



SAN FRANCISCO  
*African American  
 Historical & Cultural Society*

**SAN FRANCISCO  
 AFRICAN AMERICAN  
 HISTORICAL &  
 CULTURAL SOCIETY**

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**IT'S ALL ABOUT  
 THE TEAM!**

**PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

*Al Williams*



*Guiding Light*  
 VirgiNia Jourdan

*Living Black Ain't Easy. But Being Black Sure Feels Good!* (Nu Black Arts West Theatre)

In the March *Praisesinger*, I stated that as a result of the pandemic, the Society's Board and volunteers are working exceptionally well together. As the saying goes, there is always opportunity found in the challenges of problems. We have galvanized into an effective team.

As a youngster growing up in Miami, I was a fan of the Dolphins, not because I'm from Miami, but because of what I saw in the cheap seats, high above the Orange Bowl. I could see the whole field and all of the players on both teams. Plays unfolded just as designed on the chalkboard by team coaches. You could see exactly why a play worked or didn't because you could see what each player did. When each player did his part, the team was successful. When just one player didn't execute his assignment, the team didn't accomplish its goal, unless the other players overcompensated and picked up the ball. The team suffered when individual players were more focused on their own success rather than the team's. What was true for the Dolphins is true for any team, including the Society.

The Society can only enjoy maximum success when its volunteers are committed to achieving its overall goals through fulfilling their individual responsibilities. I see the Society as both player (i.e., a member of the African American community) and a team with a unique role to play in the on-going effort to overcome the impact of white supremacy and racism. Primarily an educational institution, the Society's mission is to document, preserve and present true accounts of history from the perspective of African Americans. This education is done in order to avoid past mistakes and to capitalize on present and future opportunities. As a fully functioning team, we can more effectively contribute to the community's effort to defeat white supremacy and racism.

While these are perilous times for this country in general, and for African Americans and other people of color in particular, they are not new. Unfortunately, we have been here before on too many occasions throughout our history.

Let us remember two important lessons learned from past experiences: white supremacy and racism are in the DNA of this country and will probably always be an obstacle to realize the freedom and equality that is our birthright; and, that we have a long track record of overcoming the obstacles that we confronted. Based on this track record, we must look upon the present challenges with confidence and optimism. As "Griot" and "Praise Singer", the Society must always remind the community and our allies that in the final analysis we always have and we always will overcome the

Continued on page 5

## PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER

### THE BLACK FAMILY THROUGH ARTIST'S EYES

NEW EXHIBIT, Going  
Virtual

*William Hoskins*



*Right to Safety*  
VirgiNia Jourdan

2020 was a challenging year for San Francisco citizens and most certainly the minority community. The COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the city, strained the health care system, precipitated economic devastation to businesses and cultural institutions, and there was political unrest and a hotly contested election. The importance of the Black Family in this environment cannot be emphasized enough. The Society, in collaboration with the *Art of the African Diaspora*, a relationship that began with the late Rae Louise Hayward, co-founder of *The Art of Living Black*, presents “The Black Family Through Artist’s Eyes”. This virtual exhibit reflects the theme for this year’s Black History Month, “The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity”. Each year the Association for the Study of African American Life and History creates a theme for Black History month. ASSALH was created in 1915 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson to increase the awareness and consciousness of the importance and value of African Americans’ contributions to the community and the nation at large.

The virtual exhibit, “The Black Family through Artist’s Eyes” features more than sixty paintings, sculptures, drawings and photographs created by twenty Bay Area artists is scheduled to open May 7, 2021 in tribute to Mothers and Mother’s Day. The diversity and configuration of the Black family, or any family, is limitless as is suggested in the exhibit. Viewing the exhibit virtually, not only allows you immediate viewing of the artwork provided by the artist specifically for the exhibit, but provides you with information about the art piece and the artist. In addition, you will have the option to virtually visit the artist studio and gallery. Much of the work exhibited will be for sale and available through the artist’s website.

Our goal is to stimulate community conversation by presenting exhibits and programs that are not only informative and contextualizing, but support the resolution of those issues that have plagued minority communities forever.

After the dark pandemic year of 2020, 2021 has been the start of the Society’s spring rebirth and blossoming of the Society. We invite you to join us in this “blossoming” by visiting the virtual exhibit, “The Black Family Through Artist’s Eyes” and other Society programs coming later in the year.

Access the exhibit through the [sfaahcs.org/Events](https://sfaahcs.org/Events) page, and click on “The Black Family Through Artist’s Eyes”.

## PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER

### IN DEFENSE OF THE BLACK FAMILY

*Bamidele Agbasegbe*  
Demerson, Chief  
Curator  
African American  
Museum and Library  
at Oakland

Guest Contributor

From the AAMLO e-news  
March 12, 2021

During Black History Month, February 2021, the nation celebrated the theme, *Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity*. On 10 March 2021, a little more than a week had passed since the time set aside for the observance, when U.S. Representative Glenn S. Grothman (R. Wisconsin) took to the floor of the U.S. Congress and flagrantly spewed racist prattle when he said “I know the strength that **Black Lives Matter** had in this last election. I know it’s a group that doesn’t like the old-fashioned family.” Delegate Stacey Plaskett (D. U.S. Virgin Islands) rose to issue an immediate rebuke of the lawmaker’s outrageous claim. “How dare you, how dare you say that Black Lives Matter, Black people do not understand old-fashioned families despite some of the issues, some of the things that you have put forward that I’ve heard out of your mouth in the Oversight Committee, in your own district,” she sternly retorted. The delegate continued, “How dare you say that we are not interested in families in the Black community. That is outrageous. That should be stricken down!”

Plaskett noted that for more than four hundred years African Americans have held families together. But this effort has been against formidable odds. During the period of enslavement, family members were separated one from another by way of sales, bequests, and transfers of “chattel” to pay off debts. Moreover, during bonded servitude, families were also disrupted whenever “human property” was deemed necessary for medical experimentation, suffered lethal punishment, or existed with bounties placed on their heads. This manipulation of the structure and functioning of Black families continued long after the official abolition of slavery into the modern day. African Americans have persistently been subjected to unscrupulous medical experimentation, eugenics protocols, false imprisonment, and the senseless deaths attendant with the actions of the Ku Klux Klan, the constabulary, and their vigilante mob surrogates.

Not since Senator Daniel P. Moynihan authored, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (popularly called the Moynihan Report) in 1965, has a federal legislator been called out for such outlandish foolishness as that spoken by Grothman. Black Lives Matter organized opposition to the anti-African American focus—i.e., the murderous dereliction of duty—at the hands of the constabulary. The member of Congress did not praise the initiatives of Black Lives Matter for poignantly pointing out impediments to forming and maintaining a stable family life. Indeed, when Grothman waged a verbal attack on Black Lives Matter, he proved himself to be a dangerous despicable dastard.

An understanding and appreciation of Black family life is presented in several studies conducted since Moynihan’s pseudo-social scientific fiasco.

Dr. Demerson’s bibliography and bio on page 7



*Born Free*  
Virginia Jourdan

## PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER

### MUSEUMS TELL OUR STORY

Check out these new museums we should make a point to see when we can visit again, and read about to explore the history and contributions of our great and noble people!

**GREENWOOD RISING MUSEUM** is scheduled to open in September, 2021, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. *Black Wall Street Tulsa, Oklahoma, Museum* is on the corner of Greenwood and Archer Streets. It connects to John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park. Hille Foundation and 21 North Greenwood, LLC., donated the land. This museum will have interactive experiences about the history of Tulsa's affluent African American community, the massacre and the destruction of that thriving Black community on May 31 and June 1, 1921. 35 blocks were burned down and many residents killed or injured by a mob of white rioters and residents. About 10,000 Black people were left homeless. Black and white residents kept quiet for decades about these events out of fear and shame. The museum is the project of the *1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission*.

[www.tulsa2021.org/groundbreaking](http://www.tulsa2021.org/groundbreaking)

*Eldoris Cupp Cameron*

**INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM** is located on the *Gadsden's Wharf in Charleston, South Carolina*, opening next year. 40% of all enslaved Africans brought to these shores between 1783 – 1808 disembarked there: men, women, children awaited sale at that wharf. The museum will be elevated on pillars and built on Cooper River with a view towards Fort Sumter and the Atlantic Ocean. The Museum highlights various cultures, traditions and languages brought by the enslaved, and the wealth generated from rice, tobacco, sugar, cotton and forced labor that fueled American growth. The museum will host a Research Center for African American Genealogy that will help tie the present to the past and enrich our understanding of the African American family. *The African Ancestors Memorial Gardens* is noted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., as "ground zero" of African American experiences.

P.O. Box 22761, Charleston, SC 29413

<https://www.africanamericancharleston.com/contact/>

Donate at: [IAAMUSEUM.org/OpenOurDoors](http://IAAMUSEUM.org/OpenOurDoors)

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC** officially opened to the public on January 30, 2021 in Nashville, Tennessee. It is dedicated to "*preserving and celebrating the many music genres created, influenced, and inspired by African Americans.*" Its Mission is to educate the world, preserve the legacy, and celebrate the central role African Americans play in creating the American soundtrack. Soundtracks and interactive technology connect the history of "musical heroes of the past into the present." Some pioneering artists in the Nashville music scene included: Fisk Jubilee Singers, Jimi Hendrix, Ray Charles, and Little Richard. Check for days/hours open before going.

510 Broadway, Nashville, TN 37203, Located at 5<sup>th</sup> & Broadway. (615) 301-8724

## PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER

Continued, President's remarks

the obstacles that white supremacy and racism represent.

Finally, let us remember that we are never in this struggle alone. The Society is a member of the African American community's team, and we are members of the Society's team. While it may seem that we're fighting the battle alone, nothing could be further from the truth. If we could see the many fields of play, we'd see that there are many other "teams" like the Society that are fighting to defeat white supremacy and racism.

The Society leadership invites you to join us on the volunteer team, if you wish to contribute your time talents and skills. We seek people with expertise in a variety of fields for Board Directors and volunteers to help with our communications, archive inventory and educational programs. If you are willing to join the team spirit, please let us know. **GO TEAM!**

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At our recent Sunday, March 21, 2021 Annual Meeting, two directors were elected for 3-year terms, replacing outgoing members. Meet Thor Kaslovsky and Addie Renee Lewis, serving in the class of 2021 through 2023. Both represent the expertise and team spirit needed for the Society. Thor brings facilities management/planning and real estate development expertise; Addie brings expertise in marketing and promotions. The Society's [website](#) contains mini-biographies of all of the new and ongoing Directors.

The Board of Directors sets policy, envisions a quality program, and sustains the Society. Building on the MAP\* recommendations, the Board aims to address the areas of governance, fund development, facilities, programming, collections, outreach and promotion, technology, organizational partnerships and membership.

For a copy of the March 21 Annual Meeting Minutes send an email to or call: [info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org), or 415-292-6172. Please your name and address or email. / \*Museum Assessment Plan.

### CO-EDUCATOR FELLOWSHIP AWARDED TO THE SOCIETY

*Fannie Preston*

In Spring 2021, the Society took a major step toward forming an on-going partnership with the Leo McCarthy Center for Public Service, University of San Francisco (USF). By sending a representative to the McCarthy Center Community Partner Co-Educator Fellowship six-week symposium, the Society demonstrated its desire to continue partnering with USF started in the Spring of 2020, when 14 interns were assigned to work with the Society. Dr. Fannie Wiley Preston, member/volunteer, participated in this program as the Society's representative. The purpose of the Fellowship is to create a shared vision of what USF expects when students are assigned to an organization to complete their Community Engaged Learning requirement and to provide ideas and materials to share with the board and members of the host organization. The Society plans to submit a proposal to USF for the Spring of 2022.

*PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER*

**STOP AAPI HATE**

We abhor hate and violence of any kind; African Americans know well the hurt of racially-motivated hate and violence. We are disgusted that there has been a significant number of elderly women and men who have been targeted. As individuals and community members, let’s stand up against hate and violence of any kind and show our solidarity with others.

**Black Lives Matter! Stop Asian American Pacific Islander Hate!**

Mothers,  
grandmothers,  
foster and adoptive  
mothers,  
“play” mothers,  
future mothers and  
mothers-to-be...

**HAPPY MOTHER’S DAY**  
Sunday, May 9, 2021



*Right to Life and Freedom, VirgiNia Jourdan*



*Miss Magnum’s Daughter, Ira Watkins*

**STORYTELLING**

*Eldoris Cupp Cameron*

Story telling is an African American tradition: Brer Rabbit, the “Boogie” Man, “Haints”, Anansi the Spider, the signifying monkey, etc... San Francisco/Oakland and the Bay Area, bring back storytelling as has the **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK STORYTELLERS (NABS)**, with chapters across the United States. 2021 marks its 39<sup>th</sup> year. **NABS** regularly publishes a newsletter and holds an **Annual National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference** in various cities across the country. Contact NABS at P.O. Box 67722, Baltimore, Maryland 21215. [www.nabsinc.org](http://www.nabsinc.org)

## PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER

### ARCHIVE NEWS: BACK TO WORK

*Ginger Smyly*

Volunteers resumed archive inventory in April. Thanks to Shawna Sherman, SFPL African American Center, and Glenda Graves, a City College librarian and sister to donor, Warren Graves, for joining us in the archives. We look forward to Amy Holloway and Kiwan Gore rejoining us in May and a USF student, majoring in history, interning this June and July.



Pearl and Freddie Birdies

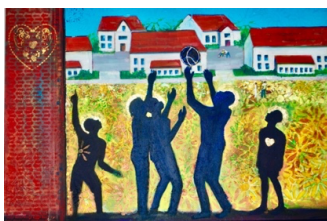
Depicted in this 1940s-memorabilia are Freddie and Pearl Birdies, who immigrated, married, lived and died in San Francisco. It is a photograph imposed on a carved wooden base and realistically painted to reflect the clothing and jewelry worn by the couple at their wedding. The wooden frame and triangle feet are beautifully varnished and inlaid. The entire image is encased in two sheets of glass. We are still seeking the formal name of this type of object, and, more about the people who are depicted in it.

Sweet and sentimental, this piece of memorabilia reflects African American values of the time and suggests a particular way of life. Clearly, the Birdies valued their marriage and partnership. They were dressed formally: he with a crisply knotted bowtie and folded pocket handkerchief, and she with earrings and a string of pearls. Youthful and hopeful faces shine in this beautifully memorialized portrait. Their faces reflect the youth and hope of those who immigrated to San Francisco seeking a better life than that they knew of in the South. The piece itself and where it was found - in storage in their old home on Beulah St. years after their deaths - suggests that the Birdies fared well, and in their own way, were San Francisco "strivers."

It is pieces like this, donated by Society members and friends of the Society, that make up the bulk of the ephemera in the archives. Many rich African American stories have yet to be told; join us as we continue our archive inventory, uncovering our roots and documenting the past.

Thank you, Warner Graves, for this gift.

**PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER**



*Praisesinger* featured art by VirgiNia Jourdan (above) and Ira Watkins, (below) can be seen among art works and artists featured in “The Black Family Through Artist’s Eyes” virtual exhibit opening *May 9, 2021*. At the site you will be able to view the Artist’s Studio, and purchase this and other art works.



**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL**

(Your annual membership term is January 1 through December 31.)

LIFE members, your donation is appreciated

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ CELL \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign me up as a:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Student \$15      \_\_\_\_\_ Organizations \$250
- \_\_\_\_\_ Senior \$25      \_\_\_\_\_ Small Business \$350
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adult \$50      \_\_\_\_\_ Large Business \$700
- \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$100      \_\_\_\_\_ Donor

\*\*If you do not plan to be an active member, please make a donation

Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership fees and contributions are tax deductible

**Make Your Check Payable/Mail To:**

**San Francisco African American Historical & Cultural Society**

762 Fulton Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94102  
 415.292.6172

I am interested in serving on the  committee(s):

- \_\_\_\_\_ Development      \_\_\_\_\_ Library/archives
- \_\_\_\_\_ Membership      \_\_\_\_\_ Programs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black History Month      \_\_\_\_\_ Communications
- \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer/Reception      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Date rec'd      check/cash      roster      thank you

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