
Finding aid of the Martin F. Block Papers

Collection number: Coll2006-001

ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives
Los Angeles, California

Processed by:

Michael C. Oliveira

Date Completed:

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Encoded by:

Michael C. Oliveira

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Martin F. Block papers

Dates: 1935-1995

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1950-1955)

Collection number: Coll2006-001

Creator: Block, Martin F., 1919-1995

Collection Size: 1 archive carton 0.2 linear foot

Repository: ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.

Los Angeles, California 90007

Abstract: Materials documenting Martin F. Block's activities as a writer, founder and first editor of ONE Magazine, and as a board member of the Celebration Theatre, Hollywood, in the 1980s. The collection includes unpublished poetry and prose 1938-1953 and 1982-1984, by Block, Howard Griffin, and Ramon Mendez, as well as correspondence, clippings, ephemera, and a transcript of an interview relating to Block's career, personal life, and to the founding of ONE, Inc.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access

The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.

Publication Rights

Researchers wishing to publish materials must obtain permission in writing from ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives as the physical owner. Researchers must also obtain clearance from the holder(s) of any copyrights in the materials. Note that ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives can grant copyright clearance only for those materials for which we hold the copyright. It is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain copyright clearance for all other materials directly from the copyright holder(s).

Preferred Citation

Box #, folder #, Martin F. Block Papers, Coll2006-001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Acquisition Information

Date of acquisition unknown.

Processing Information

Formerly housed in boxes 103-18 and 103-73. Processed October 03, 2006, and revised June 05, 2008, by Michael C. Oliveira.

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Biography

Martin Fiddler Block was born on July 27, 1919. As a teenager he delivered merchandise for a bookstore in New York City. After graduating from high school he found employment as a buttonhole maker. He later worked for Doubleday, Doran Book Shops becoming, upon completion of military service, night manager for the firm's shop in Grand Central Terminal. He then obtained employment in the publishing business. He moved to Los Angeles in the late 1940s, and in the early 1950s became one of the owners of the Studio Book Store, Hollywood, California. In late 1949 or early 1950, Block was invited by Rudi Gernreich to join the nascent Mattachine Society. By late 1952, an increasing number of members believed the Mattachine should consider a more public role. On October 15, 1952, at a regular meeting chaired by Block, the publishing of a periodical for homosexuals was first proposed. The concept was developed in a succession of weekly meetings, and on November 15, Block, Dale Jennings, and Antonio Sanchez under the pseudonym Anthony Ryceman signed the articles of incorporation for ONE. On November 29, at the first meeting of the new organization, held in his Hollywood bookstore, Block was elected Chairman of ONE, Incorporated. Block also served as the first editor of ONE Magazine, the inaugural issue of which was published in January 1953. However, the demands of his bookstore and family matters compelled him to resign from his position as editor in June 1953. Block remained active in the organization, although with increasing infrequency, through the 1950s. Throughout his professional life Block reviewed books for the Los Angeles Daily News, the Saturday Review, and the New York Times Book Review. In the late 1950s, after his own store closed, he managed the book department of Robinson's Department Store, in Pasadena. He also served as chairman of the Celebration Theater during the early 1980s. He died in West Hollywood, California, on March 4, 1995.

Sources:

Martin F. Block Papers, Coll2006-001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Feinberg, Leslie. "Headwaters of First Mass Political Gay Movement Rise." *Workers World*, August 23, 2005. Accessible at <http://www.workers.org/2005/us/lavender-red-45/> (accessed September 26, 2006).

Hansen, Joseph. *A Few Doors West of Hope: The Life and Times of Dauntless Don Slater*. Universal City, CA: Homosexual Information Center, 1998.

Marcus, Eric. "The Editor: Martin Block." In *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Right, 1945-1990; An Oral History*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

White, Todd C. "Timeline, 1960 and Before." Tangent Group, November 12, 2005. Accessible at <http://www.tangentgroup.org/history/Timeline/Timeline1959.html> (accessed September 26, 2006).

Scope and Content of Collection

The bulk of the collection consists of manuscripts by Block and others, and appears to be derived from his activities as founding editor of ONE Magazine in 1953, and from his involvement with the Celebration Theatre in the 1980s. Block's own writings include poetry and a self-assessment. Materials by others that may relate to Block's involvement with *ONE Magazine* include a synopsis for a play, *Behold Your Calling*, by Ramon Mendez, and a short story, *From a Soldier's Notebook: The Joy of Lightning*. A contemporary note was penned on the title page, "Howard Griffin c/o the Hon. Dorothy Brett, Taos, N.M.," suggests that the author may have been John Howard Griffin (1920-1980), a southern writer with many connections to the Taos area. Materials relating to the Celebration Theatre include playbills, flyers, financial records, and the pamphlet *An Introduction to the Celebration Theatre*, which includes an essay by Block, *On the Nature of Gay Theatre*. The correspondence file contains correspondence relating to Block's career in publishing, and to personal matters. It includes an acetate-covered cardboard "voice-o-graph" disk, postmarked November 20, 1946, and marked "Coney Island." The clippings file also

contains materials concerning Block's career in publishing, as well as other items of personal interest. A transcript of an interview with Block provides information on his life and on the founding of ONE, Inc. Materials in the ephemera file consist primarily of several playbills, and flyers from Block's career in publishing. Charles D. Rowland (1917-1990) was a long-time friend and as a producing director of the Celebration Theatre, a colleague of Block: Rowland's file contains a copy of his will (with Block named as executor) and tributes from his memorial service.

Indexing Terms

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

Block, Martin F., 1919-1995

Celebration Theatre (Los Angeles)

Gay activists--Los Angeles

Gay dramatists--United States

Gay men's writings, American

Gays' writings, American

Griffin, John Howard, 1920-1980

Mendez, Ramon, d. 1953

ONE, Inc.

Rowland, Charles D., 1917-1990

Unpublished Material, 1938-1984

Box : Folder 1 : 1 **Martin F. Block 1938-1952**

Box : Folder 1 : 2 **Howard Griffin, "From a Soldier's Notebook: The Joy of Lightning" circa 1950**

Box : Folder 1 : 3 **Ramon Mendez, "Behold Your Calling" 1953**

Box : Folder 1 : 4 **Celebration Theatre 1983-1986**

Correspondence 1945-1995

Box : Folder 1 : 5 **Correspondence 1945-1995**

Box : Folder 1 : 10 **Voice-O-Graph, acetate coated cardboard disk 1946**

Box : Folder 1 : 6 **Clippings 1943-1957**

Box : Folder 1 : 7 **Interview circa 1990**

Box : Folder 1 : 8 **Ephemera 1935-1959**

Box : Folder 1 : 9 **Charles D. Rowland 1989-1990**