

History of the Paseo Group

The history of the Paseo Alcoholics Anonymous Group begins in late August of 1947. Black and white people met together for the first time at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in Kansas City, Missouri. This meeting was called the Interracial Group of Alcoholics Anonymous and Kansas City Interracial. Black participation was novel at this time.

The first inquiry received at G.S.O. from a "colored" alcoholic came from Pittsburgh in 1943. In reply to the next inquiry in October 1944, Bobbie B. wrote, "We do not have a colored group anywhere and the problem is popping up more and more every day. In Pittsburgh, they have a colored member, and I suggest you write and find out how the situation was handled there".

In 1945, however, there were black groups in both Washington, DC and St. Louis, Missouri. In January of the following year, a group started in Los Angeles and within a year, had 20 members. In June, the Outhwaite group in Cleveland, Ohio registered at G.S.O. with eight members. And a month later, there was news of a colored group in Charleston, South Carolina. In the same period, colored groups began in Kansas City, Missouri and Toledo, Ohio.

By 1947, the pace picked up. A colored group began in New York's Harlem, and two were reported in New Jersey. Philadelphia's first negro group met for the first time at the end of June, and a group was formed in Cincinnati. The first negro group in Crowley, Louisiana was started in May 1949. By 1952, there were about 25 known negro groups according to Ann M., who was especially dedicated to helping A.A. reach Black alcoholics. As no effort has been made at G.S.O. to distinguish Black groups from others in A.A. Directories, it is next to impossible to trace their growth in the intervening decades, nor to estimate the present number. They are obviously very strong in Northern Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Washington, DC; Atlanta, Georgia; and probably in most major cities with concentrations of Black population. Under this backdrop, Paseo was formed.

In August, 1951, Beulah G., on behalf of four of the "Colored" members, petitioned the General Service Office (G.S.O.) on how to start another group. Resentment and a coffeepot had started an uprising. The G.S.O. responded the next month, suggesting the group take a look at its "new" General Service Representative Plan. Kansas City Interracial changed its name to the Paseo Alcoholics Anonymous Group as a result of the suggestion — Paseo was the street where the group was meeting at that time. The group moved a week after the name change, but kept the name because the word "Paseo" is derived from the Spanish verb "pasar", which means to transfer or to "PASS IT ON". The Paseo Group has not met on Paseo Boulevard, since that day.

It was during the days of the Kansas City Interracial Group that Frank M. answered an ad in the Kansas City Star newspaper about problem drinking. Frank was introduced to the group in late 1947 and bounced in and out of sobriety until December 26, 1951. A letter Frank wrote to the G.S.O. and the Alcoholics Anonymous tradition of orally "passing it on" are the basis of our history.

Frank had been asking his sponsor about this "Big Book", he had read about in a story in the A.A. Grapevine Magazine. No one knew what he was talking about, so Frank wrote to New York, requesting a copy of the book in September 1951. It took three months for the book to arrive and Frank relapsed two more times. The book arrived on December 26, 1951; Frank woke in the middle of the night to finish off a half-pint of Gordon's Gin. He read the Big Book while he drank — Frank M. never drank again. "It works. It really does." (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 88)

Also the International Women's Conference website states that Berth C. of Kansas City, Missouri was one of the first black women in Alcoholics Anonymous with lasting sobriety. Bertha C. informed me that she was the only black woman in A.A. for a time, until Vernetta W. came into the program. They were sponsored by one of the first speakers of the conference, Madge F., of Kansas City's Group Number 1.

Although it was hard for these women, at first, being the only black women, they stayed sober until their deaths.

Paseo Group has had many addresses. The "Little Red House" located at 2409 E. 30th, the most beloved by the older members. The group moved to 2107 E. 24th Terrace in 1996 and then on to 701 E. Armor Blvd. in 2003. We arrived at our current location in 2004 and it's here that our younger members believe that God keeps His office. They claim to have found a new sense of belonging. As a result of our adherence to our Fellowship's singleness of purpose, four Cocaine Anonymous groups and two Narcotics Anonymous Groups, an Al-Anon Family Group, and a Gambler's Anonymous group have split off of the Paseo Group.

The group decided on a weekend conference for its 60th anniversary. The result was so overwhelming that the group could no longer keep up with the responsibilities and requirements necessary that it decided to ask the Greater Kansas City Alcoholics Anonymous groups for help. Thus the Kansas City Classic AA Convention was born. The first was held August 29-31, 2008. Paseo resumed all responsibilities for its anniversary as of August, 2010.

May God continue His blessings and allow the spiritual liberation and spiritual progress of the previous years to continue indefinitely. And may we all never forget that "God could and would if He were sought. (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 60)