

PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER

SAN FRANCISCO

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SOCIETY



SAN FRANCISCO AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL & CULTURAL SOCIETY

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Eldoris Cameron & Ginger
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Al Williams, President
William Hoskins,
Executive Director

Photos: Lewis Watts

When we say **BLACK LIVES MATTER**, we mean **ALL LIVES MATTER**.

THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!

Volunteers are essential to the Society. Please consider serving on the Board, taking leadership on a committee or volunteering at the gallery. Contact Al Williams, President, at info@sfaahcs.org or call 415-292-6172.

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REPARATIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

The African American community has longed for “40 acres and a mule.” Based on an order given by Union General Sherman, it was reneged on by President Andrew Johnson, who backed the white southern movement to overturn Reconstruction and the gains made by formerly enslaved and “free” Blacks. Since, African Americans and their allies have been fighting for reparations: to make whole what was torn apart and recognize grievous wrongs done to our ancestors and from which African Americans continue to suffer.

More than 30 years ago, Rep. John Conyers introduced House Bill 40, to establish a study of reparations to African Americans; to date this bill has not gotten out of Congress. Early in March, President Biden signed an Executive Order to enact the intent of HR 40. Across the country in cities, the momentum for reparations has accelerated. San Francisco and California State task forces’ reports might be the most momentous in the reparations’ movement. Such reports suggest greater investment in education, employment, housing and health care to address inequities in access and outcomes. Other reports have recommended that reparations be limited to folks who can show they descend from enslaved persons. How are they to prove that! In San Francisco, one hopes that solutions will address “the loneliness of being Black.”

- *The Editors*

A meeting of the San Francisco Task Force was held mid-March to hear from the public about its recommendations. A final vote to approve was delayed. The Board of Supervisors has expressed its support. The final report is due in June. Get informed. See our list of current activities and reports on page 4.

**BLACK RESISTANCE, 2023
ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY
MONTH KICK OFF**

On Friday, February 3rd, City Hall Rotunda echoed with the sounds of the “Negro National Anthem,” words of encouragement and sounds of Black Resistance. The 2023 Annual Black History Month Kick-Off was the first Society in-person event since the 2020 Black History Month Kick-off. There were well over 300 people with many elected officials, appointees, dignitaries, Society members and friends present. Among the many special guests were members of the Ministerial Alliance.

Mayor London Breed and others welcomed the gathering; Rev. Ann Champion Shaw, Bethel AME, provided words of invocation, Lawrence Beamen led the participants in “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” Lance McGee, “Unique Derique” performed “hambone,” one of the earliest forms of African resistance. The keynote speaker was Erroll Southers, Associate Senior Vice President of Safety and Risk Assurance, University of Southern California. His resume includes serving in FBI SWAT, TSA, Federal and State Homeland Security, and more. His words of wisdom and resistance relayed his personal observations of criminal justice/police interactions with black and brown people and the necessity for reform and just treatment. The Kick-Off was moderated by the Society President, Al Williams.

This “family reunion” was in and of itself a show of Black Resistance – that we are still here and uplifting our people and our cause. View the Kick-off [here](#). View photos of the event on the last page of this *Praisesinger*.

Immediately following the Kick-Off, the MJ Brass Boppers, sponsored by the African American Center, San Francisco Public Library, performed in the Civic Center Plaza, marched to the Larkin St. steps of the Public Library and played and danced there in joy and resistance. Participants were given “hankies” so they could march à la New Orleans’ second line-style behind the band.

THE SOCIETY THANKS ITS LOYAL SPONSORS, PARTNERS & MEMBERS WHO ALWAYS GIVE GENEROUSLY TO MAKE THE KICK-OFF A SUCCESS.

SPONSORS: ... Seven Hills The Swinerton Foundation ... Golden State Warriors
... First Republic Bank ... Alfred Williams Consultancy, LLC

PARTNERS: ... Human Rights Commission ... San Francisco Public Library ... Fitted
... Citizen Film ... RBA Creative ... African American Arts and Culture Complex

MEMBERS: ... Bryan Caston ... Dr. Fannie Preston ... Virginia Smyly

- Ginger Smyly

Please forgive any omissions! We value you all.

Looking forward to next year? Get involved. Contact us at: info@sfaahcs.org

BLACK RESISTANCE

- *William Hoskins,
Executive Director*



Dr. Carter G. Woodson and his associates created the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the Black History Bulletin, and its related publications as a resource to be used by the black community resisting anti-Black violence and oppression while pursuing a more equitable future. The dream of ASALH in 1915 of creating a future America in which people of color are no longer denied their rights, prevented from accessing educational opportunities or oppressed by a criminal justice system is still, in 2023 unrealized.

Today, 39 states have endorsed over 393 bills that make it more difficult for minority voters to register, to stay on the rolls or to vote. 18 states have passed voter suppression laws that directly affect the minority community. A most recent example of this is the Supreme Court decision upholding the restrictive Arizona voting laws which in turn challenges the Voting Rights Act.

Black History Month as we know it today was originally, a Black History Day, becoming Black History Week in February 1926 and Black History Month in February 1986. The month of February was originally selected because it included the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Given the importance of all that Black History Month now represents, we should all be thinking, supporting and committed to a Black History Year. The luxury of focusing and limiting our efforts to the month of February is one we can no longer afford.

The current Society exhibits, **“the Vote”** and **“Obama: A Legacy of Hope”** are designed to reflect the Black History Year concept and to underscore what can be accomplished when we do. **“Obama: A Legacy of Hope”** celebrates and at the same time emphasizes the importance and power of the vote which should be a most fundamental right of democracy. Implicit in the exhibit are the efforts of so many before Obama who recognized the power of the vote and were willing to sacrifice, fight and even die for a right that all Americans should have been entitled to. Without their efforts, we most likely would not have had a President Obama. George Edwin Taylor (1904), Shirley Chisholm (1972) and Jesse Jackson (1984 and 1988) all campaigned for President of the United States. **“The Vote”** underscores the power of exercising a right when given the opportunity. It also suggests the need for continuity throughout the year and not just for a self-imposed month.

Access to the current exhibits in the AAH&CS gallery is available by appointment Tuesdays and Thursdays. And Wednesdays, 11-3:30. Please call (415) 292-6172 or email for additional information or to make an appointment.



BOOK TALK: EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW, CONSTANCE BAKER MOTLEY

This autobiography brings to life the efforts of the first black female federal judge at the height of the legal conflicts of the civil rights movement and women's rights struggle. During this modern civil rights era struggle, she interacted with many fellow civil rights fighters including Thurgood Marshall, James Meredith and Martin Luther King. Her book provides a detailed account of the struggle of a black woman, whose courage and sense of responsibility, impacted in a profound fashion, twentieth century civil rights history.

**BLACK RESISTANCE & ACHIEVEMENT:
GLADYS WEST, AFRICAN AMERICAN MATHEMATICIAN**

Thanks to Gladys West’s mathematical genius, West’s data became the basis for the Global Positioning System (GPS). The accuracy of GPS and the measurement of satellite data advanced the navigational systems of satellites, airplanes, ships, missiles, cars and cell phones. Road maps once used to travel across country are almost obsolete.

In 1956, Gladys West was hired to work at the Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren, Virginia, now called the Naval Surface Warfare Center where she met and married Ira V. West, another Black Mathematician. She was project manager for data-processing systems used in the analysis of satellite data. In the mid-1970s through the 1980s, West programmed an IBM 7030 Stretch computer to deliver increasingly precise calculations to model the shape of the Earth, known as the geoid. In 1986, West published Data Processing System Specifications for the Geosat Satellite Radar Altimeter, a guide to explain how to increase the accuracy of the estimation of geoid heights and vertical deflection. Her work went unrecognized for many years.

- Eldoris Cameron

In 2018, Gladys West was inducted into the United States Hall of Fame. She was born October 27, 1930 in Sutherland, Virginia, an AKA, and at age 92, Gladys West no longer gives interviews. Learn more about this amazing woman.

RESOURCES - REPARATIONS

- ✓ Read The State Interim [Report](#) on Reparations.
- ✓ View [Executive Summary](#) of State Report:
- ✓ Links to [other portions](#) of the State report:
- ✓ View the [California Historical Society briefing](#), “African American Family History and Reparations.”
- ✓ View PBS’ 5 part series, "[The Road to Reparations in California](#)”
- ✓ View San Francisco interfaith Council, "[The findings of the California State Reparations Task Force](#)”
- ✓ Read the draft/final [San Francisco](#) Task Force Report

REDEVELOPMENT MYSTERY PHOTOS (PRE-DEMOLITION)

Do you recognize the subjects of these photos? Do you know where this mural was stored? (l. Joe Alioto, 2 unidentified men; r. 680 McAllister, Society offices, 1970 SFRDA Archive)



[Contact](#) the editors, and let us know!

MAYA ANGELOU TO BE ENSHRINED AT SFPL

“The caged bird sings, with a fearful trill, of things unknown but longed for still, and his tune is heard, on the distant hill, for the caged bird sings of freedom.”

Excerpted from “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,”
Maya Angelou

By the end of 2023, the San Francisco Public Library’s Main Library should see the installation of a monument to Dr. Maya Angelou located in front of the building’s Larkin Street entrance near the Civic Center Plaza. Entitled, “Portrait of a Phenomenal Woman,” the monument is designed by Lava Thomas, a Berkeley-based artist, and is part of an effort by the San Francisco Arts Commission to redress a gender imbalance in the city’s monuments, which tend to focus on white men.

Dr. Angelou, who lived in San Francisco for part of her young life, broke color and gender barriers by becoming San Francisco’s first African American female streetcar conductor, an award-winning author and poet, a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient and a civil rights leader. The monument takes the shape of a book and includes an etching of Dr. Angelou’s face on one side and a quote from Dr. Angelou on the back:

“Information helps you to see that you’re not alone. That there’s somebody in Mississippi and somebody in Tokyo who all have wept, who’ve all longed and lost, who’ve all been happy. So the library helps you to see, not only that you are not alone, but that you’re not really any different from everyone else. There may be details that are different, but a human being is a human being.”

The SFPL used a sketch of Angelou, one of Thomas’ studies for the monument, as part of its marketing material for the 2023 “More Than a Month” Black History Month program. Thomas draws from her family’s Southern roots, current and historical socio-political events, intersectional feminism and African American protest and devotional traditions for her work. Her practice centers ideas that amplify visibility, healing, and empowerment in the face of erasure, trauma and oppression.

Thomas is currently showing “Clouds of Joy” (2021) in the exhibit, “Resting Our Eyes,” at the Institute of Contemporary Art, San Francisco, curated by Tahirah Rasheed and Autumn Breon on view through June 5, 2023. Her work is part of permanent collections around the world, and she has exhibited across the nation.

MORE ANGELOU

The next time you take a Market St. car, check to see if it has been named. The Market Street Railway organization has vetted the naming of an old Market St. railway car in honor of Maya Angelou, who at age 15 became a “conductorette” for MUNI. [Read the article.](#)

TECH AND TAX HELP

Drop-in Tutorial, Computer Training Center, 5th fl., Main Branch, SFPL
Tech Drop-in, Tuesday and Thursday, 11-3, “Booker T.” Center
[Free Tax Services](#), or call 211

MORE AT THE LIBRARY

- *Shawna Sherman, Board member / Manager, African American Center, SFPL, Main Branch. Shawna wrote about the Angelou monument, and the African American Center events*

April 19, 6 pm, Presentation: Audre Lorde’s, The Black Unicorn Intersectional Identities in a Global Context

A discussion about intersectionality in the book by SFSU professor Dr. Crystal Edwards. And, live reading of Lorde's poems by Yeva Johnson.

May 3, 6 pm, Author: Chad Williams, The Wounded World: W. E. B. Du Bois and the First World War

Williams in conversation with Sarah Ladipo Manyika about W. E. B. Du Bois's reckoning with the betrayal of Black soldiers during WWI and a new understanding of one of the great twentieth-century writers. NOTE: Williams was born and raised in San Francisco, son of Society members, Jayne & Carl Williams, Esq. Williams was the Society’s Black History Month keynote speaker in 2018.

May 25, 6 pm, Author: Dorothy Lazard, What You Don't Know Will Make a Whole New World

Dorothy Lazard, retired librarian and former San Francisco resident, tells a migration story, a Black Power story, a multi-generational family story and a story that celebrates the enduring quest for education and freedom.

All events held at the African American Center, Main Branch, 3rd Floor

**GENEALOGY!
REPARATIONS?**

For African Americans, genealogy can uncover secrets, find missing links and connect to heritage and ancestors. As talk of reparations grows, genealogy takes on more importance in African American lives.

Did you miss the in-person/hybrid workshop on February 18th? “Genealogy Resources for African Americans” was held at the bright and shiny Booker T. Washington Community Service Center (SHOUT OUT TO THE “Booker T.” STAFF!) and led by Addie Lewis Watson and Ginger Smyly, with a technical assist by Al Williams. 14 people were in attendance. This workshop, geared for learning about genealogy resources best suited for African Americans, includes some “tricks of the trade” that have worked for the facilitators and participants. The “fun” part of the workshop is when we help one another with the ancestors we are searching and the different ways to accomplish success.

Let us know if you would be interested in this workshop or a regular genealogy meet-up in which there is no formal instruction but just a time for sharing and working with others’ assistance on one’s own family tree. Contact the [Society](#).

PRAISESINGER ONLINE

Can’t open, download or print the *Praisesinger*? Go to our [website](#), scroll down to the newsletter (on left) and read the *Praisesinger* online. You can also read earlier editions of the newsletter from that site.

SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS & OTHER INFO

Visit us at www.sfaahcs.org

- ✓ Society Library & Gallery open, limited basis, Wednesdays are best! Call or email before coming
- ✓ “Obama: Legacy of Hope and Vote,” exhibit, Society Gallery, call to ensure access
- ✓ Soulful Sunday, Panel Discussion in honor of women’s history month, with authors, leaders, etc., March 26, 2-6 pm, 1700 block O’Farrell, Brothers For Change
- ✓ “Angela Davis, Seize the Time,” at the Oakland Museum of California, through June 2023
- ✓ Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., San Francisco Alumnae Chapter: 2023 - CELEBRATES 75 YEARS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE! “Delta Authors on Tour” in the Farwest Region, San Francisco Public Library, Main Branch - Koret Auditorium, April 1, 2023, 1 – 3 PM
- ✓ Book Tour, Chad L. Williams, PhD, Author, The Wounded World: W.E.B. Du Bois And The First World War, May 3, 6 PM, Koret Auditorium, San Francisco Public Library.

Call the Society 415-292-6172 or [email](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org) us for more information

Check our [website](http://www.sfaahcs.org) for events, resources and stories

BE A SOCIETY FRIEND

Be a Society friend and make info@sfaahcs.org a contact in your email address book! The *Praisesinger* will go directly into your inbox every time!

Members, please submit your 2023 membership dues if you are able. Society friends, consider joining or re-joining the Society.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

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

LIFE members, your donation is appreciated

NAME _____

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Please sign me up as a:

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_____ 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, 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 |

PHOTO ALBUM – PHOTO ALBUM -- PHOTO ALBUM – PHOTO ALBUM -- PHOTO ALBUM – PHOTO ALBUM



l.-r.: Erroll Southers, Mayor Breed, Rev. Shaw, Lance McGee; Lawrence Beaman; partial view of crowd



l.-r.: partial view of crowd; Chief Scott, David Johnson, Erroll Southers; Jackie Sue, David Johnson, woman, Al Williams;



MJ Brass Boppers in Civic Center and at the Library