

The Brian M. Day Scholarship

This scholarship was established by Brian M. Day in 1993 to support Puget Sound area gay men of color who have significant financial need and demonstrate activism in the LGBTQ community and in communities of color.

Words about the Creator:

Brian M. Day was born in Seattle on May 6, 1960. He was raised in the Central District where his middle-class family lived until they moved to Mt. Baker.

The family, while racially mixed, identified as Black and was proudly active in the political life of the community. Brian's mother was involved in democratic politics along with his aunts who made up a rich extended family—including Marjorie Pitter King, who was the first Black woman to serve as a State Representative. From early on, Brian was introduced to politics and was refining his social conscience.

Brian attended Evergreen School for Gifted Children and went on to attend Lakeside Middle School. Eventually, he opted to get a GED and complete his education on his own. At the time, there were few opportunities to address the needs of Black men in the Seattle area with Brian's interests and abilities. He soon left for New York, where he attended The Fashion Institute of Technology, but left to contract with Pfizer as one of their first computer engineers.

Brian always had a love for Seattle and knew he would return one day. After the death of his mother, he came back to open VSOP, an imported specialty clothing store for men. His store was the first in an empty warehouse on Pike Street that later came to house Out of the Closet and other businesses that improved the neighborhood. Business, however, did not thrive here—Brian still felt the impacts of racism as an upscale business owner, so he moved again, this time to Old San Juan Puerto Rico. Brian lived and worked there until 1989 when he became ill. He returned to Seattle to go directly into the hospital, where he was diagnosed with HIV.

Brian's early political teaching came back as he quickly became involved as an activist in issues related to HIV, LGBTQ people, and people of color living in poverty. He was instrumental in community activities relating to the loitering law which the city was trying to enforce against homeless people and had a disproportionate impact on people of color. Brian actually had been arrested in front of his own store at one time. He was a founding member of Seattle Act-Up and sat on the Governor's Commission on HIV/AIDS.

In the last year of his life, Brian decided he wanted to leave a legacy and turned to Fred Schoen, of Fred Schoen Fiduciary Services, to assist him. Originally, Brian had planned to make scholarships available to Black gay men, but was convinced that he should expand the funds to provide support to all gay men of color. Fred also encouraged Brian to look to Pride Foundation to provide the organizational structure through which to make the funds available—leading to the establishment of the first scholarship fund at Pride Foundation in 1993. While Brian agreed, he initially had concerns about the homogenous nature of the organization. Over time Pride Foundation has invested resources and committed to diversifying the organization and the people served—more accurately resembling the wholeness of the LGBTQ community.