



S A N F R A N C I S C O
*African American
 Historical & Cultural Society*

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

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**WHAT IS THERE TO
 PRAISE AND SING
 ABOUT?**

- *The Co-Editors*

While times are still uncertain, the pandemic seems to be nearing end; life as we knew it in March 2020 is returning, if slowly. We have suffered grief, fear, disbelief, and disgust at the events having rolled out: killings and maimings of unarmed black men and women by police officers and their surrogates, the inequitably distributed negative impacts of the epidemic laid upon the existing inequities in our community, the insurrection at the Capitol perpetrated by a predominantly white crowd, and more. *What is there to praise and sing about?*

All the while, the Society, as a “praise singer” or West African “griot”, has urged you to get factual information about health care, testing and vaccination; we have stated our abhorrence of violence and hate toward Asian Americans and stand in solidarity with all oppressed and hurt simply because of the color of their skin; and, we have urged you to vote whether in a national election or a state recall election. *That is something to praise!*

This is the final 2021 edition of the *Praisesinger*. We co-editors hope it has lived up to the Society’s established high standards in that you will find informative, entertaining articles that pique your interest. Look for a special edition of the *Praisesinger* in the new year as we announce the Black History Month line-up of programs including the annual kick-off observance, scheduled for **Friday, February 4, noon, at City Hall Rotunda, in person! Mark your calendars.** The 2022 Black History Month theme is timely as never before, “**Black Health and Wellness**”. If you have ideas and want to contribute, contact the Society offices to let us know. *That is something to sing about!*

Check out these articles and photos in the November *Praisesinger*:

- ✓ Wilfred and Maxine Ussery, Trailblazers
- ✓ Jesse Arnelle - Farewell
- ✓ Flower Piano
- ✓ Black History Month Theme 2021, The Black Family (two articles)
- ✓ Archive Update: Invitation to be Archive Activists
- ✓ Upcoming Events
- ✓ The Society Hears From You
- ✓ Membership Application/Renewal
- ✓ And, more

Wishing you well as we enter the holiday season. Keep safe and enjoy these times now that we can be with one another in-person again. And, Happy New Year!

WEALTH & THE BLACK FAMILY

This year’s Black History Month theme as articulated by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, **THE BLACK FAMILY**, has multiple implications especially for the Black community at large. This is especially true in the world of finance.

In the United States, Black people represent about 13.4% of the population but only 0.8% of Fortune 500 CEOs, 3.2% of senior managers and 8% of professionals. Underlying structural racism and inequalities prevent Black professionals from being recruited, retained or promoted. A lack of diversity, equity and inclusion in one’s every day experience can and does have a devastating effect.

Research by the Institute for Policy Studies and Prosperity shows that by year 2053, Black households will have a median wealth of zero. Most recently, the median net worth of Black families with durable goods was \$11,000 compared to \$134,000 for White families. This trend reflects most dramatically on the Black family and community’s failure to focus on the critical and important issues of financial literacy and intergenerational wealth. In addition, predatory and discriminatory lending practices, the devaluation of homes in Black neighborhoods and long-standing discriminatory systems have been set up over the years and continue to hinder the advancement of Black people.

In the early 1920s, the number of African American farmers was devastated and reduced by 50%. This severe reduction in farm and land ownership was directly connected to the discriminatory federal and state loan policy which resulted in Black farmers being systematically denied and not being able to secure the funds traditionally needed for seeds, fertilizers and equipment for next year’s planting and harvesting. During this same period, loans were being extended to White farmers enabling them to retain their farms, livelihood and intergenerational wealth.

In conclusion, fundamental issues facing the Black family, community and society today, like voting rights, economic opportunity and social justice are real and will remain so until a solution is found. However, the cornerstone to finding a real and lasting resolution, in my opinion, will be our ability to focus and make a real impact on financial wealth in the Black family and community. The resulting awareness of this fact and its implementation will not only support equality and diversity but also inclusion and a sense of belonging in a community where everyone feels safe, seen, heard, respected and accepted.

This is and the following excerpt from a message from Rev. Dorsey Blake completes our series on the 2021 Annual Black History Month theme “The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity”.

SEEING THE LIGHT OF DAY...

ARCHIVE INVENTORY PROJECT UPDATE

Thanks to our volunteers who have worked in the archives this fall! Over 2000 items, many of which had not seen the light of day since being donated, are inventoried. We found a cardboard box of music scores, rehearsal books, sheet music, including “coon and darky” songs, dating to 1916. These are being handled gingerly as they are not in great condition. Among the music was a concert flyer from Berlin dated early 1930s. The name, “Berlinda Davidson” was beautifully scrolled across much of the piano, violin and voice pieces.

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FLOWER PIANO

On a beautiful San Francisco Monday afternoon, a crowd of about 75 people stood or sat around a large pergola in the Botanical Gardens located in Golden Gate Park. It was September 20, 2021, at one of the final events offered at the Botanical Gardens' Annual "Flower Piano" event, where pianos are scattered throughout the gardens for passers-by to play and programs feature many genres of music. For the first time, the Society was asked and became a co-sponsor of this specific event, a presentation by our friends, Elizabeth Silva Pepin and Lewis Watts on the occasion of the 2nd Edition of Harlem of the West and a concert of jazz standards and period pop given by Sam Peoples and friends.

Watts and Pepin gave an overview of the book: the first jazz club may have started in 1932; in the next decade there were over 20 jazz and blues clubs, with people jammed-pack on the streets, "dressed to the nines". David Johnson, a former Society President and life member, and Peter Stein were acknowledged by the authors. Johnson's career took off when he arrived in San Francisco during the heyday of the burgeoning African American community and the many jazz clubs in the Fillmore district. With other artists, Johnson documented these two phenomena. Stein, affiliated with KQED, was instrumental in the production of a film about those times. Sam Peoples' father was one of the regular jazzmen playing in the Fillmore clubs. It was a reunion of sorts.

Following the book talk, Mr. Peoples played two sets, hitting the keys and playing jazz favorites of the day and original pieces. Singing partner, Lynn, and guest vocalist, Jacore Baptiste, accompanied by Peoples, rendered pop songs of the day.

- Ginger Smyly



In attendance were Society members Al Williams, Bill Hoskins, Enrique Hernandez Hoskins, Eldoris Cameron, Mae Threadgill, David Johnson, Jaqueline Sue, Ida Hurst and Ginger Smyly and Society friends, Frances Luster and others.



Lewis Watts and Elizabeth Pepin, seated, Peoples, standing

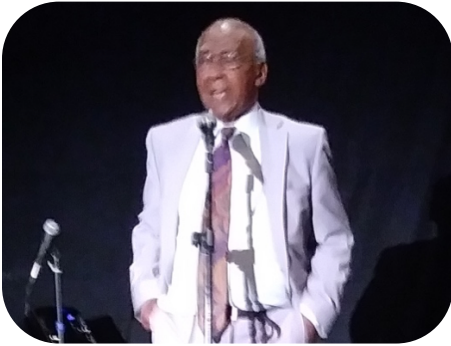


Sam Peoples at the Annual "Flower Piano"

You may purchase Harlem of the West, The San Francisco Jazz Era at: <https://globalcitypress.com/harlem-of-the-west/>

Sam Peoples may be heard Monday afternoons at the Beach Chalet.

See more photos in the "photo album" at: sfaahcs.org



**MAXINE & WILFRED
USSERY**

“San Francisco Black
Family Trailblazers”

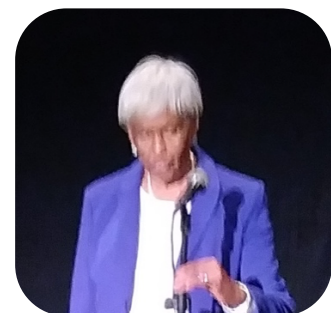
- Eldoris Cameron

One cannot help but admire and respect the accomplishments of **Maxine and Wilfred Ussery** who reside in San Francisco. Maxine is the **Chief Operating Officer** for **The Post News Group**, the largest African American weekly newspaper in Northern California serving, San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Richmond, Marin, Hayward & Fremont.

Maxine and Wilfred Ussery have been married for 52 years and have a son, Wilfred Riley Ussery. Maxine hails from Shreveport, LA and Wilfred from Pine Bluff, AR. Their paths met in San Francisco while working for the Economic Opportunity Council under chairman J. Austell Hall, then pastor of Bethel AME Church. Maxine was a graduate of McClymonds High, Oakland and USF, San Francisco. She had exclusively modeled for Saks Fifth Avenue and traveled around the world. Wilfred attended Berkeley High and SF City College, majoring in architectural drafting, a career he pursued for 25 years, then furthered his studies at UC Berkeley in architectural draftsmanship.

Civil Rights were Ussery’s passion. In 1967, he became **National CORE Chairman** after working in the local Chapter of CORE, the NAACP, the Bay Area Urban League, & SNCC. In the 1960s, he demonstrated against discriminatory practices at The Sheraton Palace Hotel, Auto Row and Mel’s Drive-in.

In 1969, Wilfred Ussery was **Dr. Carlton Goodlett’s** surrogate at two international conferences in Khartoum, Sudan and Cairo, Egypt. He was a delegate to the Second International Conference in Support of the Arab People, and attended a reception for Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser; one of only two Black delegates. (Dr. Goodlett was unable to leave due to his medical practice.) Wilfred Ussery was honored to be



asked by Madame DuBois to be her escort as she accepted the Posthumous Award for the life works of her late husband, **Dr. W.E.B. DuBois**, from the President of Sudan.

Wilfred was Public Affairs Director for **KDIA Radio** in Oakland from 1972 to 1975. He served on the **BART Board** for 18 years from 1978 to 1996 and was twice elected **BART president**. He was retained by Harold Ellis of Grubb & Ellis, the developer of City Center in downtown Oakland to organize Economic Community Development programs. *“In 1995, Wilfred Ussery was invited to Japan by the late Dr. Yoshihiro Kiatoni, universally recognized as the father of Japan’s Bullet Train System and lead scientist on the development of Japan’s 650-mile maglev system between Tokyo and Osaka, Japan.”*

At age 93, Mr. Ussery is retired, but his mind and activities are ongoing! Mrs. Maxine Ussery, as **COO** of the **Post News Group**, keeps the news coming to African American communities. ***Mr. & Mrs. Wilfred Ussery are enjoying one another, and doing it well!***

Local Black History Note: *Anaias Willis, late father of Maxine Ussery, once owned Adeline Cleaners, the oldest African American business in Oakland.*

**FAREWELL TRIBUTE
HUGH JESSE ARNELLE,
ESQ.**

December 30, 1933 –
October 21, 2020



The San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society extends condolences and deepest sympathy to his wife, Carolyn Block-Arnelle, children and family at the passing of Hugh Jesse Arnelle, a remarkable man and leader.

The Society was honored that Hugh Jesse Arnelle, Esq., served as Society President from 1980 – 1982. His leadership and vision for the Society were remarkable. The highlight of his presidency was the successful fundraiser co-sponsored by the Society and the World Affairs Council of Northern California with Edmund S. Muskie, Secretary of State, as guest speaker. This lavish dinner event was held at the Sheraton Palace Hotel on December 4, 1980.

The funeral of Hugh Jesse Arnelle, Esq. was held at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco on Friday, October 28, 2021 at 1:00 PM. Many friends and relatives had the opportunity to pay their final respects in person or virtually.

The Society would like to thank all who contributed to the Society in memory of our departed member and friend, Hugh Jesse Arnelle, Esq.

May he rest in peace.

THE BLACK FAMILY

“It is because you are sons/daughters that God has sent fourth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Galatians 4:6

“Fathers All Are We”

My father as well as my mother modeled perseverance despite difficulties. Both provided the necessities of life and more. The "more" was confidence, courage, security, support and a joy in living. They believed that God would provide. As a child, I sensed this was true for many of the fathers of my playmates. There were also black men involved in the lives of black children who were not their own children. They were family members or men of the community who were tied to the children in communal kinship. They were tutors and mentors of the young.

My personal experience was not in sync with a common place assertion that black men were absent from the lives of their children.

- Rev. Dorsey Blake,
Church of the
Fellowship of all
Peoples

“... society is devastated because the majority of African-American fathers are not at home, not involved in the lives of their children. The solution, therefore, is for black men to return to their responsibilities.”

Excerpted from the virtual message delivered on June 20, 2021

Too many sermons on Father's Day seem to focus on the black father’s need to engage his children because he's shirked responsibility. These statements are stereotypes, fabrications and completely wrong. The impact of these thoughts is girded in the foundations of American society, from systems of education to access to employment, to incarceration.

Josh Lev’s article, “No, Most Black Kids Are Not Fatherless” deconstructs the “70% of black children are fatherless” myth. Data from the CDC report, "Fathers’ Involvement With Their Children," verify that the majority of black fathers actually live with their children (2.5 million versus 1.7 million), and furthermore, whether living in the same home or not, **black fathers are the most involved of all primary recorded race and ethnic groups.**

These stats do not account for the fact that men have died or passed away, couples may live together while unmarried, couples may be divorced, and let's not forget, that, due to the system of incarceration, men are not only separated from their families but often even prevented from staying in the home with their families if the housing is federally provided. The *New York Times*’ 2015, "1.5 Million Missing", gave credence to the shocking reality, presenting loud and clear how our country's mass incarceration-industrial complex has claimed more men than were enslaved in 1850.

The 2022 Black History Month theme is “Black Health and Wellness”.

Research by scholars like Waldo M. E. Johnson leads in efforts being made to re-educate about black fatherhood, and also brings notice to the men who stand in as genuine, authentic father figures for children who have lost fathers for whatever reason... And rather than focusing on the root cause of structural, institutional and implicit racialization, violence, poverty and general lack is scapegoated onto the

backs of black fathers.

As we approach Father’s Day when the horrific 70% statistic is utilized so often, I urge our religious and congregational leaders to re-speak the narrative. Speak to the power of how millions of African-American men and dozens of programs... are shedding light on the actual truth: **most black children are not fatherless and black American fatherhood is very much alive!**

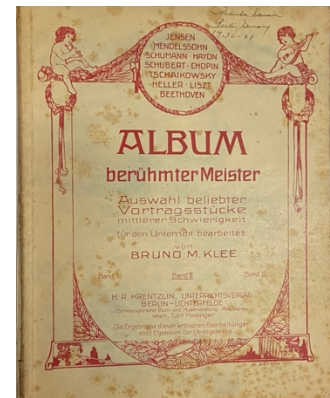
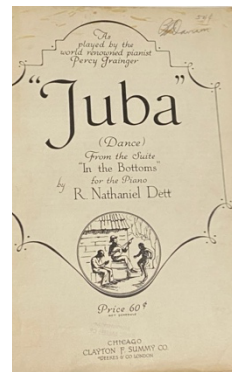
Continued, “Seeing the Light of Day”

If you read our website, you know that Berlinda Davidson was a 1920s UC Berkeley graduate, who married Edward Mabsen, a prominent Black San Francisco attorney. Davidson went to high school in Juno, AK; her brother, Stuart, was the first African American to graduate from UC’s medical school; Mabsen was one of the founding directors of the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center. The Cosmos Club’s Musical Reception invitations and related photos from the early 1930s, donated by Mrs. Carlos McLean, Sr., (deceased) were also inventoried. They give an invaluable insight into Blacks in San Francisco prior to WW II.

‘Wanna know more? Join the “Archive Activists” this fall to learn how to research, document and tell stories about these people, items and San Francisco’s Africans.

Join us for a documentation techniques workshop on **November 3rd, 1-2:30 pm at the Main Library.** Call or email to register and get more information.

Covers of some of recently found early 20th century sheet music – over 100 years old!



STOP HATE AND VIOLENCE

We abhor hate and violence of any kind. Stand up against hate.

BLACK LIVES MATTER!

STOP ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER HATE!

SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS & OTHER INFO

The Society Board and our fabulous volunteer - members, along with some of our partners, have been working diligently to prepare a schedule of events that illustrate African American history, life and culture and are meant to inspire, provoke and instill respect and pride in our community. We will keep you posted on coming events through emails and future *Praisesinger* newsletters!

We hope you will join us either in person or virtually over the next 6 months or so. If you have the passion and energy to join us in developing future programming, let us know.

Also, be sure to check the Society’s website November – January for event updates and another story about an African American pioneer. Visit us at www.sfaahcs.org.

The Society’s first virtual exhibit, “The Black Family Through Artists Eyes” is still available to view at <https://sfaahcs-vs.org>.

November 3, 1 pm	Documentation techniques for archive stories	SF Public Library, Main Branch, 5 th fl. Lab
November 6, 11 am	Genealogy Workshop https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88551112294?pwd=bFFqWmowNU9peUIDR2hwWmhoMEU2Zz09	ZOOM
November 19, pm pending	Blacks and the Arts Talks: Frankie Gillette	ZOOM, look for email
January 17, 2022	MLK Holiday events: SF Interfaith Council gathering, Yerba Buena Gardens and other venues.	Many in-person
January, pending	Blacks in the Arts Talks: Afro futurist author	ZOOM and in person
February 4, noon	Black History Kick-off	City Hall Rotunda
February, pending	Genealogy workshop	Look for email
February, pending	Black Health & Wellness Talk:	Look for email
March 20	Society Annual Member Meeting	In-person and ZOOM

- ✓ Call 415.292.7162 and leave a complete message. OR, email info@sfaachs.org.
- ✓ Visit the Society’s first virtual exhibit, “The Black Family Through Artists Eyes” at <https://sfaahcs-vs.org>.
- ✓ Visit the Society website for updates on events and notable and pioneering African Americans, at www.sfaahcs.org.

THE SOCIETY HEARS FROM YOU

Thanks to our loyal members and other readers who positively respond to the *PRAISESINGER*, Society website and e-mailings. The pandemic shut-in forced us to boost our electronic and digital footprints to keep in touch with you and carry out our mission. And, we “leaned in”.

We acknowledge those of you who have responded: thanking us for the “great newsletter” and informative webpages, opening and viewing email messages. Many of you must be forwarding the later as we have had several requests to be put on the e-mail list. We know you are reading the newsletter, because some of you have touched base with additional information about our archive items. We have had several “new” members join the Society.

As we go forward and return to “normal”, we will endeavor to hold in-person meetings and programs when possible. We will continue to reach out to you on digital platforms, which permits more of you to participate. If you haven’t already, please reach out to us with your email address and encourage other Society members to do so – get in the loop.

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We had a successful **2021 Black History Month** program; please join us next February (only 4 months away) for the **2022 Black History Month Kickoff** and programs related to the theme, “Black Health and Wellness”. Contact the Board if you want to help plan Black History Month.

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Time to **renew your membership for 2022**. Complete the application form and send your check to the Society now. THANKS!

BONUS PHOTO ALBUM at sfaahcs.org

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	\$2
			50
_____ Senior	\$25	_____ Small Business	\$3
			50
_____ Adult	\$50	_____ Large Business	\$7
			00
_____ 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, 2nd 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