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Title: Sir Lawrence Washington Papers on Carnaval San Francisco
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Abstract: Sir Lawrence Washington, was a conceptual artist, community activist, consultant and participant in the first Carnaval street parade in 1979. He led the parade wearing his signature Grand Marshall sequined costume. Sir became one of the six organizers to form the Carnaval San Francisco Coordinating Committee in 1979 and helped organize the 1980 parade and festival in Dolores Park. He continued to be involved as the leader of a major performing contingent in the parade, and also promoted and supported the event through 1983.

Physical Location: The collection is stored onsite.
Language of Material: English
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Sir Lawrence Washington Papers (SFH 562), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Provenance

Related materials
Researchers are encouraged to see also SFH 560 Carole Deutch Papers on Carnaval San Francisco, SFH 562 Johanathan Powk Papers on Carnaval San Francisco.

Conservation Note
During processing, the entire collection was re-foldered and re-housed in acid-free folders and boxes. Some metal staples remain.

Biography
SIR LAWRENCE WASHINGTON: Sir Lawrence Washington, "Sir", a San Francisco native, was a conceptual artist, community activist, consultant and participant in the first Carnaval street parade in Precita Park, 1979. He led the parade wearing his signature Grand Marshall sequined costume.
A good friend of dancer Adela Chu, who initiated the 1979 event, Sir became one of the six organizers to form the Carnaval San Francisco Coordinating Committee in 1979 and helped organize the 1980 parade and festival in Dolores Park. He continued to be involved as the leader of a major performing contingent in the parade, and also promoted and supported the event through 1983.
American Revolving Theatre: In 1973, Sir Lawrence Washington and friends founded American Revolving Theatre (ART), a production and performance company. ART participated in Carnaval parades as one of the most original and creative contingents from 1981-1983, featuring impressive floats, costumes and original music.
CARNAVAL SAN FRANCISCO: In 1979, Marcus Gordon and Adela Chu requested rehearsal space at the Precita Valley Community Center for their upcoming Carnaval parade to be held in Precita Park. Carole Deutch, the manager of the center, liked the idea, knew many of the participants and offered support. On February 25th 1979 the parade of approximately one hundred costumed dancers and a fifty-piece "bateria" (percussion ensemble), marched around Precita Park three times, then entered the park for a finale. Hundreds of supporters and neighbors joined the celebration. Based on the enthusiasm generated by the parade, Chu and Gordon asked if Deutch would join them to organize a larger 1980 event. Seeing a unique opportunity to showcase local artists and combine diverse cultures in a new, innovative event, she enthusiastically agreed.

The Carnaval Committee first met in March 1979. There were six original members: Adela Chu (dancer/teacher), Marcus Gordon (master percussionist/music director), Pam Minor (Costume Bank), Sir Lawrence Washington (conceptual artist), Lou DeMatteis (photographer) and Carole Deutch. They named the event Carnaval San Francisco, and decided to create a multi-cultural, multi-tradition event that reflected the diversity of the bay area, with emphasis on artistic quality and community participation.

The 1980 Grand Parade on Mission Street and Festival in Dolores Park was a huge success. The parade had grown to include several contingents who displayed dazzling artistry and the Festival included staged entertainment and several booths. Over fifteen thousand people attended, filling the park and adjacent streets.

Tired of spending endless hours on logistics, Adela Chu, Sir Lawrence, Pam Minor and Lou DeMatteis left the Committee to focus on personal Carnaval and creative projects, but continued to support the event. Gordon and Deutch were joined by Anne Milkie, who had initiated a Carnaval photographic exhibit at the Galeria de la Raza. Together with many committed volunteers, they expanded their vision and organization to produce the 1981 event.

Anticipating many thousands of attendees, the city would not allow a festival of that size in the Mission district. So, in addition to dealing with some disgruntled residents and increasing responsibilities, the organizers were given a new route and destination to manage, as well as new features and activities to organize. On Sunday, April 12th 1981, the Grand Parade marched through the Mission and merged into a packed Civic Center Plaza. The event had grown tenfold, beyond expectations. At least 50,000 people gathered, performed and celebrated.

In just three years, Carnaval San Francisco had become a huge popular event, acknowledged by citywide neighborhoods, institutions and the press. It had become a keystone for multi-cultural artists, community organizations and public institutions and was widely celebrated.

Sunday, April 25, 1982 - the Grand Parade and Festival were considered a major citywide event. The Mayor proclaimed Carnaval day, KQED produced a documentary, twenty-five contingents with elaborate costumes, musicians and floats paraded into a packed Civic Center Plaza. Over 100 thousand people gathered along the route and in the Plaza. Once again, the growth from one year to the next was overwhelming. The organization could barely keep up with demands and requirements.

By 1983, the event had outgrown the grass roots structure and minimally funded organization. In spite of their dedication, enthusiasm and skill, the small group could no longer satisfy growing structural and financial requirements.

After producing another massive event in 1983, Marcus, Anne and Deutch tried to recruit new leadership but, having no success, retired, leaving the decision about next steps to Mission Neighborhood Centers.

Scope and Contents
The collection includes carnaval committee minutes and correspondence, clippings, parade contingent documents, flyers, photos.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged by date.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Carnaval San Francisco
Carnaval -- California -- San Francisco

box 1, folder 1  Sir Lawrence Washington Biography
box 1, folder 2  Documents 1979-1980
Scope and Contents
Carnaval Committee meeting minutes and correspondence, notes, original papers Carnaval Committee, city documents, budget.
box 1, folder 3  Documents 1980
Scope and Contents
Flyers, procedures of parade contingents, letters of support, budget doc / Zellerbach grant, A.R.T. contingent documents 'Heart of Spring', parade contingent list, clippings.

box 1, folder 4  Documents 1981
Scope and Contents
Carnaval brochure program, communications, outreach, A.R.T. comparsa theme 'Tropical Outerspace', Carnaval Ball flyer, Batucage fundraising brochure, 'Bay Area Carnaval Magazine' Brazil Club Publication, correspondence, clippings.

box 1, folder 5  Documents 1982
Scope and Contents
A.R.T. parade contingent documents, A.R.T. proposal

box 1, folder 6  Documents 1983-1987
Scope and Contents