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**DJB Foundation**

**Records, 1971-1975**

**Mss 010**

## **DJB Foundation Records, 1971-1975**

Ms 010  
10.5 c.f. (21 cartons)

### **ABSTRACT**

The DJB Foundation, a progressive social change philanthropy, was founded in 1948 by Daniel J. Bernstein to hold the portion of his inheritance intended for donation to charities. With his death in 1970 almost five-million dollars came to the foundation. Its most active period began in 1971 when the Board of Directors decided that all assets would be given away within ten years. The grants concentrated on groups and programs generally ignored by conventional foundations because they were "controversial" -- the poor, GIs, deserters and draft resisters, ethnic groups, convicts and ex-convicts. The DJB Foundation exhausted its funds by the end of 1974.

The DJB Foundation Records consist of financial summaries and grant files containing correspondence, proposals, and information about the recipient organization.

### **ACCESS**

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### **PREFERRED CITATION**

Cite as: DJB Foundation Records, 1971-1975, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

### **ACQUISITION**

Presented by Carol Bernstein Ferry and W. H. Ferry, July 1993. A93-89

Processed by Brenda L. Burk and Danielle Macsay, March 1998.

## **HISTORICAL NOTE**

**Daniel J. Bernstein** was born in New York City in 1918, the youngest of three brothers. Graduating from Cornell University in 1940, he went to Harvard Business School for a year before going to work for the Land Conservation Corps. A few months later he volunteered for the Navy at the United States' entry into World War II and served for five years. An early impression that developed Dan's awareness of the plight of others was the treatment of black servicemen. The unfairness with which black sailors were dealt by the Navy was a powerful lesson for him about the hatefulness of racism.

After leaving the Navy, Dan searched for a job that would have some meaning. He was guided by Jim Robinson, a progressive minister in Harlem, to the National Scholarship Fund and Service for Negro Students. He and Felice Schwartz, the creator of the organization, built it into a great success, connecting qualified black students, available funding, and interested colleges.

After a few years, he entered the business world and eventually began working for Loeb Rhoades, a Wall Street investment firm. Although he always disapproved of the market mechanism and the faith people had in it to reflect and enhance the U.S. economy, he found it intellectually fascinating and was very successful. In 1956, while recuperating from knee surgery, Dan decided to work at home permanently. He built an office in the barn located behind his house in Scarsdale, New York; this office became the headquarters of the DJB Foundation

The **DJB Foundation** was created in 1948 by Daniel Bernstein as a holding operation for the inheritance received from his father until he sorted out what should be done with it. He continued to work in the stock market to earn a living but he used the Foundation funds and his own funds when limited by the tax laws to give to his causes and beliefs. The legal limitations imposed on tax-exempt funds were an obstacle to Dan and reform-minded individuals but he overcame that obstacle by using his own private funds, capital and income, to meet the needs for which foundation money could not be used.

When Dan died in 1970 at the age of 51, approximately \$5 million of his estate went to the DJB Foundation. This sum was substantially all of the Foundation's capital, as at his death it had about \$100,000. The Foundation now began its most active period. The Board of the Foundation consisted of four members: Carol Bernstein, his widow; Stephen R. Abrams, CPA, longtime friend and colleague; Robert S. Browne, president of the Black Economic Research Center and widely recognized for his knowledge of Southeast Asia and the domestic economic scene; and newly appointed member, W. H. Ferry, whose imagination and judgement Dan had long admired and who later became Carol's husband in 1973. Vincent F. McGee, Jr., joined the Foundation as its executive staff member in the beginning of 1973.

The board adopted the following operating practices: spend capital as well as income and use the money within ten years, concentrate on groups generally ignored by conventional foundations because they were controversial, operate on a nationwide scale despite their modest resources,

give when small grants could make a difference, make grants without imposing their own ideas (no strings attached), not jeopardize the Foundation's several million dollars by grants that could be challenged by the tax authorities. The board members believed that real change must come from the roots of American society, thus they concentrated on aid to small groups organized to help themselves and to resist corporate and official power.

With these principles, the Board followed Dan's philosophy and focused its giving in support of those who were perceived to be victims of government vindictiveness or neglect. The recipients of its grants were generally controversial groups such as anti-Vietnam War supporters, progressive political groups, and organizations interested in minority rights and education. The foundation helped to fund legal defense programs, clinics, community organizations in urban ghettos and barrios and in the impoverished rural areas of the South and West, and Native American rights groups. Public foundations such as the Regional Young Adult Project, the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, and the Youth Project, were used as approved channels to get money to controversial causes without being challenged by the tax authorities.

With its funds virtually exhausted by 1975, the board members of the DJB Foundation more than achieved its ten-year goal of depleting its resources in only four years. The Foundation is still in existence but operates on a much smaller scale than during its most active period which is represented in the records.

## **RELATED MATERIALS**

The Carol Bernstein Ferry and W.H. Ferry Papers, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

The Carol Bernstein Ferry and W.H. Ferry Oral History, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The collection consists of two series: Business Records, 1971-1975, and Grant Files, 1971-1975. These records document DJB Foundation's most active period, which followed Dan's death in 1970 and the approximate \$5 million given to the Foundation from his estate.

The **Business Records, 1971-1975**, contain summary financial information about the DJB Foundation. The *DJB Foundation Report, 1971-1975*, is the only report published by the Foundation. It includes the Foundation's philosophy of giving, and a summary of its grants describing the recipient and its purpose along with a listing of donations, 1971-1975. Also within the business records are the accounting records of 1973 prepared by Ferro, Berdon and Company that include financial statements and the accountant's report summarizing the Foundation's financial status for the year.

The **Grant Files, 1971-1975**, include information pertaining to organizations given donations by the DJB Foundation. The files demonstrate the process used by the board members in its grant approval process. Each file usually contains the paperwork on the IRS tax-deductibility status of the recipient organization, correspondence, a proposal describing the proposed project for funding, and documented proof of the work accomplished with the donation. Additional documentation in some files includes printed prospectuses and agendas, newsletters, articles, handwritten letters, and photographs. While the Grant Files give insight into how the DJB Foundation dealt with requests, the records do not contain all the files of organizations and individuals who received funds. The series list contains the names of the organizations and individuals documented in the collection. For a complete listing of donations made by the Foundation, consult the *Report of the DJB Foundation, 1971-1975* found in the Business Records of the collection.

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