



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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Smyly, Co-editors

Al Williams, President  
William Hoskins,  
Executive Director

Photos: Eldoris Cameron,  
Ginger Smyly, David  
Johnson, unattributed

*We grieve violence-related deaths, the toll of COVID and the impact of climate change loss around the world. We deplore violence and hate of any kind. When we say **BLACK LIVES MATTER**, we mean **ALL LIVES MATTER**.*

## THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!

Volunteers are essential to the Society's sustainability; volunteers make possible: **Black History Month Kick-Off**, educational programs, genealogy workshops, library and archive access, website and *Praisesinger* newsletters. The Board and other volunteers have made these things happen throughout the epidemic. THANKS!

Won't you consider serving on the Board or taking leadership on a committee to do your part and relieve those currently in leadership? Or, if you know of someone particularly suited to serve, please promote it with him, her or they. Contact Al Williams, President, at [info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org) or call 415-292-6172.

## In this issue:

- ✓ Society Leadership – an all-volunteer force
- ✓ "Its Not Over Until Its Over!" the Executive Director
- ✓ UCSF Honors Pioneering Blacks
- ✓ The San Francisco Housing Development Corporation / Geraldine Johnson
- ✓ 2023 Black History Month Kick-Off and other upcoming and current events
- ✓ More

## SAN FRANCISCO STATE PROFESSORS

### DR. GERALD WEST

Former 1950-1990's students at San Francisco State College, now San Francisco State University, have fond memories of the African American professors one could count on one hand. Some among them were: Dr. Robert Thornton, science; Dr. Finis Dew, psychology; Dr. Raye Richardson, Black Studies; Professor Nontzisi Delores Cayou, dance; Dr. Oba T'Shaka, Black Studies; and Dr. Gerald I. West, psychology.

**On September 30, 2022, Gerald I. West, Ph.D.,** passed away. He was awarded Professor Emeritus from San Francisco State University in 2005. Over the years, Dr. West lead in consulting and directing many community-based programs. *May his memory be a blessing!*

## IT IS NOT OVER UNTIL IT IS OVER! – 2024...

- William Hoskins,  
Executive Director



This statement has taken on even more significance as the midterm election results become less relevant. Regardless of the efforts and results of the recent election, our right to vote remains on the line. Political forces are still committed to blocking Black Americans from the ballot box. This is at a time when Black households' income is 40% less than that of White Americans, the poverty rate is more than twice as high, and workers are paid less at every educational level. In addition, the Black-White equity index being 73.9% suggests that African Americans remain disadvantaged by at least 26% in the areas of health, education, social justice, civil engagement and economic status.

The current anti-democratic wave that we are experiencing began to rise after the 2008 election, when the Black voting rate for the first time matched white voting rates, helping to propel Barack Obama to the White House. It was enhanced in 2013 when the Supreme Court's Shelby County V. Holder decision gutted the Voting Rights Act's preclearance provision.

This year, legislatures in 39 states have considered at least 393 bills that make it harder for voters to register, stay on the rolls or vote. In addition, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, 18 states have passed voter suppression laws which disproportionately affect minorities. A particular focus this year has been to pass laws allowing partisan officials to interfere with the election process.

The upcoming 2024 elections could be one of the most important elections of our time. It is time to protect our right to vote which is on the line and directly impacts our ability to achieve a diverse, inclusive and equitable America for all. We should, in addition to our own personal efforts, support those that share a common interest. Working together, we can achieve the results and reach the goals that we all believe in and are voting for. Your Vote is Your Voice!

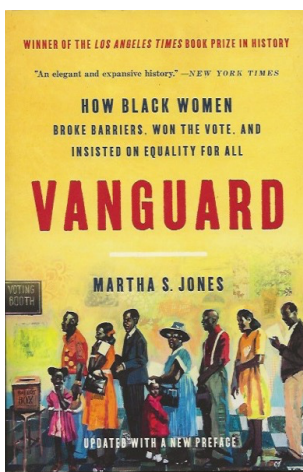
Exhibit in the Society Gallery:

Access to the **current exhibit** in the Society gallery, **Obama: Legacy of Hope and Vote** will be available on a limited basis starting November 29. Please call 415 292-6172 or email the [Society](#) for additional information.

Recommended Reading:

**Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote and Insisted on Equality for All**, by Martha S. Jones

Vanguard, offers a new and commanding history of African American women's political lives in America. Jones recounts how women defied both racism and sexism to fight for the ballot. From the earliest days to the 1965 Voting Rights Act and beyond, Jones shares the lives of famous Black women as well as those in her own family who were a vanguard for women's rights.



**San Francisco Housing  
Development  
Corporation and  
Geraldine Johnson**

The San Francisco Housing Development Corporation, "SFHDC," celebrated its 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the HopMonk Tavern, Novato, CA, on Saturday, October 15, 2022. The Community Activist Award was presented to Dorris Vincent and Eddie J. Walker received the Community Economic Development Award. SFDHC has helped hundreds of families throughout the city. Founded in 1988 by Geraldine Johnson, much has been accomplished:

- over 1,250 affordable housing units, with another 700+ units in the pipeline
- hundreds of first-time homebuyers purchased a home; thousands of families and individuals assisted in improving financial wellness
- 970 households in apartment homes sustained their housing
- working with nearly 100 Black entrepreneurs to establish or expand their enterprises, some of whom will sell their goods in a new store, "In the Black," at the corner of Fillmore and Geary

Congratulations, SFDHC!

Geraldine Johnson, born on November 4, 1933 in New Orleans, moved to San Francisco with her family at age 29. The disenfranchisement and struggles of Black people moved her to work on their behalf for affordable housing, employment and justice. She founded the local chapter of the Coalition for Black Trade Unionists and then joined the San Francisco Labor Council as their union representative.

The Affordable Housing shortage in the late 1980s lead to the San Francisco Housing Development Corporation which built and managed several units in the Bayview-Hunters Point and Western Addition districts for low-income families.

- Eldoris Cameron

In 1989, Geraldine Johnson helped organize the first Economic Development Conference and was instrumental in the 1993 installation of the **Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial at Yerba Buena Gardens**. Ms. Johnson passed at age 64. What a giant of a person.

*'Just think of what each one of us can do!'*

**AFRICA**

- Letitia Herndon  
Channel, first printed  
in the *Praisesinger*  
April 1976

*Africa, all Africa, homeland of my race  
I came across the briny deep, to look up on your face  
You are a roast and Rising to a higher plane of life  
In freedom to unfold and grow with less turmoil and strife*

Letitia Herndon Channel, 96, historian-poet and Society member, was awarded the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Medallion distinguished citizen award on March 25, 1976

## THE NATIONAL GREAT BLACKS IN WAX MUSEUM

1601-03 East North  
Avenue, Baltimore, MD  
21213  
(410) 563-3404

Founded in 1983 by Drs. Elmer P. & Joanne M. Martin

The National Association of Black Storytellers' 40 Anniversary Festival was held November 9-13 at the Sheraton Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland. The Mama Linda Goss Wax Figure of the organization's co-founder was unveiled at the event. The figure will be on display at the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum alongside the organization's late co-founder, Mother Mary Carter Smith.

Society members and sisters, Mae Threadgill and Eldoris Cameron, attended the 2022 Black Storytellers' Festival.



L-R: Mama Linda Goss alongside of her wax figure;  
wax figure of Mama Linda Goss next to the late  
Mother Mary Carter Smith.



## PLANET FILLMORE.TV

Since 1969, [Planet Fillmore](#) Communications has focused on helping make the community around us a better, happier more productive place. We assist tireless organizers and fundraisers build community events aimed at lifting our valued community's voices in an interesting way. Thanks, Lance.

## UCSF - BLACK CAUCUS AWARDS



David Johnson, long time Society member, Charles Clary and Freedman Bradley recently received the coveted University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Medal bestowed upon them by the Black Caucus for their contributions, ranging back almost 50 years. [Read](#) the entire article and bios of the awardees.



## IN THE ARCHIVES

Now on hiatus from working in the archive, I have had a chance to reflect upon the great gifts received by the Society on behalf of the larger community; and how Society leaders had the wisdom to collect items without prejudice, often flotsam and jetsam, but also much of inestimable value to our cultural heritage. It could also be said that our predecessors had no plan, no specialization. And, our community for lack of another place to conserve what they considered “history,” brought things to the Society for safe keeping. This, making the job of inventory, sorting and assigning meaning, more difficult.

In brief, the archive contains: fine art and art reproductions, traditional African arts and crafts, scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, hundreds of church group, press and family photos, reports, journals, newsletters, magazines, monographs, curricula, awards and certificates, books, ledgers, business records, meeting minutes, *Praisesingers*, programs for musicals, poetry reading, plays, lectures, conferences, exhibit postcards, event flyers, playbills, fraternal and social organizations and club programs, etc!

- *Ginger Smyly*

Over the last two years, volunteers have given generously of their time and labor, making headway through the many, many boxes in the storage area. Garbage has been hauled to recycle bins and items re-packed into archival files and boxes to preserve old paper. It is our aim in the 2023 Spring-Summer campaign, to get through the last of the boxes and re-do others. Once done, we can analyze the inventory and begin to suggest stories that these items individually and collectively tell. We will also identify areas of further research. Having this knowledge will permit the Society to make educated decisions about the future disposition of the archive and its ongoing relationship to the Society and the broader community.

Even through the epidemic, the community offered books, textiles, art and other objects. Today’s gift acceptance criteria include: a) value to the history of San Francisco African Americans, b) uniqueness or rarity, c) condition, and d) the Society’s conservation compacity.

Thanks, San Francisco, for valuing our past and intuiting the necessity of those souvenirs as essential to the present and future. Stay tuned!

SOCIETY HISTORY  
LESSON – Q & A

The Society was first named, “San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society,” an affiliate of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH.) When was the Society’s name changed to, “San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society?”

Answer on page 7

## HILDA ROBINSON

"It was a joy to create this (exhibit) because of her work - vibrant, expressive and joyful," said the curator of the Hilda Robinson fall exhibit of latest works held at the Adams Claghorn gallery in Albany.

Society members need no introduction to Hilda Robinson, San Francisco Bay Area artist, creating art that embraces the Black experience, resounding with hymns of praise, shouts and squeals of children, horns of jazz, swing and be-bop, stoop conversations and movement through the city. Her colors and compositions transmit attitude, joy, love and family, reflecting you and yours. Robinson in a nonagenarian, who doesn't let age keep her from full participation in life and the artistic expression thereof. Keep on truckin' Ms Hilda!

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## ART AT THE SECC

On October 22, 2022, the long-awaited Southeast Community Commission held its grand opening and "Block Party" on the grounds of the sleek, but accessible community center on the corner of Third and Evans Streets. The program included speeches, cultural dancing, singing and drumming, and a ribbon cutting. On the generous grounds, attendees made a bee-line to the food being served and listened to music at the amphitheater; inside they visited a community fair in a separate, but equally beautiful hall and took a self-guided tour of the center.

The sculpture created by noted artist, Mildred Howard, draws your eye as you approach the facility. It is at once imposing for its sheer size, shape and bronze color, and gives the illusion of transparency, as one can look right through the three objects. It represents traditional currency once used in the Ivory Coast. Works of art, representative of people and their cultures who lived/live in the Southeast corner of the city are on display on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors. Two large murals depict community heroes: Ethel Garlington, Shirley Jones, Alex Pilcher, Espanola Jackson, Elouise Westbrook and Harold Madison. Make this your community center! [Learn more about the Southeast Community Center](#)

- Ginger Smyly



Left: members, Rozelle Lee and Hilda Robinson, featured artist

Right: "Black Lives Do Matter"

For photos of the SECC "Block Party" go to Photo Album, last page



DELTA SIGMA THETA	Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, San Francisco Alumnae Chapter, will celebrate <b>75 years</b> of community service. The celebration includes a Gala at the Intercontinental Hotel, May, 2023 and an exhibit. More information is forthcoming.
<p>SAN FRANCISCO NEGRO AND HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SOCIETY FOUNDING</p> <p>- Frances Roston Miller, Society co-founder</p>	<p>Notes prepared on March 7, 1974 by Frances Roston Miller</p> <p>In October 1956 a group of friends met at my house to organize the San Francisco chapter of the National Society for the Study of Negro Life and History. Those present were: Dola Miller, Vidella Minus, Ted Clark, Francis Miller, Ruth March, Harold Adams, Rev. Wesley Hawes, Eula Blocker, Clara Shortridge, Tressa Hawes, Lillian Morton, Serena Rhone, Robert Page, Gerald Johnson, Lany Sholars, Willa Page, Donetta Dean, James Carmel, Julian Richardson, Lucille Sims, Alton, Davison, Ray Richardson, Albert Patterson, Helen Lignosky, Edith Abanathy, Dr./Mrs. Craig Morris, William May Hicks, Chas. Gilliam Water, Henrietta Gilliam Water.</p> <p>Rev. M. M. Flynn from Shreveport, LA, conducted the election of officers, namely: Frances Miller, president, Lany Sholars, treasurer, Donetta Dean, secretary, Asa Davis, lecturer. To get our charter from National, we had to have seven persons take a subscription to the <i>Negro History Journal and Bulletin</i>, and buy one study book, <u>The Negro in Our Community</u>, by Carter G Woodson. The local chapter had a joining fee of \$1.25 per month.</p> <p>On the 20 of November, a committee presented the Constitution and it was adopted. The first major project sponsored was the celebration of Negro History Week, February 10 - 17, 1957, chairman, Charles L. Turner. The theme for the year was, "Negro History in Development of Human Understanding." The first program was held at the Hamilton Recreation Center on February 10, 1957. A musical recital was presented by Elizabeth Rease. Programs were held on the radio and at various churches over the city.</p> <p>In early summer, the chapter merged with a study group headed by Mr. James Herndon. A new constitution was drafted and adopted in 1958, with a new name, San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society. An election was held: Mr. James Herndon was elected president. I was elected vice president.</p> <p>As time goes on, History of the Past serves as a guide for the Future. if we want to retain this history for the future generation, our task is to record the history.</p>
SOCIETY HISTORY LESSON – Q & A	<p>From page 5:</p> <p>The Society officially changed its name to "San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society" on August 28, 1970.</p>

## SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS & OTHER INFO

Visit us at [www.sfaahcs.org](http://www.sfaahcs.org)

- ✓ Society Library & Gallery Open, limited basis
- ✓ David Johnson, "In the Zone, 1945-1965" at City Hall, May 19, 2022 - June 6, 2023
- ✓ "Angela Davis, Seize the Time," at the Oakland Museum of California, through June 2023
- ✓ "Obama: Legacy of Hope and Vote," exhibit, Society Gallery, call to ensure access
- ✓ **2023 Annual Black History Month Kick-Off, Friday, February 3, 2023, noon, City Hall Rotunda!** More information to follow
- ✓ **Black History Month** Programs, including Genealogy workshop, February 2023. More information to follow

## Black Resistance! Black Resistance! Black Resistance!

Black Resistance is the 2023 Annual Black History Month theme. To learn more about [Black Resistance](#) check out the ASLAH site.

What does Black Resistance mean to you?

## BE A SOCIETY FRIEND

Be a friend to the Society and make [info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org) a contact in your email address book! This will ensure that the *Praisesinger* newsletter goes directly into your inbox every time!

If you are reading the *Praisesinger* from your computer screen, click on any link, [usually blue and underlined](#), and you will be transported to the requested website.

## 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, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415.292.6172

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

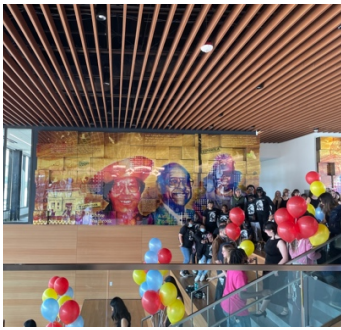
_____ Development	_____ Library/archives
_____ Membership	_____ Programs
_____ Black History Month	_____ Communications
_____ Volunteer/Reception	_____ Other



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



Above: Southeast Community Center Block Party, October 22, 2023, scenes from the grounds



Above: Mural by Philip Hua, "Building a Better Bayview," on staircase, view of grounds from 2<sup>nd</sup> fl., heroes of the Bayview



Above: Art from Malik Senefuru, Ira Watkins and A. McNealy on 2<sup>nd</sup> fl. of new community center