

Judy Freespirit papers

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GLBT Historical Society

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Judy Freespirit papers

Dates: 1971-2009

Collection Number: 2008-48

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 9 linear feet (7 cartons, 1 oversized folder)

Repository: GLBT Historical Society

San Francisco, California 94103

Abstract: Judy Freespirit (Judith Louise Berkowitz Ackerman) was an activist, writer, and performer, focused on the subjects of women, lesbians, Jewish culture, fat acceptance, disability rights, and incest survival. Freespirit was of the earliest members of the fat acceptance movement, as coauthor (with Vivian Mayer) of the 1973 Fat Liberation Manifesto. The collection includes manuscripts and journals; subject files on various activist, therapeutic, and religious topics; and audiotapes, videotapes, and film of various performances, including Freespirit's own. There are also ephemera, such as t-shirts, buttons and photographs.

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).

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

Judy Freespirit papers. GLBT Historical Society

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated to the GLBT Historical Society by Judy Freespirit in 2008.

Biography/Administrative History

Judy Freespirit (Judith Louise Berkowitz Ackerman) was an activist, writer, and performer, focused on the subjects of women, lesbians, Jewish culture, fat acceptance, disability rights, and incest survival. Freespirit was of the earliest members of the fat acceptance movement, as coauthor (with Vivian Mayer) of the 1973 Fat Liberation Manifesto, and later a performer with Fat Chance and Fat Lip Reader's Theater. She is the author of four books: *Daddy's Girl*, *Keeping it in the Family*, *Whole Lotta Quakin' Goin' On*, and *A Slim Volume of Fat Poems*. Freespirit was born in 1936 to a working-class Jewish family in Detroit, Michigan. From an early age, she was subject to incestuous sexual abuse by her father; from the age of five, she was also pressured by her mother to diet. Dance and theatre became her primary methods of survival. After an early marriage and the birth of a son, she finished college and became Director of Social Services at a psychiatric hospital. She later became involved in the women's liberation movement, and came out in the early 1970s as a lesbian. This led to further activism, including an extended period of work against the Briggs Initiative in Sonoma County. After her asthma and environmental allergies became increasingly disabling, she became part of the Berkeley disability movement and worked with the World Institute on Disabilities (WID) on issues of fat, health and disabilities. After many years of performing and activism, Freespirit died in 2010.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection includes manuscripts and journals; subject files on various activist, therapeutic, and religious topics; and audiotapes, videotapes, and film of various performances, including Freespirit's own. Some of these have been digitized. There are also ephemera, such as t-shirts, buttons and photographs. This collection complements another collection of Freespirit's papers at the June Mazer Lesbian Archive in Los Angeles.

Indexing Terms

People with disabilities

Lesbians

Theater

Fat-acceptance movement

[Guide to the Judy Freespirit papers](#)
