



The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Block Communities, Inc. records

1962-2021 [bulk 1964-1971]

MssCol 186111

Processed by Stacey Ference in 2022.

Summary

Project director: Borden, David A.

Title: Block Communities, Inc. records

Date: 1962-2021 [bulk 1964-1971]

Size: 2.71 linear feet (8 boxes)

Source: The materials came from various Block Communities, Inc. (BCI) members--namely Judith Aronson, Bruce Chadwick, Mike Seliger, and Mary Breasted Smyth--who were organized by one of the founders, David Borden. They were ultimately shipped to Chadwick who arranged their transportation to NYPL.

Abstract: Block Communities, Inc. (BCI) was a community organizing anti-poverty agency that operated in New York City from 1966 until 1968. Originating in East Harlem, the group consisted of community organizers who moved onto a city block, surveyed the residents, and spearheaded various community development programs. This collection consists of administrative materials, daily and weekly reports by block workers, and publicity materials that include moving images. The collection also holds latter day reflections from BCI alumni.

Preferred citation: Block Communities, Inc. records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: Multiple languages English and Spanish.

Processing note: Processed by Stacey Ference in 2022.

Creator History

Block Communities, Inc. (BCI) was a community organizing anti-poverty agency that operated in New York City. Originating in the Manhattan neighborhood of East Harlem, BCI eventually extended into the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Community organizers were assigned one city block, where they moved in, surveyed each of the residents, and, according to co-founder David Borden, "gently organized them into interest groups that would pool their ideas and energies to solve local problems." By 1968, BCI supported over thirty organizers and blocks.

It was founded in 1965 as the Block Development Project (BDP). In 1966, after the East Harlem anti-poverty program Massive Economic Neighborhood Development (MEND) hired many of the BDP members, a new board was formed with new interim financing and BCI began operations.

BCI, after holding community meetings, helped to establish summer programs for young children that employed neighborhood teenagers, sparked and supported rent strikes, established daycare facilities, organized garbage pickup events, supported drug treatment services, and worked on pocket parks and housing refurbishment. Some BCI members were present in the New York City riots that were part of the "Long, Hot Summer of 1967" and members detailed conditions of the unrest from July 22nd through the 30th.

BCI staff also trained community organizers from other agencies, through their affiliation with Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA, which eventually became a part of AmeriCorps). Funded briefly by the Lindsay administration, BCI ceased operations due to lack of funding in 1968, but some volunteers continued to work in their neighborhoods until 1970.

Scope and Content Note

The Block Communities, Inc. collection consists of administrative materials (initial concept documents, funding proposals, evaluation reports, training documents, and internal communications), daily and weekly reports by block workers, and publicity materials that include moving image materials. The majority of the collection covers the work done in East Harlem, with only a small amount of materials concerning other neighborhoods. The weekly reports also cover ground conditions during the 1967 NYC riots. Additionally, 2021 reflections from BCI alumni are included. This collection does not have a single source. It was created from the personal files of various BCI alumni, under the direction of David Borden.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged into three groupings: Administrative, Weekly/Daily Reports, and Publicity and are presented in chronological order.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Brochures
Notes (documents)
Video recordings

Subjects

Community activists -- New York (State) -- New York
Community life -- New York (State) -- New York
Community organization -- New York (State) -- New York
Riots -- New York (State)

Geographic Names

East Harlem (New York, N.Y.) -- Social conditions

Occupations

Social activists.

Names

Aronson, Judith

Borden, David A.

Chadwick, Bruce

Seliger, Mike

Smyth, Mary Breasted

Volunteers in Service to America

Container List

Administrative

- b. 1 f. 1 Original Proposal -- Fall 1964 to J.M. Kaplan Fund 1964
- b. 1 f. 2 Advisory Board -- Friend of BDP 1965
- b. 1 f. 3 Block Development Originals -- 1965 Bi-Weekly Reports, 1st Annual Report 1965
- b. 1 f. 4 "Grass Roots" -- January 25, 1965 -- Beginning of Block Development Project 1965
- b. 1 f. 5 Proposal for Anti-Poverty Funds 1965
- b. 1 f. 6 "A Statement of Goals and Achievements" 1965
- b. 1 f. 7 BDP Initial Concept 1964-1965
- b. 1 f. 8 105th Street School 1964-1965
- b. 1 f. 9 Fighting Poverty 1966
- b. 1 f. 10 Proposal with Addiction Services Agency 1966
- b. 1 f. 11 Report of Staff Resignation from Block Development Program 1966
- b. 1 f. 12 Agencies Impact on Blocks 1967
- b. 1 f. 13 Block Communities, Inc. Brochure 1967
- b. 1 f. 14 Bruce Chadwick materials 1967
BCI brochure, certificate, BCI Statement of Concept and General Policy, staff memo, BCI proposal and plan on action.
- b. 1 f. 15 Finances 1967
- b. 2 f. 1-3 "Goals of the Development of Community Potential" 1967
- b. 2 f. 4 Politics 1967
- b. 2 f. 5 Schedule 1967
- b. 2 f. 6 VISTA 1967
- b. 2 f. 7 VISTA 1962-1967
- b. 2 f. 8 Proposals 1965-1967
- b. 2 f. 9 Addiction Services Agency 1966-1967
- b. 2 f. 10 NYC Government -- Human Resources Administration Community Corporations 1966-1967
- b. 2 f. 11 Role of Block Worker 1966-1967
- b. 3 f. 1 Training Memos 1966-1967
- b. 3 f. 2 "Black Power -- Author Unknown (not BCI)" 1968
- b. 7 Community Development Manual 1968
- b. 3 f. 3 Data for Poor Areas 1968
- b. 3 f. 4 Termination of David Borden 1968
- b. 3 f. 5 BCI Board 1966-1968
- b. 3 f. 6 BCI Personnel Practices 1966-1968
- b. 3 f. 7 Addiction Services Agency 1967-1968
- b. 3 f. 8 Block Workers Assignments 1967-1968
- b. 3 f. 9 Funding/Budget 1967-1968

Administrative (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 10 Mike Seliger Materials 1967-2018
Photographs from the 25th anniversary VISTA reunion, 2013 era clarification of daily reports, BCI brochure and *Vista Volunteer*, correspondence, training schedule, rough draft of proposal for legal action program.
- b. 3 f. 11 David Borden Articles -- Summarizes BDP/BCI 1969
 - b. 4 f. 1 Bruce Chadwick Memoir 1971-2021
 - b. 4 f. 2 25th Anniversary 2021
 - b. 4 f. 3 Overview 2021
 - b. 4 f. 4 110th Street Application from Block Association
 - b. 4 f. 5 Anonymous Block Worker -- Evaluation Report
 - b. 4 f. 6 "Block Communities, Inc.: An Organization in Process"
 - b. 8 Community Organization Training Manual
 - b. 4 f. 7 Rockefeller Data Bank
 - b. 4 f. 8 Statement of Purpose
- Weekly/Daily Reports
 - b. 4 f. 9 Jo Adler 1965
 - b. 4 f. 10 George Morrison 1965
 - b. 4 f. 11 Victoria Munos 1965
 - b. 4 f. 12 Collette Winkfield 1965
 - b. 4 f. 13 Ed Vega 1965-1966
 - b. 4 f. 14 Marjorie W. Benton 1966
 - b. 4 f. 15 Bill Nieves circa 1966
 - b. 4 f. 16 Hernon Cardoso 1967
 - b. 4 f. 17 Ronald Herndon 1967
 - b. 4 f. 18 Mercedes Rivera 1967
 - b. 4 f. 19 Mike Seliger 1967
 - b. 4 f. 20 Audrey Hill 1967
 - b. 4 f. 21 Judy Lewis 1967
 - b. 4 f. 22 Otto Benavides 1967-1968
 - b. 4 f. 23 Bruce Chadwick 1967-1968
 - b. 4 f. 24 Annie Laurie Chestnut 1967-1968
 - b. 4 f. 25 Bob Lipkins 1967-1968
 - b. 4 f. 26 Sister Claire Peers 1967-1968
 - b. 4 f. 27 G. Michael Perez 1967-1968
 - b. 4 f. 28 Mike Seliger 1967-1968
 - b. 5 f. 1 Ruth White 1967-1968
 - b. 5 f. 2 Stephen Banks 1968
 - b. 5 f. 3 Carrie Burns 1967-1968
 - b. 5 f. 4 Rene Casaclang 1968
 - b. 5 f. 5 Zaida Corchado 1968
 - b. 5 f. 6 Louvertia Daise 1968
 - b. 5 f. 7 Angie Gomez 1968

Weekly/Daily Reports (cont.)

b. 5 f. 8 Gertrude Hunter 1968

Weekly Reports/Memos

b. 5 f. 9-10 1966

b. 5 f. 11 1966-1967

b. 5 f. 12-13 1967

b. 6 f. 1 1967-1968

Publicity

Audio and moving image recordings are unavailable for use pending preservation transfer.

b. 6 f. 2 Publicity 1966-2019 [bulk 1966-1968]

b. 6 f. 3 Larry Rockefeller 1967-1968