene White and four police from a special San Francisco detail, raided her apartment in the Mark Twain hotel in San Francisco's night life area.

White said the detail found the colored song enchantress in the bathroom, washing her hands beneath the medicine cabinet where they located a small vial of opium.

Book "Cure" in New York

Miss Holiday, only recently released from a federal institution at Alderson, W. Va., as "cured" of drug addiction, appeared at the city prison for fingerprinting and booking in a black dress and \$7,000 blue mink coat.

She wore high heels and a perky hat and was flanked by Levy, hatless and coatless in the chill San Francisco weather. Throughout the proceedings Miss Holiday remained virtually silent.

But Levy indignantly denied the charge. "We both deny everything," he said. "She didn't even sleep in her apartment last night."

Claims: Friend Used Room

Levy said Miss Holiday "lent" the room to a girl he knew only as "Mandy," a Negro girl friend of the singer.

He charged the officers "apparently were tipped" and said they went "directly to the bathroom and took the vial out of the chest."

Levy said he first got suspicious "something was up" when he got a call from the lobby downstairs that said: "Are you the Levy who is a stocking salesman?" He said "No" and hung up, and a few minutes later the police knocked on the door and he admitted them.

Bank at Night Club

The chubby Negro songstress, whose record albums feature smoky, world-weary numbers, has been appearing at the Cafe Society Uptown in San Francisco's "Harlem" district along Fillmore street.

Levy said he had just arrived in San Francisco on the Coaster, an overnight passenger train from Los Angeles, and that he had been in his client's room only about an hour before the law burst in. Immediately after the knocking, the pair left for the cafe with the words, "The show must go on." Since the death of her acknowledged model and mentor, Bessie Smith, the husky-voiced Miss Holiday has generally been rated tops in her line. Her albums are best-sellers and her recording of "Strange Fruit," the weird, minor-key lament of a Negro lynching, has become her virtual trademark.

- Mr. [initials]
- Miss [initials]

File 100

Mr. Tolson	.....
Mr. Clegg	.....
Mr. Glavin	.....
Mr. Ladd	.....
Mr. Nichols	.....
Mr. Rosen	.....
Mr. Tracy	.....
Mr. Egan	.....
Mr. Gurnea	.....
Mr. Harbo	.....
Mr. Mohr	.....
Mr. Pennington	.....
Mr. Quinn Tamm	.....
Mr. Nease	.....
Miss Gandy	.....

4-
H

6
face

BILLIE HOLIDAY TRIAL RE-SET

The narcotics trial of Billie Holiday, colored singer, was reset yesterday for April 15 to save her financial loss in pursuing her career.

Appearing with her attorney, W. Ehrlich, Miss Holiday explained to Superior Judge Albert Wollenberg that she was on "stay or pay" contract.

"That means," said Ehrlich, "that if she does not fulfill her contract and appear in Chicago later this month, a penalty clause will call for payment from her."

The judge moved the trial date from March 14 to April 15. The singer was indicted for possession of narcotics by the grand jury on January 22.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 11/28/88 BY SP3CJ/RBG

G.I.R.-7

12-17-49-1-
NOT RECORDED
43 APR 1 1949

FBI - SAN FRANCISCO
MAR 11 1949
Bureau

Re: Billie Holiday
Miscellaneous Info Concerning

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

62 APR 8 1949

MAR 4 1949

Mr. Tolson _____
 Mr. Clegg _____
 Mr. Glavin _____
 Mr. Ladd _____
 Mr. Nichols _____
 Mr. Rosen _____
 Mr. Tracy _____
 Mr. Egan _____
 Mr. Gurnea _____
 Mr. Harbo _____
 Mr. Mohr _____
 Mr. Pennington _____
 Mr. Quinn Tamm _____
 Mr. Nease _____
 Miss Gandy _____

Handwritten initials and scribbles

**Ellie Holiday Cleared
 of Opium Possession**
 San Francisco, June 4 (U.P.)—
 Ellie Holiday, blues singer, has
 been declared innocent of charges
 of possessing opium.
 A jury of six men and six women
 returned a not guilty verdict yes-
 terday after hearing Miss Holiday
 testify that her manager, John
 Levy, thrust a package of narcotics
 into her hand just before her hotel
 room was raided by Federal agents.
 The defense contended Levy was
 a turned informer on Miss Holiday
 to avoid marriage.

10 17 15
 83 JUL 12 1949

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
 HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
 DATE 11/28/88 BY SP5 CI/RBG

June 28, 1949.

The Director,
Federal Bureau of Investigation,
U.S. Department of Justice,
WASHINGTON, D.C. U.S.A.

Dear Sir:

Re: Miss Billy HOLIDAY

RECORDING

b7c
b7D

It would be appreciated if you would enquire into the matter, advising of any information you may have concerning Miss HOLIDAY.

Yours truly,

ENCL.

RECORDED - 4

EX-1

W/S to [unclear]
rec'd [unclear]
4855389
7-21-49

F B I
JUL 29 1949

50 AUG 10 1949

XXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXXX

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

2 Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

Deletions were made pursuant to the exemptions indicated below with no segregable material available for release to you.

Section 552

Section 552a

(b)(1)

(b)(7)(A)

(d)(5)

(b)(2)

(b)(7)(B)

(j)(2)

(b)(3)

(b)(7)(C)

(k)(1)

(b)(7)(D)

(k)(2)

(b)(7)(E)

(k)(3)

(b)(7)(F)

(k)(4)

(b)(4)

(b)(8)

(k)(5)

(b)(5)

(b)(9)

(k)(6)

(b)(6)

(k)(7)

Information pertained only to a third party with no reference to you or the subject of your request.

Information pertained only to a third party. Your name is listed in the title only.

Documents originated with another Government agency(ies). These documents were referred to that agency(ies) for review and direct response to you.

Pages contain information furnished by another Government agency(ies). You will be advised by the FBI as to the releasability of this information following our consultation with the other agency(ies).

Page(s) withheld for the following reason(s):

For your information:

The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:

12-1720- 4 ENCLOSURE

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
X DELETED PAGE(S) X
X NO DUPLICATION FEE X
X FOR THIS PAGE X
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXXX

RECORDED - 4

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
AIR MAIL

EX-1

DATE: July 25, 1949

TO: [Redacted]

b7c
b7D

Attention: [Redacted]

FROM: John Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

SUBJECT: BILLY HOLIDAY

Reference is made to your letter dated June 28, 1949 requesting information regarding the above-captioned individual.

Enclosed herewith are two copies of the Identification Record of Billie Holiday as it appears in the files of the Identification Division under FBI#-4855389.

[Handwritten signature]

b7c CC -
b7D

(PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL - AIR MAIL) ~~X~~

CC -

(Detached)

[Handwritten initials]

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Gurnea
- Mr. Harbo
- Mr. Mohr
- Mr. Pennington

b7c

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION
 MAILED 13
 JUL 25 1949 P.M.
 *
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

4855389-487 405041RAG