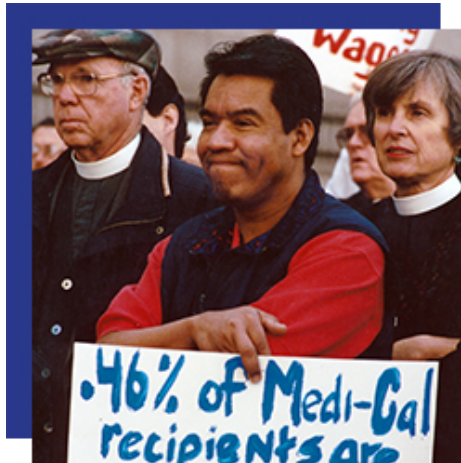


Liberty Hill's Second Decade

1986-1995

Disney Hall a gleam in Lillian Disney's eye. Stylin' with Boy George and/or Michael Jackson. NWA. Ghostbusters and The Color Purple at the movies. Unrest in South L.A. and beyond. Earthquake in SFV and beyond.



1989: The campaign for a Living Wage.

By the mid-1980s, Liberty Hill's community funding boards had matured into an effective infrastructure **for reaching out to experts and listening to grassroots leaders. The focus was on seed funding, and the community funding board members were adept at identifying groups that would turn out to be effective in the long run.** Catherine Sutor, then Liberty Hill's Director of Development, told an interviewer, "Many of these organizations had just barely gotten their 501(c) 3 status. They were meeting in someone's living room." She also described how the process was "a tremendous movement builder that got people rubbing shoulders across race and class. We'd have people in the same room who would never otherwise interact: a youth from South Central L.A., a tenant organizer from East L.A., and an activist from the gay community. People built relationships that they could take back out into their work."

Liberty Hill's community of donors grew as well, even establishing a fund for Santa Barbara and a chapter in San Diego. Mary Jo von Mach continued as Executive Director until 1987, and Michele Prichard took the helm in 1989.

But new national and state economic and anti-drug policies were having a significant impact on the lives of Angelenos: homelessness was rampant, the crack cocaine epidemic dealt South Central Los Angeles a severe blow, and the number of people in prisons increased dramatically. The 1984 passage of anti-immigrant Proposition 187, which would have denied undocumented individuals all public services and would have required teachers and doctors to report the immigration status of students and patients, points to the backlash against the rise in immigration. Among its grants to organizations working on immigrant integration, Liberty Hill funded a post-Proposition 187 hotline run by the Coalition for Human Immigration Right of Los Angeles (CHIRLA).



1990: The Lesbian and Gay Public Awareness Project.

New organizations founded by ethnic groups

Liberty Hill continued its involvement in global issues during the 1980s. Ten percent of its grantmaking from 1976 to 1986 went to disarmament and anti-nuclear work. Ten percent went to women's and LGBT groups, 19% to community organizing, 11% to grassroots media and culture, eight percent to international

issues such as anti-apartheid work and five percent to "health/the environment." There were a number of Native American-led organizations in Southern California supported by Liberty Hill during this period, and new groups formed by Asian Americans and Latin American immigrants were recommended by the Community Funding Boards for seed grants. One of these groups was the Asian Pacific Legal Center (APALC), which is now Asian Americans Advancing Justice, the largest Asian American legal aid and civil rights organization in the country, which received its first grant in 1983 from Liberty Hill.

In 1986, Ronald Reagan signed an "amnesty" bill through which 2.7 million immigrants in the U.S. gained documentation. By then, leaders in Southern California's immigrant communities were working in pan-ethnic coalitions to address a wide range of issues, including early environmental justice campaigns resisting the placement of dumps and incinerators in low income and immigrant-majority neighborhoods. **Los Angeles also began to see the emergence of multiracial strategies in workers' rights campaigns that are now a hallmark of the local social justice movement, but did not fully form until after the early-1990s civil unrest.**

The effort to form broad-based coalitions wasn't all Kumbaya moments. In 1988, Liberty Hill funded a coalition of between 150-180 groups that came together behind a broad "progressive agenda for 1988," marching on the 20th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King under banners reading "Neither Skid Row nor Death Row," "ERA," and "Economic Trade, Not Military Aid." The press reports noted, however, the last minute withdrawal from the march by religious leaders who'd missed a meeting when the "agenda" was adopted, including "support of abortion, the Palestine Liberation Organization and other controversial causes."

Disability movement



Lilibeth Navarro of Americans Disabled for Public Transit (ADAPT) in 1989. Currently, she is Executive Director & Founder of Communities Actively Living Independent and Free (CALIF).

The rapid advance of the disability rights movement after years of discrimination can be traced in two early years of activist Lilibeth Navarro's career. In actions throughout 1989 and 1990, she was arrested 13 times before being invited to Washington D.C. to attend the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. She, along with other members of the street-activist wing of the disability rights movement, ADAPT (Americans Disabled for Public Transit), had spearheaded the Southern California push for ADA. Not long after, she mobilized the disability community to support the unionization of home care workers, resulting in the biggest labor victory in L.A. since the 1940s, with 74,000 workers voting to join.

There were light notes. In 1986, Minister Carl Bean's Minority AIDS Project distributed condoms packaged with the notice "Funded by Liberty Hill." In 1988, Liberty Hill won a spot in L.A.'s Weekly "Best of L.A." issue when the paper selected the organization as the one with the "Best Annual Dinner."

Because of the ongoing analysis of the community funding boards, Liberty Hill was acutely aware of increasing pressures on low income communities of color. In 1991, Liberty Hill hosted "Communities in Crisis: Racism, Poverty and Urban Violence," a conference that brought together 100 organizers representing more than 100 local groups to discuss strategies for easing racial tensions. A year later, U.S. Representative Karen Bass, who was then Executive Director of Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment and a member of Liberty Hill's Board of Directors, wrote for Liberty Hill supporters about causes and effects of the civil unrest that followed the King verdict. She pointed out that Proposition 13 (1978) had dramatically reduced funding for public services, and that a national climate of political hysteria about drugs was criminalizing whole neighborhoods. "Currently, 6.3 million Californians, many of them children, are without health insurance and basic medical care," she noted. "When the lack of resources blocks the ability to meet fundamental human needs, families and communities collapse from the burden." She described how "L.A.'s finest" had entered the renewed war on drugs "with battering rams, mass round-ups of youth, 'gang sweeps,' and attempts to prosecute adults for failing as parents."



1990: The Clinic Defense Alliance.

Rebuilding Los Angeles

In the wake of the 1992 uprising, Liberty Hill quickly stepped up, raising \$240,000 to funnel to community-based organizations working on affordable housing, prisoner recidivism, economic development and advocacy for youth, the poor, and the homeless. As the philanthropy sector sought to support rebuilding, other foundations turned to Liberty Hill for expertise. Representative Bass, who had also served on Liberty Hill's Community Funding Board, wrote: **"In the midst of seemingly impossible circumstances, the grassroots initiative and response to urban problems is resilient and creative.** And Liberty Hill has been in the forefront of assisting communities to fight back and develop concrete and immediate solutions to their problems."

But the effort to "rebuild" communities took place in the context of government and private sector actions that had shuttered factories, leading to massive job losses; national "welfare reform" that shredded the social safety net; and a local "Weed and Seed" program described by USC professor Manuel Pastor as "a law enforcement approach that targeted Black and Brown youth for surveillance and imprisonment."

Liberty Hill grantees, in contrast, increased their efforts to work together, creating alliances across ethnic, class and geographic lines.

Meanwhile, Liberty Hill reached out to other funders and individual donors with a series of panel discussions and other forums, as well as invitations to participate in tours of communities and meet the grassroots leaders working to bring change. Michele Prichard, Liberty Hill's Executive Director, told a researcher: "Everyone was open to new ideas. It was so traumatizing and we all felt that what we had been doing was not enough."

Liberty Hill's leadership decided to focus resources on economic and racial justice, and so created the Fund for a New Los Angeles. The idea was to help small community groups grow into strong, sustainable organizations by offering larger grants over longer periods of time. The fund was created from a \$1 million



Members of the Child Care Employee Project call public attention to the plight of child care workers in 1994.

gift from Clark Branson and \$185,000 from Comic Relief, and later included additional foundation funding.

In 1994, California's Three Strikes Law was enacted, pushing the rise in imprisonment into an era of mass incarceration. In L.A. County, 71% of people sentenced under the law were African American or Latino. Liberty Hill grantee Families to Amend California's Three-Strikes (FACTS) works to amend the law so that only violent felonies automatically trigger the 25 years-to-life sentence but it was not until 2012 that Proposition 36 changed some aspects of the law.