



## **MARTIN F. BLOCK PAPERS**

**Coll2006-001**

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### Contact Information

One National Gay & Lesbian Archives  
909 West Adams Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
Phone: (213) 741-0094  
Fax: (213) 741-0220  
E-mail: [askone@onearchives.org](mailto:askone@onearchives.org)

### Processed by

Michael C. Oliveira

### Date Completed

October 3, 2006 (revised June 5, 2008)



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## Descriptive Summary

### Title

Martin F. Block Papers

### Creator

Martin F. Block (1919-1995)

### Extent

Number of containers: 1 archives carton  
Linear feet: 0.2 linear foot

### Date

1935-1995 (bulk 1950-1955)

### Repository

ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

### 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 The collection includes unpublished poetry and prose 1938-1953 and 1982-1984, by Block, Howard Griffin, and Ramon Mendez, as well as correspondence, clippings, ephemera, and a transcript of an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 and personal life and the founding of ONE, Inc.



## Administrative Information

### Access

The collection is open to researchers when ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives is open, and at other times by appointment. There are no access restrictions.

### Publication Rights

Researchers wishing to publish material must obtain permission in writing from ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives as the physical owner of the material. Note that permission to publish does not constitute copyright clearance. ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives can grant copyright clearance only for those materials for which we hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain copyright clearance for all other materials from the copyright holder(s).

### Preferred Citation

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

### Indexing Terms

This collection is indexed under the following terms:

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

### Acquisitions Information

Date and circumstances of acquisition unknown.

### Processing Information

Formerly housed in boxes 103-18 and 103-73. Processed October 3, 2006, and revised June 5, 2008, by Michael C. Oliveira.

## 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 1940's, and in the early 1950's 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 newly formed Mattachine Society. By late 1952, an increasing number of members believed the organization should take a more public role in society. On October 15, 1952, at a regular meeting of the society chaired by Block, the concept of publishing a periodical for homosexuals was first raised. The concept was further 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:

Feinberg, Leslie. "Headwaters of First Mass Political Gay Movement Rise." *Workers World*, August 23, 2005. Available from <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*. Homosexual Information Center; University City, California; 1998.

Marcus, Eric. "The Editor: Martin Block," *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Right, 1945-199: An Oral History*. HarperCollins, New York, New York 1992.

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



## Martin F. Block Papers, Coll2006-001

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White, Todd C. "Timeline, 1960 and Before" Tagent Group, November 12, 2005. Available from <http://www.tagentgroup.org/history/Timeline/Timeline1959.html> (accessed September 26, 2006).

## Scope and Content

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 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 directly 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 20 November 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, colleague of Block: Rowland's file contains a copy of his will (with Block named as executor) and tributes from his memorial service.

### Box Folder

		Unpublished Material, 1938-1984
1	1	Martin F. Block, 1938-1952
1	2	Howard Griffin, "From a Soldier's Notebook: The Joy of Lightning," circa 1950
1	3	Ramon Mendez, "Behold Your Calling," 1953
1	4	Celebration Theatre, 1983-1986
		Correspondence, 1945-1995
1	5	Correspondence, 1945-1995
1	10	Voice-O-Graph, acetate coated cardboard disk, 1946
1	6	Clippings, 1943-1957
1	7	Interview, circa 1990
1	8	Ephemera, 1935-1959
1	9	Charles D. Rowland, 1989-1990