
Guide to the People's Fund Records

Processed by The GLBTHS Archives staff; machine-readable finding aid created by Xiuzhi Zhou

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

989 Market Street, Lower Level

San Francisco, California 94103

Phone: (415) 777-5455

Email: reference@glbthistory.org

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

© 1999

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. All rights reserved.

Guide to the People's Fund Records

Accession number: 1988-06

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

San Francisco, California

Contact Information:

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

989 Market Street, Lower Level

San Francisco, California 94103

Phone: (415) 777-5455

Email: reference@glbthistory.org

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

Processed by:

The GLBTHS Archives staff

Date Completed:

1999

Encoded by:

Xiuzhi Zhou

© 1999 The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. All rights reserved.

Descriptive Summary

Title: People's Fund Records

Accession number: 1988-06

Creator: People's Fund

Extent: 1 box

Repository: The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

San Francisco, California.

Shelf location: Housed at the GLBT Historical Society.

Language: English.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

Copyright to unpublished manuscript materials has been transferred to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], People's Fund Records, 1988-06, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

History

The People's Fund (1976-1983) was a charitable organization that provided financial aid to members of the gay community of San Francisco. Its stated goal was to lend and grant funds to members of the "homosexual community" who suffered unexpected loss due to fire, theft, or a death in the immediate family. The Fund operated under a charter with the Pride Foundation, and was a product of the combined efforts of the Council of Emperors, and Bob Ross of Benro Enterprises.

The Council of Emperors (1972 - present) is a major component of the Royal Court of San Francisco. The Royal Court originated with the Council of Empresses, organized in 1966 by Jose Sarria. Other elements include dowagers, dukes and duchesses. The Royal Court system was soon copied by many other cities and regions. It merged theatrical and camp elements of high drag with social, political, and fundraising activities. The Court has been credited with helping to link gay bars with city politics and forming a gay voting block. It holds ritualized social events (balls, dinners, parties, etc.) that generate major funding for gay organizations and AIDS charities.

Benro Enterprises is the creation of Bob Ross, publisher of the *Bay Area Reporter*(BAR). Benro owns the BAR, Gay Graphics, and Gay Comics. It also once owned a bar supply company, Glasses Etcetera. Bob Ross has long been active in the Royal Court. He was elected seventh Emperor in 1978.

The Pride Foundation (1972-198[5?]) was a private non-profit organization whose goal was to operate a gay community center that would house legal, recreational, artistic, and social services. A partial listing of the founders of the Pride Foundation includes Zane Thomas, B.J. Beckwith, George Mendenhall, Roberta Buba, Charlotte Coleman, John Wahl, Perry Wood, and Paul Hardman. Paul Hardman has suggested that the surviving papers from the Foundation can be found through the One Institute in Los Angeles.

Mark Calhoun, treasurer of the People's Fund, was credited with supplying the momentum behind the activities of the Fund. Calhoun, owner of the Starlight Room (a gay bar located at 1121 Market Street), died in 1980. The People's Fund was disbanded in 1983, when a check for the remaining funds was donated to Shanti.

Scope and Content

This sparse collection is comprised of approved and denied applications for assistance, thank-you notes, bank records, minutes, and scattered correspondence. There is little that documents the relationship between the Pride Foundation and its community center at 330 Grove, Bob Ross and Benro Enterprises, and the People's Fund. Nor is there an record of how the decision was made to limit aid to victims of theft or fire, or the death of family members. The criteria used in determining eligibility for funds is also not indicated.

One interesting exception to the stated purpose were funds spent on the funeral of Robert Hillsborough. Hillsborough was murdered in a vicious gay-bashing in June of 1978. His murder, which was linked to the current Anita Bryant campaign in Dade County Florida, sparked tremendous anger and street demonstrations in San Francisco. Money from the People's Fund was used for cremation of the remains, the funeral itself, and to fly his mother Helen to San Francisco for the services.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Imperial Court System

Folder 1	Initial Proposal and Charter Agreement
Folder 2	Meeting Minutes
Folder 3	Applications for Loans and Grants - Approved
Folder 4	Applications for Loans and Grants - Rejected
Folder 5	Correspondence
Folder 6	Board of Trustees Lists (1976-1977)
Folder 7	Council of Emperors of San Francisco - Undated List
Folder 8	Sanwa Bank Statements (7-9-76 to 1-20-77)
Folder 9	Wells Fargo Bank Statements (1-7-77 to 3-16-84), Copies of signature cards (1-7-77 and 3-16-84)
Folder 10	Record of Wells Fargo deposits, numbered 1 to 27
Folder 11	Record of Wells Fargo withdrawals (2-77 to 3-79)
Folder 12	Sketch of an annual accounting: loans and accounts receivable (1977 - 1979)
Folder 13	Receipts and cancelled checks