Guide to the Berkeley Civic Study Club Records

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Guide to the Berkeley Civic Study Club Records

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Berkeley Civic Study Club records
Dates: 1932-1974
Collection number: MS 145
Creator: Berkeley Civic Study Club (Berkeley, Calif.).
Collection Size: .25 linear feet (1 box)
Repository: African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, Calif.)
Oakland, CA 94612

Abstract: The Swastika Berkeley Civic Study Club was founded in 1924 by a group of African American women wanting to study civic issues and participate in bettering their community. According to club publications, the purpose of the Berkeley Civic Study Club was "...to unite its members in non-partisan, educational, and civic work; to present information, and offer for free discussion, civic and legislative problems." The Berkeley Civic Study Club Records consist of one ledger containing meeting minutes, newspaper clippings, correspondence, financial records, and rosters from 1932-1974.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
No access restrictions. Collection is open to the public.

Access Restrictions
Materials are for use in-library only, non-circulating.

Publication Rights
Permission to publish from the Berkeley Civic Study Club Records must be obtained from the African American Museum & Library at Oakland.

Preferred Citation
Berkeley Civic Study Club records, MS 145, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library.
Oakland, California.

Acquisition Information
Ledger donated to the African American Museum & Library at Oakland by Ruth Lasartemay, Berkeley Civic Study Club president.

Processing Information

Biography / Administrative History
The Swastika Berkeley Civic Study Club was founded in 1924 by a group of African American women wanting to study civic issues and participate in bettering their community. According to club publications, the purpose of the Berkeley Civic Study Club was "...to unite its members in non-partisan, educational, and civic work; to present information, and offer for free discussion, civic and legislative problems." Members met on a monthly basis at the South Berkeley Public Library and discussed how they could assist the City of Berkeley with urban renewal projects, educational proposals, minority programs, and planning and improvements. A goal of the club was to foster good citizenship in the African American...
community. To promote intelligent voting, they studied civic issues and invited friends and neighbors to lectures by political candidates. The club mounted campaigns to make African Americans more familiar with voting procedures and joined with the League of Women Voters in helping more African American women to register to vote. The club's members also organized fund drives for charities, worked to instill civic pride, and contributed to the efforts of such organizations as the NAACP to eliminate discrimination and segregation. Through rummage sales, teas, and pancake breakfasts, the club raised money for the Community Chest, Fannie Wall Children's Home and Day Nursery, Alameda County Tuberculosis and Health Association, and other charitable institutions. The women also organized their neighborhoods for participation in clean-up weeks and City Beautiful campaigns. They held a lifetime membership in the NAACP and regularly raised money to contribute to the local chapter. To inform the community about African American contributions, the club created displays for Negro History Week at libraries and schools. After several decades of activity, the club experienced a decline in the 1950s. Members discontinued meeting between 1952 and April 1957. In 1960, the club's president, Ruth Lasartemay, held a meeting to re-evaluate the activities of the club. Once again, it had been inactive during the summer months and early fall and she felt the club had lost its influence in the community, becoming "lamentably sluggish." Members also agreed that the club had not been interested or involved enough in racial issues. In order to define their purpose more clearly, the women formulated a new definition of their activities, stating in club minutes that "...the club should be a voting clinic to discuss sample ballots. It should be a reservoir of information on major issues before voting time. The members should attend council meetings, Board of Education meetings, Planning Commission sections, PTAs and be vocal in all areas in which the issues affect the community." To achieve some of these goals, the club voted to join the California State Association of Colored Women's Clubs in order to unite their efforts with other groups. This decision provided a new spurt of energy to the club's membership. They established a municipal committee to attend meetings at City Hall and became involved in combating such problems as juvenile delinquency and in voicing opinions about city ordinances. Unfortunately, by the early seventies, the club's level of influence and activity had once again diminished. On June 27, 1974, members voted to dissolve their association because they felt they could no longer handle the demands of developing membership and programs. They divided their remaining monetary assets between the NAACP National Office and the East Bay Negro Historical Society.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The Berkeley Civic Study Club Records consist of one ledger containing meeting minutes, newspaper clippings, correspondence, financial records, and rosters from 1932-1974. Club meetings are well-documented in the minutes, which highlight the club's involvement in civic affairs and also reveal changes in the purpose and membership of the club. The minutes include rosters of officers and members and provide a record of when individuals joined the club. They cover the years 1932-1951; 1957-1969; and 1974. The ledger also includes assorted newspaper clippings from the 1950s and 1960s which announce club activities or meetings. In addition, the club's finances are documented in records of dues received and of account balances. A few examples of correspondence received from organizations or city officials are also present and provide insight into how the community responded to the club's contributions.

**Arrangement**

Series I: Meeting minutes ledger

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog:

- African American women--California--History.
- African American women--Societies and clubs.
- Berkeley (Calif.)--History.
- Berkeley (Calif.)--Social life and customs.