L1993.05 The Albert Bell Papers

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Lambda Archives of San Diego
4545 Park Blvd, Suite 104
San Diego, California 92116
(619) 260-1522
manager.lambda.archives@gmail.com
http://www.lambdaarchives.us/
2019
Descriptive Summary
Title: L1993.05 The Albert Bell Papers
Collection Number: L1993.05
Creator/Collector: Albert Bell
Extent: 1 linear foot
Repository: Lambda Archives of San Diego
San Diego, California 92116
Abstract: Albert Bell was a prominent local activist who fought tirelessly for gay and lesbian rights in San Diego, working on promoting a dialogue on a variety of issues both inside and outside of the LGBT community.
Language of Material: English
Access
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Preferred Citation
L1993.05 The Albert Bell Papers. Lambda Archives of San Diego
Biography/Administrative History
From The Center’s Wall of Honor: Albert Bell was a prominent local activist who fought tirelessly for gay and lesbian rights in San Diego, working on promoting a dialogue on a variety of issues both inside and outside of the LGBT community. Bell came into politics and student activism and an early age and founded the first Gay Liberation group in San Francisco at the age of 20 in 1970. He later went on to found gay student unions at San Francisco City College and San Francisco State University. During this period, Bell worked on Harvey Milk’s successful bid to become San Francisco’s first openly gay supervisor. After his career in student activism Bell moved to San Diego where he became one of the early directors of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center where he was instrumental in keeping The Center in the public eye and at the forefront of the political scene. He served on The Center’s Board for seven years while working on some of the earliest Gay Pride events in San Diego. As a spokesman for the LGBT community, he was aware of the power and potential of media, and on one notable television appearance on Channel 10, Bell confronted anchor Ed Quinn on the station’s lack of coverage for the 1988 March on Washington. Quinn’s response generated public condemnation from visiting ABC anchor Peter Jennings. This led to a meeting between Bell and Jennings, along with Channel 20 executives, which resulted in a substantial change in the way gay issues were presented. In 1980 he attended the first spiritual gathering of Radical Faeries in Boulder, Colorado. Bell developed a popular course titled “Homospiritual: A Gay Journey to Self Esteem,” which ran for several years and was presented to hundreds of men in San Diego. At the height of the AIDS crisis in the mid-1980’s, Bell took on the role of community leader once again. He established “Our House,” the first residential living facility for people with AIDS and helped create the AIDS Assistance Fund and served on its board of directors. At the same time, he helped organize San Diego’s first chapter of “ACT UP,” bringing pressure on local agencies and government so that people with AIDS might get the help they needed. Bell also produced the “AIDS Walk for Life” and was an initial supporter of “The Blood Sisters” program, in which lesbian women donated blood to the San Diego Blood Bank in solidarity with their gay brothers. Up until the final years of his life, he worked for San Diego County as an HIV health advisor, providing testing and education to those in need. His reputation and authority in local politics made him a natural choice as a delegate to the 1992 Democratic Convention in New York. As one of the few delegates with AIDS in attendance, Bell was able to take the issue of gay rights and AIDS to a national stage. He received the first Albert Bell Award for Community Service from the San Diego Democratic Club shortly before his death. In a self-penned obituary, he listed his cause of death as “government sponsored genocide,” citing the government’s failure to find a cure for his disease. Albert Bell died at home of AIDS in 1993 at the age of 43, surrounded by his friends.
Scope and Content of Collection
This collection contains multiple copies of Albert Bell’s “Homospiritual” Essay, photographs of Bell, memorial flyers, newspaper containing a memorial essay about Bell, RFD Journal, the logo templates for the Gay Men’s Community Center (later known as “The Center”), and a small miscellany folder. Bell was a co-founder of The Center and a prominent gay rights and AIDS activist.
Indexing Terms
LGBTQ theory
AIDS
Homospiritual
Gay Center for Social Services
Gay Men's Community Center
San Diego

L1993-05 Inventory