
Allan Berube papers

Finding aid created by GLBT Historical Society staff using RecordEXPRESS

GLBT Historical Society

989 Market Street, Lower Level

San Francisco, California 94103

(415) 777-5455

reference@glbthistory.org

<http://www.glbthistory.org/>

2021

Descriptive Summary

Title: Allan Berube papers

Dates: 1946-2007

Collection Number: 1995-17

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 15 cartons, 166 boxes, 7 oversize boxes (97.45 linear feet)

Repository: GLBT Historical Society

San Francisco, California 94103

Abstract: The Allan Bérubé Papers document the personal life, family history and professional work of Allan Ronald Bérubé (1946-2007), a community historian, teacher, author and activist. The collection includes his extensive research files on the topics of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender history. Of particular note are Bérubé's writings and research files on the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union. These include several unfinished manuscripts and the oral histories he conducted for this project.

Language of Material: English

Access

Collection is open for research. Funding for processing this collection was provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and Allan Bérubé's literary estate. The erotica in this collection may only be viewed by researchers age eighteen and over and it is made available for educational and research purposes.

Publication Rights

Copyright to unpublished manuscript materials has been transferred to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Preferred Citation

Allan Berube papers. GLBT Historical Society

Acquisition Information

Gift of Allan Bérubé in May 1994. Gift of the trustees of Bérubé's literary estate, Waverly Lowell, John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, in March 2009.

Biography/Administrative History

Allan Bérubé was born to Florence and Ronald Bérubé in Springfield, Massachusetts on December 3, 1946. He grew up in a Franco-American working-class family. In the early 1950s his family moved to the Sunset Trailer Park in Bayonne, New Jersey. Bérubé attended the Watchung Regional High School in New Jersey from 1961 to 1962, and received a scholarship to attend the Mount Hermon School for Boys (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School) in 1963. Bérubé went to the University of Chicago on a scholarship in 1964, and studied there until 1968. In 1968 his friend Roy Gutmann, who Bérubé had recently come out to, was killed in an apparent race-related homicide. Bérubé dropped out of school after this, never finishing his degree. The Vietnam draft was in effect, and in order to avoid the draft, he successfully applied to the Selective Service Board and was classified as a conscientious objector. Bérubé became increasingly involved in the politics of the era and participated in nonviolent protests against the war. In the early 1970s Bérubé moved to Vermont with his friend Allan Troxler. He learned to weave and crochet, and even collected natural ingredients to make his own dyes. He supported himself by selling his creations and by traveling periodically to Boston to work in a hospital. By early 1973 Bérubé had moved with Troxler to the San Francisco Bay Area. Bérubé was determined to learn about the history of the gay and lesbian community, and he began visiting libraries and archives to search for information. In early 1979 he established, with others, the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project. Together, Bérubé and the members of the Project met to discuss and share their findings with each other and the larger gay and lesbian community. Bérubé's shared his own historical research by putting together talks and slide shows that he presented to audiences around the country. One of these slide shows, "Lesbian Masquerade," was an illustrated lecture on women who had passed as men in the 19th and 20th centuries in San Francisco. His presentations were met with enthusiastic responses, which elevated his prominence in the gay community and beyond. Bérubé devoted himself to the research of gay and lesbian history. Topics of particular interest to him were the military's ban on homosexuals, gay bathhouses, class, race, AIDS and grief. He collected extensive research files on these subjects, and wrote articles, gave talks, and created slide shows to promote his findings. In 1983 Bérubé met Brian Keith, a British biochemist, at a leather bar. The two became partners and lived together for several years. In 1986 Keith was diagnosed with AIDS, and his health deteriorated rapidly. In 1987 Keith died. Bérubé's grief from this loss was great, and inspired the autobiographical essay, "Caught in the Storm." Keith designated Bérubé the beneficiary of his life insurance policy and, with this financial support, Bérubé was able to purchase an apartment in San

Francisco and continue his research and writing. Bérubé's slide show, "Marching to a Different Drummer," focused on gay men in the military during WWII. Response to the show was so enthusiastic that Bérubé decided to devote himself to writing a book on the subject. Bérubé traveled, presented his slide show, and wrote articles on the topic to support himself and generate publicity for the book. *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (1990) was a great success. The book won a Lambda Literary Award, and was made into a documentary film by director Arthur Dong. Bérubé worked with Dong to produce the script, and the film, which premiered in 1994, won a Peabody. Bérubé's also taught classes on queer history and theory in the 1990s at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Stanford University, Portland State University, and the New School for Social Research in New York. Bérubé's next project focused on West Coast union called the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union. Bérubé interviewed subjects to collect their memories as oral histories, and extensively searched libraries and archives for materials on the union. He received a year-long fellowship in 1994 from the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the City University of New York and, in 1996, Bérubé received a MacArthur Fellowship, which provided him with financial support to work on his book. He moved to Manhattan, and spent much of his time writing and doing research. In the early 2000s Bérubé moved out of the city to Liberty, New York. He quickly became involved in the community, joining the volunteer fire department, managing an old movie theater, and helping save historic buildings from demolition. He was twice elected to public office as a Trustee of the Village of Liberty, and opened a bed and breakfast. In 2007, Bérubé completed another manuscript about the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union. Unfortunately, in December of that year, Bérubé passed away unexpectedly, and his book was never finished.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Allan Bérubé Papers document the personal life, family history and professional work of Allan Ronald Bérubé (1946-2007), a community historian, teacher, author and activist. The collection includes his extensive research files on the topics of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender history. Of particular note are Bérubé's writings and research files on the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union (MCS). These include several unfinished manuscripts and the oral histories he conducted for this project. Bérubé's personal papers include biographical materials and family history. Personal photographs in the collection date back to his early childhood. Bérubé's educational records and memorabilia include such highlights as poems and creative writings from his school years. Also included in the collection are the papers of Brian Keith, Bérubé's partner, who died of AIDS in 1986. Bérubé's professional papers include his writings, talks and slide shows, course materials from his teaching appointments, and awards he received. Included in the collection are nearly 70 oral history interviews that Bérubé conducted during his research for a book on the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union. Bérubé's book was not completed before his death, and the collection contains multiple drafts of his manuscripts, as well as his research files. Bérubé's extensive research files were generally kept in his original order. Bérubé had his own internal filing system and used abbreviations for specific subjects on his folders. L/G stood for lesbian and gay; W stood for work; WC stood for working class; QL stood for queer labor; QW stood for queer work; MC stood for middle class; MM stood for modern military; PGW stood for Persian Gulf War; and PB stood for paperback books. News clippings in the collection date back to 1850 and photographic materials collected by Bérubé date back to 1900. Bérubé's collection includes two USB drives containing his electronic work files. The processing archivist selected files from the drives that were not already represented in the collection, printed them out and added them to Bérubé's professional papers. GSSO Linked Terms: http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/GSSO_000374; http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/GSSO_008536; http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/GSSO_008494; http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/GSSO_007641; http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/GSSO_007675; http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/GSSO_006371

Indexing Terms

Gay men
World War, 1939-1945
Historic preservation
Latinx people
African Americans
Black people
People of color
Amateur film
Marine Cooks and Stewards Association of the Pacific Coast
Marine Cooks and Stewards Union

[Container List for the Allan Bérubé Papers](#)
