Poetry for the People Program Records, 1989 - 2014

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Poetry for the People Program Records, 1989 – 2014


Collection Number: CES ARC 2018/1

Creator/Collector: June Jordan, Poetry for the People, University of California Berkeley Department of African-American Studies

Extent: 15 cartons, 3 boxes, 1 oversized folder – 22.71 linear feet

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Abstract: Poetry for the People (P4P) is an arts/activism program, founded by the late June Jordan in 1991. This collection contains administrative records, anthologies, news coverage, video recordings, and other materials related to the content, administration, organization and vision of the Poetry for the People Program of the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at UC Berkeley.

Language of Material: English

Access

PARTIALLY RESTRICTED COLLECTION: Cartons 6 – 15 (Series 10) contain student work that is restricted and unavailable for public use. Students who were part of the program may request to see their own work if available. Please contact the Comparative Ethnic Studies Librarian for more information.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation


Acquisition Information

The Poetry for the People (P4P) Program Records were given to the Ethnic Studies Library as a gift by the Department of African-American and African Diaspora Studies in 2016.

Biography/Administrative History

Poetry for the People (P4P) was officially established in 1991 by poet and UC Berkeley professor June Jordan with three guiding principles in mind: 1. That students will not take themselves seriously unless we who teach them, honor and respect them in every practical way that we can. 2. That words can change the world and save our lives. 3. That poetry is the highest art and the most exacting service devoted to our most serious, and our most imaginative, deployment of verbs and nouns on behalf of whatever and whoever we cherish. Poetry for the People created a community that thrived on connections between humans, attesting to the significance of each person’s struggle, and the idea that anyone could take the course without any prior writing experience. Students in the Poetry for the People program crafted their own original poems as well as taught poetry for other University students, high school students and community members. At the close of each semester, students produced an anthology of poetry and students showcased their work at community and on-campus public poetry readings. The program also brought “Hot Shot poets” to campus and the surrounding area for readings and lectures. Under the direction of Professor June Jordan, Poetry for the People expanded to sites at Berkeley High School, Dublin Women’s Prison, Glide Memorial Church, Mission Cultural Center, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and others. Poetry for the People continues to the present day as a fully accredited academic program at UC Berkeley with an academic focus on the reading, writing, and teaching of poetry, while also engaging in bridging the gap between the university and the larger community, working with teens and young adults, schools, and community organizations, and activist projects in the greater Bay Area.

Scope and Content of Collection

Poetry for the People (P4P) is an arts/activism program, founded by the late June Jordan in 1991. This collection contains administrative records, anthologies, news coverage, video recordings, and other materials related to the content, administration, organization and vision of the Poetry for the People Program of the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at UC Berkeley. The collection includes course syllabi, course readers, handouts, Student Teacher
Poet (STP) resources; course evaluations; program correspondence; program funding requests; VHS tapes of poetry performances; media coverage of P4P; UC Berkeley courses tangentially related to P4P/taught by June Jordan; information on P4P guest speakers; publicity materials from P4P public performances; P4P student advocacy; materials and records from P4P satellite programs at Glide Memorial Church, FCI Dublin Women’s Prison, Yerba Buena Gardens, Mission Cultural Center, La Peña and more. Important themes of this collection include campus-community engagement and the intersection of culture/arts and community organizing. Series 10 contains semester portfolios, final essays, poems and other student work and has access restrictions.

Finding Aid