

African American Citywide Historic Context Statement



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Prepared for the City and County of San Francisco by:
Tim Kelley Consulting
The Alfred Williams Consultancy
VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting
San Francisco Planning Department

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Summary Statement

In 2013, the Historic Preservation Fund Committee awarded the San Francisco Planning Department (City) a grant for the preparation of a historic context statement (herein referred to as the African American Citywide Historic Context Statement, or Historic Context Statement) to assist the City to identify and evaluate individual properties and other historic resources associated with San Francisco's African American community. Though San Francisco has a longstanding historic preservation program dating back to 1967, the contributions of the City's African American residents, as well as other minority communities, have long remained under-examined. Traditionally, historic preservation efforts have targeted architecturally significant properties and mainly ignored those with cultural associations, especially those linked to marginalized communities.

African Americans have lived in this City as long as there has been a San Francisco, though they only began to comprise a significant percentage of the population during World War II, when shipyards and other defense industries began recruiting large numbers of workers from the American South. Most of these newcomers settled in existing African American communities, particularly in the Western Addition, and later in the Bayview-Hunters Point district. During the 1950s and 1960s, San Francisco's African American community expanded beyond the core areas of settlement into other neighborhoods, including the Oceanview/Merced Heights/Ingleside district. Since the 1970s, San Francisco's African American population has declined in numbers and the City's remaining Black enclaves are in danger of disappearing altogether. This Historic Context Statement has been written to acknowledge the many significant contributions that African Americans have made in San Francisco's economic and cultural sectors, as well as to its built environment, taking pains to recognize individual properties and districts associated with important individuals and groups.

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The completion of the African American Citywide Historic Context Statement is a logical step in the realization of San Francisco's historic preservation goals. In a city that has historically given short shrift to communities of color, this document will assist City staff and commissioners, property owners, business owners, residents and other stakeholders gain a better understanding of the development and evolution of San Francisco's African American communities. It identifies properties and types of properties that may have important associations with Black San Francisco, and provides integrity thresholds that a property should retain for it to be eligible for designation as a landmark at the local, state, or national level. This document lays the groundwork for the identification of longtime African American residential enclaves, Black-owned businesses, properties associated with prominent African Americans, and important religious, cultural, political and labor organizations that have played important roles in the making of Black San Francisco.

B. Purpose and Use of this Document

The African American Citywide Historic Context Statement is not meant to be a comprehensive history of San Francisco's African American community. This history has already been well-documented over the last 25 years in books, articles and socio-economic studies – most of which were prepared by African American scholars. Rather, the focus of this document is the identification of important themes in the development of San Francisco's African American community from the Spanish and Mexican colonial era onward, and more important, how these themes helped to determine the shape of the built environment. Key historical themes discussed in this document include the following:

- Patterns of Migration and Settlement
- Employment Trends
- Education
- Development of Residential Enclaves and Housing Patterns
- Formation of Religious, Fraternal, Social Organizations
- Commercial Development
- Civil Rights
- Impacts of Redevelopment
- Artistic and Cultural Contributions

This document provides a framework for evaluating properties associated with these themes and for determining their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register), and Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code, which regulates local Landmarks and Landmark Districts. It also provides information on integrity thresholds that a property (resource) must retain in order for it to be listed in the above mentioned inventories. Finally, the African American Citywide Historic Context Statement is intended to help City staff and other decision-makers, property owners and members of the general public of all backgrounds to understand what types of properties are important to protect and enhance the character of San Francisco and its diverse communities.

C. Definition of Geographical Area

The geographical area examined in the African American Citywide Historic Context Statement is coterminous with the boundaries of the City and County of San Francisco. This document attempts to cover all parts of the City, not just traditional African American strongholds such as Bayview-Hunters Point or the Western Addition. During the post-World War II era, important concentrations of Black settlement developed in the Oceanview/Merced Heights/Ingleside (OMI) district, Visitacion Valley, the South of Market Area, Potrero Hill, Hayes Valley, Duboce Triangle, the Haight-Ashbury District, and Glen Park/Diamond Heights. However, this study also looks beyond these areas because many of San Francisco's most influential African American residents lived in majority-White neighborhoods, such as Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr., who lived in Westwood Highlands; or Willie Mays, who lived in Sherwood Forest. Finally, this Historic Context Statement documents several no-longer-extant enclaves, including Stone Street in Chinatown and Tehama Street in the South of Market Area.



Map of San Francisco showing neighborhood boundaries
Source: Paragon Real Estate Group

D. Methodology

This Context Statement was prepared by Christopher VerPlanck of VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting, and staff from the San Francisco Planning Department, with input from Tim Kelley of Tim Kelley Consulting, and Al Williams, president of the Alfred Williams Consultancy and the San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society. Mr. VerPlanck and Mr. Kelley both meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications for Architectural History and History. Research assistance was provided by Stacy Farr, an architectural historian, as well as Jonique Green and Nicole Jones, interns with the San Francisco Planning Department. Dr. Albert Broussard, Professor of African American History in the Department of History at Texas A&M University, served as the principal advisor on this project, reviewing drafts for thoroughness and accuracy.

In consultation with the Historic Preservation Fund Committee, additional research, writing and oversight was provided by staff from the San Francisco Planning Department. These included Tim Frye, Preservation Coordinator; Susan Parks, Project Manager/Preservation Planner and contributing author; Jonathan Lammers, Preservation Planner and contributing author; and Mary Brown, Preservation

Planner. The Planning Department's Communications Team, Gina Simi and Candace SooHoo, provided assistance with community events and management of the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG). The CAG included architecture and planning professionals along with community historians and activists. Members of the CAG included:

- Mr. Carson Anderson, Architectural Historian/Environmental Planner & Senior Associate with ICF International
- Mr. Mike Buhler, Executive Director of San Francisco Architectural Heritage and a member of the Historic Preservation Fund Committee
- Mr. Lance Burton, San Francisco Black history expert and Owner of Planet Fillmore Communications
- Dr. Robert Cherny, retired Professor Emeritus of History at San Francisco State University and a member of the Historic Preservation Fund Committee
- Mr. Daniel Landry, community activist based in San Francisco's Western Addition neighborhood
- Mr. Rick Moss, Chief Curator of the African American Museum and Library at the Oakland Public Library
- Mrs. Alise Vincent, community activist, Outreach Coordinator for Hunters Point Shipyard Citizen's Advisory Committee and owner of Vincent Alise Consulting

The project team also solicited oral histories from representative members of San Francisco's African American community. Planning Department interns Jonique Green and Nicole Jones conducted the interviews with the following people:

- Mr. Jon Kevin Green, owner of Esquire Barber Shop, in the Fillmore district, established in 1968
- Reverend. Roland Gordon, Pastor of Ingleside Presbyterian Church
- Mrs. Mable Jordan, long-time resident of Visitation Valley and an active International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) member
- Dr. Espanola Jackson, Bayview-Hunters Point community activist
- Mrs. Doris Ward, former San Francisco Supervisor, former President of the Board of Supervisors and former City Assessor
- Mrs. Annie Shynebaugh, former nurse and Manager for the Diamond View Residents Association.
- Mrs. Carol Bassetti, mental health counselor and long-time resident of San Francisco's Bayview neighborhood
- Mr. Lance Burton, community activist, owner of Planer Fillmore Communications and former member of the African American Chamber of Commerce
- Reverend Arnold Townsend, Vice-President of the San Francisco chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), community activist and long-time resident of San Francisco's Fillmore district
- Mrs. Lavaughn King, long-time resident and community activist in San Francisco's Visitation Valley neighborhood

Special thanks goes to San Francisco Planning Department Director John Rahaim for his assistance, during this project and to those organizations that allowed the Department to hosted community events including the African American Art and Cultural Society and Ingleside Presbyterian Church.

This document was prepared in compliance with federal and state guidelines for historic context statements. The following sources were consulted to organize the document and evaluate the significance of potential historical resources:

- U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin 15: "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation"*
- U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin 16A: "How to Complete the National Register Registration Form"*
- U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin 16B: "How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form"*
- U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin 24: "Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning"*
- State of California, Office of Historic Preservation, *"Instructions for Recording Historical Resources"*
- State of California, Office of Historic Preservation, *"OHP Preferred Format for Historic Context Statements"*

The Historic Context Statement makes extensive use of three important sources dealing with the subject of African Americans in San Francisco: *Pioneer Urbanites*, by Douglas H. Daniels (1990); *Black San Francisco*, by Albert S. Broussard (1993); and *The Postwar Struggle for Civil Rights*, by Paul T. Miller (2010). These three sources cover the history of San Francisco's African American community from the Spanish and Mexican periods to the mid-1970s. Additional secondary sources consulted include: *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, by Delilah L. Beasley (1918), and *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, by Rudolph Lapp (1977). Together, these five sources heavily informed the narrative history presented in this document. Additional secondary sources consulted include several local newspapers, including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *San Francisco Call*, *San Francisco Bulletin*, *San Francisco News*, and several African American newspapers, especially the *Sun-Reporter*.

Important primary sources consulted in the preparation of this document include the U. S. Census, especially aggregate data for San Francisco City and County, Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps from 1886-93, 1899-1900, 1913-15, and 1948-50; San Francisco city directories; San Francisco block books; building permit data from the San Francisco Department of Building Inspection; and property ownership information from the San Francisco Office of the Assessor-Recorder. This Historic Context Statement also makes use of historic photographs from the following repositories: San Francisco Public Library (San Francisco History Center and the Historical Photograph Collection), California Historical Society, the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, Society of California Pioneers and the Sutro Library.

Government reports provided useful statistical information. For information on recent demographic trends we consulted *The Unfinished Agenda: The Economic Status of African Americans in San Francisco, 1964-1990*, a report prepared by the San Francisco Human Rights Committee to address the phenomenon of "Black flight" from San Francisco.

E. Nomenclature

For the most part, the contemporary term *African American* is used throughout the document. *Black* is used interchangeably with *African American* to add variety and improve the flow of the text. Often used in writing and informal speech, the term *Black* (capitalized) is rarely considered offensive. Older terms, including *Colored* and *Negro*, which are generally considered to be offensive today, are only used as

quotations from older sources or to refer to organizations that used the term, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.¹

This Historic Context Statement uses several names to refer to African American neighborhoods, though not interchangeably. Taken in the strictest sense, the term *Western Addition* refers to a much larger area of the City that was platted in 1855-56. This area encompasses a vast swath of San Francisco between Duboce Avenue and San Francisco Bay to the north and Larkin Street and Arguello Boulevard, including Pacific Heights, Presidio Heights, Hayes Valley, North of Panhandle and other areas. The term *Fillmore*, *Fillmore district*, or simply, *The Fillmore* refers to a section of the Western Addition that was the core of African American San Francisco between World War II and the 1980s. More of a state of mind than a concrete geographical area, the boundaries of the Fillmore are imprecise, though the core of the district runs along Fillmore Street from approximately Page Street to Pine Street. Its eastern boundary is approximately Franklin Street and its western boundary is roughly Divisadero Street. As the African American population of the Fillmore district has declined the term has been gradually going out of use, or turned on its head: “Fill-no-more.” As the entire Western Addition has gentrified over the last 30 years, new names have been developed by realtors and newcomers to refer to various parts of what was the Fillmore, including *NoPa* and *Lower Pacific Heights*. These more recent terms are not used in this document. This Historic Context Statement uses the term *Fillmore* to refer to the core of the African American Western Addition throughout the period in which the term was widely used. Otherwise, the term *Western Addition* is used.

The term *Bayview-Hunters Point* refers to a vast swath of southeastern San Francisco bounded by San Francisco Bay to the east, the San Mateo County line to the south, the Bayshore Freeway (U.S. 101) to the west, and Islais Creek Channel to the north. It encompasses many smaller neighborhoods, including the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, Hunters Ridge and Hunters View housing projects, Bayview, Silver Terrace, Bret Harte, India Basin, Double Rock, Bayview Heights, as well as several housing projects, micro-neighborhoods, and industrial areas. When *Hunters Point* is used alone it refers mainly to the public housing projects on Hunters Point Ridge. When *Bayview* is used alone it refers to the mixed industrial and residential area bounded by San Francisco Bay to the east, Oakdale Avenue to the north, Yosemite Avenue to the south, and Third Street to the west.

¹ “African American versus black.” Grammarist.com <http://grammarist.com/usage/African-American-black/>; accessed December 16, 2014.

II. EXISTING STUDIES AND DESIGNATIONS

Presently, there are not many properties in San Francisco associated with African Americans that have any formal historical status. Though several historical resource surveys have been completed in San Francisco over the last 45 years, few have specifically addressed African American history beyond a cursory level. Fortunately in recent years the focus has shifted toward documenting and registering properties associated with various ethnic and cultural groups, including African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and LGBTQ communities. In addition, several neighborhood-based historic context statements prepared in recent years have covered content on African American history, including: Bayview-Hunters Point, Japantown, India Basin, and the OMI. Though there are no local historic districts with an African American focus there is a handful of local landmarks registered for their associations with notable African Americans or the African American community at large. They include:

- Madame C. J. Walker Home for Girls and Women, 2066 Pine Street (Landmark No. 211)
- Joseph Leonard/Cecil F. Poole House, 90 Cedro Avenue (Landmark No. 213)
- Sam Jordan's Bar, 4004-06 Third Street (Landmark No. 263)
- Marcus Books/Jimbo's Bop City, 1712-16 Fillmore Street (Landmark No. 266)
- Mary Ellen Pleasant Trees, located at the southwest corner of Octavia and Bush Streets, (Structure of Merit No. 6)

Several other local landmarks have known associations with African American history. They include:

- South San Francisco Opera House, 1601 Newcomb Avenue (Landmark No. 8)
- Palace Hotel and Garden Court, 2 New Montgomery Street (Landmark No. 18)
- Don Lee Building, 1000 Van Ness Avenue (Landmark No. 152)
- Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church, 2135 Sutter Street (Landmark No. 202)

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There is at least one California Historical Landmark in San Francisco that is associated with the history of the City's African American Community:

- Original Site of Third Baptist Church, 483-495 Greenwich Street (California Registered Historical Landmark No. 1010)

Though there are several properties in the National Register that have associations with African American history and/or culture, there are none that are specifically designated because of these associations.

One of the main purposes of the African American Citywide Historic Context Statement is to identify additional properties that should be designated as City Landmarks or listed in the National Register. Among our recommendations (See Chapter V) is that existing National Register nominations and City Landmark designation reports be amended to include information on their importance to African American history and culture, such as the Palace Hotel, the Don Lee Building, and the South San Francisco Opera House.

III. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

A. Pioneers of African Descent in Alta California



John Borein etching of Mission Dolores.
Source: Bancroft Library

This section explores the earliest period of African and African American settlement in what is now California, beginning with the Sir Francis Drake expedition and then encompassing the Spanish and Mexican periods. It concludes with the American conquest of California following the Mexican American War.

The first known persons of African descent to come to what is now California arrived with the English seafarer Sir Francis Drake in 1579. This contingent included three men and a woman who had been captured from either Spanish or Portuguese vessels sailing in the Caribbean.² Around the same time, Spanish colonial authorities in New Spain (Mexico) began importing African slave laborers to work in the silver mines and on the haciendas of local grandes. Throughout a period of around 200 years, approximately 200,000 enslaved Africans were forcibly relocated to Mexico. Over time, most were absorbed into Mexico's mixed indigenous and Spanish population, creating an important component of the nation's *mestizo* majority. When the Spanish first settled Baja California in the seventeenth century, it was estimated that at least 20 percent of the settlers had some African ancestry.³

It took nearly three centuries from the initial Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1521 for settlement to reach what is now the American state of California, a remote frontier region that both the Spanish and Mexicans called *Alta California*, or "Upper California," to distinguish it from *Baja California*. People of

² Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 2.

³ Lapp, 2.

partial African ancestry were known to have accompanied both the Portolá and De Anza expeditions in the late eighteenth century, and people of mixed African and Spanish ancestry were among the first settlers of *El Pueblo de Los Angeles* in 1781. These included the mulatto, Francisco Reyes, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1781 and eventually became its *alcalde*, or mayor. One authority surmised that at least half the original *pobladores* had some African ancestry, including members of the prominent Tapía and Pico families. However, like most Mexicans of this era, these families did not often allude to their African heritage, preferring to embrace a pan-Mexican identity.⁴

By the first decade of the nineteenth century, Spain's New World empire was starting to disintegrate. While Spain was occupied by France during the Napoleonic wars, an emergent class of native-born *Criollos* revolted, winning independence for most of Spain's Latin American colonies by the mid-1820s. Mexico, the jewel in Spain's New World crown, declared independence in 1810, though it did not finish expelling the last Spanish forces until 1822. After a short stint as an empire, the Republic of Mexico was founded in 1823. Alta California, which Mexico inherited from Spain, became the northernmost territory of the new nation. Wracked by internal revolutions and civil discord, Mexican authorities could do little to protect the nation's sparsely populated northern frontier, especially Alta California, which began to attract the interest of Russia, France, England, and increasingly the United States.

African Americans During the Mexican Era

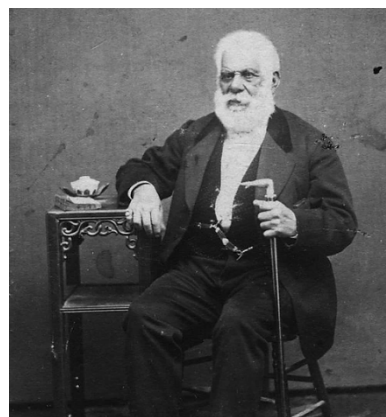
Anxious to improve its hold on Alta California, Mexican authorities abolished the Franciscan missions and opened the territory to foreign traders. During the 1820s and 1830s, an increasing number of American seafarers arrived in Alta California, mostly aboard whaling ships and merchant vessels engaged in the fur and hide-and-tallow trades. Many liked what they saw and jumped ship, including some African American sailors. Slaves in particular had a significant incentive to remain in Alta California because slavery was forbidden in Mexico's 1823 Constitution. The first African American known to have settled in Alta California was a slave who jumped ship in Santa Barbara in 1819. John Christopher, or Juan Cristobál, was baptized at *Misión Santa Barbara* and subsequently became a Mexican citizen.⁵ During the next three decades, dozens of African Americans – both slaves and free persons – jumped ship in Alta California to begin a new life far from the strictures of slavery and institutional racism in the United States. For unlike the United States, the newly independent nation of Mexico eliminated the legal notion of separate races, as well as slavery itself. Among those who prospered under Mexican rule was Pio Pico, the grandson of a mestizo man and mulatto woman, who twice served as governor of Alta California. His brother, Andres, also served as military commander of the Mexican California militia.⁶

During the 1840s, the number of Americans traveling overland to Alta California increased markedly. Previously deterred by expansive deserts and steep, snowbound mountain ranges, overland travel took off after

⁴ Lapp, 2.

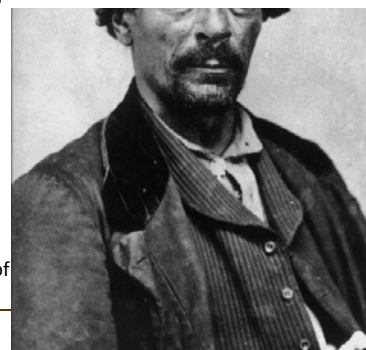
⁵ Lapp, 3.

⁶ De Graaf, Lawrence B., Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor. *Seeking El Dorado*. (Seattle: University of



Pio Pico, the last Mexican governor of Alta California.

Source: Wikipedia commons



James Beckwourth.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

several trails were blazed over the Sierras by fur trappers and explorers, including Jedediah Smith and John C. Fremont. African American mountain men were part of this group; one of the best-known was James Beckwourth, a mountain man who guided overland migrants over a pass that he discovered from the Nevada desert and over the Sierras into the upper Sacramento Valley.⁷ Another was Jacob Dodson, a freeman from Washington, D.C., who accompanied Fremont in 1843.

San Francisco was originally called the *Pueblo de Yerba Buena* when it was founded by the Mexican government around 1835. The remote settlement on the northerly tip of the San Francisco peninsula attracted a polyglot population of Mexican *rancheros*, Yankee merchants, Kanaka sailors, and a mixture of European and Latin American residents engaged in trade with visiting merchant ships and whalers.⁸ By 1847, one year before the American annexation of California, Yerba Buena contained 459 residents, including 10 people of African descent (nine men and one woman). Not much is known about these early Black residents, though all were evidently free.⁹ Most were probably maritime workers, traders, or manual laborers.

William A. Leidesdorff

By far the most prominent resident of African descent in Yerba Buena was William Alexander Leidesdorff (1810-1848). Born in the Danish Virgin Islands to a Danish sugar planter and a native-born woman of mixed African and Carib ancestry, Leidesdorff left the Virgin Islands for New Orleans as a teenager to engage in maritime trade. As his fortunes increased he became a ship captain, regularly sailing between New Orleans and New York. In the wake of a broken engagement, Leidesdorff decided to travel to Yerba Buena. After selling his personal property, Leidesdorff purchased a 106-ton schooner called the *Julia Ann* and sailed around Cape Horn. Upon arriving in 1841, Leidesdorff began trading between Yerba Buena and Honolulu.¹⁰ He also pioneered steamship service to San Francisco Bay with the introduction of the *Sitka*. Among other business ventures, Leidesdorff built the first hotel in San Francisco, the City Hotel, at the corner of Clay and Kearny streets. He also built a warehouse at the corner of California and Leidesdorff streets (buildings no longer extant). In 1844, William Leidesdorff became a Mexican citizen and obtained a grant of 35,500 acres along the American River, near what is today Folsom.¹¹



William Leidesdorff.
Source: Wikipedia Commons

Leidesdorff was known to sympathize with American interests and in 1845 he was appointed by President James K. Polk to serve as the U.S. vice-consul to Mexico. It is presumed that President Polk, a Tennessee-born slaveholder, probably did not know of Leidesdorff's African ancestry.¹² Polk was a firm adherent of Manifest Destiny, and ordered U.S. troops to occupy Mexican territory south of the Nueces River, then the boundary between Texas and Mexico. The act provoked Mexico into fighting, and Polk convinced Congress to declare war on May 11, 1846. By June 1846, US military forces had landed in California and occupied both Monterey and Yerba Buena. Shortly before these operations, Leidesdorff gave assistance to John C. Fremont and other participants in northern California's Bear Flag Revolt.

⁷ Lapp, 6.

⁸ "Kanaka" was a common name for natives of the Hawaiian islands during the nineteenth century.

⁹ *Californian* (August 28, 1847).

¹⁰ Lapp, 10.

¹¹ Lapp, 10.

¹² Lapp, 10.

After the American conquest, Leidesdorff was elected to the *ayuntamiento*, the pueblo's town council. He later became the town treasurer and sat on the board of San Francisco's first school (Yerba Buena was renamed San Francisco in 1847). As the owner of Yerba Buena's largest and best-appointed house, Leidesdorff also hosted most visiting dignitaries. William Leidesdorff died of a fever in 1848 at the age of 38. After an elaborate state funeral, he was buried at Mission Dolores. His obituary in the *California Star* announced:

One of the largest and most respectable assemblages ever witnessed in this place, followed the deceased from his late residence to the place of interment, and everything was done on the part of the community to evince its deep feeling for the loss it has sustained. All places of business and public entertainment were closed, the flags of the garrison and the shipping were flying at half-mast, and minute guns were discharged from the barracks and the shipping as the procession moved from town...It is no injustice to the living, or unmeaning praise for the dead to say that the town has lost its most valuable resident....¹⁴

It had not been generally known in San Francisco that William Leidesdorff was of partial African descent. Following his death, General Joseph Libby Folsom maneuvered to buy Leidesdorff's *Rancho Rio de los Americanos*. Folsom's lawyer traveled to the Danish Virgin Islands to negotiate with Leidesdorff's family, and while there he learned the truth of Leidesdorff's mixed-race heritage. Though there were doubtless some who may have changed their opinion of Leidesdorff upon hearing the news, most San Franciscans were unconcerned. Leidesdorff's reputation was so sterling that a committee of San Franciscans gathered to posthumously name one of the City's chief streets after him. However, in the end he only got Leidesdorff Street, a narrow three-block alley in what is now the Financial District.¹⁵ In 2014, a bronze statue honoring Leidesdorff was placed within the open-air lobby of the Selbach and Deans Building, located on the northeast corner of Leidesdorff Street and Pine Street. The statue was sculpted by Bruce Hasson and is accompanied by an information plaque discussing Leidesdorff's accomplishments. Another plaque honoring "Captain Leidesdorff" is part of the Bay Trail and located in the Embarcadero sidewalk adjacent to the entrance to Sue Bierman Park.

11

Griffin Dobson

One of the more remarkable and overlooked stories of the American conquest is that of Griffin Dobson. A Virginia slave, Dobson first visited California in 1843 as the personal servant to Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones, commander of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Squadron. Dobson also sailed with Jones to Mexico at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War, and would remain aboard Jones' flagship, the *Ohio*, during the first chaotic year of the Gold Rush. Thus Dobson, described as Jones' "constant companion,"¹⁶ was eyewitness to some of the most significant events in California history.

Griffin Dobson was raised at Prospect Hill, the Fairfax, Virginia plantation of Commodore Jones. He later married another slave named Cynthia and had five children at Prospect Hill between 1840 and 1847.¹⁷ Dobson first began accompanying Commodore Jones on naval trips in 1842, when he appears on the muster roll for the *USS United States*. During this voyage, on October 19, 1843, the squadron anchored in Monterey Bay and Commodore Jones seized the town, ostensibly because he had heard reports that

¹⁴ *California Star* (May 20, 1848).

¹⁵ Lapp, 11.

¹⁶ Gene A. Smith, *Thomas Ap Catesby Jones: Commandore of Manifest Destiny*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 140.

¹⁷ Gene A. Smith, "Griffin Dobson Virginia Slave, California Freeman," *Virginia Cavalcade*, Vol. 46, No.6, Autumn 1997, 286.

the United States and Mexico were at war. These reports proved false, however, and two days later the squadron left Monterey.

In mid-October 1847, with the United States and Mexico now actually at war, Dobson left with Jones on a naval expedition to Mexico aboard the *USS Ohio*. But by July 1848, when Jones and the fleet were in port at Guaymas, Mexico, the war had already ended.¹⁸ It was at this moment that Griffin Dobson asked Commodore Jones for his freedom. As related in a narrative prepared by Commodore Jones:

Griffin, to my great surprise, asked me one day if I would allow him to buy himself, if he could raise sufficient funds. In answer to my astonished inquiry as to what had put such a notion in his head, (for this was before we received any intimation of the discovery of gold in California,) he replied that the men on board the *Ohio*, both white and colored, would not let him have any peace, and that they had offered to raise by subscription a sufficient fund to buy himself if I would agree it.¹⁹

¹⁸ Gene A. Smith, "Griffin Dobson Virginia Slave," 286.

¹⁹ Jones, Thomas Ap Catesby. *Late Commander-in-Chief Pacific Squadron, Letter to Honorable William A. Graham, Secretary of the Navy*. (Washington D.C., Executive documents printed by Order of the United States during the Second Session of the Thirty-First Congress-1850-1851, 376.



1847 Currier & Ives lithograph of the USS Ohio.

Source: Wikipedia

As related in Gene A. Smith's book, *Thomas ap Catesby Jones: Commodore of Manifest Destiny*, Dobson's request was likely a function of prevailing attitudes among the sailors. "Antislavery sentiment had pervaded the squadron, and apparently several white and free black crewmen aboard the *Ohio* felt that Dobson should be a free man."²⁰ A number of crewmen and officers contributed \$400, and Jones acceded to Dobson purchasing his freedom when they returned to Virginia. Sailing up the coast to California, however, the *Ohio* arrived to the news of the Gold Rush, and for much of the next year Dobson would remain in service to Jones as the Commodore maintained a Navy presence in San Francisco.²¹

In November and December of 1848 Commodore Jones toured the gold fields with Dobson, purchasing gold at a discount using government funds and money provided by Jones and others. The gold would later be resold in the east and the profits distributed among all who invested.²² In May 1849 Griffin Dobson again approached Jones to purchase his freedom, and this time the Commodore agreed. Dobson was likely anxious to raise money quickly which could be used to purchase the freedom of his family. His activities for the next two years are unclear, but Dobson would reconnect with Jones in 1852.

For a variety of reasons, including his use of government funds to speculate in gold, Commodore Jones fell quickly from political favor and faced a court-martial that lasted from December 1850 to February 1851.²³ Pressured financially, Jones in September 1852 agreed to accept \$1,200 as a price for the freedom of Griffin Dobson's family.²⁴ The deed of sale names "Cinthia about thirty years old. Her

²⁰ Smith, *Thomas Ap Catesby Jones*, 140.

²¹ Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Rush to Gold: The French and the California Gold Rush, 1848-1854*, (Yale University, 2013), 1818.

²² Smith, *Thomas Ap Catesby Jones*, 142.

²³ Smith, "Griffin Dobson Virginia Slave," 286.

²⁴ Smith, *Thomas Ap Catesby Jones*, 161.

children Polly aged about ten years, Walt twelve, Beverly nine, Henry seven and Edmund about five years old.”

Following the purchase of his family’s freedom, Griffin Dobson returned to San Francisco where he would later be connected to another notable event of the Gold Rush era. This is described in the next section, as is the career of Griffin’s son Beverly, who would earn notoriety as a politically connected African American street contractor during the last decades of the 19th century.

Summary of Significant Themes

The primary theme of this period is the Euro-American settlement of California. This included many persons of African descent, including those of mixed African, Spanish and indigenous ancestry, as well as African Americans from the continental United States.



Plaque at the corner of Leidesdorff Street and Sacramento Street
Source: Wikipedia commons

Extant Properties

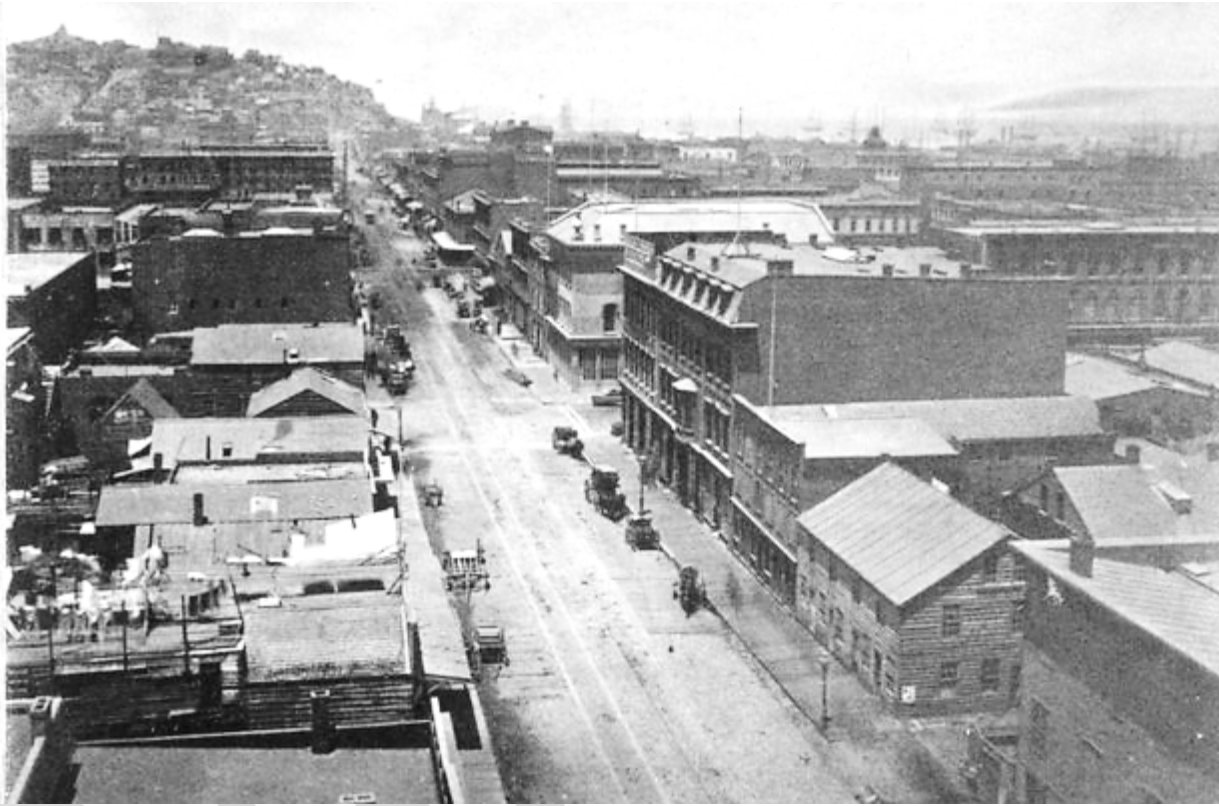
Almost no physical fabric associated with African Americans in San Francisco survives from this period. The exception is the grave of William Leidesdorff. There are also several commemorative sites associated with William Leidesdorff.

- Grave and headstone of William Leidesdorff, Mission Dolores

Commemorative Sites

- Plaque depicting William Leidesdorff, wall of 343 Sansome Street, southeast corner of Leidesdorff Street and Sacramento Street
- Statue of William Leidesdorff, lobby of the Selbach and Deans Building, 340-344 Pine Street.
- Sidewalk plaque honoring William Leidesdorff, Embarcadero sidewalk adjacent to the entrance to Sue Bierman Park

B. African Americans in San Francisco 1849-1905



Looking north along Sansome Street toward Telegraph Hill, circa 1870.
Source: Society of California Pioneers

The American conquest of California was cemented by the discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills. The ensuing Gold Rush lured thousands of people to San Francisco from all over the world, including small groups of African Americans and people of African descent from Latin America, Europe, and Africa. Though they faced prejudice in California, as they would anywhere else in the United States, African Americans in San Francisco defied both racist assumptions and attempts to introduce slavery and repression to California. Though their numbers were small, various African American entrepreneurs and community leaders, including Mary Ellen Pleasant and Peter Lester distinguished themselves among the wider community as businesspeople and resisters against institutional racism.

The Gold Rush

Gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill on January 24, 1848. Because of its huge harbor San Francisco was the logical disembarkation point for most prospective gold seekers arriving by sea. Most outfitted in San Francisco and quickly moved on to the Sierra Nevada goldfields. Those who struck it rich had few places to spend their fortunes outside San Francisco, and the City soon became home to hundreds of returning miners. Their business supported innumerable gambling parlors, houses of prostitution, saloons, and a full range of businesses designed to fleece the "Forty-niners."

The population of California ballooned during the Gold Rush. Between 1846 and 1852, when the state completed its first census, the population grew from approximately 100,000 Native Americans and 8,000 Mexicans, Americans, Europeans, and *Californios* (native-born Hispanic Californians of mixed Spanish, Mexican, and Indian origin) to an estimated 90,000 Native Americans and 260,949 non-Native people.

The diversity of the state's population was astounding, with people representing nearly every country in Europe and South America, every state in the union, China, Turkey, Hawaii, India, and Australia.²⁵

The Census of 1852 records San Francisco's population at 34,776. Of that figure, African Americans comprised some 464 persons, slightly over one percent of the City's population. By 1860, the number of African Americans in San Francisco had jumped to 1,176, slightly over two percent of the City's total population of 56,776.²⁶



African American miner at Auburn Ravine, 1852.
Source: Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Some African Americans who arrived in California during this time were slaves brought by settlers from the American South. One such person, known only in court records as "Mary," successfully petitioned local courts for her freedom from her owner. She argued that the United States had agreed under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo to uphold Mexican law until a new state constitution was adopted. Because slavery was forbidden in the Mexican Constitution, she argued, it remained illegal in California.²⁷ This argument was widely seen in legal circles to be valid and was often used prior to the adoption of California's first constitution.

In contrast to the settled communities of Europe or "Back East," society in San Francisco was fluid. People of humble origins often became rich overnight because gold prospecting was a low-cost undertaking that required only physical stamina, sense, and a bit of luck. In this nearly all-male and relatively egalitarian society, several African American gold miners became quite wealthy. In San Francisco at least, gold was the great leveler and many African Americans successfully resisted the racist assumptions of their White countrymen. Rudolph Lapp describes one such incident in *Blacks in Gold Rush California*:

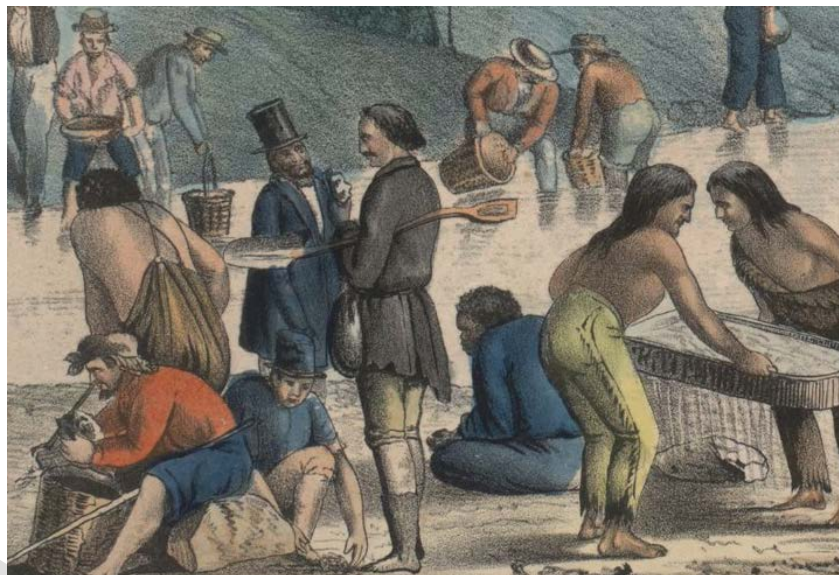
On a September day in 1848 a black man was walking near the San Francisco docks, when a white man who had just disembarked from a ship called to him to carry his luggage. The black cast him an indignant glance and walked away. After he had gone a few steps, he turned around and, drawing a small bag from his bosom, he said, "Do you think I'll lug trunks when I can get that

²⁵ 1852 California Census.

²⁶ 1852 California Census.

²⁷ Lapp, 9.

much in one day?" The sack of gold dust that he displayed was estimated by the white man to be worth more than one hundred dollars.²⁸



Detail from "California Gold Diggers, Mining Operations on the Western shore of the Sacramento River."

Source: Kelloggs & Comstock via Bancroft Library

Word soon got out in the free Black communities of the Northeast United States about the opportunities awaiting African Americans in California. Individuals who struck it rich encouraged their friends and family to try their luck. In 1850, the anti-slavery publication, the *Liberator*, published a letter signed by 37 Black men in San Francisco. These men, stating that they earned between \$100 and \$300 a month, had formed a mutual aid society to assist newcomers who wished to come to California. Many of the signatories were from free Black communities in New York and Massachusetts, especially New Bedford, Massachusetts. At least one all-Black mining company was founded in New York City to undertake the expensive and arduous trip to San Francisco.²⁹

San Francisco's pioneer Black population was wildly diverse. Though most of San Francisco's African Americans were from the Northeastern United States, mainly New York, Philadelphia and New Bedford, Massachusetts, many others were foreign-born, with Black residents claiming origins from several islands in the West Indies, Canada, Central America, South America, the Cape Verde Islands, the African continent, and several European countries, including Portugal, Spain, France, and England.³⁰

Certainly early censuses lacked the nuanced language necessary to draw an accurate racial portrait of a city like San Francisco, and complex combinations of ethnicities and racial mixtures likely led to vagaries and recording errors.³¹ However, much like other arrivals to the City, early African American settlers in San Francisco were characterized by certain self-selected traits. They were typically young, eager to

²⁸ Lapp, 12.

²⁹ Lapp, 13.

³⁰ Douglas H. Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 18.

³¹ Daniels, 82.

work and adventurous. They were also largely unburdened by the extreme poverty that would prohibit such a significant relocation in another time or place.

Despite the enthusiasm for “emigration” to California in the free Black communities of the Northeast, some worried about California potentially becoming a slave state. Though still a territory during the first two years of the Gold Rush, California’s dramatic population growth quickly led to statehood in 1850. Although Mexican law remained in effect until a new constitution was adopted, White migrants from the Deep South, Texas, Kentucky, Missouri, and other slaveholding states openly advocated for California to be admitted to the Union as a slave state. This possibility alarmed abolitionists, both White and Black, who stood strongly in favor of California remaining free. Fortunately, Northerners outnumbered Southerners in the Constitutional Convention and California was declared to be a free state in its new Constitution, which was adopted in October 1849.³² A year later, on September 9, 1850, California was admitted to the union as a free state.³³

Discrimination on the Frontier

The admission of California as a free state had been highly contentious because it upset the balance of power in the United States. Under the terms of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, states had been admitted in pairs, one slave and one free. The purpose of this agreement was to maintain an equal number of slave and free states and therefore equal representation in the Senate, but there was no slave state admitted in 1850. The Compromise of 1850, by which California was admitted to the union, resulted in the passage of the federal Fugitive Slave Act. This much-despised act, a carrot handed to the South in exchange for California’s admission, enacted significant penalties for those who “harbored” escaped slaves. Suddenly, all African Americans, including those living as free men and women in non-slave states, worried with good cause that they might be kidnapped and sold into slavery in the South. Consequently, many African Americans who might have migrated to California headed instead to Canada, which as a British dominion had outlawed slavery in 1833.

California lost more of its appeal as a sanctuary with the passage of the California Fugitive Slave Act of 1852. This law, passed with the support of White Southerners in the California Senate, was viewed by many as a back-door legalization of slavery in the state. Among its more odious provisions, the law compelled California’s Black residents to prove that they had lived in the state before statehood.³⁴ Any African American who could not prove that he or she had lived in California since 1849 could theoretically be sold into slavery. Even a Black person who was born free outside the South could be enslaved if someone was willing to testify that the individual was an escaped slave.³⁵



Abolitionist Peter Lester, ca. 1850.
Source: blackpast.org

³² Lapp, 14.

³³ Lapp, 130. There was at first the possibility that California would be divided into two states at the 35th parallel (aligning with the Missouri Compromise line), with Northern California admitted as a free state and Southern California as a slave state. Though the Wilmot Proviso essentially outlawed slavery in any of the newly conquered Mexican territories, there were nonetheless many Southerners who hoped to eventually expand slavery westward into New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California. Luckily the climate and terrain of the Southwest did not lend itself to cotton cultivation, reducing the incentive to import slavery.

³⁴ Lapp, 140-7.

³⁵ Lapp, 147.

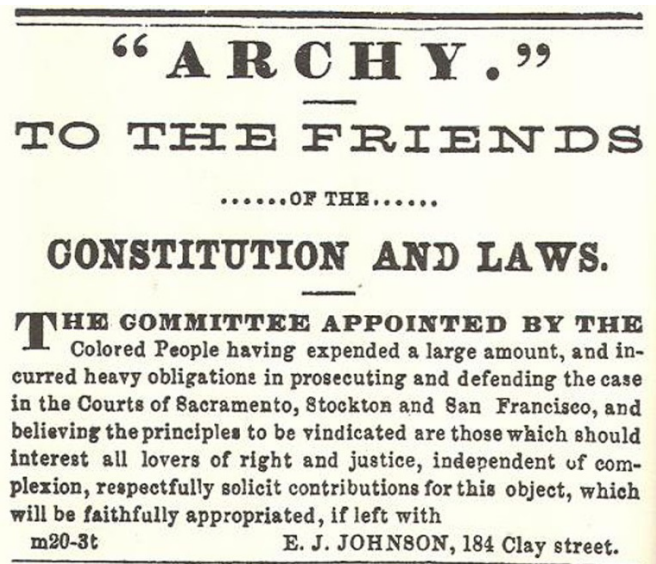
The hated law eventually expired in 1855 and it was not renewed. Following its expiration, African American Californians organized the first of several statewide “Colored Conventions” to alert African American slaves living in the state that they could claim their freedom. Additional conventions were held in 1856 and 1857 with similar goals. In San Francisco, such efforts were encouraged by local abolitionists, including the African American businessman and abolitionist, Peter Lester. A native of Philadelphia, Lester moved to San Francisco with his family in 1850 to open what would become a very successful boot and shoemaking business, the Pioneer Boot and Shoe Emporium.³⁶ He often invited slaves to his house to inform them of their legal rights. A German immigrant described Lester’s methods: “The wealthy California Negroes ... exhibit a great deal of energy and intelligence in saving their brothers.”³⁷

The Case of Archy Lee: 1857-1858

One of the first test cases involving a slave claiming his or her freedom following the expiration of the California Fugitive Slave Act involved an 18-year-old Black man named Archy Lee. Lee had been brought to the state in 1857 by Charles Stovall. Unwilling to go back to slavery when Stovall decided to return home to Mississippi, Archy Lee hid out in a Black-owned hotel in Sacramento. In January 1858, his owner sued for his return. After a series of court decisions and appeals in which Lee was represented by prominent abolitionist lawyers, the California Supreme Court decided that any person arriving in California with the intention to live, such as Charles Stovall, could not legally own slaves.

Though this decision should have freed Archy Lee, the court decided that because Stovall was not in good health that Lee should be sent back to Mississippi with Stovall. After learning of the court’s decision, several abolitionists intercepted Lee before he could be put aboard a ship headed out of San Francisco. As they were rowing back to shore the abolitionists were intercepted by local authorities, who then remanded Lee back into custody. This event launched a new round of trials, which after several twists and turns resulted in Archy Lee at last being declared a free man on April 14, 1858.³⁸

Lee was a hero to San Francisco’s African American community, many of whom had gone into debt to pay for his legal defense. After being fêted in one of the boardinghouses owned by Black businesswoman and abolitionist, Mary Ellen Pleasant (discussed in detail later in this chapter), Archy Lee decided to emigrate to Victoria, British Columbia, where he would be safe.³⁹ The case of Archy Lee was an important one for San Francisco’s pioneer African American community



Advertisement soliciting funds for Archy Lee’s defense, 1858.
Source: blackpast.org

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ruth F. Axe, ed., *Bound for Sacramento* (Claremont, CA: 1938), 144.

³⁸ Lapp, 151-2.

³⁹ Lapp, 153.

because it finally ended the threat of de-facto slavery in California by freeing any slaves brought to the state. On the other hand, it did little for escaped slaves who came to California on their own volition; they were still liable to be returned to their owners under the federal Fugitive Slave Act.⁴⁰

The Kidnapping of Henry Dobson

As discussed in the previous chapter, Griffin Dobson was a slave who served as the personal servant to Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War and during the first year of the Gold Rush. He obtained his freedom in May 1849 and earned enough money to purchase the freedom of his family in 1852. He then returned to San Francisco where he was employed as a porter in a bank, and later worked as a waterman.

In 1859, a story appeared in the *Sacramento Daily Union* about the kidnapping of Dobson's son, Henry, and an attempt to sell him into slavery. According to the newspaper article, Griffin Dobson apprenticed Henry to Sanford A. Taylor, a barber in Crescent City. Mr. Taylor's business failed, however, and he moved to Victoria, leaving young Dobson behind. Henry was soon kidnapped by Daniel and J. P. Wright of Missouri, who intended to sell Henry into slavery. The Wrights took Henry to San Francisco and had him put below on the steamer *Uncle Sam*. But on the voyage to Panama, "a colored man named Lewis, and the baker, a white man, finding out the circumstances, took the boy into custody and kept him on the steamer while the Wrights sailed on."⁴¹

The story spread as far as New York, where *The Weekly Anglo-African* mentioned it in "Our Letter from San Francisco." It began: "We had an attempt to kidnap among us. Griffin Dobson, one of our most enterprising colored men in this city, who has been for two years past engaged in the waterman business, bound out one of his sons to learn the barber's business, at Crescent City."⁴² The rest of the article provided no new details about the kidnapping, but it did mention that the steamer *Uncle Sam* seemed "to be an unfortunate steamer," as the previous year it had been the boat that was to carry Archy Lee back to enslavement. The incident weighed heavily on Griffin Dobson's mind. In 1862 he advertised in the *San Francisco Bulletin* that "All persons are hereby warned against harboring, shipping or advising any one of the four boys of the subscriber, against his will or without his consent."

Exodus to British Columbia

During the late 1850s, San Francisco's Black community faced another challenge from pro-slavery Southerners in the California legislature. In 1858, Assemblyman J. B. Warfield of Nevada County introduced a bill to forbid the "immigration" of any people of African descent to California, including American-born Blacks from other states and U.S. territories. The bill would have required all resident African Americans to register and carry identification papers at all times. People who could not produce papers asserting that they had lived in California prior to 1858 were liable under the bill to be "deported," and if they did not have any money they would be forced into involuntary labor to pay their passage "home."

Though the Warfield bill ultimately failed to make it out of committee, many local African Americans had had enough of the seemingly continual barrage of racist legislation coming out of Sacramento. Some made plans to emigrate. Initially Mexico and Panama (then part of Colombia) were considered as possible destinations, but some voiced concerns that these nations would eventually be absorbed by the

⁴⁰ Lapp 156.

⁴¹ "Attempted Kidnapping," *Sacramento Daily Union*, July 11, 1859.

⁴² "Our Letter from San Francisco," *The Weekly Anglo-African*, August 20, 1859.

United States.⁴³ They then turned their attention toward Canada, which as a British dominion had been free from slavery since 1833. Canada, long the final destination of the Underground Railroad, had attracted thousands of African Americans, mostly to Ontario. Plans became actions after Jeremiah Naglee, captain of the British steamer *Commodore*, attended a community meeting at A. M. E. Zion Church. A White man, Naglee informed those in attendance that Black people were treated with respect in Canada and he offered to transport anyone who desired to leave on his next voyage to Victoria, British Columbia. On April 22, 1858, some 200 people took up Captain Naglee on his offer, including Archy Lee, Peter Lester, and many of San Francisco's best-known and most prosperous Black community members.⁴⁴

Many of the pioneers settled on Salt Spring Island, where they bought land, built homes, and established a small community of fishermen and farmers. Over the next several months, letters from emigrants to Victoria arrived in San Francisco. These letters reported on ample job opportunities, inexpensive real estate, and the relative lack of racial discrimination in the British territory. These glowing reports caused an unknown number of African Americans to emigrate between 1858 and 1860. Some apparently struck it rich in the gold fields of Fraser River, but others made a living from farming, land speculation or various other commercial enterprises.⁴⁵ In 1860, the U.S. Census recorded fewer than 1,200 African Americans in San Francisco, or approximately 2 percent of the City's total population of 56,802. Though this figure represented an increase since 1852, it would have been much larger if some 400 to 800 African Americans had not emigrated to Canada.⁴⁶ Men outnumbered women almost two-to-one (711 to 435), reflecting a lingering imbalance between the sexes in San Francisco among all races.⁴⁷

Employment Trends

Despite the overall live-and-let-live atmosphere that characterized San Francisco during the Gold Rush era, racial prejudice prohibited most African Americans from attaining professional jobs in the emerging merchant city. Indeed, most African Americans who arrived in San Francisco during this period were either self-employed or employed in culinary or maritime occupations. Many worked on the merchant ships that navigated the inland waterways to Sacramento and Stockton. Still others operated ship-to-shore launches, carrying new arrivals and their luggage to the beach and piers in Yerba Buena Cove. Some transferred skills they had learned on ships to mainland occupations, with recorded instances of ships' cooks starting restaurants, waiters opening dining halls, and porters establishing boarding houses.⁴⁸

One of San Francisco's earliest restaurants, and long one of its most lucrative, was the Battery House. Though established by a pair of White New Yorkers, the cooking and day-to-day operations were handled by two African American men who came west with the restaurant's owners. This story was repeated elsewhere in San Francisco. According to the 1852 census, of the City's 464 Black residents, 67 (14 percent) were employed as cooks in restaurants, cafés, and hotels and boardinghouses.⁴⁹

⁴³ Lapp, 240.

⁴⁴ Lapp, 242.

⁴⁵ Lapp, 247.

⁴⁶ Lapp, 262.

⁴⁷ San Francisco City Directory, 1860.

⁴⁸ Daniels, 77.

⁴⁹ Lapp, 96.

Other common occupational categories among San Francisco's pioneer African American population included barbers, stewards, and shoe-shiners and boot-blackers. Though boot-blackening was considered to be a menial job by most people, it could often be quite lucrative, with individuals stationed in front of popular gambling houses and hotels earning upwards of 15 dollars a day (the equivalent in today's purchasing power of more than four hundred dollars).⁵⁰ Employment as a steward could also be extremely remunerative. During the Gold Rush, Black stewards could reportedly earn upwards of \$150 a day.⁵¹

Several prosperous stewards invested their savings in real estate or stocks. In 1870, an African American stewardess named Salina Williams who was employed on a Sacramento steamer owned \$12,000 in real estate, putting her among the top-ten wealthiest Black San Franciscans.⁵² Other common occupational categories included white-washers, porters, fishermen, and general laborers.⁵³ Skilled occupations were uncommon. The 1860 Census reported only six Black carpenters in all of San Francisco.⁵⁴

Some African Americans operated successful entertainment venues, including The Iron Clad at 420 Pacific Avenue, and The Lincoln Exchange on Washington Street (buildings no longer extant).⁵⁵ These venues employed African Americans at all levels, including entertainers, chefs, waitresses and doormen. As early as 1850, there was at least one African American-owned and operated boarding house on Kearny Street. Though it is not known what it was called, it was probably the Harper & West Hotel, owned by William H. Harper.⁵⁶ Not far from this business was a used goods store owned by John Ross. Called Ross' Exchange, this business was located on Pacific Avenue (neither building extant).

One of the most important African American entrepreneurs in Gold Rush-era San Francisco was a New Bedford native named James P. Dyer. In 1851, he founded one of San Francisco's earliest soap factories. George Washington Dennis, a former slave who purchased his own freedom, made a small fortune from gambling and invested the proceeds in real estate. He then opened the Cosmopolitan Coal and Wood Yard, at 340 Broadway (not extant). By 1889, he was one of San Francisco's wealthiest Black residents, with a fortune estimated at \$50,000.⁵⁷

On the whole, though, African Americans struggled in competition with Asians and Europeans for jobs. As observed in *Pioneer Urbanites*, African Americans "watched helplessly as foreigners displaced them beginning in the 1860s; they assumed the role of pawns in struggles between white labor unions and management."⁵⁸ The recruitment of Chinese to work on construction of the Central Pacific Railroad was especially troubling. One of San Francisco's African American newspapers, the *Elevator*, stated derisively of the Chinese that "we have enough, and more, of them here now, eating out our substance, polluting the atmosphere with their filth."⁵⁹

Competition with the Chinese was also discussed in a *San Francisco Chronicle* article appearing at the turn of the century: "San Francisco Has No Regular Negro Quarter, But She Has A Peculiar Negro

⁵⁰ Lapp, 97.

⁵¹ Oscar Lewis, *This was San Francisco* (New York: 1962), 180-1.

⁵² Lewis, 180-1.

⁵³ Lapp, 99.

⁵⁴ Daniels, 33.

⁵⁵ Daniels, 80.

⁵⁶ Lapp, 98.

⁵⁷ Daniels, 30.

⁵⁸ Daniels, 32.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Colony.” One of the specific issues was the inability of African Americans to compete with the Chinese for domestic service positions.

Several causes have combined to create this result. In the first place, the Chinese have been in the field all along as house servants and have left very little demand for the colored servant class. As a result, the immigration of these people has been very slight. Los Angeles has two negroes to this city's one; and most of these are employed just as the colored people of this city are not. Many of the latter are the descendants of the house servants of early days, brought to the city in its gilded youth by the first families of the day. Many are the children of free negroes who came to California from Northeastern states in the days of '49, attracted by the same spirit of adventure and hope of wealth which brought the white men here in those strenuous times. On leaving their early service, these colored people found that the Chinese were established in the positions which were usually theirs to fill, and most of them turned their attention to other means of livelihood, with the result that there is a small but select class of negroes in the city, some engaged in responsible positions, others in business for themselves. Intelligent, well educated, industrious, they have won success in the world, substantial and visible proof of which are their families, established in comfortable homes of their own.⁶⁰

Another factor limiting employment opportunities for African Americans was the rise of White labor unions. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, San Francisco's Black population lost ground to unionized European immigrants, who took over many occupational categories once open to African Americans, including hotel work, laundry work and jobs in maritime industries.⁶¹ In 1889, over 200 African American employees of the Palace Hotel were summarily dismissed and replaced with unionized White labor.⁶²



A San Francisco saloon at the turn of the 20th century.
Source: Shorpy.com

⁶⁰ San Francisco Chronicle, February 7, 1904.

⁶¹ Daniels, 17.

⁶² Daniels, 16.

With unions choking off access to craft and industrial jobs, San Francisco's African American community found itself increasingly relegated to menial service jobs and day labor. Indeed, as early as the 1850s, Mifflin Gibbs recounted how he was forced to abandon carpentry because "white employees finding me at work on the same building would 'strike.'⁶³ As late as 1900, only four African American carpenters belonged to the Carpenters' Union, which had over 2,500 members. As the NAACP journal, *Crisis*, (edited by W. E. B. Du Bois) correctly pointed out, White trade unions had effectively "held the Negro out and down" in San Francisco.⁶⁴

During the late 19th century some African Americans were employed in the local whaling industry. Whaling had historically been centered in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the hometown of many of the City's early Black residents. In New Bedford, many crewmembers were Black or mulatto—mostly natives of the West Indies or Portugal's African colony of Cabo Verde (the Cape Verde Islands). This tradition of employing African American crewmen continued after the American whaling industry relocated to San Francisco in the 1870s.

William T. Shorey, an African American whaler, eventually rose to the rank of captain, something unheard of on the East Coast. Shorey was born in Barbados, the son of a Scottish sugar planter and a local woman of mixed African and Amerindian ancestry. Whaling brought him to San Francisco in the 1870s, and in 1886 he became a captain. Known as the "Black Ahab," Shorey married the daughter of a prominent African American family and prospered in his new life, remaining in the business until 1908 when steamships took the place of sailing vessels.⁶⁵ Shorey died at his home in Oakland in 1919.



William T. Shorey, ca. 1905.
Source: Oakland Public Library

Residential Patterns

African American San Franciscans were little different from other communities in that the primary determinant in choosing a place to live was its proximity to one's employment. As a community heavily represented in maritime and hospitality businesses, the Gold Rush era saw many African Americans living near Yerba Buena Cove. Long since filled, this crescent-shaped harbor once extended from Rincon Point to Clark's Point, at the foot of Telegraph Hill.⁶⁶ Some of the City's single Black men lived in a multi-ethnic neighborhood called "Chili Hill," named thusly because many Latin-American immigrants from Chile and Peru lived there.⁶⁷ This neighborhood was located on the southern slope of Telegraph Hill in what is now North Beach.

⁶³ Mifflin W. Gibbs, *Shadow and Light: An Autobiography* (New York: 1968), 40.

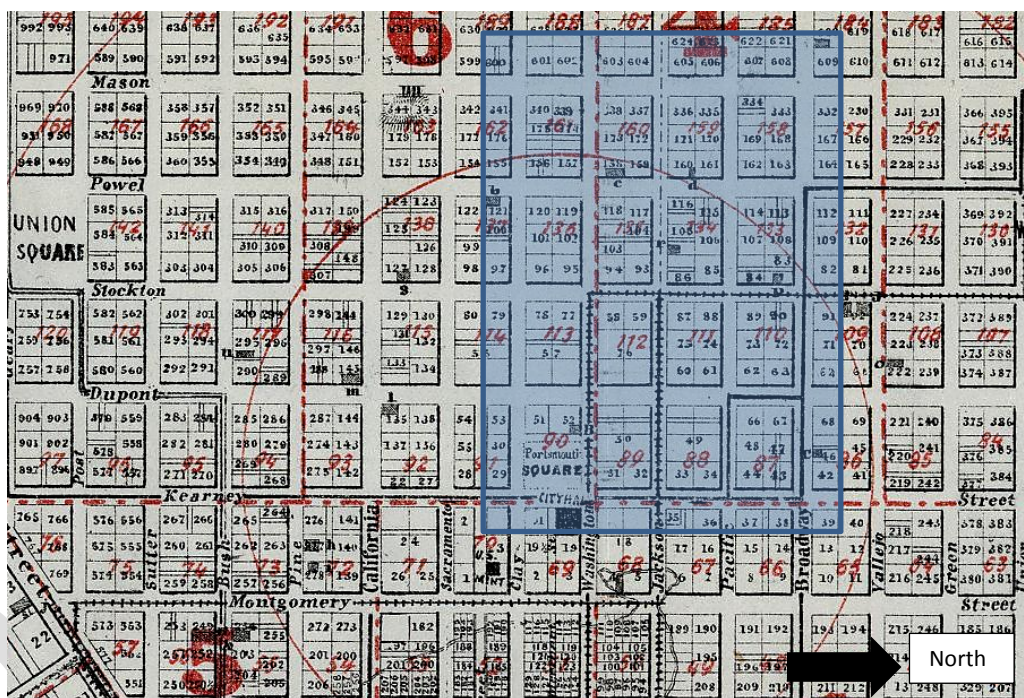
⁶⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, as quoted in Daniels, 34.

⁶⁵ Shorey, 98.

⁶⁶ Daniels, 76.

⁶⁷ Lapp, 103.

Unlike the Chinese, who were legally restricted to living in Chinatown, in theory there were no legal limitations on where African Americans could live in nineteenth-century San Francisco.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, many Black San Franciscans lived along the northern edge of Chinatown, a low-prestige, multi-ethnic area that was close to the waterfront and other centers of employment. The boundaries of the African American neighborhood were not distinct, but encompassed areas from Broadway on the north, Clay Street on the south, Kearney Street on the east and Mason Street on the west.



1863 A. Gensoul map of San Francisco. The rectangle indicates the densest area of African American settlement during the late 19th century.
Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, edited by authors

The African American presence was densest in the eastern portion of this area. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, one-third of the City's Black population lived in a six-block area bounded by Stockton Street, Kearney Street, Washington Street, and Broadway. They lived among Chinese, Europeans, and American-born Whites.⁶⁹ As shown in the map above, this area was served by two horse car street railways by the early 1860s and readily accessible to service jobs in the commercial core.

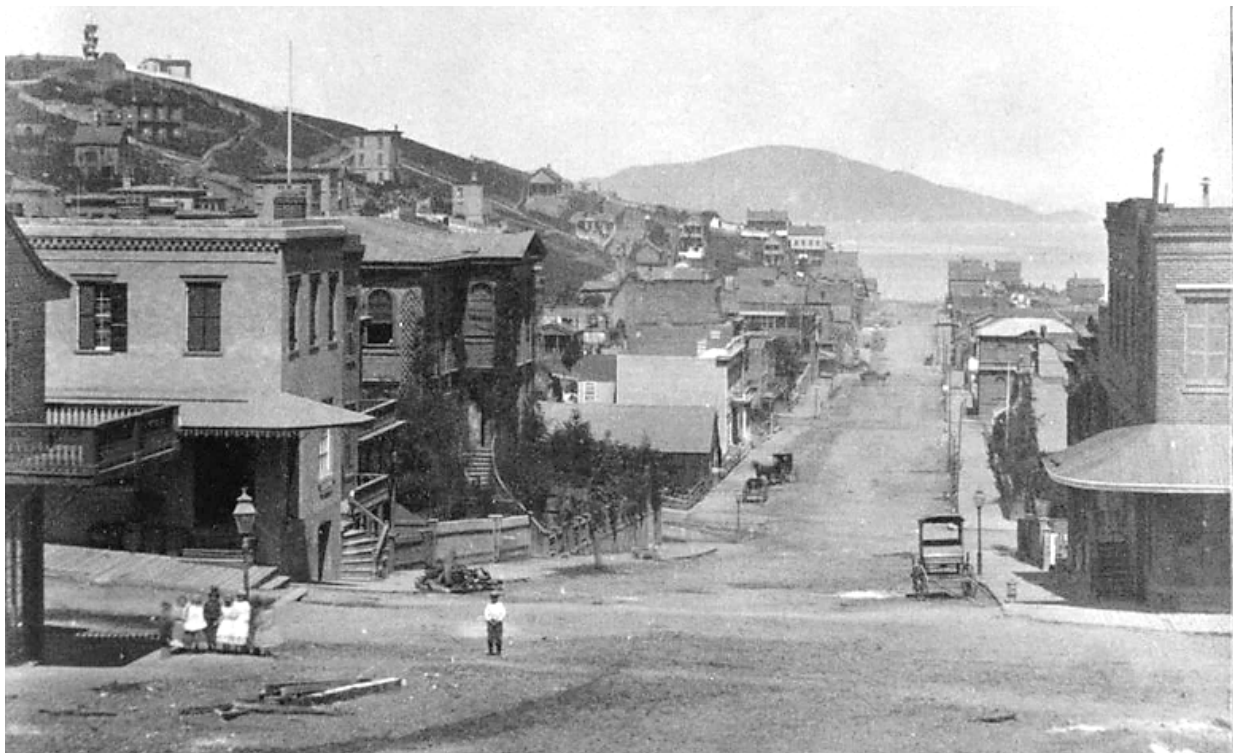
The area with the highest concentration of African Americans was a narrow alley in Chinatown called Stone Street, directly adjacent to the Chinese Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Branching off the north side of Washington Street, between Stockton and Powell streets, this narrow lane, described by newspapers as the "colored colony,"⁷⁰ was lined by small dwellings and flats (none extant) that housed 34 African Americans out of a total of 53 residents—the only African American-majority enclave in San Francisco at that time.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Daniels, 79.

⁶⁹ Daniels, 97.

⁷⁰ "The Mystery Cleared Up," Daily Alta, March 26, 1888.

⁷¹ Daniels, 98.



Mason Street looking north from Clay Street, circa 1865. This area was home to many African Americans.

Source: Society of California Pioneers

Though forbidden from intermarrying with Whites—California’s anti-miscegenation laws were not struck down until 1948—there were no legal restrictions preventing African Americans from marrying other people of color. Thus, given their mutual proximity, some African Americans did marry members of the City’s much larger Chinese population.⁷²

The African American presence was by no means restricted to the northern area of Chinatown. Later in the nineteenth century, as the primary source of African American employment shifted away from the waterfront to the railroads and hotels south of Market Street, the residential center of Black San Francisco shifted south as well. Though they never formed a majority, U.S. Census records from the 1880s and 1890s reveal several distinct clusters of Black families along Minna, Tehama, and Natoma streets.⁷³

Because they formed such a small minority, more prosperous Blacks could live largely wherever they liked as African Americans were not perceived as a threat by the White majority at this time.⁷⁴ The absence of a distinct African American residential quarter was discussed in a turn-of-the-century article appearing in the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

J. S. Francis, editor of the *Western Outlook*, a weekly devoted to the interest of the colored people in this city, explains the absence of a negro quarter here, as well as the grade reached by

⁷² Daniels, 97.

⁷³ Daniels, 97.

⁷⁴ Daniels, 81.

many of the of the colored residents, by the fact that there is no strong color line drawn in this city. The colored people have been allowed to rent in most parts of the city, and have not been limited to one locality He explains the status of the colored part of the population as due in part to conscious effort on the part of influential members of the race, who have a certain authority in the matter of regulating immigration. They have made every effort to discourage the undesirable element, and to summon to positions in the city negroes of education and general ability.⁷⁵

There was a Black commercial and institutional presence located closer to Market Street. As related in *A Walking Tour of the Black Presence in San Francisco During the Nineteenth Century*, a number of prominent African American persons, businesses and institutions were also clustered in the area between Washington, Bush, Kearney and Sansome streets. This included newspapers such as the *Pacific Coast Appeal*, *Western Outlook* and *Western Appeal Spokesman*, as well as the San Francisco Athenaeum and a boarding house owned by Mary Ellen Pleasant. Below is a list compiled for that publication.

BUSH STREET	MERCHANT STREET
327 Jacob Thompson	711 Peter K. Cole
348 Mathew A. Phipps	105 Satchell & Farrell
Dodson & Sanches	541 Peter Anderson
BUSH STREET THEATRE	543 William Gordon
Hyers Sisters	642 Mercier & Cassey
MONTGOMERY STREET	645 Richard T. Houston
425 <i>Western Outlook</i>	UNION HOTEL
502 <i>SF Sentinel</i>	Morris & Buler
525 William H. Seth	Brown & Pierre
617 <i>Western Appeal Spokesman</i>	CLAY STREET
CALIFORNIA STREET	508 William H. Blake
321 William McDonald	520 G. T. Brown & Company
432 David C. Lee	546 Nathaniel Godfrey
465 Barney Fletcher	547 David C. Lee
Henry M. Collins	622 Philip A. Bell
530 Thomas W. Pierre	636 Lester & Gibbs
539 John Meshaw	640 Cary & Susand
PINE STREET	SANSOME STREET
406 Phillips & Company	NIANTIC HOTEL
WASHINGTON STREET	George W. Gordon
1006 Lombard Boarding House	405 <i>SF Pacific Coast Appeal</i>
Horace N. Bentley	300 Joseph Stevens
Alexander C. Taylor	215 Horace N. Bentley
Nelson A. Primus	SACRAMENTO STREET
920 Pleasant Boarding House	521 Shadrack Howard
John Francis	631 N. Gray & Company
918 James Monroe Whitfield	HALLECK STREET
Mrs. Johnson Lodging House	62 Wilford R. Strickland
917 San Francisco Athenaeum Bldg.	
710 Dr. Ezra Rothschild Johnson	

List of addresses associated with San Francisco's African American community during the second half of the 19th century.

Source: The San Francisco African American Historical & Cultural Society

After growing very quickly during the Gold Rush, San Francisco's African American population stagnated during the last half of the nineteenth century. By the Civil War, California's Black population totaled around 5,000, with new arrivals largely balancing departures. By 1880, there were 6,018 Blacks residing in the entire state, mostly in Northern California, with the majority living in San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton and Marysville. By 1890, this figure had nearly doubled to 11,322. Though an impressive jump,

⁷⁵ San Francisco Chronicle, February 7, 1904.

California's Black population remained tiny in comparison with most Eastern and Midwestern states. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, most of the growth in California's African American population occurred in communities where jobs in the state's fast-growing railroad sector were available, especially Los Angeles and Oakland.⁷⁶

Between the Civil War and 1900, San Francisco's Black population slowly recovered from the exodus to Canada, growing from 1,176 in 1860, to 1,628 in 1880, and 1,847 in 1890. Nonetheless, San Francisco's African American population did not keep pace with the City's overall population growth, which stood at almost 300,000 in 1890. At this juncture Blacks comprised a little over half of one percent of the City's population, the lowest percentage ever. In comparison, San Francisco's Chinese population stood at 25,833, or 11.5 percent of the City's population.

Between 1890 and 1900, San Francisco's Black population actually declined, shrinking to 1,654, or less than half of one percent of the City's total population of 342,782. In comparison, New York's Black population in 1900 stood at 60,666 (1.8 percent), Philadelphia at 62,613 (4.8 percent), New Orleans at 77,714 (27.1 percent), and Atlanta at 35,727 (39.8 percent). Though Oakland's Black population (1,026) was still smaller than San Francisco's, it was growing much faster and comprised 1.5 percent of that city's total population.⁷⁷

Reasons for San Francisco's declining Black population were many. The first and most significant reason was the region's isolation from the traditional heartland of African American settlement in the South. Though several cities had experienced significant growth in their Black populations before 1900, including New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis, the West Coast was much farther away from the South than the major cities of the Northeast and Midwest. It was also expensive to travel across the continent, especially without the assurance of steady work. A cross-country railroad ticket cost between \$65 and \$140 in 1900.

Civic Institutions

Though many African Americans who came to San Francisco during the Gold Rush went straight to work in the goldfields, others tried their luck in the cities, of which only San Francisco and Sacramento warranted the description as such. The newcomers became part of an almost entirely male, frontier society with few rules and many vices. As mentioned previously, the unstable environment led to the founding of mutual aid societies, including the Mutual Benefit and Relief Society, founded by 37 African Americans from New Bedford, Massachusetts. This organization was dedicated to helping Black newcomers find jobs and housing, as well as assisting members during hard times.⁷⁸ Nothing is known about the subsequent activities of this organization, or many other pioneer social service and religious organizations founded in San Francisco during the Gold Rush era. Society was extremely transitory, a characteristic unfavorable to institutional longevity. There were, however, a few organizations and cultural institutions founded during this period that remain in existence today.

The Athenaeum

Members of San Francisco's Black community convened in July 1853 at a house located at 273 Washington Street (not extant) to found the City's first social club for African Americans. Called The

⁷⁶ Lapp, 269.

⁷⁷ Daniels, 15.

⁷⁸ Lapp, 95.

Athenaeum, the institute housed the Athenaeum Saloon on the first floor and the Athenaeum Institute on the second floor. Here, African Americans would meet and socialize over drinks and games in the saloon, which was managed by Monroe Taylor and James Riker (with financial backing from Mary Ellen Pleasant), and reconvene upstairs for lectures, debates and other intellectual activities. The Athenaeum Institute's first director was a businessman named Jacob Francis and its secretary was William H. Newby, a well-known daguerreotypist from New York City.⁷⁹ Its founders included several prominent businessmen and abolitionists, including J. H. Townsend, Mifflin W. Gibbs, James R. Starkey, W. H. Harper, William H. Newby and E. R. Johnson. Within a year of its founding, the organization had 85 dues-paying members, \$2,000 in funds, and 800 books in its collection.⁸⁰

The Athenaeum Institute hosted debates, meetings and published reports describing the activities of San Francisco's African American community. In 1854, it published a directory of businesses and institutions founded by members of San Francisco's Black community, including two joint-stock companies, four boot and shoemakers, four clothing stores, eight express and livery wagon companies, two furniture shops, twelve public houses, two restaurants, two billiard saloons, sixteen barber shops, two bathhouses, one reading room and library, one Masonic lodge and one brass band. The directory also tallied the rough numbers of African Americans employed in various occupations in San Francisco, including 100 mechanics, 20 draymen, 100 porters, 150 stewards, 300 waiters and 200 cooks.⁸¹ Today's African American Historical and Cultural Society is descended from The Athenaeum.

A local source of anti-slavery sentiment, the Athenaeum Institute diligently fought for the rights of San Francisco's African American residents. Two of the Institute's major causes included securing the right to vote and the ability to testify against Whites in court. The right to testify was especially important. Without it, African Americans were vulnerable to exploitation in business or beatings by hoodlums.⁸² In 1852, local activists led by David W. Ruggles and Mary Ellen Pleasant founded the Franchise League with the goal of securing these basic civil rights.⁸³ Despite the tireless work of the group's volunteers and the political advocacy of leaders such as Philip A. Bell, publisher of the *San Francisco Elevator*, these rights were slow in coming. Though the right to testify in court was achieved in 1863, California's African American men did not receive the right to vote until the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, five years after the end of the Civil War.⁸⁴

Masonic Lodges

It appears that Blacks have been members of the Freemasons since the organization's U.S. inception. The first lodge specifically chartered for Black Freemasons was Boston's African Lodge No. 459, from which all Black lodges claim descent. When Freemason Phillip Buchanan left his lodge in Pennsylvania sometime around 1850, he requested a charter from the Most Worshipful National Grand Lodge to found a lodge in San Francisco.⁸⁵ Hannibal Lodge No. 1 was established in June of 1852 as the oldest Prince Hall lodge in the West. In 1855 Hannibal Lodge became a Grand Lodge associated with Philomathean Lodge No. 2 in Sacramento (1853) and Victoria Lodge No. 3 in San Francisco (1855). From at least 1861 to 1872, Hannibal Lodge met at a hall located on the northeast corner of Mason and

⁷⁹ San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, *A Walking Tour of the Black Presence in San Francisco during the Nineteenth Century* (San Francisco: 1974), 3-4.

⁸⁰ Lapp, 101.

⁸¹ *Alta California* (April 7, 1854).

⁸² Albert S. Broussard, *Black San Francisco* (Lawrence, Kansas: The University of Kansas Press, 1993), 16.

⁸³ Broussard, 17.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ "Welcome," Hannibal Lodge No. 1, Accessed April 4, 2015, <http://hanniballodge1.org/site/>.

Broadway. In 1873 they moved into a new hall on the southwest corner of Jackson and Powell streets which they shared with Victoria Lodge No. 3 (neither building extant). There was also a ladies' auxiliary called the "Ark and Dove."⁸⁶

During the early 20th century, Hannibal Lodge met at 1547 Steiner Street in the Western Addition (not extant). Sometime prior to 1950 the lodge began meeting in a hall on the top floor of 2804 Bush Street, where the organization continues today. Recent listing show the Victoria lodge as meeting at 111 Raymond Avenue in the Visitation Valley neighborhood. This building dates from 1926 and was also used as Shriners Lodge Thutmose Temple, No. 74. More information is needed to understand how long Victoria Lodge has used the building.

African American Newspapers

Almost immediately upon settling in San Francisco African Americans began to organize and advocate for civil rights. In addition to subscribing to Eastern abolitionist papers, most notably Frederick Douglass' weekly *North Star* (later renamed *Frederick Douglass' Paper*), Black San Franciscans published newspapers and journals locally to educate people about local and national issues. These newspapers were immensely important in the African American community, which included a number of gifted writers and orators.

The Mirror of the Times and William H. Newby

The first African American newspaper on the West Coast, *The Mirror of the Times*, was established in San Francisco in 1856 by William H. Newby, Jonas Holland Townsend and William Yates.⁸⁷ Born in 1828 in Virginia to an enslaved father and free mother, William H. Newby grew up in Philadelphia where he was active in the Black community's literati, including participation in the Library Company of Colored Persons. He was also a Mason. He worked as a barber and daguerreotypist before moving to California in 1851. Once in San Francisco, he threw himself into developing a Black academic community similar to that of Philadelphia.⁸⁸ He, along with Jonas Townsend, M. W. Gibbs, E. J. Johnson and others founded the San Francisco Athenaeum, a literary debating society in 1853.⁸⁹

Newby's major literary efforts in California centered on his work with the *Mirror of the Times*, although today only a few copies survive. Other known examples of Newby's writings include the columns that he wrote as the Western Contributor to *Frederick Douglass's Paper*. Assuming the penname "Nubia," Newby wrote over a dozen columns in the mid-1850s, all to satisfy what he termed, "your great interest in all that concerns the welfare of our people." His topics included California politics, San Francisco commerce and banking, Chinese immigrants and the possibility of annexing Hawaii. In many of these articles he attempted to portray Black San Francisco as a highly civilized city of great promise.⁹⁰

Newby was a driving force behind the California Colored Conventions held in Sacramento in 1855, 1856 and 1857. The conventions had as their goal securing the right of Blacks to vote and testify in court. For the First Colored Convention, Newby was Chairman of the Committee and Resolutions, the most important leadership position. One of the convention's resolutions was that "The laws of the State of

⁸⁶ "Dedication of a New Masonic Hall, *The Elevator*, May 10, 1873.

⁸⁷ San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, 3-4.

⁸⁸ Eric Gardner, *Unexpected Places Relocating Nineteenth Century African American Literature*, (University Press of Mississippi), 2010, 105.

⁸⁹ "Obituary," *Pacific Appeal*, Volume II No. 112, June 20, 1863.

⁹⁰ Gardner, 106.

California, disenfranchising its colored citizens, on the ground of color, are a foul blot upon the Statutes of the State.”⁹¹

Newby’s involvement in the 1857 efforts for the Third Colored Convention, held at St. Cyprian Church, was cut short when he accepted a position as Secretary to the French consul to Haiti, Patrice Dillon.⁹² His stay in Haiti was short-lived, as Dillon died on the journey from France to Haiti. Upon his return, Newby attempted to resuscitate the diminishing Athenaeum, while also forming the Dillon Literary Society. With his health declining and only a few members, that organization failed.⁹³ Newby died in San Francisco in 1863. His funeral procession included thirty carriages forming the largest procession ever conducted in the San Francisco Black Community. He was given full Masonic Honors and was buried in Lone Mountain Cemetery (not extant).⁹⁴

The Pacific Appeal

The *Mirror of the Times* newspaper established by Newby was published for seven years until it merged with the *Pacific Appeal*, founded in 1862. The inaugural issue declared that the name was indicative of the paper’s purpose. “We have nothing to disguise; we enter the field boldly, fearlessly, but with dignity and calmness to *Appeal* for the rights of the Colored Citizens of this State.” From its inception through at least the 1870s the paper’s offices were located at 79 Merchant Street on the southwest corner with Sansome Street (not extant)



The first issue of the *Pacific Appeal*, April 5, 1862.
Source: California Digital Library Newspaper Collection

One of the founders of the paper was Philip A. Bell, who in the 1830s had helped found New York’s *Weekly Advocate*, the second-oldest African American newspaper in America (later renamed the *Colored American*). He later wrote for the *Philadelphia Elevator* and the *New York Anglo-African*. In New York, Bell helped escaped slaves find jobs or continue on to Canada.

⁹¹ Colored Convention *Proceedings*, 41.

⁹² “Obituary.”

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Lapp, 263.

Bell arrived in San Francisco in 1860 and founded the *Pacific Appeal* two years later with Peter Anderson. He left the *Appeal* shortly after, however, and would launch his own newspaper, *The Elevator*, in 1865. Closely modeled on the design of the *Pacific Appeal*, *The Elevator* masthead carried the phrase “Equality Before the Law” on every issue until its final publication in 1898. In its early years the paper focused on Black voting rights and political representation. Bell was also a staunch advocate of decent educational facilities for African American youth.



Phillip A. Bell.

Source: Reprinted from *African Americans of San Francisco*, p. 22

In politics, Bell told his readers not to vote for party but for the most qualified candidate.⁹⁵ In 1878 he supported the National Labor Party, and served as the sergeant-at-arms during the state convention. Bell died destitute in San Francisco in 1889, and the paper published only intermittently after his death. Initially, the offices of *The Elevator* were located in the Phoenix Building at the corner of Sansome and Jackson streets, but later offices included 616 Battery Street (1870s), 529 Washington Street (1880s) and 622 Clay Street (1890s). None of these buildings remain extant.

⁹⁵Louis Henry Gates, Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, eds. *African American Lives*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 70.



Other African American newspapers published during this period included the *San Francisco Vindicator*, founded in 1887 and published by Robert Brown. The *San Francisco Sentinel* was founded in 1890 and had offices at 1020 Powell Street. The *Western Outlook* was founded in 1900 by Joseph S. Francis and J. L. Derrick and maintained offices on the 400 block of Montgomery Street.⁹⁶ Francis was member of the National Academy of Music and president of the San Francisco Lyceum. The *Western Outlook* later moved to Oakland where it was published from offices located along Seventh Street. None of these various newspaper offices appear to have been located in any buildings that exist today.

African American Churches

By the time African Americans first started arriving in California they had already built a thriving religious tradition apart from mainline White Protestant Christianity. Two groups that splintered off from the Methodist Church in the early nineteenth century were the African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) Bethel Church from Philadelphia and the A. M. E. Zion Church from New York. By the 1850s, Black Baptists and Presbyterians had also founded separate churches catering to African Americans in San Francisco. At these churches, all of which were located at the edges of Chinatown, African Americans could worship in their own space and according to their own traditions. The churches also served as important community gathering



A. M. E. Zion Church.

Source: First A. M. E. Zion Church

⁹⁶ Jan Batiste Adkins, "Literary prose and poetry in San Francisco's black newspapers, 1862-1885," (Unpublished Master's Thesis Paper 3973, San Jose State University, 2009), 1.

places, where news was exchanged, friendships formed and reinforced, and business discussed.

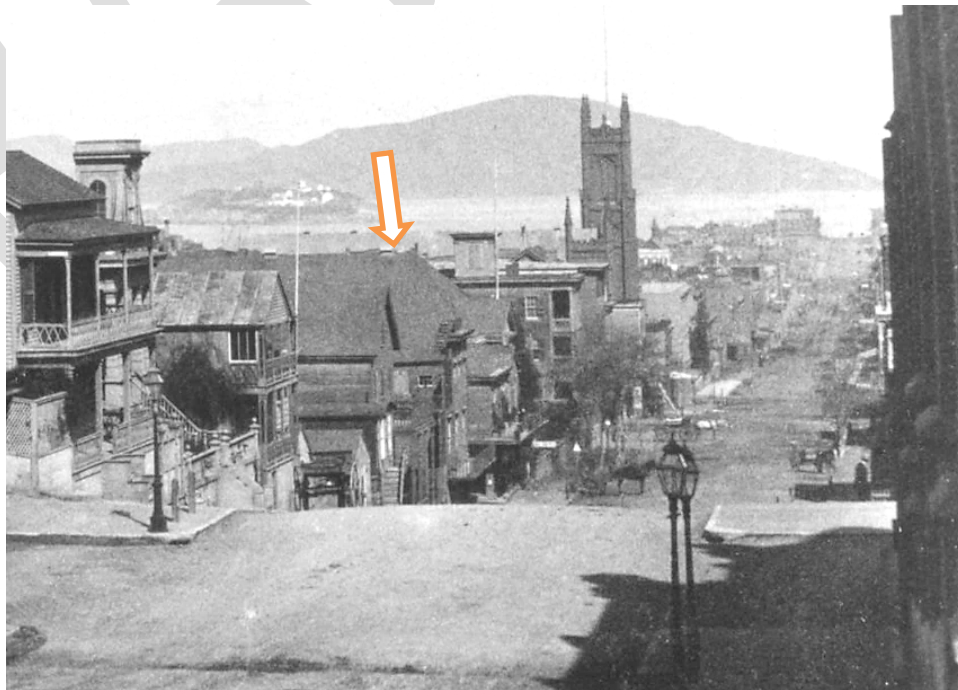
First A. M. E. Zion Church

San Francisco's earliest documented African American church was founded in 1852 by the Reverend John Jamison Moore and located on Stockton Street, between Broadway and Vallejo Street (not extant). By 1856, the congregation had moved nearby to a new \$4,000 brick building that was large enough to house a Sabbath school for 50 students, as well as a library (not extant).⁹⁷ It appears that First A.M.E. Zion represented the merger of two churches. The 1856 City Directory shows at that time Reverend Moore served as pastor for the "M.E. Church" on Stockton Street, as well as the Zion A.M.E. Church on Pacific Street between Powell and Mason streets (not extant). In 1864, the congregation purchased the former First Unitarian Church at 905 Stockton Street near Sacramento Street. This church, the most elaborate one yet, was home to the congregation when it was destroyed in the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. A blurry image from a newspaper article depicts the two-story, hipped-roof church with a two-story portico.

St. Cyprian & Little Pilgrim Churches

In 1854, the Reverend Barney Fletcher traveled to San Francisco from Sacramento to found another A. M. E. church called St. Cyprian. It was located on Jackson Street, between Stockton and Powell streets (not extant). Led by the Reverend T. M. D. Ward, St. Cyprian operated with a school in the basement. In 1857, Reverend Jeremiah Sanderson, a native of New Bedford, Massachusetts, opened a third A. M. E. church called the Little Pilgrim Church. It was located on Scott Street between Pacific Avenue and Broadway in what is today the Pacific Heights neighborhood (not extant).⁹⁸

34



Circa 1870 view east on Stockton Street from California Street. The arrow points to the roof of A. M. E. Zion Church. The tower beyond is the First Presbyterian Chinese Church.

⁹⁷ Lapp, 160.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Mary Ellen Pleasant also maintained a boarding house in this area.
Source: Society of California Pioneers

The church buildings themselves demonstrated much about Black ambitions in nineteenth-century San Francisco. Congregations vied with one another to build and furnish the most impressive church possible. After Reverend T. M. D. Ward became pastor of St. Cyprian Church, he moved this A. M. E. congregation to the former Little Pilgrim Church on Scott Street. Then, in 1862, he purchased an existing church building on Powell Street (not extant). Known as Grace Church, this “stately” building with its “gothic piers and handsome gilding” symbolized the growing wealth and ambition of the congregation. Costing \$5,500 to purchase, the congregation paid off the loan in 1864. Between 1865 and 1868, the congregation raised another \$6,600 to remodel the church, adding bells, a belfry, and an organ.⁹⁹

Third Baptist Church

Another important early African American church in San Francisco was the Third Baptist Church. In contrast to the A. M. E. churches, which mainly attracted people from the Northeast, the Third Baptist Church appealed largely to Black Southerners. The church was organized in 1852 in the home of Eliza and William Davis on Kearney Street. The congregation purchased the old First Baptist Church and moved it to a location on Grant Avenue at Greenwich Street (not extant) in what is today the North Beach neighborhood. Today this site is marked by a plaque for California Historical Landmark No. 1010, which was placed on the wall of 483-495 Greenwich Street in 1996. Third Baptist remained without a permanent pastor until 1857, when Reverend Charles Satchell, an ardent abolitionist from New Orleans arrived.¹⁰⁰ By 1863, the three A. M. E. churches had a combined membership of nearly 100, with the Third Baptist Church reporting 74 members.¹⁰¹ Though there were a handful of Black Catholics in San Francisco, there were no predominantly African American Catholic parishes in the City until World War II.

African American Schools

Schooling for any child was hard to come by in pioneer San Francisco, much less for African American children. It was not until 1851 that the California legislature even allowed local municipalities to establish and fund their own schools. In 1852, funds were made available for schools for White children, but no provisions were made for people of color, especially African Americans and Chinese. Essentially locked out of the White schools, pioneer African Americans lobbied for funds to establish their own. Until such funding was forthcoming, education of Black children was handled by the churches.

In San Francisco, St. Cyprian Church operated a school from 1854 until 1864.¹⁰² In June 1857, city authorities in San Francisco designated St. Cyprian’s school as San Francisco’s “Negro Children’s School” and began providing a salary to its staff. At that time the school educated 114 children and young adults.¹⁰³ The school was located on Jackson Street (now James Place), at the northern end of Chinatown (not extant). Another private school was the Livingston Institute. Founded in 1860 by the Reverend Barney Fletcher and the Reverend John J. Moore, the school was the first secondary school for Black children in the West and operated out of A. M. E. Zion.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Daniels, 118-9.

¹⁰⁰ Lapp, 161.

¹⁰¹ Lapp, 162.

¹⁰² Lapp, 167.

¹⁰³ Lapp, 169.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth L. Parker and James Abajian, *A Walking Tour of the Black Presence in San Francisco During the Nineteenth Century*, (San Francisco: San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, 1974), 1.

The dank, crowded basement of St. Cyprian was never adequate for a school, and in 1864 the school board finally built a dedicated public school for the City's African American children. This school, called the Negro Children's School, was located on Broadway near Powell Street on the northern edge of Chinatown (not extant).¹⁰⁵ Though located in an area that housed most of the City's African American residents, some Blacks did not live within walking distance of the Negro Children's School, forcing them to seek other options. In 1870, the school moved to a site on Vallejo Street, near Taylor Street in Russian Hill (not extant).

African American children were not customarily allowed to attend neighborhood public schools, though some did, especially light-skinned children who could "pass" as White. This policy was challenged in 1858 after a 15-year-old girl named Sarah Lester was threatened with expulsion from the City's high school despite receiving extremely high marks in the admissions tests. Sarah Lester was the daughter of the prominent African American abolitionist and boot-maker Peter Lester. After vociferous lobbying from the pro-slavery *San Francisco Herald*, the school board seemed to be on the verge of expelling Miss Lester in spite of threats by her White classmates to withdraw from the school if she was forced to leave. Lester's parents, disgusted by the actions of the school board, resolved the standoff by emigrating to Canada.¹⁰⁶

In 1872, parents of 12-year-old Mary Frances Ward challenged San Francisco's segregationist school policy by applying for a spot at the all-white Broadway Grammar School. Following the denial of their application by Superintendent Noah Flood, the Ward family sued. Represented by attorney John W. Dwinelle, the Wards argued that they had the right to send their children to their local school on the basis of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution.¹⁰⁷ In 1875, though, the California Supreme Court decided that race-segregated schools were constitutional. The San Francisco Board of Education concluded that providing a separate school for the City's African American population was too expensive and it therefore permitted African American children to be admitted to any of the City's schools. San Francisco's largest Black newspaper, *The Appeal*, greeted the decision with the following statement: "Both white and colored citizens should rejoice that this last relic of slavery has at last disappeared from our great Metropolitan City of the Pacific Coast."¹⁰⁸ However, the City's Chinese students, who were more numerous and more geographically concentrated than African Americans, remained in segregated schools.

Political Clubs

While nationally the vast majority of African Americans identified as members of the Republican Party during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Blacks living in San Francisco were by no means politically monolithic. This reflected city politics in general. During a period of economic turmoil in the 1870s, large numbers of Whites broke off from the Republican Party to join Denis Kearney's Workingman's Party of California, which mixed working class populist themes with rabid anti-Chinese agitation. Some of Kearney's supporters were later brought into a reorganized Democratic Party, which in the 1880s, grew ascendant under the leadership of "Blind Boss," Christopher Buckley. Buckley's machine dominated San Francisco politics for much of the 1880s, sweeping elections in 1882, 1886 and 1888. As observed by

¹⁰⁵ Lapp, 174.

¹⁰⁶ Lapp, 170.

¹⁰⁷ The Thirteenth Amendment forbade slavery in 1865. The Fourteenth defined U.S. citizenship in 1868 and most important, specified that "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

¹⁰⁸ *California Reports* (1874), 48.

Daniel Steven Crafts, “while there may have been some basic difference in political philosophy at the state level, party differences were insignificant when it came to city control.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, for those seeking political access and patronage, one was either with the party in power or on the outside.

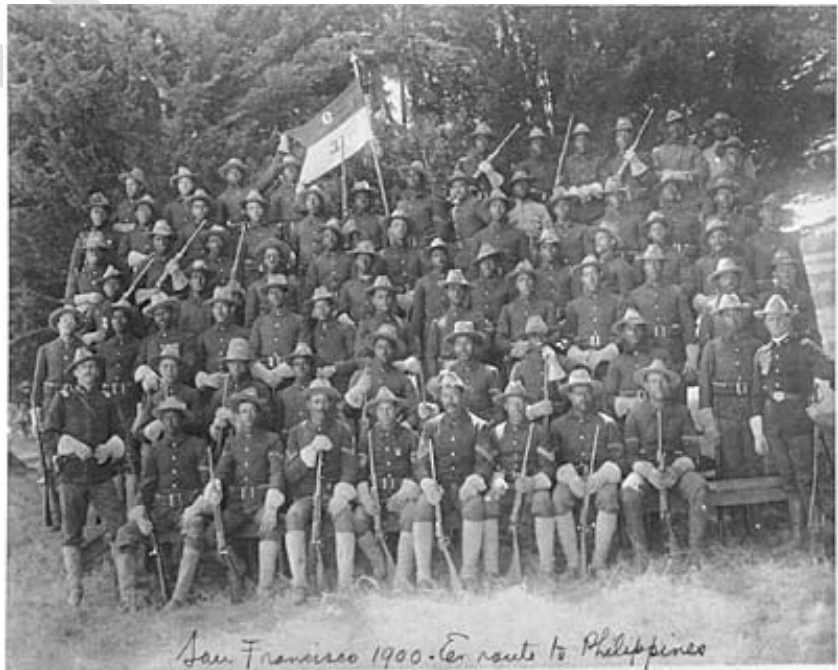
By the early 1880s there were at least two organized African American political groups in the City: the Colored Central Republican Club and the Colored Central Democratic Club. San Francisco newspapers show that the Republican Club was operating at least as early as 1879 under President F. T. Bowers. At that time, meetings were held at the Y. M. C. A. Hall on Sutter Street, but in 1886 they moved into a new home at 417 Kearny Street (not extant).¹¹⁰

The Colored Central Democratic Club was formed no later than the early 1880s. In November 1883, the *Daily Alta* noted the Colonel J. A. Barber of the Club gave “a forcible speech, giving a history of the trials and disappointments of the colored race and stating that the colored man had been deceived, brow-beaten, condemned and abused until he had come to the conclusion that the Republican party was a mere brutal machine for making votes without regard to manhood.”¹¹¹ During this period the Colored Central Democratic Club met in rooms at the corner of California and Kearny streets (not extant).¹¹²

African Americans at the Presidio of San Francisco

San Francisco’s African American population experienced a temporary uptick in 1899 with the arrival of Black troops at the Presidio, including members of the U.S. Army’s 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. The four Black Infantry regiments reported to the Presidio on their way to the Philippines. The United States had recently taken control of three former Spanish colonies: Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, via the Treaty of Paris which ended the Spanish-American War.

Collectively known as “Buffalo Soldiers,” a nickname given to them by Plains Indians, members of all four regiments saw sustained action in the West, particularly during the Indian Wars. During the Spanish-American War (1890-1902), the Buffalo Soldiers gained a well-earned reputation for bravery and toughness, especially while fighting under Theodore Roosevelt in the Battle of Santiago in Cuba. When the companies arrived in San



Troop E of the 9th Cavalry at the Presidio, 1900.
Source: National Park Service

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Steven Crafts, “Christopher Buckley,” *FoundSF*, accessed April 20, 2015.

¹¹⁰ “Young Men’s Central Republican Club,” *Pacific Appeal*, April 19, 1879; also “A Housewarming,” *Daily Alta*, October 6, 1886.

¹¹¹ “Union Veterans,” *Daily Alta*, November 2, 1883.

¹¹² “Colored Democrats,” *Daily Alta*, August 30, 1884.

Francisco, their presence swelled the pride of local African Americans. Indeed, before they shipped out to the Philippines, some 150 local volunteers signed on for duty. Some had trained in local Black militias, including the Brannan Guards, the Sumner Guard, and the Moor Cadets.¹¹³

Initially, only the 24th and 25th Infantry were sent to the Philippines. But when the Filipino nationalists began resisting American intervention by attacking the troops, the 9th and 10th Cavalry were also sent along with African American national guardsmen. Within the Black community there were mixed feelings regarding the Philippine War.¹¹⁴ Many leaders supported the idea of Filipino independence and felt that it was wrong for the United States to essentially “colonize” a non-white nation. Many others felt that a good military showing by the Black troops would reflect favorably upon the community.¹¹⁵



Contemporary view of the Main Post Barracks.
Source: National Park Service

After three years in the Philippines, the Buffalo Soldiers returned to the Presidio. It is unknown exactly in which barracks the 9th Cavalry lived. Based on a description of their “deplorable” accommodations in a letter written by Colonel Nobel, it appears that the troops most likely lived on the Main Post in either the brick barracks along Montgomery Street, or in the older Civil War era wood barracks known as the Cavalry Barracks, located close to where the horses were stabled, just below the Main Post on the edge of today’s Crissy Field.¹¹⁶

In 1902, the regiment was split into companies that were assigned to the Presidio of San Francisco (Companies I, K, L, M), the Presidio of Monterey and to Fort Walla Walla, Washington. In 1904, the Buffalo Soldiers’ 9th Cavalry formed President Theodore Roosevelt’s Honor Guard when he visited San Francisco. They also patrolled Muir Woods, Sequoia, Yosemite, General Grant Canyon (now King’s Canyon) and other national parks before the creation of the National Park Service and the formation of Park Rangers in 1916.¹¹⁷

The U.S. Cavalry troops had managed and protected national parks each summer since 1881. In 1899, the 24th Infantry had patrolled Yosemite, and starting in 1903, the 9th Cavalry (Company I) patrolled Sequoia, the first time African American soldiers were given full responsibility for a park for an entire summer season.¹¹⁸ Led by Captain Charles Young, the first African American to become an Acting Superintendent of Sequoia National Park, the 9th Cavalry constructed, repaired and improved the parks’ roads and trails—constructing more miles of road in one year than the previous three seasons combined. The next year Companies A, B, C, and D were assigned to the same duties. The 9th Cavalry’s trails are still used in Sequoia National Park today.¹¹⁹ Captain Young was born to former slaves in 1874 and was the third African American graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. After

¹¹³ Daniels, 133-5.

¹¹⁴ “The Philippine War - a Conflict of Conscience for African Americans,” National Park Service, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ “The Presidio Garrison,” National Park Service, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹¹⁷ “The Buffalo Soldiers,” National Park Service, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹¹⁸ “Patrolling Sequoia National Park,” National Park Service, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹¹⁹ “Charles Young – Leader of Men,” National Park Service, accessed April 4, 2015.

working with the 9th Cavalry, he became a Major for the 10th Cavalry and by the end of his career he had risen to the rank of full Colonel, the highest rank ever held by an African American at the time.¹²⁰



Members of the 24th Infantry patrolling Yosemite National Park in 1899

Source: San Joaquin Valley Library System

Though eventually transferred elsewhere, African American military personnel stationed at the Presidio led to the development of a small community of Blacks in the adjoining neighborhoods of Presidio Heights and Pacific Heights. Over 450 Buffalo Soldiers are buried at the Presidio's San Francisco National Cemetery. Most are buried in the West Section that filled during and shortly after the Spanish American War. Among them is William Thompkins, who along with fellow 10th Cavalry Privates Fitz Lee, Dennis Bell, and George Wanton, voluntarily went ashore several times against enemy fire in Tayabacoa, Cuba, to rescue their wounded comrades. Each was awarded a Medal of Honor for their valor.¹²¹

Cultural Contributions

African American musicians, actors, and other performers were popular with White San Franciscans throughout the nineteenth century, especially the Black Pacific Brass Band, which was often invited to perform at civic events. In addition to authentic exhibitions of Black talent, minstrels remained a popular diversion.¹²² African Americans had their own saloons and music halls in San Francisco where members of the community could socialize and listen to music with friends and family. One of the earliest was George Smith's Magnolia Saloon, which opened in 1867 in Apollo Hall at 808 Pacific Avenue (not extant). Other early nightclubs that were owned by African Americans included the Aurora at 649 Mission Street (not extant).

¹²⁰ "Charles Young – Buffalo Soldier," National Park Service, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹²¹ "Buffalo Soldiers in the National Cemetery," National Park Service, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹²² As quoted in Daniels, 125.

Artistic Contributions

Grafton Tyler Brown

Grafton Tyler Brown (1841-1918) was a cartographer, lithographer, and painter. He is widely considered to be the first professional African American artist in California and was the only known African American to produce bird's-eye view lithographs.

In official records there seems to be much confusion about his race. Brown's parents were African Americans born free in the slave state of Maryland. In the 1870 census, however, Brown is listed as "mulatto," while the same year Dun and Bradstreet listed him as "quadroon" (i.e., one-quarter White), and in the 1880 census he was listed as White.¹²³

Brown arrived in Sacramento as a teenager in 1858, where he worked as a hotel steward and independently studied art. In 1860, after critics praised his "inborn and self-taught style," he went to work as an illustrator of new settlements and gold-rush towns for the San Francisco lithography firm of Kuchel & Dressel.¹²⁴



Grafton Tyler Brown.
Source: Blackpast.org

In his lithography work, Brown was dispatched to the Comstock Lode, a collection of silver mines in Nevada. He also created fifteen bird's-eye views of Pacific Coast cities and towns, which were widely popular at the time. The large, colorful scenes promoted civic pride, advertised businesses and helped provoke interest in the westward movement.¹²⁵

Following Kuchel's death in 1864, Brown purchased the lithography business, renaming it G. T. Brown & Co., located at 520 Clay Street (no longer extant).¹²⁶ Despite his apparent mixed heritage, Brown worked with known racists, such as Virginian Benjamin Franklin Washington, editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*, who served on the Tideland Commission. Brown was hired to create lithographs of seven large-scale maps.¹²⁷

Brown expanded his business ventures throughout the 1870s. He bought a steam-powered lithography press, managed a staff of eight, and traveled widely for his work through California, Nevada, and the Pacific Northwest. Essentially a graphic designer, he produced works for many San Francisco-based companies including Folger's Coffee Company (then J. A. Folger & Co.), Ghirardelli Chocolate Company, and Levi Strauss & Co. Overall, G. T. Brown & Co.'s lithography output included scenic views, membership certificates, sheet music designs, mining stock certificates and maps—the latter two categories producing the largest profits.¹²⁸

¹²³ Robert Chandler, *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist Grafton Tyler Brown*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 49.

¹²⁴ "Grafton Tyler Brown," Encyclopædia Britannica Online, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹²⁵ "Grafton Tyler Brown." Blackpast.org, An Online Reference Guide to African American History, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹²⁶ San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, *A Walking Tour of the Black Presence in San Francisco during the Nineteenth Century* (San Francisco: 1974), 8.

¹²⁷ "Grafton Tyler Brown." Blackpast.org.

¹²⁸ *Grafton Tyler Brown*, "Blackpast.org.

In 1878, Brown created 42 of the 72 lithographs for *The Illustrated History of San Mateo County*, documenting the area's farmhouses, businesses and private homes. That same year, as an economic depression weighed on the market for real estate maps and the exhaustion of ore mines reduced the demand for mining certificates, Brown sold the firm to his partner, William T. Galloway.¹²⁹



View of San Felix Station from the *Illustrated History of San Mateo County*.

Source: California State Library Foundation

In 1882, Brown turned his attention exclusively to painting *en plein air*, or open air landscape painting. For the next 10 years he traveled extensively, becoming the first landscape painter in Victoria, British Columbia. He moved on to Tacoma, Washington to paint Mount Rainier and to Portland to promote Oregon's Mount Hood.¹³⁰ While in Portland, Brown served as secretary of the Portland Art Club from 1886-1887. "Go first to Nature to learn to paint landscape" was the dictum of the club. Following the Northern Pacific Railway, Brown arrived at Yellowstone National Park in 1886. In 1892, Brown relocated to St. Paul, Minnesota where he worked first as a draftsman for the Army Corps of Engineers, and then for the City's engineering department until 1910. He died in St. Paul in 1918.

¹²⁹ John Lutz. "The Missing British Columbia Paintings of Grafton Tyler Brown." University of Vancouver, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹³⁰ Ibid.



Long Lake, looking down the lake from the wagon road between Spallumcheen and Okanagan Valleys, 1882.
Source: Royal British Columbia Museum, British Columbia Archives

Grafton Tyler Brown's maps, prints and paintings are housed in archives in Victoria, San Francisco and Tacoma. A price list from the 1880s shows his paintings selling from \$35 to \$350. Today his work fetches prices up to \$75,000.¹³¹ Major exhibitions of his work in Los Angeles, Oakland and Tacoma “demonstrate Brown's significant contribution to the settlement of the West as well as reflecting the beauty and diversity of the Pacific Northwest.”¹³²

Nelson Primus

Born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1842, Nelson Primus was a painter of portraits and religious subjects. At the age of twenty-two, he moved to Boston where he lived for the next thirty years, working as a portrait painter and carriage painter.¹³³

In 1895 he arrived in San Francisco and continued painting while working as a model at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. Primus found friendship and inspiration in San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood where he resided. Two of his most famous works from this period include *Fortune Teller* (1898) and *Oriental Child* (1900). In 1900 he lived at 1006 Washington Street, the address for the same boarding house that was home to musician Alexander C. Taylor.¹³⁴ Following the 1906 Earthquake city directories show Primus living at 1780 Turk Street and 1100 Divisadero Street in the Western Addition (neither extant). He remained in San Francisco until his death in 1916.¹³⁵



Fortune Teller, 1898.
Source: Savannah College of Art and Design, Museum of Art

¹³¹ John Lutz. “The Missing British Columbia Paintings of Grafton Tyler Brown.” University of Vancouver, accessed April 4, 2015.

¹³² “Brown, Grafton Tyler,” Black Past.org.

¹³³ Samella S. Lewis, *African American Art and Artists* (University of California Press, 2003), 37.

¹³⁴ Parker and Abajian, 1.

¹³⁵ Lewis, 38.

Literary Contributions

James Monroe Whitfield

James Whitfield (1822-1871) was a “widely known nineteenth century poet, civil rights lecturer and emigrationist.”¹³⁶ While living in Buffalo between 1839 and 1859, a number of Whitfield’s poems were published in Frederick Douglass’ *North Star* anti-slavery newspaper and several letters he wrote about establishing a separate state for African Americans were published in Frederick Douglass’ *Paper*.¹³⁷ In 1854 Whitfield debated Frederick Douglass over colonization and during the mid-1850s organized two national conventions on emigration. Whitfield moved to San Francisco by the early 1860s, and is known to have lived at 918 Washington Street (no longer extant).¹³⁸ While in the City he joined the Prince Hall Masons and in 1864 was named a Grand Master. Whitfield died in San Francisco in 1871.¹³⁹

Typical of his work is the poem, *America*, written in 1853. The first stanza reads:

America, it is to thee,
Thou boasted land of liberty,
It is to thee I raise my song,
Thou land of blood, and crime, and wrong.
It is to thee, my native land,
From whence has issued many a band
To tear the black man from his soil,
And force him here to delve and toil;
Chained on your blood-bemoistened sod,
Cringing beneath a tyrant's rod,
Stripped of those rights which Nature's God
Bequeathed to all the human race,
Bound to a petty tyrant's nod,
Because he wears a paler face.

43

Musical Contributions

Musicians and singers were well represented in nineteenth century San Francisco, including Alexander C. Taylor, who lived at a boarding house at 1006 Washington Street (not extant). As related in *A Walking Tour of the Black Presence in San Francisco During the Nineteenth Century*:

Alexander C. Taylor (b.1849), a well-known musician who married Sarah Miles, the vocalist daughter of Henry Miles. The couple went east for further musical training after which they toured the United States and Europe. Taylor also served as an accompanist for the famed Hyers Sisters of Sacramento, the most important Black musicians produced by California in the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁰

The Hyers sisters, Anna Madah and Emma Louise, were educated in San Francisco. From the 1870s to the 1890s they toured the U. S. presenting operatic musicals centered on the African American story

¹³⁶ Parker and Abajian, 2.

¹³⁷ “Biographies, Frederick Douglass,” pbs.org: Accessed May 27, 2015.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Jack Rummel, “Whitfield, James Monroe,” *African-American Social Leaders and Activists*, (New York: Facts on File, 2003), 219.

¹⁴⁰ Parker and Abajian, 1.

from slavery to freedom. Another musician known from this era is Samuel Grooms, who led a band of Negro Musicians in the Bay area starting in 1854.¹⁴¹

Portraits of African American Life

Mary Ellen Pleasant: A Life of Advocacy

Mary Ellen Pleasant (1814-1904) was one of the leading figures in California's abolitionist movement and an active participant in the Underground Railroad. Very little is known about her early life, which she kept a closely guarded secret. Some sources, notably Helen Holdredge's sensationalized 1953 book, *Mammy Pleasant*, maintain that Mary Ellen Pleasant was born into slavery around 1814 on a plantation in Georgia.¹⁴² A more recent and credible biography by Lynn Hudson casts doubts on this story, citing Pleasant's own statement that she was born free in Philadelphia to a Hawaiian father and an African American woman from Louisiana.¹⁴³ Regardless of her origins, Mary Ellen was by most accounts light-complexioned and at times she could evidently "pass" as being White, especially during her younger years.¹⁴⁴

Holdredge says Mary Ellen was purchased and subsequently freed by a White planter from Missouri who, impressed with her intelligence, paid for her education. Most accounts agree that in her early twenties she moved to Boston, where she married a wealthy abolitionist named James W. Smith. Smith died not long after, in 1844, leaving his estate to his widow.¹⁴⁵ Mary Ellen vowed to use her husband's fortune to help free slaves and transport them to Canada. For the next eight years Mary Ellen Smith kept her vow, becoming one of the leading "conductors" on the Underground Railroad. Always a step ahead of authorities, Mary Ellen went into hiding several times when her activities became known.¹⁴⁶



Mary Ellen Pleasant, 1902.
Source: Bancroft Library

Around 1850, Mary Ellen married John James Plaisance (she later changed the spelling to "Pleasant"), a mixed-race former slave and fellow abolitionist. John and Mary Ellen Pleasant arrived in San Francisco in 1852. John worked as a ship's cook and Mary Ellen Pleasant managed the households of several wealthy families.¹⁴⁷ Pleasant still had some money from her first marriage and she invested it in real estate. She also established three commercial laundries that she staffed entirely with ex-slaves brought to California via the Underground Railroad.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴¹ Parker and Abajian 1.

¹⁴² Helen Holdredge, *Mammy Pleasant* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), 24. Holdredge's book is not cited and almost certainly fictionalized.

¹⁴³ Lynn M. Hudson, *The Making of "Mammy Pleasant": A Black Entrepreneur in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 12.

¹⁴⁴ The concept of light-complexioned African Americans "passing" as White is as old as America and it refers to the tendency of some lighter-skinned Blacks to identify as White in order to escape racial prejudice and the traditional binary definition of race in America. To explain their darker coloring some African Americans attempting to "pass" would claim Southern European, Arab, or Native American ancestry.

¹⁴⁵ "Pleasant, Mary Ellen (1812?-1904)," W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African American Research, accessed April 20, 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Holdredge, 24.

¹⁴⁷ Hudson, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Hudson, 34.

Believing that the Southern White aristocracy would never voluntarily relinquish slavery, Mary Ellen Pleasant thought that a massive slave uprising was the only way to end this noxious institution. To that end, in 1858, she met with the abolitionist John Brown in Chatham, Ontario. She assisted him with technical and organizational advice, as well as a substantial donation of money raised from African Americans living in San Francisco. Though she was skeptical of his plans, which included raiding federal arsenals for weapons to start a slave rebellion, Pleasant may have further assisted Brown by traveling across the South on horseback, disguised as a jockey, to tell slaves to be ready to revolt. The planned revolt was canceled after Brown was captured and hanged on December 2, 1859, following his disastrous raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry. A letter from Pleasant was found in Brown's coat when he was captured. It read: "The axe is laid at the foot of the tree. When the first blow is struck there will be more money and help." Federal authorities analyzed the signature but misinterpreted the initials "M. E. P." as "W. E. P." Nonetheless, Pleasant did not wish to be captured and executed, so she made her way back to California as soon as she could.¹⁴⁹

On the eve of the Civil War, Mary Ellen Pleasant took a job managing the household of Selim and Lisette Woodworth in San Francisco.¹⁵⁰ The Woodworths valued Pleasant as an employee and supported her civil rights efforts, including her work to desegregate San Francisco's private streetcar companies. In 1866, Mary Ellen Pleasant, supported with testimony from Lisette Woodworth, sued both the Omnibus Railroad Company and the North Beach & Mission Railroad for discrimination after being denied service.¹⁵¹ In 1868, Mary Ellen Pleasant won damages in one of these lawsuits, winning the right of African Americans to ride public transit in California.¹⁵²

In 1869, Mary Ellen Pleasant had earned enough money from her various business ventures to open two boardinghouses, including one at 920 Washington Street and another at 708 Stockton Street, both near Chinatown (neither building is extant).¹⁵³ Her boardinghouses were known for their excellent food and accommodations, and were therefore in high demand among the City's business and political elite. Pleasant's boardinghouse at 920 Washington Street was especially popular because it was close to Portsmouth Square and City Hall. Incidentally, it was across the street from The Athenaeum, another project of Pleasant's.

The boardinghouse business was very lucrative, earning Pleasant \$15,000 in profits in 1870 alone.¹⁵⁴ Like her laundries, Pleasant staffed them with trusted ex-slaves. In her capacity as a trusted housekeeper, confidante, and possibly matchmaker to some of San Francisco's most powerful men, Mary Ellen Pleasant learned many important business secrets, especially mining stock tips.¹⁵⁵ With impeccable timing she invested in the Comstock Lode, a complex of silver mines in the Sierra Nevada. Whereas many San Franciscans who invested in these mining stocks lost everything, Mary Ellen Pleasant became very wealthy because she had inside knowledge of what stocks were worthless.¹⁵⁶

As the media became increasingly aware of Mary Ellen Pleasant's wealth and her apparent influence over several prominent businessmen, in particular Thomas Bell, a mining investor and Bank of California

¹⁴⁹ Hudson, 41.

¹⁵⁰ Hudson, 44.

¹⁵¹ Hudson, 51.

¹⁵² "Pleasant, Mary Ellen (1812?-1904)," W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African American Research.

¹⁵³ Holdredge, 4.

¹⁵⁴ 1870 Census.

¹⁵⁵ Holdredge, 51-4.

¹⁵⁶ Hudson, 61.

board member, reporters began writing scurrilous articles about her that accused her of using “black magic” to achieve her ends.



Thomas Bell House, looking south from Bush Street, 1926.
Note eucalyptus trees at left along Octavia Street
Source: Bancroft Library

The media also bestowed a racist nickname on her, “Mammy,” which Mary Ellen detested and refused to answer to. Though reports of intrigue multiplied, Mary Ellen Pleasant continued to prosper as the silent business partner of Thomas Bell. Between 1876 and 1878, Bell used Pleasant’s money to build an elaborately appointed mansion at 1661 Octavia Street, on the northwest corner of Octavia and Bush streets (not extant). The “House of Mystery,” as the scandal sheets called it, was reportedly designed in part by Pleasant herself. The 30-room house contained a suite for Mary Ellen Pleasant, as well as two additional suites for Thomas Bell and his wife Teresa Bell. The mansion also contained accommodations for 15 servants, lavishly decorated entertaining rooms, and reputedly a room in the basement for Pleasant’s Voudon ceremonies.¹⁵⁷ The property, which occupied an entire half block, featured extensive gardens, walkways and a circular drive. It was enclosed behind a wall ornamented with New Orleans-style friezes.

Mary Ellen Pleasant’s fortunes began to turn in 1884, not long after she testified in court against William Sharon, the wealthy mine owner and Republican Senator from Nevada. The press, never her friend, reviled her as a witch and a murderess, especially after Thomas Bell died after falling from the second-floor landing of the Bell House in 1892. In 1899, Bell’s widow, Teresa Percy Bell, forced Mary Ellen Pleasant out of the house and took control of her remaining money. Suddenly impoverished at the age of 85, Mary Ellen Pleasant died in 1904 in a ramshackle apartment building at 2107 Webster Street (not extant).¹⁵⁸ Before her death she was befriended by members of the Sherwood family, who interred her remains in the Sherwood family plot at Tocolay Cemetery in Napa. Her headstone reads: “She was a

¹⁵⁷ “The Queen of the Voodoos,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (July 9, 1899). Evidence does suggest that Pleasant may have been a practitioner of Voudon.

¹⁵⁸ *San Francisco Directory*, 1904.

Friend to John Brown.”¹⁵⁹ Though much of her life is cloaked in mystery and innuendo, her most important accomplishments, especially as an abolitionist and a successful Black businesswoman are well-established, making her an extraordinary woman of her era.

Anecdotally, several sources have stated that Thomas Bell built a second house for Mary Ellen Pleasant at 198 Laidley Street, which was used for a “madam business.” This is not true. Based on newspaper articles and city directories, it appears the house was built sometime between 1885¹⁶⁰ and 1893¹⁶¹ by attorney John Poole. Upon his death in 1901, his widow placed the property up for auction.¹⁶² In a 1912 *San Francisco Call* article, Teresa Bell is noted as living at 198 Laidley, which she purchased “after the fire.”¹⁶³ Since the property was purchased after Mary Ellen Pleasant’s death, it appears the story is an urban legend with no direct association to her legacy.

Mary Ellen Pleasant’s Trees

Though Thomas Bell’s house on Octavia Street was demolished in 1928, the five blue gum eucalyptus trees planted by Pleasant along Octavia Street at the southwest corner of Bush Street still exist.¹⁶⁴ The trees are designated as “landmark trees,” under the Urban Forestry Ordinance of the San Francisco Public Works Code for their historical importance. Some level of protection is provided through this ordinance, as a permit is required in order for the trees to be altered or removed.¹⁶⁵ While not an official City Landmark, the trees are also designated under Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code as a Structure of Merit, which honors the history of the trees and encourages their protection and enhancement.¹⁶⁶

The eucalyptus trees have also been identified as part of National Parks Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom for their association with Mary Ellen Pleasant and her establishment of the Western Terminus of the Underground Railroad. In 1975 a plaque was placed in the sidewalk by The San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, which commemorates Mary Ellen’s efforts as the “Mother of Civil Rights in California.”

Griffin Dobson & Beverly Dodson

As discussed earlier in this document, Griffin Dobson was a former slave who arrived in San Francisco during the Gold Rush. For most of the 1860s Dobson lived on the edge of Chinatown at 908 ½ Pacific Street, near Powell. This was an important area for San Francisco’s African American community. It included the Second African Methodist Episcopal Church on Powell near Jackson Street, as well as the Young Mens’ Union Beneficial Society, which during the 1870s constructed a hall at 927 Pacific Avenue (not extant). Newspapers indicate that his building was later known variously as the African American Mosaic Masonic Lodge and as St. John’s Masonic Hall.¹⁶⁷

Griffin Dobson clearly enjoyed some prominence in his community. This is indicated in part by his association with Reverend Barney Fletcher, founder of St. Cyprian’s A. M. E. Church. Not only were both

¹⁵⁹ Holdrege, 4.

¹⁶⁰ No Title. *San Francisco Call*, Feb. 27, 1895.

¹⁶¹ 1893 directory

¹⁶² “Executrix Auction,” *San Francisco Call*, April 22, 1901.

¹⁶³ “Widow Not Their Mother,” *San Francisco Call*, July 11, 1912.

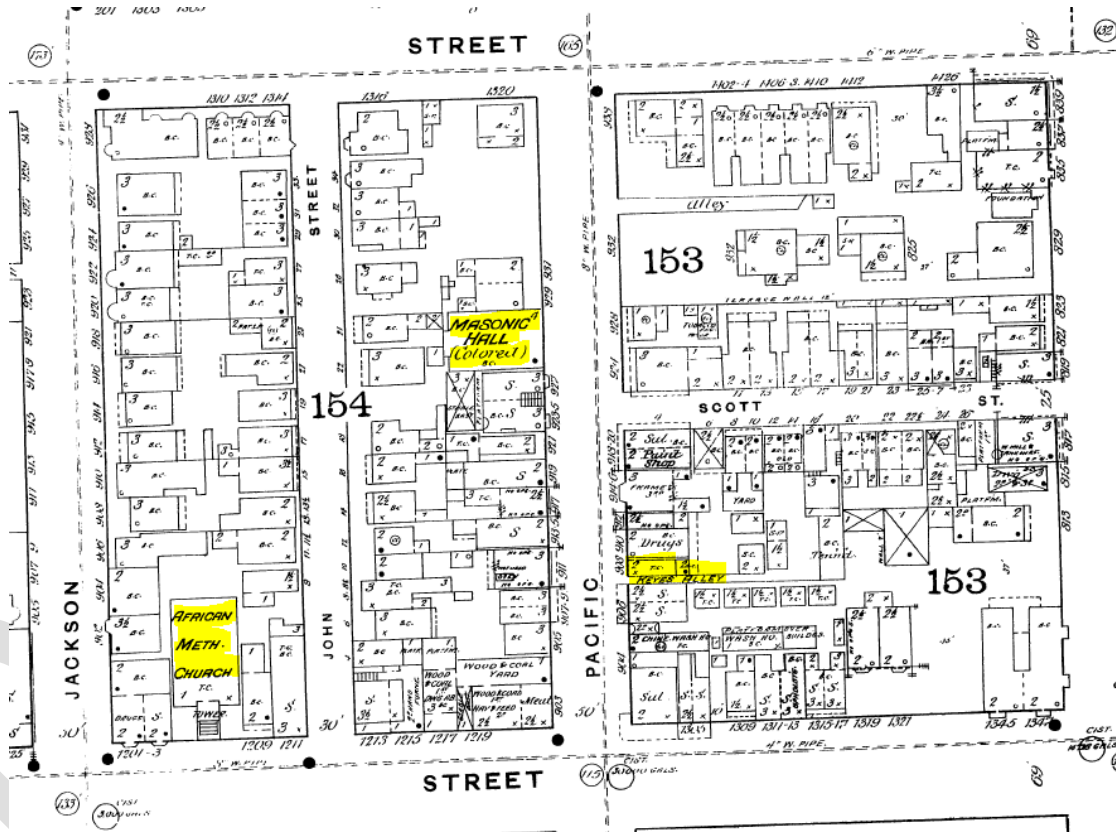
¹⁶⁴ Holdrege, 149-51.

¹⁶⁵ City and County of San Francisco Public Works Code, Article 16, §810.

¹⁶⁶ City and County of San Francisco Planning Code, Article 10, §1011.

¹⁶⁷ “To Let,” *Elevator*, October 18, 1890.

Dobson and Fletcher simultaneously officers of Hannibal Lodge No. 1, Free and Accepted A. Y. Masons,¹⁶⁸ but city directories indicate that Fletcher also lived at 908 Pacific Avenue during the 1860s at the same time as Dobson. During this period Dobson was described in the *Daily Alta* of June 4, 1865 as “an intelligent colored individual who renovates offices for a consideration.”¹⁶⁹ All that is known of his death are San Francisco records showing he died sometime around July 24, 1867 at the age of 49.¹⁷⁰



1886 Sanborn map showing a portion of an African American enclave adjacent to Chinatown. At lower left, the Second African Methodist Episcopal Church on the 1200 block of Powell Street; at upper center the Mosaic Masonic Lodge; at lower center Griffin Dobson's home at 908 Pacific Avenue.

Following Griffin's death, city directories indicate that 908 ½ Pacific Avenue was occupied by his son Beverly, who spelled his last name as Dodson, rather than Dobson. Beverly Dodson was a complicated figure with a variety of intriguing business, social and political connections. During the late 1860s he worked as a bootblack on Bush Street in the firm of Dodson & Sanches. He was also noted in the newspaper for having been elected a Second Lieutenant in the Lincoln Zouaves, one of a large number of quasi-military social clubs then popular in San Francisco.¹⁷¹ In March 1870 Dodson attempted to plan a public celebration to celebrate the ratification of the 15th Amendment, and would participate in organizing efforts for similar celebrations in 1873 and 1874.¹⁷² During this same period, the alley

¹⁶⁸ "Masonic Notice," *Elevator*, January 12, 1866.

¹⁶⁹ "Family Jars," *Daily Alta*, June 4, 1865.

¹⁷⁰ "San Francisco County: 30 May 1867 – 25 Jul 1867," *Rootsweb.ancestry.com*, accessed April 11, 2015.

¹⁷¹ "Lincoln Zouaves," *Elevator*, June 19, 1868.

¹⁷² "Notice," *Elevator*, March 25, 1870; "Public Meeting," *Elevator* February 15, 1873 and March 23, 1874.

adjacent to 908 ½ Pacific Avenue, formerly known as Keyes Alley, is shown as “Dodson’s Alley” in city directories.

During the early 1870s Beverly Dodson became active in politics. In 1872, state assemblyman William R. Wheaton, previously San Francisco Assessor, offered a resolution appointing Beverly Dodson as a “porter” for the California Assembly.¹⁷³ The following year he applied to be “Messenger of the City Hall” in San Francisco, a position which the *Daily Alta* noted did not exist at the time.¹⁷⁴ An article in the *Elevator* in August 1875 names Dodson one of about twenty “Colored Democrats” attending a political rally for Andrew Jackson Bryant, who would be elected Mayor of San Francisco on the Democratic ticket later that year.

His political work appears to have won him patronage, both private and public. During the late 1870s Dodson began working as a coachman for wealthy employers that included lumber magnate W. C. Talbot. He then began a half-decade of work for city government. In 1879 he was appointed as a porter in the Sheriff’s office by the City Commissioners,¹⁷⁵ and city directories show him as a janitor at City Hall for four of the five years between 1880 and 1885. The only exception was in 1882, when he was employed as a coachman at 1661 Octavia Street. This was the home of Thomas Bell and of Mary Ellen Pleasant.

Dodson’s political associations with the Democratic party were apparently controversial within the African American community. On an election day in November 1884, Dodson was driving a buggy decorated with political advertisements for Peter Hopkins, the Democratic Party candidate for Sheriff. As Dodson drove through the “African stronghold” on Mission Street between Third and New Montgomery streets, several African Americans jumped out and tore the advertisements from the vehicle. Supporters of Hopkins came to the aid of Dodson, and a near riot ensued with “several pistols” drawn on both sides.¹⁷⁶

In 1885, Beverly Dodson embarked on a new career as a grading and sewer contractor, and over the following years was noted for contracting street and sewer work in Noe Valley and along the western slopes of Bernal Heights.¹⁷⁷ In May of 1893 Dodson asked the Committee of Streets for permission to lay a sewer under private contract at the crossing of Virginia Street and California Avenue. Calling on his old political connections, Dodson was quoted as stating at a hearing:

I have been at this business for twenty years and have always done good work. Further than that, I am of your party, and have worked for you and made speeches for you. Now give me a fair show.¹⁷⁸

THE DAY’S ARRESTS.
A Large Number of Illegal Voters
‘Captured.’

The police had an easy day of it yesterday, when their labors on former election days are taken into consideration. All over town the reports were the same, and the total number of arrests for illegal voting was only eighteen, as against twenty-four at the last State election. But few fights occurred and only three arrests were made for battery. For a time there was promise

Daily Alta, November 5, 1884.

ored, was driving in a buggy which was decorated with Peter Hopkins’ cards, when some of his fellow men jumped out and tore the advertisements from the vehicle. James Neil, a supporter of Hopkins, stepped in to aid Dodson and was backed by about thirty other white men. The colored citizens outnumbered them nearly two to one, but in the fistful encounter that ensued the majority were sadly worsted. Several pistols were drawn on both sides, but before they were used the arrival of the police caused a general scattering.

¹⁷³ *The Journal of the Assembly during the Nineteenth Session of the Legislature of the State of California 1871-72*, (Sacramento: T.A. Springer, State Printer, 1872), 143.

¹⁷⁴ “Jottings About Town,” *Daily Alta*, December 5, 1873.

¹⁷⁵ “Jottings About Town,” *Daily Alta*, December 5, 1879.

¹⁷⁶ “The Day’s Arrests,” *Daily Alta*, April 28, 1885.

¹⁷⁷ *Daily Alta*, April 28, 1885.

¹⁷⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 26, 1893.

Beverly Dodson was not the only member of his family noted in the newspaper. In 1890, his wife Lenia successfully sued the San Francisco Sheriff for seizing a horse as payment for a debt under a writ by one of Beverly Dodson's creditors. Mary Ellen Pleasant testified on behalf of Mrs. Dodson, stating that she had given Lenia the horse and that it did not belong to Beverly.¹⁷⁹

In January 1895, the Dodsons were again in the news for being associated with a "race war raging in the Mission."¹⁸⁰ The Dodsons had accused Bessie Parsons, a native of Mississippi and guardian of Julia Clay, a nine-year-old African American girl, of subjecting the child to a "state of abject slavery."¹⁸¹ Dodson and his wife stated that the child had been beaten, poorly clothed, and that she had "stripes on her back." The trial's outcome hinged on the testimony of the child. When asked if she had been beaten by Parsons, Julia responded that the wounds on her back had been made by an estranged aunt. Following this and other testimony favorable to Parsons, the case was dismissed.

Despite all, Dodson remained active in politics. In 1894 he is noted as a "representative of the Colored Central Democratic Club," at a political rally.¹⁸² And in October 1898—the last time he is noted in the papers—Dodson was named as the Vice President of the Colored Central Democratic Club.¹⁸³ The final time he appears in the San Francisco City Directory is in 1902, when he is listed as a janitor residing at 1214 Clay Street. It is presumed that Beverly Dodson died sometime around this period. None of the buildings where Dodson is known to have resided remain extant.

Summary of Significant Themes

The overarching theme of this period is the American settlement of San Francisco, which included the development of the City's pioneering African American community. Although San Francisco's Black population remained small throughout this period, community members nevertheless established a number of significant institutions. These included the Athenaeum and several Black newspapers, as well as San Francisco's pioneer African American churches.

African Americans also made outsized contributions to the City's cultural and artistic life, and advocated strongly for racial equality. Some of the most important civil rights advances during this period included the right to testify in court (1863) and the right to vote (1870). Nevertheless, Blacks were routinely denied access to many avenues of employment, a factor that depressed population growth during the late 19th century.

Extant Properties

Most properties associated with San Francisco's African American community during this period were concentrated in the vicinity of Chinatown or near the waterfront. Unfortunately, nearly all of these buildings were either destroyed by the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, or were subsequently redeveloped. Thus, very little physical fabric remains that is significantly associated with San Francisco's African American community from this period. Some of the few exceptions include the following:

- Mary Ellen Pleasant's trees

¹⁷⁹ "Mammy Pleasant's Generosity," *Daily Alta*, December 25, 1890.

¹⁸⁰ "Wanted to Save Julie," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 12, 1895.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 19, 1896.

¹⁸³ "Friendly to Maguire," *San Francisco Call*, October 6, 1898.

- Buffalo Soldiers' barracks at the Presidio (requires further research)

Commemorative Sites

- Plaque commemorating the location of the Third Baptist Church, California Registered Historical Landmark No. 1010, 483-495 Greenwich Street
- Sidewalk plaque honoring Mary Ellen Pleasant, Bush and Octavia streets

C. African Americans in the New Century 1906-1940



View east on Clay Street toward Stockton Street, April 18, 1906. This area would soon be destroyed by fire.
Source: Bancroft Library

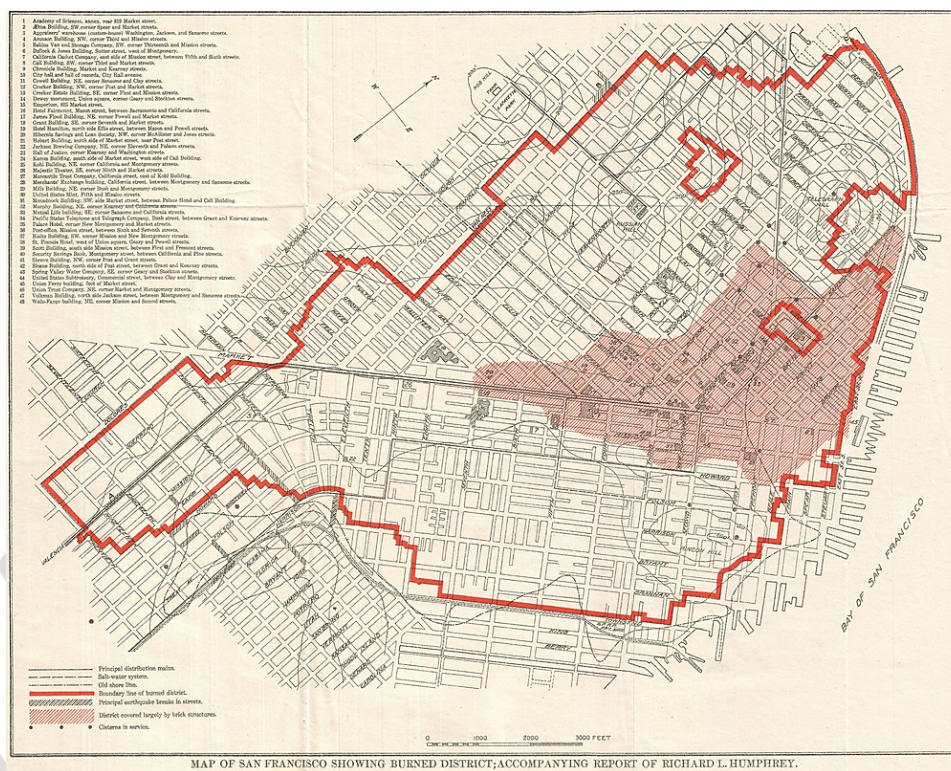
1906 Earthquake & Fire

The 1906 Earthquake and Fire was a pivotal event for all San Franciscans. The fires consumed nearly 500 city blocks and left more than half the City homeless. The African American enclave on the edge of Chinatown was completely consumed by fire, as was Downtown, the South of Market, and all of the City's principal commercial and industrial districts. The disaster dispersed many African Americans either across the Bay, or to a new residential enclave in the Western Addition.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, most of the relief programs tended to reinforce pre-disaster social status. Chinese refugees were forced to live in a segregated refugee camp, although African Americans were dispersed among the other twenty-five camps.¹⁸⁴ As the City recovered, African Americans who decided to stay in San Francisco found themselves competing with many other groups for scarce housing, particularly in the Western Addition, where many working-class earthquake refugees

¹⁸⁴ Andrea Rees Davies, *Saving San Francisco – Relief and Recovery after the 1906 Disaster*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 93.

of all races and creeds sought refuge. African Americans who were able to find housing in the area mainly settled in flats along Bush, Pine, Sutter, and Post streets, as well as in rooms above storefronts along busy Divisadero and Fillmore streets.¹⁸⁵



Map of San Francisco Showing Burned District (outlined in red), accompanying the report of Richard L. Humphrey.
Source: U.S. Geological Survey

Population Trends

As mentioned previously, San Francisco's pioneer African American community never really recovered from the exodus to British Columbia in 1858. The Black population was still in decline in the 1890s, and continued to shrink after 1900. With good job opportunities in San Francisco increasingly restricted to Whites, many local African Americans relocated to the East Bay, where jobs with the railroads began to open up in the late 1890s. They went to work at the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe shops, which opened in Richmond in 1899. After 1900, many African Americans from San Francisco moved to West Oakland where they got jobs in the Southern Pacific carriage shops or as redcaps, cooks, waiters and porters on the trains themselves. By the early 1900s, there was a thriving African American community located along 8th Street in West Oakland.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Daniels, 102.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.



Annual meeting of the Afro-American Council in Oakland, 1907.

Source: Bancroft Library

Even more African Americans left San Francisco for the East Bay after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, which destroyed nearly all of the neighborhoods where they had lived, including Chinatown and the South of Market. The 1910 census registered the drop in San Francisco's African American population, now a miniscule 1,642, or less than one third of one percent of the City's total population of 416,912. Meanwhile, Oakland's Black population tripled from 1,026 to 3,055.¹⁸⁷

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Increasingly, Black migrants to California avoided San Francisco altogether and moved directly to Oakland or Los Angeles, which became the primary destinations for African American migration to the West Coast. By 1910, Los Angeles had 7,599 African American residents, by far the largest Black population west of the Rockies.¹⁸⁸ In West Oakland and Los Angeles' Central Avenue district there were enough Black residents to support a wide range of African American-owned businesses and cultural institutions. San Francisco, in contrast, scarcely had enough Black residents to keep a single barbershop in business. Those Black-owned businesses that did survive had to either appeal to a broad, multi-ethnic clientele or capture nearly all of the Black trade to survive.¹⁸⁹

San Francisco's African American community began to grow again during World War I, reversing a nearly three decade-long slide. Some of the population growth reflected national trends, as African Americans migrated out of the South to fill factory jobs in the Northeast, Midwest, and West vacated by White servicemen. Other newcomers included West Indian cooks and stewards employed on coastal steamers. Mainly raised in the British island colonies of Jamaica and Barbados, most were laborers who had previously worked on the Panama Canal. When it was finished in 1915, some got jobs on the coastal steamers that plied between the ports of the West Coast.

¹⁸⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Daniels, 48.

Another factor in the growth of San Francisco's Black population after 1910 was natural increase, a factor that can be attributed to an influx of African American women. For decades the ratio between males and females had remained imbalanced. Improving transportation options and job opportunities attracted growing numbers of African American women after 1910, which led to the growth of the community as a whole. In 1920, San Francisco registered 2,414 African Americans, marking the first time that the City's Black population exceeded 2,000. Nevertheless, San Francisco's Black community still comprised less than one percent of the City's total 1920 population of 506,676.¹⁹⁰ By comparison, Oakland and Los Angeles registered much larger increases over the same period.¹⁹¹ **Table 1** provides population figures for each of the decennial censuses between 1900 and 1940 for San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles:

TABLE 1

Year	San Francisco	Oakland	Los Angeles
1900	1,654	1,026	2,131
1910	1,642	3,055	7,599
1920	2,414	5,489	15,579
1930	3,803	7,503	38,894
1940	4,806	8,462	63,774

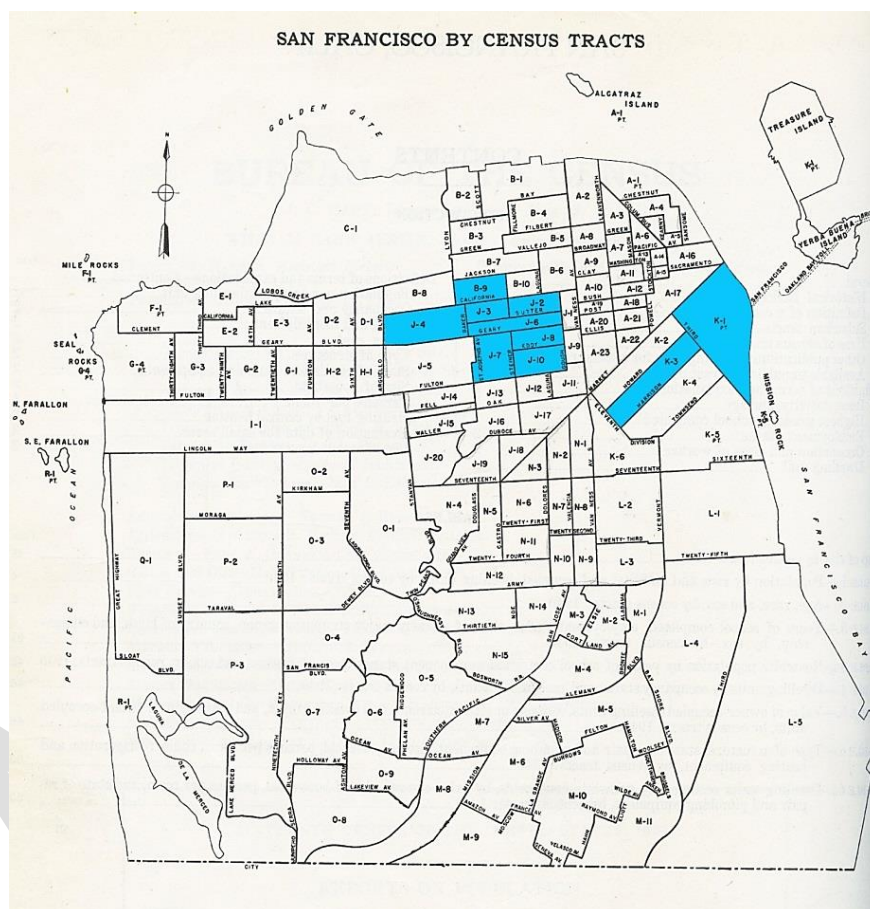
A Growing Enclave in the Western Addition

African Americans who did not move to Oakland after the 1906 Earthquake mainly relocated to the Western Addition, an aging district of Victorian-era dwellings west of Van Ness Avenue. Between 1920 and 1930, as San Francisco's Black population began to grow, almost half lived in the Western Addition. In 1930, Assembly District 30 housed 38.1 percent of the City's African American population, while Assembly District 31 housed another 15.8 percent. Other nearby assembly districts with measurable percentages of Black residents included Assembly District 22 (14.6 percent) and Assembly District 33 (10 percent). These four assembly districts housed 78.5 percent of San Francisco's Black population in 1930, indicating that the Western Addition had indeed become the center of Black life before World War II.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Broussard, 22.

¹⁹¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census.

¹⁹² Broussard, 30.



Map showing 1940 Census tracts containing at least 100 African Americans.
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

In the decade preceding World War II, the *San Francisco Spokesman* described the area bounded by McAllister, Webster, Sutter and Divisadero streets as being “densely populated with Negroes.” This area roughly corresponded to Assembly District 30. According to the 1940 Census, the census tracts within Assembly District 30 that were home to the most African Americans included J-6 (bounded by Gough, Sutter, Baker and Geary streets), which housed 831 African Americans; and J-4 (bounded by Baker, California, Arguello and Geary streets), which was home to 522 African Americans.

Other census tracts in the Western Addition that contained over 100 African Americans included J-2 (322), J-3 (403), J-7 (406), J-8 (449) and J-10 (126). In this sprawling area bounded by Gough Street to the east, California Street to the north, Baker Street to the west, and Fulton Street to the south, dwelt a little over 3,000 African Americans, still less than 6 percent of the overall population of the Western Addition.¹⁹³ An eight-block long stretch of Fillmore Street, between Sutter and McAllister streets, formed the “main street” of the emerging African American community—an area increasingly referred to by its inhabitants as “The Fillmore.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940 Census of the United States. Brian J. Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in Transition* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1988), 98.

¹⁹⁴ *San Francisco Spokesman* (November 22, 1933), 6.



McAllister Street at Webster Street, 1928.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

The influx of African Americans into the Western Addition brought the community into contact with several other non-White immigrant ethnic groups that had moved to the area after the 1906 Earthquake, in particular Japanese and Filipinos. As racial and ethnic minorities living in an overwhelmingly White city one might have expected these groups to develop some common bonds forged by resistance to racism. Though there is not much research on this subject it seems that language probably complicated intragroup relations. In addition, competition for scarce resources, in particular jobs and housing, blunted some potential opportunities for interethnic cooperation. Nevertheless, Filipinos who grew up in the Fillmore during the 1930s and 1940s remember that relations between Filipinos and African Americans were generally good and that marriages and other interracial alliances were not uncommon.¹⁹⁵

By 1940, additional concentrations of African Americans could be found around the border of Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights and in the South of Market. Assembly District 31, a large area bounded by Van Ness Avenue, Lombard Street, Parker Avenue and Pine Street, housed San Francisco's second-highest concentration of African Americans (15.8 percent of the City's total Black population). Most were clustered in Census Tract B-9, an area bounded by Steiner, Jackson, Lyon, and California streets. According to the 1940 Census, this census tract was home to 136 African Americans (65 men and 71 women).¹⁹⁶ The third area with a measurable population of African American residents in 1940 was the South of Market. Two adjoining census tracts housed 247 African Americans, including Census Tract K-1 bounded by the waterfront, Market Street and Third Street, and Census Tract K-3, bounded by Third, Howard, Eleventh and Harrison streets. Because both of these tracts were located near the waterfront

¹⁹⁵ Pepin and Watts, 13.

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940 Census of the United States.

and had an imbalanced ratio of male-to-female residents (156 to 88), it seems likely that many African American residents were single maritime or railroad workers.¹⁹⁷

Housing Discrimination

Housing discrimination, never previously a strong impediment to African Americans in San Francisco, increased as the City's Black community began to grow between 1920 and 1940. Blacks were not prohibited from owning property, though they were often forbidden from purchasing or renting in many subdivisions that had racial covenants prohibiting the sale or leasing of properties to African Americans, Asians, and other non-White ethnic groups. Entire swaths of San Francisco's West Side and Twin Peaks were basically off-limits to African Americans unless they were live-in domestic help. Neighborhoods with racial covenants included most of the residence parks built west of Twin Peaks. These included Forest Hill, Ingleside Terraces, St. Francis Wood, and some of the more modest speculator-built tracts in the suburban Sunset and Parkside districts.

These restrictions prevented middle and upper-class African Americans from moving out of the Western Addition into higher-status areas of the City.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, the middle-class Richmond and Sunset districts on the city's west side were not uniformly subject to covenants, and middle-class African Americans bought in these neighborhoods during the 1920s and 1930s without extraordinary difficulties.¹⁹⁹ This began to change in the 1930s when builders such as Henry Doelger, the Standard Building Company and others began attaching deed restrictions to the tracts they developed in the area.²⁰⁰

Black San Franciscans who chose to invest in real estate during this period often chose Oakland, where single-family homes were more plentiful and less expensive, the weather better, and where larger lots allowed room for gardening, raising animals, and providing space for children to play. Those who remained in San Francisco mostly rented, with only 8 percent of Black San Franciscans owning their own homes in 1900. This figure increased to 13.6 percent in 1930, but it was still much lower than the rates for native-born Whites (35.1 percent) and foreign-born Whites (41.6 percent).²⁰¹

Much of the housing that African Americans occupied in 1940 was judged by authorities to be substandard. According to the WPA's *1939 Real Property Survey*, a comprehensive survey of housing conditions in the city, San Francisco's Black population occupied housing that tended to be "in poor condition and more congested than homes occupied by white families." The report singled out the "J" census tracts in the Western Addition as being a "blighted community" containing over one-third of the city's substandard housing.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940 Census of the United States.

¹⁹⁸ Horiuchi, 61-82.

¹⁹⁹ Broussard, 32.

²⁰⁰ Mary Brown, *Sunset District Residential Builders, 1925-1950* (San Francisco: San Francisco Planning Department, 2013), 35.

²⁰¹ Broussard, 31.

²⁰² City and County of San Francisco, *1939 Real Property Survey, San Francisco, California* (San Francisco: 1941), 6, 7-9, 24-30.



Photo of a rowhouse in the Western Addition, 1940.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

Most of this area was occupied by Victorian-era rowhouses whose owners had long-since abandoned the neighborhood and retrofitted the formerly single-family dwellings and flats into multiple small dwelling units.²⁰³ Inadequately maintained and bereft of adequate ventilation, water, and other services, much of the central portion of the Western Addition was described as a slum by 1940.²⁰⁴ However, African Americans were not alone in being subjected to such conditions. In addition to Black families, the central Western Addition was home to many recent immigrants, including large numbers of Russian and Eastern European Jews, Filipinos, Mexicans and Japanese.

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Employment Trends

The years immediately following the 1906 Earthquake remained a difficult period for African Americans to find quality jobs. Although the economy of the city was expanding and wages remained relatively high, African Americans experienced little occupational advancement because of powerful all-White unions. The 1910 census shows that almost 50 percent of African American men and over 70 percent of African American women were employed in domestic or personal service work.²⁰⁵ No other segment of the economy employed African Americans in even remotely similar percentages during the pre-World War II era. The next largest category was manufacturing, which employed 10 percent of African American men and women. Transportation—mainly railroad work—employed another 10 percent of African American men.

By 1920, 27 percent of African Americans worked in manufacturing, largely due to labor shortages during World War I. Meanwhile, their participation in domestic services shrank to 40 percent. Railroad work continued to be an important category of employment, especially as cooks, stewards and porters. Though much of this work was based in West Oakland and Richmond, there was a small community of

²⁰³ Horiuchi, 61-82.

²⁰⁴ City and County of San Francisco, *1939 Real Property Survey, San Francisco, California* (San Francisco: 1941), 6, 7-9, 24-30.

²⁰⁵ Broussard, 41.

Black railroad workers based in the South of Market near the Southern Pacific depot at 4th and Townsend streets. The Townsend House, later known as the New Pullman Hotel at 236 Townsend Street (extant), is where many of the Black railroad porters lived. In other fast-growing sectors of the service economy, including retail, clerical and other professional services, Black men made only negligible gains.



Townsend House at 236 Townsend Street.

Source: Christopher VerPlanck

For African American women the situation actually worsened, with over 80 percent of all Black women working as domestics in 1920. African American women registered only meager gains in clerical employment, including as typists and stenographers.²⁰⁶ The only other bright spots for Black women were nursing and midwifery, where Black women made some inroads during the 1920s and 1930s.²⁰⁷

During this period intensifying racial discrimination earned San Francisco a reputation as a city to be avoided by African Americans. Compounding White racism was the fact that Blacks faced strong competition from other marginalized ethnic groups, including Chinese, Japanese and Latinos. When an African American man named F. L. Richardson arrived in San Francisco in 1919 he observed: “There wasn’t [sic] many tasks that Negroes could perform except as doormen, elevator operators, redcaps, or domestic work.”²⁰⁸ Indeed, whereas African American leaders encouraged Southern Blacks to move to Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and other industrial cities, some of San Francisco’s Black leaders actively discouraged African Americans from coming to San Francisco during the early twentieth century.²⁰⁹

Prior to World War II, San Francisco had only a small number of African American professionals, mainly because the city’s Black population was too low to support a practice based exclusively on African American patronage. Thus, African American doctors, lawyers and other professionals tended to move to cities such as Oakland where there were more potential clients. In addition, Black doctors did not have admitting privileges in San Francisco hospitals until the 1940s.²¹⁰ Until World War II, the largest

²⁰⁶ Broussard, 44.

²⁰⁷ Broussard, 45.

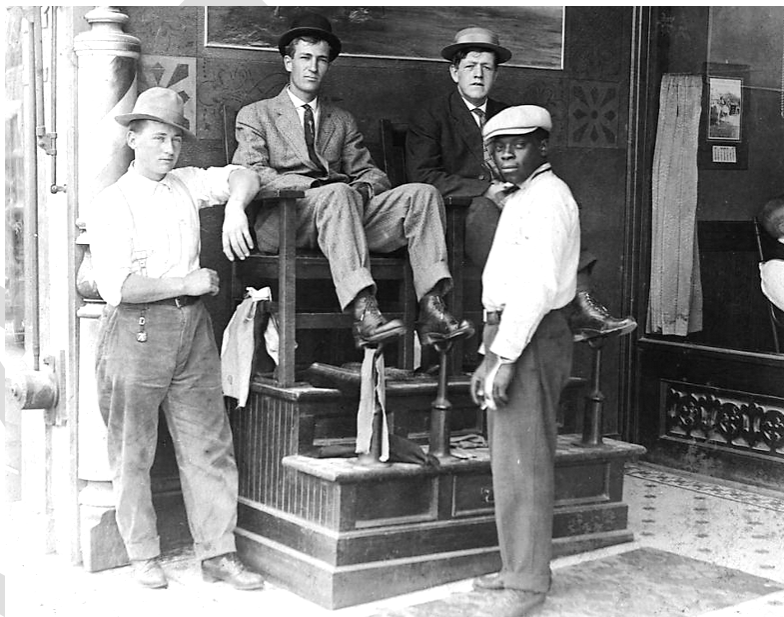
²⁰⁸ Broussard, 40.

²⁰⁹ Broussard, 39.

²¹⁰ Broussard, 43.

categories of Black professionals in San Francisco, as defined by training and formal education, were ministers and musicians.²¹¹

Some African Americans opened their own businesses in San Francisco, but most were small enterprises that catered to the African American community. These included barbershops, candy stores, real estate offices, billiards parlors, funeral homes and smoke shops. In contrast to cities with larger Black populations, such as Detroit, San Francisco did not have any Black-owned banks or insurance agencies until World War II. By the 1930s, most Black businesses in San Francisco were located along Fillmore Street, Divisadero Street and several intersecting streets in the Western Addition.²¹² For most of their day-to-day needs, the African American community patronized White or Asian-owned businesses, which tended to have easier access to capital and credit.



A shoe shine operation in the 1910s.
Source: Anaheim Public Library

Even with its prosperous agricultural, manufacturing, extraction and real estate sectors, the Depression crippled California. As early as 1931, one in three African Americans in Los Angeles was out of work.²¹³ Ironically, because they were poorly represented in the manufacturing sector, African Americans in San Francisco were not as badly affected as their counterparts in Los Angeles or Oakland.²¹⁴ Smaller family sizes and the presence of African American women in the workforce also helped to shelter Black San Franciscans from the worst effects of the Depression.²¹⁵ African Americans made the necessary adjustments, such as consolidating households, accepting boarders and taking second jobs. San Francisco's African Americans welcomed the federal relief programs of the New Deal, particularly the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Youth Administration (NYA), which employed a disproportionately large percentage of African Americans.²¹⁶

²¹¹ Broussard, 55.

²¹² Broussard, 56.

²¹³ DeGraaf, et al., 23.

²¹⁴ Broussard, 117.

²¹⁵ Broussard, 113.

²¹⁶ Broussard, 121.



Henry Shepherd and San Francisco mayor Angelo Rossi, January 20, 1931. Shepherd had just made an impromptu speech demanding that \$10 million from the general fund be appropriated for unemployment relief. Rossi was booed from the podium.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

The Depression did provide some unforeseen opportunities for Black San Franciscans, especially women. Overwhelmingly employed as domestic workers before the Depression, many Black women were assigned to semi-skilled relief jobs by New Deal agencies. These opportunities gave African American women valuable job skills that could be parlayed into better-paid work later on.²¹⁷ Another positive development was the integration of the International Longshoreman's Association (later the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, or ILWU). The maritime strike of 1934 brought African American men under union protection and ILA Chief Harry Bridges ensured that they were paid the same as their White counterparts.²¹⁸ This action effectively ended the use of African Americans as strikebreakers on the waterfront and opened up many opportunities in unionized labor to Black San Franciscans.

Social and Political Advocacy Groups

Between 1900 and 1940, African Americans living in San Francisco chartered several political and social organizations to protect themselves from economic and housing discrimination, as well as other civil rights abuses. Several of the most important organizations formed during this period included the Bay Area Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Booker T. Washington Community Center, the National Urban League, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the Madame C. J. Walker Home for Girls and Women.

²¹⁷ Broussard, 122.

²¹⁸ Broussard, 129.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

After a 1913 speaking tour that brought W. E. B. Du Bois to San Francisco, local African Americans formed the Northern California chapter of the NAACP. Headquartered in Oakland, the chapter was established in 1915 to organize civil rights activities throughout the Bay Area.²¹⁹ Led by John Drake, the Bay Area chapter of the NAACP supported a range of issues, including anti-lynching legislation at the federal level; combatting discrimination against Black customers by White and Chinese-owned businesses; investigating the condition of Black soldiers stationed at the Presidio; and exposing police brutality.²²⁰ During its formative years, the NAACP boasted membership across the entire spectrum of the Bay Area's African American community. The organization protested D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*,²²¹ a hugely popular film released in 1915 which was largely responsible for inspiring a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. The NAACP also supported the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the African American union's struggle to secure wage increases and improved working conditions.²²² In recognition of the city's growing Black population, a separate San Francisco chapter of the NAACP was established in 1923.

Up until the Depression, San Francisco's African American population generally voted solidly for the "Party of Lincoln." Though the Republican Party was supported by major Black political action groups such as the California State Colored Republican League (CSCRL), the party's leadership did little for the state's African Americans. This state of affairs began to change in the 1930s with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the Presidency. In addition to having African Americans in his informal cabinet, including Walter White of the NAACP and T. Arnold Hill of the National Urban League, Roosevelt's New Deal employment programs were open to African Americans. Consequently, by the late 1930s, many of San Francisco's African Americans had switched their registration to the Democratic Party, eventually forming several political clubs.²²³

National Urban League

The National Urban League (NUL) was originally founded in 1910 in New York City by the merger of three smaller advocacy groups: the Committee on Urban Conditions among Negroes, The National League for the Protection of Colored Women, and the Committee for Improving the Industrial Conditions for Negroes in New York.²²⁴ The NUL was one of the most important national civil rights organizations in the twentieth century. In addition to fighting for civil rights, the NUL concentrated on helping African Americans assimilate into urban life by expanding access to education, employment, housing and healthcare. The group also encouraged positive interracial interactions.

After visiting San Francisco in the 1920s, NUL President T. Arnold Hill observed that San Francisco's problems were "not too acute," probably because of the community's small size. Due to its own fast-growing Black population, the first NUL chapter on the West Coast was established in Los Angeles in 1930.²²⁵ San Francisco did not get its own chapter until after World War II.

²¹⁹ Broussard, 76.

²²⁰ Broussard, 81.

²²¹ Broussard, 78.

²²² Broussard, 82.

²²³ Broussard, 95-6.

²²⁴ Shelley Bradford Bell, *A Legacy of Victory: History of the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center 1920 to the 1970s*.

²²⁵ Broussard, 87.

Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)

In the early 1920s, the NAACP was rivaled by the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), a pan-Africanist educational and support group headquartered in Oakland. The UNIA was established by Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican-born activist known primarily for his efforts to encourage African Americans to “repatriate” themselves to Liberia, in West Africa. After 1920, UNIA began gaining influence in San Francisco’s African American community, much to the consternation of the NAACP, which encouraged African Americans to concentrate on improving conditions for Blacks in the United States.²²⁶ Ultimately the rivalries between the NAACP and UNIA subsided after the latter organization disintegrated following Garvey’s imprisonment for mail fraud in 1923.

Booker T. Washington Community Service Center

In contrast to the NAACP or the NUL, the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center was a local organization. The organization was founded in 1919 as The Victory Club, a wartime government service agency that provided activities and social events for African American soldiers. When World War I ended, members of the club petitioned the government to continue funding the service with the creation of the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center.²²⁷ Based on the self-help principles of its namesake, the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center’s principal mission was to offer wholesome recreational and educational opportunities to Black youth and steer them away from “the juvenile court, the prison, and not infrequently ... an early grave.”²²⁸ The service center also served as a “settlement house,” a Progressive-era innovation designed to assist migrants to cities to find jobs, healthcare and decent housing.

The community center opened in 1920, under the leadership of former Victory Club volunteers and employees: Revered J.J. Byers, Pastor of A. M. E. Mt. Zion Church; John Fisher, community leader; and Mary Stewart, Victory Club employee. The building was located in the Western Addition at 45 Farren Street (not extant).²²⁹ The center offered boxing, basketball and industrial arts programs to boys, and singing, sewing and homemaking classes to girls.²³⁰ In 1923, the Booker T. Washington Community Center purchased a building at 1433 Divisadero Street (not extant) for the purpose of converting it into a full-fledged community center. The project was opposed by the Western Addition Improvement and Protective Association (WAIPA), a White property owners’ group founded to oppose a supposed influx of African Americans into the Western Addition. WAIPA stated in a press release written in 1923, “It is now high time for the White residents and property owners to get together and protect themselves from this rapid invasion.”²³¹

The organization grew along with the city’s African American community, adding social workers to its staff, creating a jobs program and offering a counseling program for young mothers.²³² Running out of space on Divisadero Street during World War II, the Booker T. Washington Community Center leased quarters in a building at 2031 Bush Street (extant) that had housed the Japanese Kinmon Gakuen school

²²⁶ Broussard, 82.

²²⁷ Bell, 2.

²²⁸ Daniels, 157.

²²⁹ Bell, 3.

²³⁰ Daniels, 157.

²³¹ Broussard, 33-4.

²³² Broussard, 33-4.

prior to internment in 1942. The Booker T. Washington Community Center remained in the building until 1952, when it moved to 800 Presidio Avenue (not extant—demolished October 2015).²³³

Madame C. J. Walker Home for Girls and Women

Another local San Francisco organization, the Madame C. J. Walker Home for Girls and Women, was established in 1921 by Irene Bell Ruggles and Josephine Cole. It served as a temporary home and social services provider for African American girls and young women newly arrived in San Francisco. It was named for Mrs. C. J. Walker (1867-1919), an African American entrepreneur and philanthropist who became one of the first Black millionaires in the United States. Though Mrs. Walker had no affiliation with the San Francisco organization, she was a well-known Black businessperson. The Home offered young Black women a place to stay, as well as employment counseling and a venue for social gatherings. The Madame C. J. Walker Home was located at 2066 Pine Street in the Western Addition, and remained in operation until 1972. The Italianate style rowhouse remains extant and is San Francisco Landmark No. 211.



Madame C. J. Walker Home for
Girls and Young Women.
Source: Third Baptist Church of
San Francisco

African American Newspapers

During the early 20th century, San Francisco's African American community increasingly depended on Oakland newspapers for their news and entertainment. One of the most important figures in the Bay Area's Black press was E. A. Daley. A native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Daley arrived in Oakland in the 1920s. With savings from selling real estate, he purchased the *California Voice*, an established Black weekly founded in 1919. He later purchased the *Western Outlook*, *New Day Informer*, and the *Western Appeal*, consolidating these three papers into the *California Voice*. At this time none of the mainstream daily papers in the Bay Area hired Black reporters, save for the *Oakland Tribune* which carried a weekly column called "Activities Among Negroes."²³⁵

In 1931, a competing San Francisco weekly newspaper, the *San Francisco Spokesman*, began publication.²³⁶ Founded by John Pittman, the *Spokesman* became known for its overtly left-wing outlook, especially in comparison with the reliably Republican *California Appeal*. The *Spokesman* was in part responsible for the defection of San Francisco's Black population to the Democratic Party in the 1930s.²³⁷ The *Spokesman* was published until the 1940s, when it was replaced by the *Sun-Reporter*, paper founded by Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr. This paper is discussed at further length later in this document.

²³³ San Francisco City Directories, 1923-52

²³⁵ Thomas Fleming, "The Black Press in the 1920s," Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco.

²³⁶ Broussard, 98.

²³⁷ Broussard, 99.

African American Churches

During this period, most middle-class African Americans in San Francisco attended one of three African American churches: Third Baptist, A. M. E. Zion, or Bethel A. M. E. With roots that extended back to the pioneer period, these three institutions helped knit together multiple generations of San Francisco's small prewar African American community. In addition to providing spiritual sustenance, church leaders helped to provide a network of protection from ongoing civil and economic injustices.²³⁸ Their ministers, including the Reverends J. J. Byers and E. J. Magruder of A. M. E. Zion, and the Reverend F. D. Haynes of Third Baptist Church, were important public figures in the community at large, serving as the community's principal liaisons with San Francisco's White power structure and by sitting on multi-racial committees and panels.²³⁹



Third Baptist Church, 1945.
Source: San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection

Third Baptist Church was originally located on Dupont Street (today's Grant Avenue) near Union Street. In 1906 it relocated to 1299 Hyde Street, where it remained until 1952 (not extant). In the 1930s, Bethel A. M. E. was still located at 1207 Powell Street in Chinatown, where it had been located since the nineteenth century. A. M. E. Zion's church, which had for many years been located on Pacific Avenue near Powell Street, was destroyed in 1906. In 1912, the congregation, then led by the influential Reverend W. J. Byers, moved to a new church at 1669 Geary Street in the Western Addition (not extant).

In comparison with many Eastern and Midwestern cities, which attracted large numbers of Black Southerners during the "Great Migration," San Francisco had very few Southern-style Protestant "storefront" churches until World War II.²⁴⁰

African American Social Clubs

During the first few decades of the twentieth century, San Francisco's growing African American community established several social and fraternal clubs. Some of the larger and better-known clubs included the Kalender Klub and the Cosmos Club. The Cosmos Club, organized in 1919 by Mr. William Henry Lashley, was the most prestigious of San Francisco's Black social clubs. Open to people of all races, the club met each month at the offices of the International Institute, San Francisco's Community Chest agency, at 1860 Washington Street in Pacific Heights (not extant). Every year the Cosmos Club held an invitation-only ball at one of San Francisco's poshest hotels. Joseph Foreman, the doorman at the Shreve & Co. jewelry store in Union Square, was usually the Master of Ceremonies. Incidentally, Foreman was a fixture in San Francisco's central shopping district for decades, celebrated by *Chronicle* columnist Herb Caen for his decorum and elegance.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Daniels, 113.

²³⁹ Broussard, 63.

²⁴⁰ Broussard, 64.

²⁴¹ Broussard, 65.

Several smaller and less formal groups, including the Monarchs, the Socialettes, the Alexander Dumas Club and the Carpe Deum Club, were also founded during the early twentieth century.²⁴² Dancing, card-playing, and charity work were popular activities in the clubs. Each typically had between 15 and 20 members and did not own the buildings where they met. Instead, they gathered at the Booker T. Washington Community Center or at individual members' homes.²⁴³

Mainstream fraternal lodges, including the Masons and the Odd Fellows, appealed to some African American men. Like their White counterparts, San Francisco's Black lodges served both business and social interests, though they also paid death and sickness benefits and helped out-of-work members find jobs. These groups also hosted dances, picnics, card parties, and social outings for the wider community.²⁴⁴ Even less formally, many African American men, especially working-class men, socialized at barbershops, on street corners, barbeque joints, and later, union halls.

Portraits of African American Life

Oscar Hudson

Oscar Hudson was born in Missouri in 1876. He was orphaned at the age of eleven and moved to Mexico where he attended school and became fluent in Spanish. He served as a translator during the Spanish American War,²⁴⁵ and subsequently lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico where he was owner and editor of the local African American newspaper, the *New Age*.²⁴⁶ He studied law in California in 1907-1908, and in 1911 relocated to California where he became the first African American admitted to the bar. The following year he served as a delegate to the Negro National Educational Congress. Hudson traveled widely and his Spanish fluency attracted some of the most affluent Latino families in San Francisco to his practice.²⁴⁷

Hudson was also involved in real estate ventures in Alameda County and was later appointed by the governor to serve as the Notary Public for Alameda County.²⁴⁸ While serving in that capacity, Hudson was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson as the Port of San Francisco's Consul for Liberia, the "only 'Negro-governed country' in existence."²⁴⁹ A quote from the 1917 annual edition of the *San Francisco Daily Chronicle* indicates that Hudson enjoyed considerable community prestige.

"Many honors have come to Oscar Hudson in his chosen profession, the law. Not only does he enjoy a splendid and successful practice in all the courts that have jurisdiction in California, but he is also consul for the Republic of Liberia at the Port of San Francisco. He is the first and only Negro to hold a membership in any bar association in the State of California, and he has the respect and esteem of not only the bench and bar but of the public at large."²⁵⁰

In the 1917 Crocker-Langley Directory, Hudson's offices are listed as being in the Monadnock Building²⁵¹ at 685 Market Street (extant). The 1918 City Directory shows Hudson and his wife Estelle lived at 1627

²⁴² Broussard, 67.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Broussard, 68.

²⁴⁵ Beasley, 195.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Beasley, 196.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Beasley, 197.

²⁵¹ 1917 Crocker-Langley City Directory, 522.

Hearst Avenue in Berkeley. His San Francisco offices were later shared with McCants Stewart in the Alto Building at 381 Bush Street (extant).

Mary & McCants Stewart

McCants Stewart was born in South Carolina in 1877 to Charlotte and T. McCants Stewart. The elder Stewart was a prominent Southern Black civil rights leader, lawyer and professor, who had served as council and confidant to Booker T. Washington during the founding of The Tuskegee Institute.²⁵² Education and community leadership were expected of young McCants from childhood. At his father's insistence, he enrolled in the Tuskegee Institute and later became the first African American to earn a law degree from the University of Minnesota.

In 1904, he moved to Oregon and became the first African American admitted to the Oregon bar and the first to argue before the Supreme Court of Oregon (*State v. Brown*, 1905). In 1905, he married Mary Weir, a fellow University of Minnesota graduate and teacher. McCants struggled to find clients in Portland's small African American community, and in 1917 moved with his family to San Francisco.

McCants formed a partnership with respected black attorney Oscar Hudson. In 1918 their offices were located in the Alto Building at 381 Bush Street (extant).²⁵³ The partnership struggled financially, and McCants had difficulty securing clients. Plagued by financial problems and lingering disabilities from a streetcar accident years earlier, McCants committed suicide in 1919.²⁵⁴

Mary McCants worked for the Victory Club and eventually became a founding member of the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center.²⁵⁵ Their daughter, Mary Katherine Stewart Flippin, has been interviewed numerous times regarding her family's history, breakthroughs and contributions to African American history.

Cultural Contributions

During the first half of the twentieth century, many of the most well-known African Americans in San Francisco were musicians and performers. Some performed at popular nightspots in San Francisco's Tenderloin area or in the nightclubs of the Barbary Coast, including The Acorn, The Apex, The Thalia, Sam King's, Purcell's, and the Olympia Cafe. These cabarets frequently booked "all colored revues" to entertain mixed-race audiences. Black performers also entertained mixed-race audiences in San Francisco theaters, including minstrel shows and Vaudeville productions. Some African American street musicians, especially Bert Williams and George Walker, attracted a devoted following during the early part of the twentieth century.



McCants, Mary, and Mary Katherine Stewart, 1919.

Source: African American Historical and Cultural Society

²⁵² "Stewart, T. McCants," Blackpast.org: An Online Reference Guide to African American History, accessed March 15, 2015.

²⁵³ 1918 San Francisco City Directory, 1612.

²⁵⁴ "Stewart, T. McCants," BlackPast.org.

²⁵⁵ Bell, 2.

Music and Nightlife

With ragtime, and later jazz, African Americans developed musical forms that were in demand among the wider community leading to the popularity of Black-owned nightspots. African American nightclubs where both Blacks and Whites were welcome were called “black and tan” clubs. A list of dance halls and saloons on Pacific Avenue between 1908 and 1910 prepared by police chief Jesse Brown Cook included three “colored” establishments: “The Ivy” at 464 Pacific (extant), the “So Different” at 520 Pacific (not extant), and “The Dixie” at 750 Pacific (extant).²⁵⁶

Of these the most prominent was Louis “Lew” Purcell’s So Different saloon, where the Turkey Trot was reputedly invented. The saloon presented music by accomplished black musicians, including pianist Sid LeProtti (1886-1958), who played there for several years. The entertainment was popular not only among African Americans but also Whites. The saloon was described by contemporaries as being “furnished only with a bar, a few rough tables, and chairs, and a score or more wooden benches which faced a splintery dance floor.”²⁵⁷



Lew Purcell’s So Different saloon at 520 Pacific Avenue.
Source: Stanford Library Riverwalk Jazz Collection



Sid LeProtti’s So Different jazz band circa 1915.
Source: Old River Jazz Society

Purcell was evidently a successful businessman as related by an article in the *San Francisco Call*, which described him as “a leading light, socially, politically and otherwise in San Francisco’s colored colony; a wearer of diamonds and good clothes and a man possessed of more than average weight and strength of muscle.”²⁵⁸ As a prominent figure on the Barbary Coast, Purcell was clearly a man accustomed to defending himself. In February 1907 three White tourists from Texas encountered Purcell sitting on a crowded streetcar. They harassed him for the entirety of his ride, taunting him with “what they would do to him in Texas.”²⁵⁹ As Purcell got up to leave the streetcar, one of the Texans grabbed his shoulder and shook it. Purcell’s patience had run out and he punched the man in the jaw. When the other two tourists attacked him, he struck them as well. Police arrived and pressed charges against the Texans for disturbing the peace and allowed Purcell go free. As related in the *San Francisco Call*:

²⁵⁶ Jessie Brown Cook, *Guide to the “Jesse Brown Cook Scrapbooks Documenting San Francisco History and Law Enforcement, ca. 1895-1936” Photo Collection*. University of California, Berkeley: Bancroft Library.

²⁵⁷ As quoted in Daniels, 147-8.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ “Three Valiant Texans Meet Their Waterloo,” *San Francisco Call*, February 17, 1907.

“Whether a Black man is cleaning brick or wearing diamonds, he has the public privilege of hanging to a strap or occupying a seat in a street car if he has the price there are no ‘Jim Crow’ cars on the system track of the United Railroads ... It is fair to presume that three strangers form the biggest State in the Union will report home that it is dangerous to monkey with an overweight ‘colored gentleman’ who can afford to wear diamonds in California.”²⁶⁰



San Francisco Call, February 17, 1907.

In 1915 Purcell’s So Different saloon changed its name to the Elite Cafe, and by 1919 had relocated to 101 Columbus Avenue (not extant) where it was being managed by Lester Mapp. Described as “the joy spot” and the “real home address of jazz” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the basement cafe was also said to be home to “the best colored entertainers that can be secured anywhere in the country.”²⁶¹ Entertainment was provided by Lester Mapp’s Jazz Dogs and Sid LeProtti’s orchestra, both of which drew in mixed-race crowds with their jazz and ragtime numbers.²⁶²

The growing demand for African American music led to the founding of the Colored Entertainers’ Club in 1915. It was located in the same three-story building that housed the Elite Cafe. The club featured offices, a reception room and a dining room on the first floor and rehearsal space and a bar on the second floor. All members of the club had a key so that they could visit at any time, day or night.²⁶³

Many African American musicians won fame in the larger community and some became members of San Francisco’s famed Bohemian scene. While San Francisco’s African American musicians of this era do not seem to have pioneered their own style of jazz or ragtime, they were certainly up-to-date with popular music in New Orleans, Chicago, Memphis and New York.

The new musical styles inspired new dances that were invented by African Americans but danced by everyone. Dancers such as Al and Mamie Anderson brought the Cakewalk dance to San Francisco.²⁶⁴ Other dances, including the Grizzly Bear and the Texas Tommy, may have started in San Francisco. Many involved suggestive hip movements that some Whites thought were licentious. These dances



101-107 Columbus Avenue, 1924.
This building once housed the Elite Cafe and the Colored Entertainers’ Club. It was demolished around 1980.
Source: Bancroft Library

²⁶⁰ “Three Valiant Texans Meet Their Waterloo,” *San Francisco Call*, February 17, 1907.

²⁶¹ “Hotels and Cafes,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 14, 1919.

²⁶² Daniels, 148.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Broussard, 73.

caused much handwringing when they migrated from the Barbary Coast and Tenderloin dives into more “respectable” venues. Dancing was so suspect that bars and saloons were required to have a special license that specified the days of the week that dancing was allowed.²⁶⁵

Following the establishment of Prohibition in 1920, many of San Francisco’s nightclubs closed down or were subject to frequent police raids. By 1921, Purcell’s Cafe, frequently noted as the Olympia Cafe, was operating at 615-617 Jackson Street in Chinatown (extant).²⁶⁶ Under the continued management of Lester Mapp, the Olympia Cafe was described by photographer Arnold Genthe as “the most famous, as well as the most infamous” of the Barbary Coast “resorts,” where the “dregs of many countries” cavorted in “a vast palace of gilt and tinsel with a great circular space in the center and around it a raised platform with booths for spectators.”²⁶⁷

The Olympia Cafe finally closed for good in 1922 for violating the dance hall ordinance, which only permitted dancing at the Olympia on Saturday nights. Officers who raided the club found that “white and negro dancers were mingling indiscriminately on the dance floor.”²⁶⁸ Lester Mapp had beaten many a rap because of his connections with the local police, but this was the final straw and Mapp moved to Chicago for several years.²⁶⁹ As San Francisco’s Black population began to increase during the 1930s, incidents involving police stopping Black men in the company of White women increased significantly. In 1932, an ordinance was passed that prohibited Blacks from even dancing with Whites in San Francisco’s many integrated nightclubs.

The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 resulted in the opening of several new Black-owned clubs dedicated to jazz, blues and other traditional African American styles of music. These clubs were in the Western Addition, not the Barbary Coast or the Tenderloin. One of the first was Jack’s Tavern, popularly known as Jack’s of Sutter, at 1931 Sutter Street (not extant). Originally owned by Lenna Morell, Jack’s opened in 1933 in a mixed-race neighborhood of African Americans, Japanese, Filipinos and Jews. In addition to local acts, such as the Saunders King Band, Jack’s hosted well-known out-of-town musicians, in particular Charles Mingus. Not long after it opened, Jack’s was joined by Club Alabam at 1931 Sutter Street (not extant), which was run by nightclub impresario Lester Mapp, who had returned from Chicago. In 1938, the Town Club opened across the street from Jack’s at 1963 Sutter Street (extant) creating the third of the “Big Three” prewar nightclubs of the pre-World War II era.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ Daniels, 154.

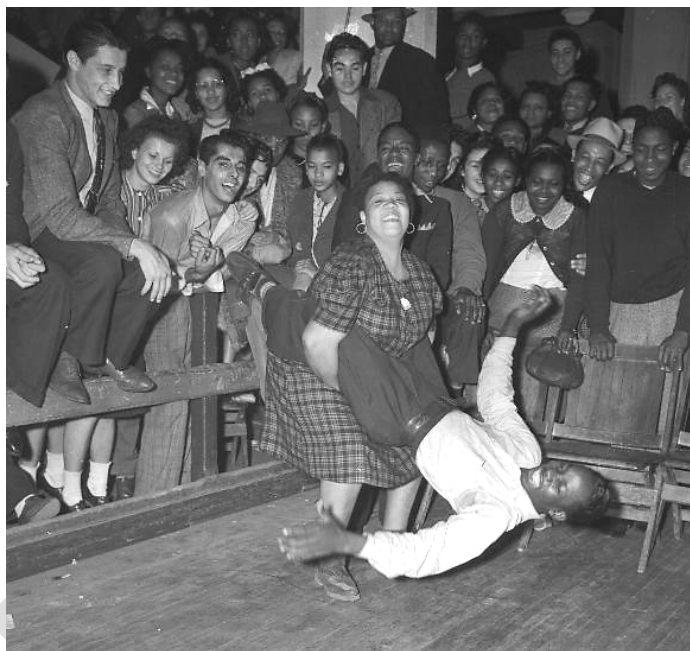
²⁶⁶ *Vestkusten*, November 24, 1921 and December 29, 1921; *San Francisco Chronicle* November 20, 1921.

²⁶⁷ Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York: 1936), 175-6.

²⁶⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 28, 1921.

²⁶⁹ Daniels, 155.

²⁷⁰ Pepin and Watts, 76.



Dancing the jitterbug, 1939.
Source: UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library

Influences of the Harlem Renaissance 1920s-1930s

Flowing from New York, a considerable influence on African American arts during this period was the Harlem Renaissance. It sprang from several sources: the migration of rural southern Blacks to major metropolitan areas, rising levels of education and literacy, the creation of national social organizations, and a developing racial pride that included pan-African sensibilities and programs.

The Harlem Renaissance spanned every genre of artistic endeavors and produced some of the leading lights of African American culture: Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday and Duke Ellington. Among artistic movements, the Harlem Renaissance remains unique for its profound and intimate correlation to civil rights and social reform organizations. As put forth by W. E. B. Du Bois and his NAACP colleague, James Weldon Johnson, “the only uniquely ‘American’ expressive traditions in the United States had been developed by African Americans—who more than any other group, had been forced to remake themselves in the New World; while Whites continued to look to Europe.” The Harlem Renaissance created a fertile environment for the blossoming of African American arts.²⁷¹

Black music provided the pulse of the Harlem Renaissance. The rise of “race records” spread the blues to audiences previously unfamiliar with the form; the emergence of band leaders such as Armstrong and Ellington helped define the Jazz Age. In the visual arts, Black painters and sculptors had rarely concerned themselves with African American subject matter prior to World War I. By the end of the 1920s, however, Black artists had begun developing styles related to Black aesthetic traditions of Africa and American folk art.²⁷²

²⁷¹ “Harlem Renaissance,” Encyclopaedia Britannica Online.

²⁷² Ibid.

Artistic Contributions

Sargent Johnson

One of the most accomplished visual artists to emerge from San Francisco during this period was Sargent Johnson (1888-1967), who left a deep legacy of artistic achievement in San Francisco and was the first African American artist on the West Coast to achieve a national reputation.²⁷³

Born in Boston to a Swedish American father (Anderson Johnson) and an African American and Cherokee mother (Lizzie Jackson Johnson) Sargent and his five siblings were raised by his maternal uncle (name unknown) and aunt, May Howard Jackson. May Jackson was a sculptor who specialized in portrait busts of African Americans. Johnson was thirty two years old when he moved to San Francisco and began studying art at the A. W. Best School of Art, and later the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute), where he studied with well-known sculptors Maurice Stern, Beniamino Bufano and Ralph Stackpole.



Sargent Johnson, ca. 1935.
Source: National Archives

Sargent, who was a member of the Communist Party for most of his life, identified as African American, though he could “pass for white.” He believed in the role of fine arts in improving the status of Blacks in American society, and became a leading figure in the “New Negro” movement of the early twentieth century. This movement embraced W. E. B. Du Bois’ goal of fostering racial pride through cultural self-expression, economic independence and progressive politics. As stated by Johnson:

It is the pure American Negro I am concerned with, aiming to show the natural beauty and dignity in that characteristic lip and that characteristic hair, bearing and manner. I wish to show that beauty not so much to the white man, as to the Negro himself.²⁷⁴

Johnson worked as an artist, selling his sculptures, portrait busts and drawings in New York. During the Depression, Johnson was employed by the Federal Arts Project (FAP), one of many New Deal social and economic programs enacted by President Franklin Roosevelt. In 1937, he received his first large scale government-funded commission as part of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP): an 8’x12’ carved redwood relief organ screen for the California School of the Blind in Berkeley.

Johnson’s best known work incorporates an almost tribal aesthetic rooted in Art Deco and Art Moderne geometry. These influences were doubtless a product of his training. Johnson’s first WPA assignment was with “Bene” Bufano for whom he spent approximately three years drawing, sculpting and creating clay study models for projects.²⁷⁵ Johnson assisted with the creation of Bufano’s famous *Peace Sculpture* in 1938, which is currently located at 700 Brotherhood Way near Parkmerced.²⁷⁶ Johnson also worked

²⁷³ “Sargent Johnson,” San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, accessed March 29, 2015.

²⁷⁴ “Sargent Johnson Mask,” Smithsonian American Art Museum, accessed March 29, 2015.

²⁷⁵ Sargent Johnson interviewed by Mary McChesny, “Oral History Interview with Sargent Johnson, July 31, 1964,” Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

²⁷⁶ “Bufano Sculpture to be Removed,” San Francisco Arts Commission Press Release, March 29, 2013.

on Bufano's famous sculpture of *Sun Yat Sen* (1937), located in Saint Mary's Square. In an oral history interview with the Smithsonian Institute, Johnson refers to the sculpture as "mine" as he felt most of the work on the project was his.²⁷⁷



Three of Johnson's works. (Left) *Negro Woman*, 1933; (Middle) *Forever Free*, 1933; (Right) *Statue of Sun Yat Sen*.
Sources: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the New Deal Art Registry

Aquatic Park Bathhouse

In 1938 Johnson received a commission for work at the Aquatic Park Bathhouse, supervising approximately 45 WPA artists. Johnson designed and carved the green Vermont slate frieze entitled *Sea Form Marquee* that adorns the entrance. He also created the interior tile mosaic. When the project began, it was intended for the building to be used as a publicly-accessible bathhouse. Shortly after it opened, though, the City leased a majority of the building to private businessmen who operated it as the Aquatic Park Casino, discouraging the public's use of the building. Because of this, in 1939 Johnson walked away from the project before he had completed his interior tile mosaic at the second story veranda.²⁷⁸ Johnson's slate frieze and unfinished tile mural are still visible today, and the Aquatic Park Bathhouse, now the San Francisco Maritime Museum at 900 Beach Street, is a contributory building to the Aquatic Park National Historic Landmark District.

²⁷⁷ Sargent Johnson interviewed by Mary McChesny.

²⁷⁷ "Bufano Sculpture to be Removed," San Francisco Arts Commission Press Release, March 29, 2015.

²⁷⁸ National Park Service, "Aquatic Park Bathhouse: Palace for the Public," accessed March 29, 2015.



Slate entryway of the Aquatic Park Bathhouse carved by Johnson in 1938.

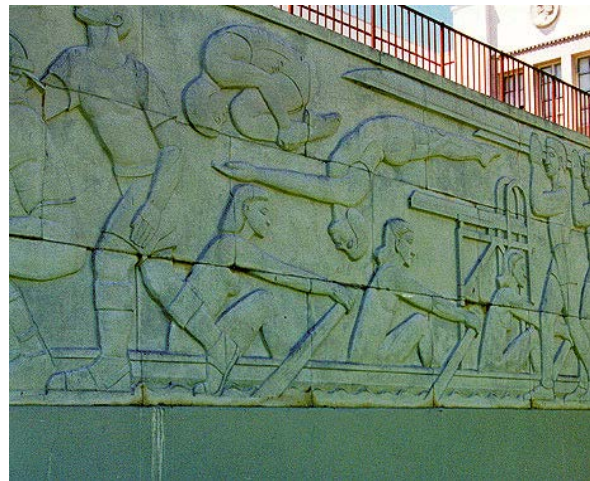


Unfinished mosaic at the Aquatic Park Bathhouse, designed by Johnson in 1938.
Source: blog.timothyphfleur.com

George Washington High School

One of Johnson's most important commissions was a series of stone relief murals at George Washington High School. Beniamino Bufano was originally awarded the commission, but in 1940, architect Timothy Pflueger and the San Francisco Arts Commission contentiously re-assigned the project to Johnson. Bufano never spoke to Johnson again. The tremendous cast stone frieze, executed in 1942, spans the entire retaining wall across the back of the football field and features various high school sports and activities. Entitled *Athletics*, the frieze is 185 feet long by 12 feet high and is made of stone cast into 6' by 14' sections.²⁷⁹ The building and murals remain extant at 33rd Avenue and Geary Boulevard.

75



(Left) Johnson carving the frieze at George Washington High School. (Right) Murals today.
Source: Found SF

²⁷⁹ "Aquatic Park Bathhouse: Palace for the Public."

Beginning in 1945, and continuing through 1965, Johnson made a number of trips to Oaxaca and Southern Mexico. Johnson also taught art classes for the Junior Workshop program of the San Francisco Housing Authority and at Mills College.²⁸⁰ Johnson moved from Berkeley to Telegraph Hill in San Francisco and then to 1507 Grant Avenue (extant) where he lived frugally by choice in two rooms.²⁸¹ Johnson died in San Francisco on October 10, 1967 after suffering a heart attack.

Architects and Builders

Many, though not all, of the labor unions that existed in San Francisco during the early 1930s continued, the early racist practices of excluding African Americans. This restricted the number of Black carpenters to only a few dozen at any given time and they could only work on non-union job sites. Even there, African Americans often faced discrimination because many White carpenters refused to work with them. This meant that the only way that an African American carpenter could build a house was if he was a contractor with his own crew or if his client was Black or not prejudiced toward African Americans.

No homegrown African American architects are known to have been active in San Francisco before World War II. Research did reveal, however, at least one early 20th century African American builder in San Francisco. William Smith, a carpenter, is known to have constructed his personal house at 524 28th Street by 1908 (extant), and is credited with construction of the adjacent house at 530 28th Street. Smith also built a home for George and Anna Dorsey in 1912 at 2123 Castro Street (extant).²⁸² Little else is known of Smith's career as research was hampered by the ubiquity of his name and profession.

Paul Revere Williams

Paul Williams (1894-1980) was born in Los Angeles in 1894 to former Memphians, Chester and Lila, who both died by the time Paul was four years old. He was placed in a home with a foster mother who devoted herself to his education and to the development of his artistic talent. In high school he experienced the first hint of racism when a teacher advised him against pursuing a career in architecture because she thought he would have difficulty attracting clients. Williams has been quoted as saying, "If I allow the fact that I am a Negro to checkmate my will to do, now, I will inevitably form the habit of being defeated."²⁸³

Williams earned his architectural license in 1921. He became the first licensed African American architect west of the Mississippi, and in 1923 was the first to be admitted to the American Institute of Architects (AIA). In 1957 he was the first African American elected to the AIA's College of Fellows (FAIA), the AIA's highest honor. Nicknamed the "architect to the stars," Williams was Los Angeles' celebrity architect from the 1920s until the 1970s.



Cuenin House, 2015.
Source: Flickr

²⁸⁰ "Sargent Johnson: A Bay Area Artist," The African American Registry, accessed March 29, 2015.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Allison Vanderslice, *Historic Resource Evaluation Response for 2123-2127 Castro Street*, (San Francisco Planning Department, August 12, 2013).

²⁸³ "Paul Revere Williams, Hollywood Architect," Great Architects A-Z, accessed March 29, 2015.

Williams also designed several homes and commercial buildings around the Bay Area. There are only two known extant examples of Williams' work in San Francisco: the Dillon Residence (1938) at 255 Santa Clara Avenue, and the Cuenin Residence (1939) at 2555 Divisadero Street. The latter was designed for Dr. Leon G. and Mrs. Lillian Cuenin, and in June 1940, was featured in *Western Architect and Engineer*. The building is a good example of the architect's "Hollywood Regency" style.

Although Williams was mostly known for his revival style single-family residences, his portfolio included an array of property types and architectural styles. Williams designed approximately 3,000 buildings over the course of his career, including hospitals, churches, hotels and the Googie-style Los Angeles International Airport Theme Building (1961). Williams retired from practice in 1973 and died in 1980.

Summary of Significant Themes

The 1906 Earthquake and Fire ranks as the most significant event in San Francisco history. The disaster and the rebuilding that followed transformed the city's physical and social fabric. For San Francisco's small African American community, the disaster influenced the evolution of a new residential enclave in the Western Addition.

Economically, African Americans continued to struggle to find quality employment and were overwhelmingly employed in domestic or service work. However, some advances were made in manufacturing and railroad work. Persons such as the attorneys Oscar Hudson and McCants Stewart also added to a small cadre of African American professionals.

African Americans were also an important segment of the city's cultural fabric, and were employed in various entertainment establishments. These included clubs that catered primarily to Blacks, as well as racially mixed nightclubs. Some African Americans also made outsized artistic contributions, including those of Sargent Johnson, who ranks as one of the city's most important 20th century artists.

Despite these advances, racial discrimination remained commonplace throughout this period, leading to the establishment of San Francisco chapters of the NAACP and the National Urban League. This period also witnessed the creation of various social support organizations, including the Madame C. J. Walker Home for Girls and Women and the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center.

Extant Properties

This list should not be considered comprehensive, but includes properties mentioned earlier in this section of the report.

- Madame C. J. Walker Home for Girls and Women, 2066 Pine Street
- The Townsend House / New Pullman Hotel, 236 Townsend Street
- Aquatic Park Bathhouse / Sargent Johnson installations, 900 Beach Street
- George Washington High School / Sargent Johnson stone relief murals, 33rd and Geary avenues
- Offices of Oscar Hudson and McCants Stewart, Alto Building, 381 Bush Street
- Purcell's Café / Olympia Cafe, 615-617 Jackson Street
- The Ivy nightclub, 464 Pacific Avenue
- The Dixie nightclub, 750 Pacific Avenue

- The Town Club, 1963 Sutter Street
- Houses designed by Paul Revere Williams, 255 Santa Clara Avenue and 2555 Divisadero Street

Commemorative Sites

- None



1963 Sutter Street, formerly the Town Club.
Source: Christopher VerPlanck

D. Growth and Transformation During World War II



**Shipyard workers at the Reliance Steel Company, Richmond, California, 1941.
Source: Richmond Public Library**

World War II changed San Francisco irreversibly. What was once a small city was now a part of the largest shipbuilding complex the world had ever known and an important center of the so-called “Arsenal of Democracy.” In need of labor to staff the many shipyards and defense plants ringing the Bay, federal agencies and private corporations recruited tens of thousands of workers from the American South, including many African Americans. Settling in San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond and Sausalito, African Americans created several Black-majority neighborhoods in San Francisco, including the Fillmore District and the naval housing adjoining the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard.

In 1940, San Francisco’s African American population stood at slightly fewer than 5,000 people. They were longstanding residents of the city and descendants of pioneer settlers. Others had arrived during the preceding two decades from various regions, including the British West Indies and the American South. San Francisco’s Black population was by any measure a small, close-knit and cosmopolitan group, with a clearly defined class structure and a well-developed pattern of social connections through years of club and church affiliations.

Wartime Population Growth

World War II brought a massive demographic upheaval to San Francisco, unmatched by anything seen since the Gold Rush. The years between 1940 and 1945 saw a 30 percent increase in the total population of San Francisco and an astounding 797 percent increase in the city's African American population.²⁸⁴ There were culture clashes between the city's longstanding African American community and the "countrified" newcomers but both groups eventually realized that there was strength in numbers. The Bay Area rapidly became the center of the nation's wartime shipbuilding complex, and the most important embarkation point for the Pacific Theater. This accounted for most of the influx. Federal agencies, such as the United States War Manpower Commission and private employers, such as the Kaiser Shipbuilding Corporation and W. A. Bechtel, aggressively recruited workers from around the country to serve the needs of industrial war production.

Between 1941 and 1945, San Francisco gained over 27,000 African American residents, growing from less than 1 percent of the city's population to 5.6 percent. It must be kept in mind that San Francisco's entire population had grown by 30.4 percent during this period, surging from 634,536 to 827,400, making the growth of San Francisco's Black population that much more impressive.²⁸⁵ A significant impact of this influx was a drastic reordering of the city's demographic makeup. Before World War II, Blacks comprised only 15.2 percent of San Francisco's minority population; after the war, African Americans were 53.1 percent. Granted, the exile of Japanese Americans from San Francisco helped to shrink the percentage of Asian Americans, but the ascendancy of Blacks to the largest minority group for the first time in the city's history was remarkable. For a time it brought San Francisco's African American population into line with most American cities.²⁸⁶

In addition to being recruited by federal agencies and private industry, many African Americans came West on their own volition in search of shipyard and defense industry work. Others decided to move to California to join friends and family who had already made the trek.²⁸⁷ Most of the newcomers came from Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. Many came by train, some with their passage paid by their future employers. Others traveled by bus or in private automobiles.²⁸⁸

San Francisco was not the only city to experience an upsurge in its African American population. The Bay Area's entire Black population tripled between 1940 and 1944, with Oakland, Berkeley and Richmond registering the largest increases. **Table 2** illustrates the dramatic changes taking place in these four cities between 1940 and 1950.

TABLE 2

City	Black Population 1940	Black Population 1950	Percentage Increase in Population
San Francisco	4,846 (0.8 %)	43,460 (5.6 %)	797
Oakland	8,462 (2.8 %)	47,610 (12.4 %)	463
Berkeley	3,395 (3.9 %)	13,289 (12 %)	291
Richmond	270 (1.2%)	13,374 (13 %)	4,853
San Francisco Bay Area	N/A	147,223 (6.1 %)	N/A

²⁸⁴ Broussard, 135.

²⁸⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census.

²⁸⁶ Broussard, 135. Asian American groups did not, as a group, exceed the percentage of African Americans until the 1980 Census.

²⁸⁷ Broussard, 141.

²⁸⁸ Daniels, 165.

In the East Bay many formerly White neighborhoods, including North Oakland and parts of East Oakland, became primarily African American as the Black population expanded beyond its traditional core in West Oakland. Richmond, which before the war had been a tiny industrial town with a negligible Black population, had the highest percentage of African American residents of any Bay Area city by the end of the war.²⁸⁹

In addition to their sheer numbers, different cultural and generational traits characterized these migrants, quickly reshaping the demographic profile of Black San Francisco. The newcomers were on average younger than San Francisco's prewar African American population, with the average age being 23 as opposed to 26 years.²⁹⁰ In contrast to San Francisco's prewar Black population, which consisted of many unmarried individuals and childless couples, most migrants arrived as family units. In other cases, heads-of-households quickly sent for their families after their arrival in San Francisco. Their families were larger and younger than natives; one third of migrant heads-of-households were younger than 30 years old, compared to only one-seventh of natives and non-migrants.²⁹¹

Race was not an immediate bond between local African Americans and the newcomers, as the cultural gap between rural Southerners and sophisticated city dwellers seemed impossibly wide. Jerry Johnson recalls: "The first housing I was refused was a place on Scott between Sutter and Post. It was owned by a black couple, and my feelings then and now, was that I was not wanted. There was a class divide. They were bourgeoisie. And coming from New Orleans I'd seen that big time."²⁹²

As mentioned previously, most World War II migrants were overwhelmingly from a region once called the "Old Southwest."²⁹³ Natives and newcomers were often described by outsiders as being "like two different peoples." Some locals characterized the newcomers as "backwards" or "country."²⁹⁴ The promise of well-paid industrial employment, backed by President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, inspired a certain level of self-confidence in the new arrivals that put off some local Blacks. Newcomers were certainly glad to leave behind the Jim Crow South; the newfound sense of personal freedom in San Francisco probably contributed to the "liberated" attitude of some of the new arrivals.

This attitude sometimes rubbed longtime San Francisco African Americans the wrong way. Local African Americans resented how decades of tireless activism had failed to achieve the occupational advances that seemed to have been bestowed on the new arrivals without any real effort on their part. However, the common goals of feeding their families, educating their children, and ameliorating overcrowded conditions in San Francisco's fast-growing Black neighborhoods eventually brought the two groups together, creating a unified front against the growing race prejudice that began to overtake supposedly "tolerant" San Francisco.

Wartime Housing

The difficulty of finding housing in World War II-era San Francisco was a common complaint of all newly arrived defense workers, both Black and White. Housing shortages were so acute that recruitment of workers for the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard was temporarily halted during the first half of 1943

²⁸⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census.

²⁹⁰ Broussard, 139.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Jerry Johnson personal communication with Johnathan Lammers, July 15, 2015.

²⁹³ Broussard, 138.

²⁹⁴ Daniels, 173.

because the city had literally run out of housing.²⁹⁵ Before World War II, African Americans had generally been free to settle in neighborhoods where racial covenants and deed restrictions were not in place. But the rapid influx of African Americans into San Francisco during the war inflamed racist attitudes in San Francisco, making it much harder for Blacks to find acceptable and affordable housing in areas where they had previously settled without difficulty.

The Fillmore District/Western Addition

As early as 1930 a notable concentration of African Americans had grown up near the center of the Western Addition. This area, centered on Fillmore Street between McAllister and Sutter streets, was not monolithically Black. Here, African Americans lived in close proximity to Filipinos, Latinos, Eastern European Jews and a thriving Japanese enclave. In 1942, however, Executive Order 9066 authorized the removal of all people of Japanese ancestry to internment camps. As a result, African Americans began moving eastward into the heart of Japantown, taking up residence in the flats and houses recently vacated by the Japanese.²⁹⁶ By 1943, approximately 9,000 African Americans were crowded into a neighborhood that had housed fewer than 5,000 Japanese Americans.²⁹⁷



Wartime housing in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Los Angeles, 1943.
Similar conditions prevailed in parts of the Western Addition during World War II.
Source: UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library

For the first time in its history, San Francisco now had a large African American-majority neighborhood. Unfortunately, overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions became endemic in the Western Addition, but with racial covenants and prejudice closing off many surrounding areas to them, African Americans were essentially stuck. A survey conducted by the *San Francisco Sun-Reporter* found war workers

²⁹⁵ Broussard, 172.

²⁹⁶ Godfrey, 100.

²⁹⁷ Paul T. Miller, *The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights in the Experience of San Francisco's African American Community, 1945-1975* (Dissertation: Temple University, 2008), 74.

“crowded 9, 10, and 15 to a single room with only one window. They work all day for the maintenance of democracy and come home in the evening to face the realities of domestic fascist practices.”²⁹⁸

Some White residents reacted with alarm at the influx of thousands of African Americans. Sociologist and researcher Charles Spurgeon Johnson, writing in his book *The Negro War Worker in San Francisco*, observed: “a concerted effort is being made by neighborhood groups, merchant associations and improvement clubs to restrict the area of living for Negro families to the present boundaries of the Fillmore district.”²⁹⁹ Restrictive covenants which had mainly been used to exclude Asians from West Side neighborhoods, were reinvigorated during World War II; over a half-dozen neighborhoods adopted covenants that explicitly prohibited African Americans from renting or purchasing real estate, including in new large-scale developments such as Parkmerced.³⁰⁰

Lack of housing for African Americans exacerbated overcrowding and forced unrelated families to double-up and triple-up in flats and apartments. Additional units were carved out by subdividing existing units, but many did not comply with code requirements for access to light and fresh air. As the African American population increased in the Western Addition, remaining Whites began to leave, moving westward into the Sunset and Richmond districts. As the Whites left more African Americans moved in, creating a nearly solidly African American “ghetto” in the heart of the Western Addition.³⁰¹

Bayview-Hunters Point

Most residents of “The Fillmore,” as the newcomers called it, worked outside the neighborhood, mainly at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard or at Marinship in Sausalito. The Bayview-Hunters Point district, where the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard was located, was an outlying area of commercial slaughterhouses, tanneries and glue factories set within a semi-rural environment of truck farms and greenhouses. The area was traditionally inhabited by White working-class people with roots in Ireland, Italy, France and Malta.

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Dormitories at Hunters Point constructed for war workers.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

²⁹⁸ *San Francisco Reporter*, July 28, 1944.

²⁹⁹ Daniels, 169.

³⁰⁰ Daniels, 173.

³⁰¹ Godfrey, 100.

In 1942, because of the extreme housing shortage, the federal government constructed 5,500 units of “temporary” defense worker housing on Hunters Point, just outside the shipyard gates. The housing consisted of plywood dormitories and some portable house trailers. By 1945, the federal government had built over 12,000 housing units in Hunters Point, accommodating 26,000 people.³⁰² This housing was initially reserved for Navy employees and their families, and because the workforce was integrated, the housing was too. By 1945, 42 percent of the population of Hunters Point was African American.³⁰³ These figures did not including the adjoining Bayview district, which remained predominantly White.



Trailers and defense worker dormitories at Hunters Point.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

Public Housing

Additional housing for defense workers was provided in public housing projects constructed by the San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA), which had been created in 1938. These projects offered some relief from the citywide housing shortage, but the SFHA’s policy of preserving “neighborhood patterns” meant that these housing projects remained segregated by race throughout the war. This policy, promulgated in 1942 to assuage White fears of housing projects becoming springboards for African Americans to move into White neighborhoods, stated: “In the selection of tenants for the projects of this Authority, this Authority shall act with references to the established usages, customs and traditions of the community” and “preserve the same racial composition which exists in the neighborhood where the project is located.”³⁰⁴

Only one project, Westside Courts in the Western Addition (extant), was constructed in an area with a pre-existing Black majority, and therefore it was the only SFHA project that accepted African American tenants. Exclusion from several “Whites only” public housing projects further concentrated San Francisco’s African American population in the Western Addition. One visiting African American scholar warned that because of its exclusionist policies San Francisco was rapidly developing a “substandard Harlem,” where the concentration of poverty and racial isolation would permanently hobble the African American community’s chances for integration.³⁰⁵

³⁰² Broussard, 175.

³⁰³ “Project Offers Housing to the Public,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 November 1945, Section A, page 11.

³⁰⁴ Alice Griffith, *A Review of the Proceedings of the Housing Authority of San Francisco, April 17, 1938-August 17, 1943* (San Francisco: unpublished manuscript, n.d.).

³⁰⁵ “Authority Warns of S.F. Harlem,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 September 1945, Section A, page 17.

Wartime Employment Patterns

The rapid growth in the number of Black workers employed in Bay Area shipyards and defense plants stemmed in large part from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, which forbade discrimination "in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin." This order paved the way for African Americans to fully participate in the wartime economy and to enter the industrial sector in large numbers for the first time in San Francisco's history.³⁰⁶



Shipyard workers in Richmond.
Source: Dorothea Lange Archives

Enforcement of Executive Order 8802 fell to the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). The FEPC had a regional office in San Francisco and took an active role in investigating and resolving discrimination complaints. The FEPC successfully resolved every reported case of racial discrimination, using aggressive follow-up procedures to ensure lasting compliance.³⁰⁷ These heroic efforts, combined with activism by African American workers, fundamentally restructured Black employment opportunities in San Francisco and the Bay Area during World War II.³⁰⁸

By 1943, half of San Francisco's African Americans, and 77.1 percent of recent Black migrants, were employed in manufacturing. Most new arrivals were employed in shipbuilding. In 1943, between 15,000 and 16,000 African Americans got jobs in Bay Area shipyards, including large numbers of women.³⁰⁹ African Americans worked at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco, Marinship in Sausalito, Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, the Kaiser yards in Richmond, and Moore Drydock in Oakland.

The percentage of African Americans employed in service jobs was still relatively high, but second to manufacturing. African Americans had also made impressive gains in professional occupations, with 10 percent of San Francisco's Black population working in areas requiring advanced education and training. Part of this was because San Francisco now had a large enough Black population to support African American professionals such as lawyers, doctors, dentists and other highly trained professionals.³¹⁰

The opening of industrial trades to African Americans did not mean that employment discrimination had simply ended. Many industries and unions not directly involved in government defense work refused to

³⁰⁶ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

³⁰⁷ Broussard, 147.

³⁰⁸ Daniels, 167.

³⁰⁹ Broussard, 145.

³¹⁰ Daniels, 167.

hire Blacks. Some attempted to excuse their discriminatory hiring practices by stating that they did not want to reduce the morale of White workers or that the unions that represented their workers would not admit Black members, which in many cases was true. Employment discrimination, especially at the hands of the unions, did not automatically end in defense industries either. Though the sprawling Hunters Point Naval Shipyard and other government-sponsored private shipyards, such as Marinship and the Kaiser yards, were forbidden to discriminate against Black workers, many craft unions would not admit African Americans as full voting members.³¹¹

Joseph James vs. Marinship

The most important court case challenging discriminatory union policies during World War II was initiated by Joseph James, a resident of San Francisco and a worker employed at Marinship in Sausalito. James moved to San Francisco from New York in 1939.³¹² Joseph and his wife Alberta lived at 2806 Pine Street (extant) in the Western Addition. James was 31 when he took a job at Marinship, then a sprawling emergency shipyard operated by the W. A. Bechtel Corporation on Sausalito's northern waterfront. He was one of approximately 2,200 African Americans employed at Marinship, slightly more than 10 percent of the total workforce. James trained to become a welder at Marinship. He proved so adept at his new trade that he was assigned to one of the shipyard's famous "flying squads," composed of teams of expert welders assigned to some of the most technically difficult work.³¹³ He also often sung at ship launchings to wide acclaim.

When he first started working at Marinship, Joseph James could not join the Boilermakers' union which represented the bulk of the skilled workforce at Marinship. During the early part of the war, the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers Local No. 6 granted waivers to Black workers exempting them from having to pay dues. This changed as the number of Black workers began to increase at Marinship. In 1943, the union, as part of its agreement with Marinship, began forcing all new African American hires to join an all-Black local auxiliary. Though they had to pay the same dues as White workers, they did not enjoy voting rights and were therefore forbidden to take part in other union business.³¹⁴

In response to what he called a "Jim Crow fake union," Joseph James, who had become president of the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP, and several other African American workers formed the Committee Against Segregation and Discrimination in August 1943.³¹⁵ Citing parallels between America's fight against Fascism abroad and the struggle against racism at home, James and his allies



African American shipyard workers demonstrate outside Marinship, 1943.
Source: Bancroft Library

³¹¹ Broussard, 145.

³¹² U.S. Bureau of the Census.

³¹³ Wollenberg, 41.

³¹⁴ Wollenberg, 77.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

stood firm against the union and Marinship. Citing the closed-shop agreement the union had with Marinship, on November 24, 1943 Local 6 requested that Marinship fire all Black workers who refused to join the auxiliary. After Marinship management complied by firing several hundred Black workers and refusing to allow other non-compliant workers to punch in for their shift, nearly 800 African American men and women rallied at the gates of Marinship to protest. The *San Rafael Independent* described the incident as “Marin’s greatest labor demonstration and most critical situation to arise since the San Francisco ‘general strike’ in the summer of 1934.”³¹⁶

Local attorneys Herbert Resner and George Andersen collaborated with NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall as the case wound its way through the courts. James also filed a lawsuit against Marinship for wrongfully dismissing Black shipyard workers who refused to join the auxiliary. Meanwhile, on December 14, 1943, the FEPC ordered Local 6 to “eliminate all membership practices which discriminate against workers because of race or color.”³¹⁷ The FEPC also forbade Bechtel, Kaiser, Bethlehem Steel and other large industrial employers from enforcing the union’s discriminatory policies.

A decision in *James vs. Marinship* was handed down in the Marin Superior Court on February 17, 1944. Judge Butler ruled that the Boilermakers’ policy of “discriminating against and segregating Negroes into auxiliaries is contrary to public policy of the state of California.” Marinship and the union appealed this decision, which they eventually lost at the California Supreme Court. This later decision stated that Blacks “must be admitted to membership under the same terms and conditions applicable to non-Negroes unless the union and the employer refrain from enforcing the closed shop agreement against them.”³¹⁸ This little-known case, which is now increasingly being recognized as one of the most important precursors to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, was a huge victory for African Americans because it significantly weakened discriminatory union hiring policies toward Blacks and other minorities.³¹⁹ Unfortunately, it happened just months before the end of World War II and the closure of Marinship and many of the other shipyards and defense plants.

Cultural Contributions

African American cultural contributions during World War II skewed heavily toward music, dance, singing and other performance-based arts. As the Fillmore became the center of African American nightlife during the 1930s, a handful of clubs became quite well-known, not only among Black San Franciscans but among the city as a whole. Minnie’s Can-Do Club, which opened in 1941 at 1915 Fillmore Street (extant), was San Francisco’s longest-running jazz club in one location. It remained at this address until 1974, when it moved to 1725 Haight Street. It closed for good in the late 1970s.³²⁰

Other clubs that opened during World War II included the California Theater Club Restaurant at 1650 Post Street (not



Source: goneadon.blogspot.com

³¹⁶ Wollenberg, 77.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ *James vs. Marinship*.

³¹⁹ Wollenberg, 80-1.

³²⁰ Pepin and Watts, 83.

extant). This extraordinary nightclub had a cocktail lounge and an elaborate Hollywood-style floor show featuring a chorus line troupe called the Ella Cummings Dancettes.³²¹ It was operated by Julius Delifus, who took over the space previously occupied by the Cherryland Sukiyaki Restaurant after its Japanese American owners were interned in 1942. Mr. Delifus also operated the Havana Club at 1718 Fillmore Street (not extant).³²²

Portraits of African American Life

Audley & Josephine Cole

Around the same time that Joseph James was fighting for equality in the shipyards, a man named Audley Cole (1918-2008) broke the color line at San Francisco's Municipal Railway (MUNI) and the local Carmen's Union that represented its workers. When Audley took the civil service exam required for MUNI applicants, he did not identify himself as African American. Between 1942 and 1945, Audley's actions ended the informal ban on Black employees. The number of African Americans employed by MUNI skyrocketed to almost 700, and Audley became the first African American motorman for MUNI.³²³



Audley and Josephine Cole, 1942.
Source: San Francisco Labor Archives
and Research Center, San Francisco
State University

Audley Cole's wife, Josephine (1913-2006), was a teacher who enjoyed a distinguished career and received a number of awards for her efforts. In an oral history interview, Josephine recalls that prior to World War II, married women were prohibited from being teachers. As racial and gender attitudes adjusted to the war effort, she became the San Francisco Unified School District's first African American teacher. In 1942, she was assigned to Raphael Weill Elementary, and three years later placed first among teachers taking the secondary education exam. Nevertheless, she was passed over two times before finally being assigned to teach at Balboa High School, the largest high school in the city and today City Landmark No. 205.³²⁴

In 1992, the Southeast Library of San Francisco State University was named the Josephine Cole Library in her honor. In 1995, the Board of Supervisors named her as an "Outstanding Community Leader" of San Francisco. The Coles lived at 2142 Bush Street in the Western Addition (extant).

Maya Angelou

The first female African American worker for the Market Street Railway (acquired by MUNI in 1944) was Maya Angelou (1928-2014), who at age 16 became a streetcar conductor. At the time Angelou began working for MUNI she lived at 1661 Post Street (not extant), and had finished a semester at George Washington High School. Initially the Railway's secretaries refused to give Angelou an application, even though she sat in the waiting room all day, every day, for two weeks.³²⁵ In a recent interview with the San Francisco Municipal Transit Agency (SFMTA), Angelou explained that after a prolonged visit with her

³²¹ Pepin and Watts, 134-5.

³²² Pepin and Watts, 137.

³²³ Broussard, 154.

³²⁴ Josephine Cole interviewed by Unknown, "Oral History Interview with Josephine Cole," San Francisco State University.

³²⁵ Mark DeAnda, "A Conversation with Maya Angelou on Her Extraordinary Muni Ties," *InsideSFMTA* (Vol. 1, No. 6), May 28, 2013.

father in San Diego, she was unable to enroll in high school that semester, and her mother forced her to get a job.³²⁶

The only thing I had to do was get a job, and being a Streetcar Conductor was the only thing that looked exciting to me. I noticed that the Conductors were women and they wore snappy uniforms and they looked cute. They had money belts and caps with bills on them and their uniforms were fitted—they were so smart, so chic.

Angelou eventually graduated high school while pregnant with her son, Clyde. To support herself and her child, she worked as a cook, dancer, driver and singer. In 1954, she joined the traveling production of *Porgy and Bess*. Afterward she returned briefly to San Francisco, but then moved to New York City where she joined the Harlem Writers Guild to hone her writing skills. At the age of 38 she began writing a series of autobiographical books including her most famous work, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). She continued to write books throughout the 1970s, while also appearing on television and in movies, including the highly acclaimed miniseries, *Roots* (1977).

Summary of Significant Themes

World War II was a watershed event for San Francisco's African American community. Between 1941 and 1945, San Francisco gained over 27,000 African American residents—becoming the largest minority group for the first time in the city's history. Blacks from across the country poured into the area, many finding employment in the shipyards ringing San Francisco Bay. With strength in numbers, African Americans successfully challenged workplace discrimination not only at the shipyards, but also broke the color line at the Municipal Railroad (MUNI) and the San Francisco Unified School District.

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The dramatic population growth was most visible in the Fillmore, which became an African American-majority neighborhood following the forced detention of the area's Japanese-American residents. Although the Fillmore quickly became the center of African American commerce and entertainment, the "tidal wave of humanity" led to overcrowded and sometimes unsanitary conditions. As a response, the San Francisco Housing Authority for the first time opened a public housing project to African Americans. Large numbers of African Americans also lived in wartime housing adjoining the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, which quickly emerged as another locus of the African American community in San Francisco. Indeed, the concentration of Blacks in the Fillmore and at Hunters Point during the war years established residential patterns that remain evident to this day.

Extant Properties

- Booker T. Washington Community Center / Kinmon Gakuen school, 2031 Bush Street
- Westside Courts Public Housing Project, 2501 Sutter Street
- Residence of Joseph and Albert James, 2806 Pine Street
- Residence of Audley and Josephine Cole, 2142 Bush Street
- Minnie's Can-Do Club, 1915 Fillmore Street

Commemorative Sites

Josephine Cole Library / SF State University Southeast Library, 1800 Oakdale Avenue

³²⁶ "Interview with Dr. Angelou, May 28, 2013," San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, accessed March 30, 2014.

E. African Americans in Postwar San Francisco 1946-1960



William Cobb, San Francisco's first African American school principal, 1947.

Source: Bancroft Library

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When World War II came to a close San Francisco was a demographically transformed city. The African American population stood at 43,460 in 1950, an astonishing 904 percent increase since 1940.³²⁷ The immediate postwar period was characterized by a maturation of San Francisco's fast-growing African American community. Once a tiny minority without any political influence, the city's Black population assumed the characteristics of an increasingly confident and economically well-rounded community commensurate with its growing numbers. The experiences of the war years had also sharpened the community's determination to overthrow the status quo. Jerry Johnson recalls that returning servicemen were an important segment of the nascent civil rights movement:

Most of the service people came from different parts of the south. I think truth be told was that soldiers and sailors that came back from the war propelled the civil rights movement. We all had the view: 'we aren't taking this shit when we get back.' That was the real thing that propelled the movement. That feeling of anger and resistance was very much a part of the attitude.³²⁸

³²⁷ Broussard, 205.

³²⁸ Johnson.

Coinciding with the early years of the national Civil Rights movement, the 1950s witnessed the rise of a new generation of activists who began the process of dismantling institutional racism in San Francisco. During the 1950s, African Americans began to move out of the core areas of settlement into new neighborhoods, including the Bayview District, Visitacion Valley, and the Oceanside/Merced Heights/Ingleside (OMI) district. This era was also characterized by growing numbers of Black professionals in many industries and professions, such as physician Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr., dentist and Urban League founder Daniel Collins, Judge Cecil F. Poole, and attorney and National Urban League president Seaton W. Manning.³²⁹

Residential Trends

By several estimates only 15 percent of the migrants who had arrived in San Francisco for wartime employment stated that they had any intention of leaving after the war.³³⁰ Persistent Jim Crow policies and the continued lack of economic opportunities provided little incentive to return to the South. Public officials in San Francisco, fearing flooded welfare rolls, offered recent arrivals, both Black and White, one-way tickets back to their places of origin, but this program was not widely embraced.³³¹

Though some Black migrants, mainly senior citizens, decided to return home, they were in the minority and were soon replaced by additional new arrivals. Many of the African Americans who had come to San Francisco during the war encouraged their relatives to make the trip after the war. Reflecting on the continued postwar influx, Seaton W. Manning, executive director of the newly founded San Francisco chapter of the National Urban League, informed National Urban League president Lester B. Granger that the “migration of Negroes into San Francisco and the Bay Area is still continuing.” He concluded: “I find it hard to believe that there are any Negroes left in Texas and Louisiana.”³³²

Housing in San Francisco continued to be in short supply after the war, with returning GIs and Japanese Americans rejoining the city’s population. At the same time, African Americans faced unique challenges in their search for housing. Restrictive covenants were in effect in much of the city, and approximately 90 percent of the new suburban developments springing up in fast-growing Marin and San Mateo counties excluded African Americans. Of the 75,000 building permits issued between 1949 and 1951 in the Bay Area, only six hundred were for units available for purchase by African Americans.³³³ Even where covenants were not in place, realtors, neighborhood “improvement” associations, and many White residents were not shy about discouraging African American residents. Most rehashed age-old stereotypes, but all worried about declining real estate values and “red-lining,” the practice by banks of denying loans to residents of neighborhoods housing people of color.³³⁴

It was not only private institutions that engaged in systematic discrimination in housing. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) denied low-interest, long-term mortgages to African Americans. Furthermore, the FHA would only underwrite and insure loans to merchant builders who implemented racial covenants and deed restrictions. To assist African Americans who had been refused residential financing by larger banks, African American financier Jefferson A. Beaver established the Transbay Federal Savings and Loan Association in 1949. This business was located at 1738 Post Street (not extant)

³²⁹ Broussard, 181-2.

³³⁰ Broussard, 206.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Broussard, 205.

³³³ Crowe, 43.

³³⁴ Broussard, 173.

and by 1956 had lent money to over 1,500 people, mostly African American, recording only two repossessions in that time.³³⁵ Beaver also directed the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP in the 1950s. African Americans who wanted to buy in a White area could occasionally enlist the help of a sympathetic White friend who would act as a middle man by purchasing a home in a restricted neighborhood and then reselling it to them.³³⁶ However, this strategy was risky and exposed the White seller to potential lawsuits filed by neighboring residents.

Western Addition/Fillmore District

During the postwar period, real estate agents continued to funnel African Americans into the neighborhoods where they already had a strong presence, especially the Western Addition. By 1950, the Fillmore District's 26 blocks, originally designed to accommodate 50-to-75 people per acre, were reportedly housing upwards of 200 people per acre.³³⁷ By 1960, more than one-third of San Francisco's African American population lived in the Western Addition, comprising 46 percent of the neighborhood's population.³³⁸

Besides being crowded, many of the neighborhood's aging Victorian-era houses, most of which had been carved up into smaller units, had little to no hot water, minimal sanitation facilities, and scarce access to natural light or outdoor space. Rat infestations were epidemic, causing public health officials to worry about the potential outbreak of disease.³³⁹ The combination of overcrowding and poverty created sub-par conditions diagnosed as "blight" by the San Francisco Housing Authority.



Building inspectors at 2062 Pine Street in the Western Addition. The arrows point to residential units and bathrooms. Photos such as these were used in support of redevelopment.

Source: San Francisco Public Library

³³⁵ Miller, 162.

³³⁶ Miller, 155.

³³⁷ Miller, 142.

³³⁸ Miller, 165.

³³⁹ Broussard, 174.

While the housing conditions in the Western Addition may have appeared substandard to some, for many newly-arrived Blacks, particularly those who had immigrated from the rural South, they were an improvement. Jerry Johnson, who moved to San Francisco in 1946, recalls:

A lot of buildings here, compared to the buildings where a lot of the Blacks came from, they were like new buildings. You had people that had come out of the cotton fields and little shacks and so on. You can imagine what these buildings looked like to people when they first came here. And they had plumbing inside – that was ‘wow.’ I think people forget how rural Blacks were at the time.³⁴⁰

With Blacks becoming a majority in the area, many Whites abandoned the Western Addition. Large numbers left the City altogether. Between 1950 and 1960, San Francisco’s White population declined by almost 100,000 persons.³⁴¹ At the same time, the Black population continued to soar, reaching 74,383 in 1960, or 10 percent of the City’s overall population of 740,316.³⁴²

Public Housing

As mentioned previously, the San Francisco Housing Authority responded to overcrowding by constructing public housing projects throughout the city. Though the SFHA initially planned to build 11 permanent housing developments, it had completed only five by 1943. Westside Courts was a 136-unit, six-building development that replaced a block of some of the most blighted Victorian-era housing in the Western Addition. Westside Courts remained the only project available to African Americans during the immediate postwar period. The other four projects built during World War II, Holly Courts, Potrero Terrace, Sunnyside and Valencia Gardens—1,605 units in all, housed only White tenants.³⁴³

The SFHA’s official policy of segregated public housing was eventually struck down by the courts in 1952. That year, the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP filed a lawsuit on behalf of Mattie Banks and her husband James Charley, Jr. The couple had tried to rent an apartment in the North Beach housing project near Fisherman’s Wharf.³⁴⁴ The case was expertly litigated by NAACP attorneys Terry Francois, Loren Miller and Nathaniel Colley.³⁴⁵ On September 1, 1952, San Francisco Superior Court Judge Melvyn I. Cronin agreed with the plaintiffs and overturned the SFHA’s racial segregation policies. Though the decision was later appealed by the SFHA to the U.S. Supreme Court, the decision stood and all public housing projects in San Francisco were eventually integrated.³⁴⁶ The successful resolution of the case brought considerable acclaim to Terry Francois, whose office at this time was located at 2085 Sutter Street (not extant). He and his wife Marion lived at 1608 10th Avenue in the Inner Sunset District (extant).



Terry A. Francois.
Source: blackpast.org

³⁴⁰ Johnson.

³⁴¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Broussard, 177.

³⁴⁴ Broussard, 223.

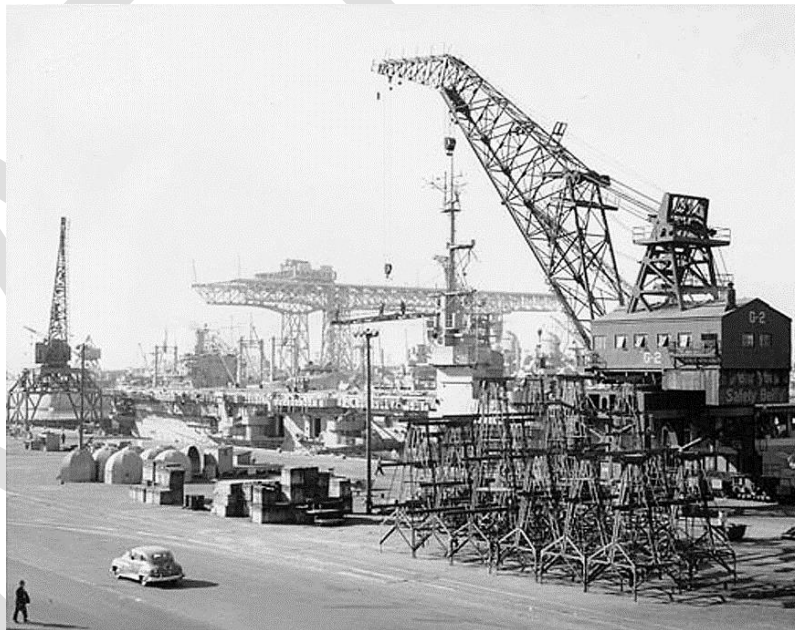
³⁴⁵ Broussard, 224.

³⁴⁶ Broussard, 226.

During the 1950s and 1960s, several formerly all-White projects became predominantly African American, including the Sunnydale Housing Development, a 767-unit public housing project constructed in 1941 on 48 acres southeast of McLaren Park in Visitation Valley.³⁴⁷ By 1960, Census Tract M-11, which encompassed Sunnydale, housed 1,422 African Americans out of a total tract population of 7,583.³⁴⁸

Bayview-Hunters Point

Transformed by World War II, the Bayview-Hunters Point district remained dependent on the fortunes of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard during much of the postwar period. By 1949, the total workforce at the shipyard had declined from its wartime peak of 18,235 to 6,000, severely impacting area residents.³⁴⁹ In 1946, the SFHA assumed control of 5,500 units of former defense worker housing at Hunters Point Ridge, South Basin, Double Rock and Candlestick Point. The SFHA initially leased the vacant units to returning war veterans and Japanese Americans. After these groups moved on, the SFHA opened some buildings to African Americans, though on a segregated, building-by-building basis. Nevertheless, by 1949, 38 percent of all SFHA units in Bayview-Hunters Point were occupied by Black tenants.³⁵⁰



Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, 1950.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

In 1956, the SFHA decided to tear down most of the World War II-era housing atop Hunters Point Ridge and replace it with the new Hunters View Housing Development (no longer extant). The new development consisted of 55 buildings containing a mix of one- to four-bedroom units, all of which were

³⁴⁷ Carey & Company, *Historic Resource Evaluation: Sunnydale Housing Development, San Francisco, California* (San Francisco Planning Department: May 25, 2001).

³⁴⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Table P-1. – General Characteristics of the Population by Census Tracts: 1960."

³⁴⁹ Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Southwest Division, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Disposal and Reuse of the Hunters Point Shipyard: Vol. 1: Main Text and Appendices* (San Diego: BRAC Operations Office, Southwest Division, 2000), D-14.

³⁵⁰ "S.F. Housing Board Keeps Racial Policy," *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 28, 1949).

sited on a steeply sloped, 17-acre tract with views of San Francisco Bay.³⁵¹ Although designed in a barracks-like, no-frills architectural vocabulary with little landscaping, they were superior to what had preceded them and were initially greeted with enthusiasm by local residents.



Hunters View Housing Development, 1961.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

The 1960 Census indicates that the African American population of Bayview-Hunters Point continued to grow after World War II. Census tract L5A, an area embracing the housing projects on Hunters Point Ridge, housed 14,248 African Americans. Meanwhile, census tract L5B, an area bounded by Yosemite Avenue to the north, San Francisco bay to the east, San Mateo County to the south, and Third Street and Bayshore Boulevard to the west, housed another 1,059 African Americans.

Though many African Americans lived in the public housing developments on Hunters Point Ridge, the census data reveal that some had begun moving south into the formerly all-White Bayview neighborhood, where African Americans began purchasing modest single-family homes in the 1950s. For some time White and Black residents coexisted without any problems. According to Ben Adams' 1961 *San Francisco, an Informal Guide*:

Negro leaders see more hopeful signs [in Bayview-Hunters Point]. Negroes have long owned small homes among Italian and other white families. Although more Negroes have moved in, few white families have moved out. Real estate values have not declined. Negro and white neighbors generally get along, belonging to the same community improvement clubs, and PTAs. Interestingly enough, the social problems found in areas of more concentrated Negro population are largely absent.³⁵²

³⁵¹ Carey & Company, *Hunters View Housing Development San Francisco* (San Francisco: 2007).

³⁵² Ben Adams, *San Francisco: An Informal Guide* (San Francisco: Hill & Wang, 1961).

During the 1950s, some African Americans also began to move into the newer residential tracts west of Third Street, including Silver Terrace, an area dominated by post-war speculator-built housing. According to the 1960 Census, though, the census tracts west of Third Street all remained at least three-quarters White.³⁵³

The growing African American community of Bayview-Hunters Point lobbied the City to provide amenities for the neighborhood. In 1954, Gene K. Walker, an African American activist, lobbied the SFHA for money to purchase and rehabilitate the old South San Francisco Opera House for use as a community center (extant). He also lobbied the city to build parks for the bleak and windswept neighborhood.

That same year, the Bayview Neighborhood Community Center was founded. Originally named the Crispus Attucks Club in honor of a Black patriot killed in the Revolutionary War, the center was located in a house at 1201-05 Mendell Street (extant). In 1966, the club moved to the old South San Francisco Opera House. The center provided a variety of services to neighborhood residents, including space for public meetings, job training and counseling, games and activities for youth, and arts and crafts programs.³⁵⁴ The South San Francisco Opera House is City Landmark No. 8.



South San Francisco Opera House, ca. 1950.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

Oceanview - Merced Heights - Ingleside (OMI)

Though the Western Addition/Fillmore district and Bayview-Hunters Point were the two main nodes of African American settlement in San Francisco during the 1940s and 1950s, Black homebuyers also made inroads in outlying parts of the city. What is now known as the OMI district (Oceanview, Merced Heights, and Ingleside) is a sprawling residential area composed of several tracts of housing that were subdivided and developed during the first half of the twentieth century. Located on the south side of Ocean Avenue between I-280 and Junipero Serra Boulevard, the OMI district has pockets of affluent homes, such as those in Ingleside Terraces. However, most of the district consists of steep hillside lots that remained undeveloped until World War II, when demand for housing made them worth developing. During the war, various construction firms began buying the unsold lots and building hundreds of modest five-room rowhouses.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Table P-1. – General Characteristics of the Population by Census Tracts: 1960."

³⁵⁴ "The Bayview Neighborhood Community Center," *The Spokesman* (n.d. 1966).

³⁵⁵ Richard Brandi and Woody LaBounty, *San Francisco's Ocean View, Merced Heights, and Ingleside (OMI) Neighborhoods: 1862-1959* (San Francisco: 2010), 40.



Ocean Avenue at Faxon Avenue, 1944.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

The neighborhood's commercial center was, and remains, Ocean Avenue, a prototypical streetcar suburb commercial strip featuring buildings from the 1920s onward. Scattered commercial development also exists along Broad Street. As one of the only areas where Blacks could buy reasonably priced new houses, the demographics of the OMI began to shift dramatically in the post-World War II era. As African Americans began to move in, some realtors began "block-busting." Block-busting is a now an illegal practice that involves using fear of racial integration to provoke a White homeowner into selling his or her property at a loss, often to the realtor, who then resells the house to a Black individual, typically at an inflated price. According to urban historian Brian Godfrey:

Apparently aided by block-busting realtors, several parts of the Ingleside (OMI) began to experience an influx of middle-income blacks in the 1940s, beginning in the southerly Ocean View (sic) neighborhood and spreading northwest into Merced Heights. The Ingleside District soon became San Francisco's middle-class black district, as opposed to the lower-income Fillmore and Hunters Point areas.³⁵⁶

Though affluent homeowners in nearby Ingleside Terraces (which did have racial covenants) complained, there was nothing that they could legally do to stop the influx of African Americans into the adjoining neighborhoods. Nonetheless, the transition from White to Black was relatively gradual in comparison with many Midwestern and Eastern cities. In 1950, Blacks comprised five percent of the OMI's population and by the early 1960s it was about half (40 percent of Merced Heights, 32 percent of Ingleside, and 59 percent of Oceanview). By 1970, the Black population of the entire district had increased to around 60 percent.³⁵⁷ Regardless, some observers viewed the OMI district as a good example of successful racial integration in an urban setting.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Godfrey, 101.

³⁵⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census.

³⁵⁸ "S.F. Study in Successful Integration," *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 19, 1963).

Employment Trends

While African Americans had dramatically expanded their occupational range during the war years, most of the defense industry jobs ended after the war.³⁵⁹ There were not enough remaining jobs for the newcomers and public officials' fears of increasing welfare dependency among laid-off defense workers became a reality. By 1948, the unemployment rate for African Americans in the entire Bay Area was 15 percent, three times the rate for Whites.³⁶⁰

In 1950, more than half of all African American women were still employed as domestics, working in private homes as cleaners, maids or taking care of children.³⁶¹ Often falling within the category of "last hired, first fired," Black workers clung tenuously to middle-class prosperity during the postwar period. In 1950, the median income for African Americans in San Francisco was \$1,924 compared to \$2,545 for Whites and \$2,050 for other non-Whites.³⁶²

Factors contributing to the high unemployment rate included intense competition from returning GIs, the end of the FEPC and other federally mandated programs prohibiting employment discrimination, and the gradual deindustrialization of San Francisco.³⁶³ The closing of the shipyards, where so many African American workers had held high-paying union jobs, was devastating. The Kaiser shipyards in Richmond alone shed almost 40,000 jobs, reducing its workforce from 47,000 in 1944 to fewer than 9,000 in 1946.³⁶⁴ By 1949, unemployment among African American men stood at approximately 30 percent.³⁶⁵ Further damage was done by unions, some of which stopped representing Blacks after the war.³⁶⁶

Nonetheless, some African Americans held onto their unionized jobs and did well. Fred Stripp interviewed 205 Bay Area union officials affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). These interviews revealed that there were over 9,000 Black employees represented by 76 locals, comprising around nine percent of the unionized workforce. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), a traditionally left-wing union, was a highly significant employer of African Americans. Anthony Andrews stated that: "There was not any labor union in town except the ILWU that would accept a Black apprentice or accept the Black into its membership ... They were awfully, very fair to Black people, gave them good jobs, good chances to work. And so many of the families, the Black families, lived off of that."³⁶⁷

Though many African Americans still worked in the service industries, including hotel and restaurant work, around one-third worked in the building trades, which had been nearly all-White preserves before the war. Another 26 percent worked in the food and textile industries, two categories of manufacturing that actually grew in postwar San Francisco, and 14 percent in metalworking and machining.³⁶⁸ MUNI was also an increasing source of jobs for African Americans.

³⁵⁹ Broussard, 206.

³⁶⁰ Broussard, 165.

³⁶¹ Broussard, 207.

³⁶² Broussard, 219.

³⁶³ Broussard, 212.

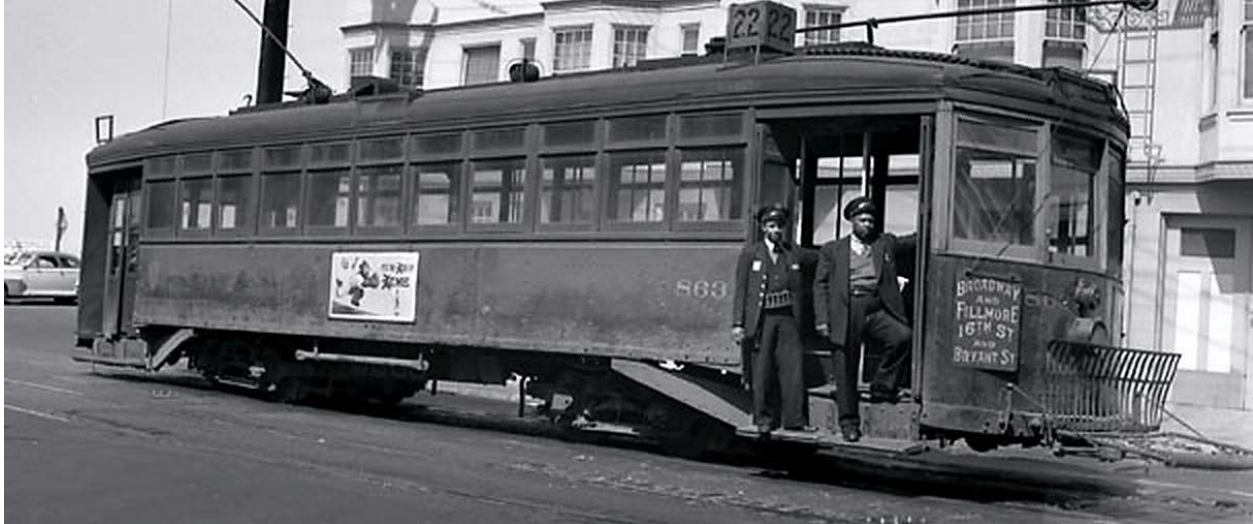
³⁶⁴ Broussard, 209.

³⁶⁵ Broussard, 210.

³⁶⁶ Daniel Crowe, *Prophets of Rage* (New York: Garland Publishing Group, 2000), 59.

³⁶⁷ Miller, 364.

³⁶⁸ Broussard, 206.



African American streetcar employees on the 22 Fillmore Line, circa 1945.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

In white-collar occupations, African Americans made moderate-to-strong gains in many fields. African Americans joined the workforces of San Francisco's banks, insurance companies and other businesses, working as clerks, stenographers, office personnel, and secretaries.³⁶⁹ The San Francisco Police Department integrated its workforce in the late 1940s, but Blacks remained a tiny fraction of the overall Department for decades. Similarly, the San Francisco Fire Department did not hire its first African American firefighter until 1955, and would not begin hiring Blacks in large numbers until compelled by the courts.³⁷⁰

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At the close of the 1950s the overall economic situation of the African American community remained precarious. Many private employers refused to hire qualified African Americans. When questioned, some employers stated that they were "not prejudiced," but that they feared complaints from their White staff members, or that their customers would no longer patronize their businesses if they had Black employees "up front."³⁷¹ With employment discrimination pervasive, African Americans and their liberal White allies advocated for the creation of a new California Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). After several failed attempts, a bill creating the California FEPC finally passed in the state legislature in 1959. The bill had heavy support from the local chapters of the National Urban League, the NAACP, and the recently founded Council for Civic Unity (CCU).³⁷² However, much of Black San Francisco had already become entrenched in poverty, either stuck in menial, low-wage jobs or unemployed altogether.

Civil Rights Activism and Community Leadership

Comprising a sizable minority of the city's electorate, African Americans' demands for political representation began to gain traction for the first time in San Francisco's history. Because of their potentially decisive role in local elections, African Americans began to demand and receive information

³⁶⁹ Broussard, 206.

³⁷⁰ Broussard, 208.

³⁷¹ Broussard, 211.

³⁷² Broussard, 212.

about potential candidates' positions on civil rights. Although no African American candidate was elected to a citywide office during the 1950s, several high-level appointments did go to African Americans. In 1949, attorney Cecil F. Poole was appointed head of the Superior Court Trial Division of the District Attorney's office, and Raymond J. Reynolds was appointed the first African American Deputy District Attorney in 1954.³⁷³ In 1958, an attorney named John W. Bussey was appointed to the San Francisco Municipal Court. Three years later, James Stratten, the longtime director of the Booker T. Washington Community Center, was appointed to the San Francisco Board of Education.

San Francisco Council for Civic Unity

Founded in the waning days of World War II, the San Francisco Council for Civic Unity (CCU) was an interracial organization that was very effective in San Francisco's civil rights community during the postwar period. Led for many years by a young White liberal named Edward Howden, the CCU leveraged the money and political influence of mainstream civic leaders to achieve much for San Francisco's African American community. The organization, which was based in offices at 437 Market Street (not extant), counted nearly 1,800 members at its peak and an annual budget of between \$25,000 and \$30,000. The CCU successfully lobbied local and state legislators to pass laws that forbade discrimination in employment, accommodations, and housing and urban development. The organization was instrumental in the creation of the California Fair Employment Practices Commission (CFEPC). The CCU also published many studies and had a radio program called "Dateline Freedom." The CCU was closely allied with the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP and other important Black-led groups. Together, they formed an important consortium of organizations that became extremely effective at fighting discrimination during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.³⁷⁴

NAACP San Francisco Branch

The San Francisco Branch of the NAACP had worked for years advocating for civil rights and fair housing practices when it took on its most prominent case, *Mattie Banks v. Housing Authority of the City and County of San Francisco*. Led by Terry François, the case, heard and won at the State Supreme Court, forbade the practice of restricting public housing according to neighborhood demographics. Prior to the ruling, the only projects open to Blacks were Channel, Double Rock, Hunters Point, Valencia Gardens and Westside Courts.

The NAACP's 47th Annual National Convention met in San Francisco in 1956. Major speakers included, Thurgood Marshall, who became U.S. Supreme Court Justice; A. Philip Randolph, legendary union organizer; NAACP Executive Secretary, Roy Wilkins; and Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. That same year, the NAACP boycotted Yellow Cab for jobs, and continued to push for Fair Employment Practices legislation. When the Jack Tar Hotel opened in 1960, Black employees worked only as doormen and maids. Community pressure led by the NAACP branch soon forced the hotel to hire at least one Black in the clerical, bartending, room service and accounting departments.

³⁷³ Broussard, 236.

³⁷⁴ Broussard, 197-201.



Shirley Frazier, a clerical employee at the Jack Tar Hotel, July 1960.
Source: *San Francisco News-Call Bulletin* newspaper archive.

Discrimination in Law Enforcement

Despite the many advances that San Francisco's African Americans had made during the postwar period, persistent unemployment and underemployment, housing discrimination, and the scarcity of healthcare and recreational facilities in predominantly Black neighborhoods created conditions ripe for social pathologies. Crime was on the rise in San Francisco during the 1950s, especially in the city's Black neighborhoods. Several well-publicized incidents led to an aggressive campaign by the African American press to expose and eliminate crime and vice in the Fillmore district.³⁷⁵ In addition to serious crimes, arrests for petty crimes such as vagrancy, street gambling, prostitution and public drunkenness were common. Unfortunately, Blacks were twice as likely to be arrested as Whites, leading to charges of discrimination.³⁷⁶ Incidents of police aggression also appear to have increased as redevelopment of the Western Addition gathered steam. Lance Burton remembers:

That's something that people don't recognize about that moment. The police weren't necessarily adversaries to the community in the 40s and the 50s. It was the military police that found their way up and down Fillmore from time to time. It was still a military town. The San Francisco police were pretty much just on low-key patrols, getting their take from the clubs, making sure people weren't getting robbed. There were some purse-snatches and things like that that went on. But that was still low key.

But when they decided they wanted Black folks to start moving out, that relationship with the police changed. And the police became much, much more aggressive. To the point of where you had parking tickets that were overdue, they would come to your house and get you. And of

³⁷⁵ Broussard, 233.

³⁷⁶ Miller, 232.

course as the waterfront jobs were going away, more black men were out on the street unemployed.³⁷⁷

Incidents of police violence were chronicled in the *Sun-Reporter*.³⁷⁸ Attempts to create a citizen-controlled review board to get a handle on police brutality were unsuccessful, and within the African American community there developed a pervasive distrust of the SFPD that would fester and eventually contribute to the Hunters Point disorder of 1966.³⁷⁹

As early as 1947, San Francisco District Attorney Edmund G. “Pat” Brown appointed the prominent African American attorney, R. J. Reynolds, to study the rising crime rate in San Francisco’s African American neighborhoods. Reynolds’ study confirmed the high incidence of certain crimes in the Fillmore district; he concluded that Blacks were simply more likely to be arrested than Whites for committing similar crimes. He also described crime in the City’s Black neighborhoods as a generational aberration that he attributed to the influx of rural Southerners during World War II, many of whom he said had had a difficult time adjusting to city life. As evidence, Reynolds pointed out that before World War II San Francisco’s African American residents committed many fewer crimes per capita than Whites. He concluded that Black crime would “level off” once the community gained equal access to jobs and housing and became better-integrated into local society.³⁸⁰

Housing Discrimination and Willie Mays

Integration of private housing proceeded at a much slower rate than public housing in San Francisco, despite the overturning of racial covenants in 1948 by the Supreme Court in *Shelley v. Kraemer*. Racial tensions were evident. White citizens wrote impassioned letters to Governor Earl Warren, imploring him to “segregate us from them,” some with even harsher messages.³⁸¹ Some Whites complained about “rude and uncouth” behavior among the newly arrived Blacks, fretting about escalating crime and openly worrying about interracial relationships. Members of San Francisco’s pre-war Black establishment shared some of these sentiments, openly expressing concerns about the assimilation of “countrified” Blacks in big city San Francisco.³⁸²



Willie Mays, his wife Margherite, and their son Michael, 1959.

Source: San Francisco Public Library

Housing discrimination in San Francisco became national news in 1957 when Willie Mays, a famous African American baseball player, attempted to purchase a house in the City. Mays, a team member of the San Francisco Giants, which had just moved from New York to San Francisco, selected a newly constructed house at 175 Miraloma Drive (extant), a quiet residential street adjoining the exclusive St. Francis Wood neighborhood.

³⁷⁷ Lance Burton personal communication with Jonathan Lammers, July 15, 2015.

³⁷⁸ Miller, 141.

³⁷⁹ Crowe, 218.

³⁸⁰ Broussard, 232.

³⁸¹ Broussard, 168-9.

³⁸² Broussard, 171.

The contractor who built the house, Walter Gnesdiloff, initially agreed to sell it to Mays, but suddenly tried to back out of the deal, claiming that his business would suffer if it became known that he had sold a property to a Black man. Gnesdiloff claimed that he had received irate telephone calls from neighbors and neighborhood improvement clubs. This was probably true based on the public statements of several neighbors, including one man who stated: “Certainly I objected. I happen to have quite a few pieces of property in that area and I stand to lose a lot if colored people move in.”³⁸³ Faced with a public relations nightmare, Mayor George Christopher wrote the following letter to Mays and his wife:

Words cannot express my deep feeling of regret at this most unfortunate occurrence. Mrs. Christopher and I extend to you our warmest invitation to be our guests in our home until you find suitable housing.

I sincerely trust that you will not feel that this incident portrays the sentiment of San Francisco. You may be assured that the vast majority of our citizens want to welcome you here.³⁸⁴

Although Christopher had long refused to hire African Americans to work at his dairy, the mayor understood that San Francisco’s reputation for tolerance and civility was at stake. Under pressure from Mayor Christopher, Gnesdiloff telephoned Mays to offer him the property.³⁸⁵ Mays accepted and purchased it for \$37,500, \$5,000 more than it had been previously offered to a potential White buyer. Though Mays publicly claimed that the incident did not affect his feeling toward San Francisco, his wife Margherite confessed: “Down in Alabama where we come from you know your place, and that’s something at least. But up here it’s all a lot of camouflage. They grin in your face and then deceive you.”³⁸⁶

Though Mays’ situation was satisfactorily resolved, mostly due to his public stature and the political talents of his attorney, Terry Francois, everyday African Americans were rarely so lucky. According to the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP, “What happened in Mays’ case is dramatically enacted daily by hapless Negro families whose lack of prominence does not command the attention of the press and officials of San Francisco.”³⁸⁷ The case also brought to light the subtle racism experienced by Black San Franciscans in a city which, then as now, was celebrated for its liberalism and cosmopolitanism.

Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr.

Physician Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr. was one of the giants of San Francisco’s postwar civil rights movement. Goodlett was born in Chipley, Florida in 1914, but he grew up in Omaha, Nebraska. He attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., graduating in 1935. Several years later, he earned his Ph.D. in psychology from Howard University. In 1944, Goodlett earned his M.D. from Meharry Medical College, a historically Black medical school in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1945, Goodlett moved to San Francisco, where he established a medical practice. His office was located at 1845 Fillmore Street (extant). He and his wife Willette first lived at 272 9th Avenue (extant) and later 762 Hayes Street (extant) before relocating to 579 Los Pamos Drive in Westwood Highlands (extant).³⁸⁸

³⁸³ Miller, 58.

³⁸⁴ NAACP files, as quoted in Miller, 58.

³⁸⁵ “Willie Mays Buys S.F. Home,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (1957).

³⁸⁶ “Willie Mays is Denied,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (1957).

³⁸⁷ San Francisco chapter of the NAACP, as quoted in Broussard, 240.

³⁸⁸ San Francisco City Directories.



Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr. at a 1968 press conference discussing the SF State College strike.
Source: San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive

A “joiner,”³⁸⁹ Goodlett became a trustee of the Third Baptist Church and president of the local chapter of the NAACP. Not long after his arrival in San Francisco, Goodlett and his friend, the dentist Dr. Daniel Collins, invested in the *San Francisco Reporter*, a local Black newspaper established in the Fillmore district in 1942. Goodlett and Collins eventually gained full control of the paper, and in 1948 purchased the *San Francisco Sun*, another Black newspaper, combining them as the *San Francisco Sun-Reporter*. In 1948 the offices of the *Sun-Reporter* were located in the Fillmore at 1683 O’Farrell Street (not extant), but moved to 1579 Post Street (not extant) by 1954.

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The *Sun-Reporter* was San Francisco’s most important Black newspaper during the postwar period. Dr. Goodlett eventually acquired additional papers, and became one of the pre-eminent African American publishers in the nation.³⁹⁰ Using his papers as a platform, Dr. Goodlett was outspoken in his advocacy for Black civil rights and dignity. As described in his *New York Times* obituary:

For more than four decades, Dr. Goodlett, who published the weekly *Sun-Reporter* in San Francisco and eight affiliated papers, was an eloquent and tenacious advocate for an array of rights initiatives. His causes included the hiring of blacks by San Francisco’s Municipal Railway, desegregation of the city’s municipal labor unions and improvements in public housing.

Dr. Goodlett became a powerful voice in the Democratic Party, serving as a model for young black leaders. In 1966, he became the first black American since Reconstruction to mount a serious candidacy for the governorship of California

In 1966, Dr. Goodlett announced his intention to run for governor of California, a direct attack on Gov. Edmund G. (Pat) Brown, the Democratic incumbent who was facing a strong challenge from the likely Republican challenger, Ronald W. Reagan. Though Dr. Goodlett lost in the Democratic

³⁸⁹ Broussard, 182-3.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

primary, his call for Governor Brown to "go into the ghettos of Watts and Oakland" resonated throughout the Governor's unsuccessful campaign for re-election.³⁹¹

In 1963, Goodlett moved his medical office and the *Sun-Reporter* office to a building at 1366 Turk Street (not extant).³⁹² After a long and successful career, Dr. Goodlett died in 1997. In 1999, Mayor Willie Brown, San Francisco's first African American mayor, renamed two blocks of Polk Street in front of City Hall Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr. Place.

Dr. Daniel Collins

Dr. Daniel Collins (1916-2007) was born in 1916 in Darlington, South Carolina. Showing great academic promise as a boy, Collins was admitted to Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. In 1941, he graduated with his D.D.S. from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. He then earned a graduate degree in dentistry from the University of California, San Francisco. After graduating from UCSF in 1944, Dr. Collins decided to stay and open a practice catering to the City's growing Black population. In the 1950s, he founded the Beneficial Savings and Loan Association in Oakland, one of the Bay Area's first Black-owned businesses of its type.



Dr. Daniel Collins.
Source: Marin Journal

Dr. Collins was involved in the founding of many organizations within the African American community. In 1945, along with Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, he helped to fund the operations of the *San Francisco Sun* newspaper. Two years later, he founded the San Francisco chapter of the National Urban League, which became an important force advocating for civil rights in San Francisco. Dr. Collins served on the organization's board from 1965 until 1987. He served as a board member of the San Francisco Chapter of the NAACP; as a founding member of the predominately African American professional fraternity Alpha Pi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Gamma Chi Lambda Chapter; Chairman of the Board for the Booker T. Washington Community Center; and founding member of the Church for the Fellowship of All People, one of the first nondenominational, interracial churches in the country.³⁹³

During this time, Dr. Collins continued to maintain a successful dental practice at 2449 Sutter Street (not extant) serving clients of all races. He also taught at the UCSF School of Dentistry, where he was the first African American professor of dentistry. Among his many accomplishments, Collins was appointed by President Kennedy to the National Health Resources Advisory Committee. He also served as a Board member of the National Urban League and Radio Free Europe, and was elected to serve as Executive Director of Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich—the first African American elected to the board of a major publishing house.³⁹⁴ Of special note, Collins was the founder of Lifehouse, a San Rafael-based organization that helps children with disabilities. When his son was born with developmental disabilities, Dr. Collins' efforts led the California legislature to pass the Lanterman Act to ensure that people with

³⁹¹ "Carlton Goodlett, 82, Doctor and a Campaigning Publisher," *New York Times*, February 2, 1997.

³⁹² San Francisco City Directories.

³⁹³ Marin County Resolution, Commending Dr. Daniel Collins, DDS, MSD, FICS, Retired Dentist, Businessman, Entrepreneur and Civic Giant," accessed April 5, 2015, <http://egovwebprod.marincounty.org/EFiles/BS/AgMn/agdocs/070313/070313-ca2b-BS-res-RES.pdf>.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

disabilities receive government services. Dr. Collins was married to DeReath Collins and the couple lived in Mill Valley from the early 1950s until his death in 2007.³⁹⁵

Cecil F. Poole

Cecil F. Poole (1914-1997) was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1914 and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Poole attended high school in Washington, D.C. and earned both his A.B. and LL.B. from the University of Michigan in 1935 and 1938, respectively. In 1939, he earned his LL.M. from Harvard University's School of Law. Poole was drafted into the Army during World War II and assigned to Tuskegee Army Air Service Base, where he worked with the famous 332nd Fighter Group, an all-Black corps better known as the "Tuskegee Airmen."



Cecil Poole (left) and Robert Kennedy (right), 1961.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

After World War II, Poole moved to San Francisco, where he initially worked as a labor relations lawyer for the federal government, and later as a District Attorney. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy appointed Poole U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California, making him the first African American to hold this position in the continental United States. Poole later served as a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, as well as the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.³⁹⁶

Poole and his family lived at 90 Cedro Way in Ingleside Terraces. Poole was the first African American to live in the neighborhood, which was built for whites only by developer Joseph Leonard. Famously, a cross was burned in front of their home shortly after they moved there in 1958. The Cecil Poole Residence was designated City Landmark No. 214 for its association with Cecil Poole and the builder/developer Joseph Leonard, who built the house for himself in 1912. Cecil Poole died in 1997.

Seaton W. Manning

Seaton W. Manning, a Jamaican-born and Harvard-educated historian and activist, had worked for the National Urban League in Boston before moving to San Francisco after World War II. He served as the executive director of the newly founded San Francisco chapter of the National Urban League from 1946 until 1960.³⁹⁷ In contrast with other members of San Francisco's African American elite, who tended to live in middle-class, White neighborhoods on the West Side, Manning and his wife Eugenia lived at



Former National Urban League headquarters.
Source: Christopher VerPlanck

³⁹⁵ "Daniel Collins Dies: Dentist and Bay Area Urban League Founder," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 25, 2007).

³⁹⁶ "Cecil F. Poole, 83, a Legal Leader for Blacks," *New York Times* (November 16, 1997).

³⁹⁷ Broussard, 184.

1032 Gilman Avenue in the Bayview-Hunters Point district (extant). During the postwar period the San Francisco chapter of the National Urban League offices was housed in a brick building at 2015 Steiner Street (extant) in the Western Addition.³⁹⁸

Robert B. Flippin

Robert Flippin was born December 24, 1903 in Nebraska. During World War II he became the first African American parole officer at San Quentin Prison, remaining in that position until his death in 1963.³⁹⁹ Flippin was also the able leader of the Booker T. Washington Community Center, bridging the prewar and postwar eras. In 1942, Flippin began writing a weekly column for the *San Francisco Chronicle* entitled “*In the Districts*,” which detailed the transformation of Black life in the Western Addition.⁴⁰⁰ The following year, he was appointed to the San Francisco Housing Authority to manage the Westside Courts public housing project in the Western Addition.



Booker T. Washington Center, demolished October 2015.
Source: Christopher VerPlanck

James Stratten

James Stratten arrived in San Francisco in 1941 to serve as the associate regional supervisor for the YMCA-USO, helping to coordinate activities for African American soldiers on leave in the city. After the war he became the executive director of the Booker T. Washington Community Center, the most important secular organization established by African Americans prior to World War II.⁴⁰¹ Stratten oversaw the construction of the Booker T. Washington Community Center’s at 800 Presidio Boulevard in 1952.

Frances B. Glover

Men were not the only important figures in San Francisco’s post-war African American community. Frances B. Glover was married to D. Donald Glover, vice-chairman of the California Federation of Civic Unity. She was educated at West Virginia State College and Ohio State University. Before coming to San Francisco after World War II, Mrs. Glover worked with Mary McLeod Bethune at the National Youth Administration’s Division of Negro Affairs in Ohio. During the 1950s, Glover served as the managing editor of Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Jr.’s *Sun-Reporter* and as secretary to the board of directors of the Central YMCA.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ San Francisco City Directories.

³⁹⁹ U.S. Census.

⁴⁰⁰ Bell, 6.

⁴⁰¹ Broussard, 184.

⁴⁰² Broussard, 185.

Ministers and Churches

Before World War II, most of San Francisco's small Black population attended one of the major mainline Protestant churches: Third Baptist, A. M. E. Zion, Bethel A. M. E., or St. Cyprian A. M. E. The war years brought in a significant population of African American Catholics (mainly from Louisiana) who began attending Catholic services in several parishes throughout the City, especially Sacred Heart in the Fillmore and All Hallows and Our Lady of Lourdes in the Bayview-Hunters Point district.

During the postwar period many of the older pioneer African American churches moved to the Western Addition. The Third Baptist Church, which had been located at 1299 Hyde Street since 1906, built a new church at 1399 McAllister Street in 1952 (extant). During this period Third Baptist was led by Reverend Frederick Douglas Haynes, Sr. Born in 1899, Haynes was a member of the prewar African American community, though he remained active in civil rights efforts and led his church from World War II until his death in 1971. He was married to Charlie Mae (Crawford) Haynes, a singer and church worker who was a successful candidate for the San Francisco School Board.⁴⁰³

A. M. E. Zion United Methodist Church

A. M. E. Zion, which since 1912 had been located at 1669 Geary Street, was demolished in the late 1950s and reconstructed in 1960 at 2159 Golden Gate Avenue (extant). This building was designed by architect Robert Batchelor and constructed at a cost of \$130,000.⁴⁰⁴ Bethel A. M. E., which had previously been located at 1207 Powell Street (not extant) since the late nineteenth century, bought an old, disused church building at 916-70 Laguna Street in the late 1950s. When this church became too cramped the congregation replaced it with a new facility in 1969-73 (extant).



Third Baptist Church, 1953.
Source: San Francisco Public Library



A. M. E. Zion Church, 1964.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

⁴⁰³ Frederick Douglas Haynes, *Finding Aid for the Frederick Douglas Haynes Family Papers*. (California Historical Society: San Francisco).

⁴⁰⁴ San Francisco Department of Building Inspection, "Permits on file for 2159 Golden Gate Avenue."

The postwar period also witnessed the founding of many new Protestant churches, including several dozen Evangelical and Pentecostal “storefront” churches, mainly in converted commercial buildings along Fillmore Street, Third Street, and elsewhere. The Reverend E. E. Hamilton of the Church of God in Christ presided over the largest African American congregation in San Francisco only two years after he arrived. Reverend Hamilton, along with Reverend H. B. Gantt of A. M. E. Zion, Reverend Hamilton T. Boswell of Jones Methodist Church, and Pastor F. D. Haynes of Third Baptist, were all important figures in the Black Ministerial Alliance, a civil rights organization dedicated to gaining equal access for African Americans to jobs, housing and health care.⁴⁰⁵

Jones United Methodist Church

Jones United Methodist Church was organized in February 1943 in the storefront of 1901 Bush Street (not extant) by Reverend T. J. Bridgette, of the Louisiana United Methodist Conference. The church was named in honor of Bishop Robert Jones, the first Black Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church (1920). By 1945, membership in the church had grown to over 300 members. The congregation moved to 1975 Post Street, where it remains to this day (original building demolished in 1998; new extant).⁴⁰⁶

Jones Church established a number of social programs designed to address the needs of the congregation and surrounding Fillmore community. In 1952, the church founded the Jones United Methodist Credit Union in response to red-lining. Begun with \$1,500 in assets, it was approved by the Federal Credit Union League on the basis of a few members’ good credit ratings.⁴⁰⁷ The credit union still exists and operates separately from the church’s funding. The Jones Memorial Senior Homes were established in 1960 to provide inexpensive, affordable-rate housing to seniors across the City. In 2001, the church merged with Ridgeview, also known as Ridge Point Church, a community formed in 1943, which aided Navy service personnel in the Bayview/Hunters Point area of San Francisco.⁴⁰⁸



Former Jones United Methodist Church
Source: San Francisco Library

Dr. Howard Thurman and the Fellowship of All Peoples Church

Another noteworthy church led by a prominent African American minister was the Fellowship Church of All Peoples, an interracial, inter-ethnic church founded in 1944 by Dr. Howard Thurman (1899-1981) and Dr. Alfred G. Fisk. The church, reputedly the first intentionally interracial congregation of its kind in the United States, was intended to foster goodwill between Whites and Blacks in postwar San Francisco.⁴⁰⁹ Initially services were held at the First Unitarian Church, but the congregation later moved to a church at

⁴⁰⁵ Broussard, 183.

⁴⁰⁶ “About Jones,” Jones Memorial United Church, accessed April 5, 2015,

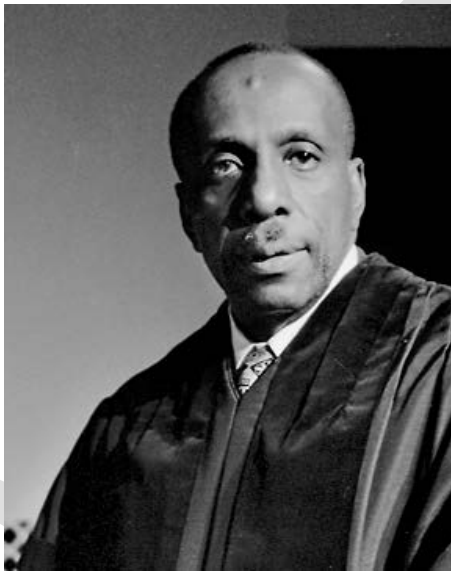
⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Broussard, 187.

2041 Larkin Street in Russian Hill (extant). This building was originally constructed in 1907 as St. John's German Evangelical Church.

Thurman was born and raised in Daytona, Florida by his grandmother, a former slave. He became an ordained Baptist minister in 1925. Thurman began studying the interdenominational teachings of non-violence with Rufus Thomas, a Quaker mystic and pacifist. This laid the foundation for Thurman's activist teachings that racism and segregation had fostered spiritually destructive attitudes in both Blacks and Whites. He preached a philosophy of "common ground" which held that strength of inner spirit would lead to a common understanding among peoples.



Rev. Howard Thurman.
Source: Boston University



Fellowship Church of All Peoples Church.
Source: San Francisco Library

In 1936, he led a "Negro Delegation of Friendship" to India, where he met Mohandas Gandhi. Thurman said that Gandhi's message of non-violence would spread throughout the world via African Americans. Thurman's book *Jesus and the Disinherited* provided an interpretation of the Gospels that laid the foundation for Martin Luther King's non-violent approach to the Civil Rights Movement. King often sought counsel from Thurman and it is said that King was re-reading a copy of the book during the Montgomery bus boycott.

Thurman and Fisk co-founded the Fellowship Church of All Peoples church in the belief that religious communion was one of the few venues where people of all races could stand united in fellowship. Thurman decried church segregation on both class and ethnic lines. Writing in *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Thurman observed:

The first step toward love is a common sharing of a sense of mutual worth and value. This cannot be discovered in a vacuum or in a series of artificial or hypothetical relationships. It has to be in a real situation, natural, free.

The experience of the common worship of God is such a moment. It is in this connection that American Christianity has betrayed the religion of Jesus almost beyond redemption. Churches

have been established for the underprivileged, for the weak, for the poor, on the theory that they prefer to be among themselves. Churches have been established for the Chinese, the Japanese, the Korean, the Mexican, the Filipino, the Italian, and the Negro, with the same theory in mind. The result is that the one place in which normal, free contacts might be most naturally established ... is one of the chief instruments for guaranteeing barriers.⁴¹⁰

In 1932 Reverend Thurman married Sue Baily Thurman, an important African American figure in her own right. Educated at Oberlin and Spelman colleges, she taught at the Hampton Institute and later worked in the Washington, D.C. offices of the YWCA. In San Francisco she founded a local chapter of the National Council of Negro Women. This civic organization achieved much for civil rights and women's rights under Thurman's directorship. Based on her accomplishments, Thurman was subsequently appointed to represent the United States at a UNESCO conference held in Paris in 1949.⁴¹¹

Prior to his arrival in San Francisco, Thurman served as dean of Rankin Chapel at Howard University in Washington, D.C. During the mid-1940s, the Thurmans lived at 2660 California Street in the Western Addition (extant). In 1952 Thurman spoke at the dedication of the new Booker T. Washington Community Center, declaring it a "center for the whole community."⁴¹² In 1953 Thurman moved to Boston, where he served as dean of Boston University's Marsh Chapel until 1965. Today the University's Howard Thurman Center for Common Ground is named for him.

Cultural Contributions

Music and Nightlife

African American culture flowered in San Francisco during the late 1940s and the early 1950s, a period when the Fillmore district was nicknamed the "Harlem of the West." Commemorated in the lyrics of Lowell Fulson's "Fillmore Mess Around" and in the pages of Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the Fillmore was a thriving business district containing dozens of African American-owned businesses, including barbershops, billiards parlors, cleaners, shoeshine stands, barbeque restaurants, record stores and various other stores and offices.⁴¹³ During this time African American entrepreneurs opened several notable bars and nightclubs, including the following:

- Louis Landry's New Orleans Swing Club (later the Champagne Supper Club), at 1849 Post Street (not extant)
- The Long Bar, at 1633 Fillmore Street (extant)
- Wesley Johnson's Texas Playhouse/Club Flamingo, at 1836-40 Fillmore Street (not extant)
- Leola King's Blue Mirror, at 935 Fillmore Street (not extant)
- The Ellis Theater, at 1671 Ellis Street (not extant)
- Elsie's Breakfast Nook, at 1739 Fillmore Street (not extant)
- Jackson's Nook, at 1638 Buchanan Street (not extant)
- James and Mary McCoy's Primalon Ballroom, at 1223 Fillmore Street (not extant)
- Charles Sullivan's Fillmore Auditorium (extant), at 1805 Geary Boulevard
- Charles Sullivan's Booker T. Washington Hotel and Cocktail Lounge, at 1540 Ellis Street (not extant)

⁴¹⁰ Thurman, 98.

⁴¹¹ Broussard, 185.

⁴¹² *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 17, 1952.

⁴¹³ Pepin and Watts, 13.

- Jimbo's Bop City, at 1690 Post Street (extant—building moved to 1712 Fillmore Street ca. 1979)⁴¹⁴

Charles Sullivan, "Mayor of the Fillmore"

During the heyday of the Fillmore, Charles Sullivan (1907-1966) was by far the most influential club owner and concert promoter. A native of Alabama, Sullivan stated that he had been indentured as a "slave" to an African American farmer at the age of two.⁴¹⁵ He ran away to California in the 1920s and studied at night school to become a journeyman machinist. During the late 1930s he lived in San Mateo where he operated a barbecue restaurant and bar named Sullivan's. According to author Gary Kamiya, at the start of World War II Sullivan became the first African American in the Bay Area to become a member of the machinist union. "He was the only qualified black machinist in California. He tried to get a job at the shipyards, but the union refused to hire blacks. Sullivan got 50 white machinists to testify on his behalf, but it took the personal intervention of President Roosevelt to get the union to hire him."⁴¹⁶ In 1941 Sullivan became the first African American to construct fighting ships on the West Coast.⁴¹⁷

During the war years Sullivan also opened a number of bars and liquor stores in the Bay Area, while also becoming involved in the juke box business and concert promotion. This included booking acts for concerts in the bustling Fillmore District. According to an article in *The New Fillmore*, Sullivan not only emerged as the most successful businessman in the Fillmore, he was also the most successful music promoter on the West Coast:

Sullivan moved into the Fillmore and hooked up with one of the Bay Area's more colorful characters, a large man named Shirley "Fats" Corlett. Fats had come into possession of the Edison Hotel at 1540 Ellis Street and renamed it the Booker T. Washington Hotel, but because of a felony conviction he couldn't own the bar. Sullivan saw an opportunity and bought the hotel, as well as the Post Street Liquor Store nearby at 1623 Post. The Post Street building had rooms for rent on the second floor, and that became the Sullivan Hotel.⁴¹⁸



**Charles Sullivan (center left), with Fats Corlett sitting beside him) in the Booker T. Washington Hotel.
Source: *The New Fillmore* / Hall family**

About 1950 Sullivan approached James "Jimbo" Edwards about operating a restaurant in a building that Sullivan owned at 1690 Post Street. Soon afterward jazz musicians began playing in the space behind the

⁴¹⁴ Pepin and Watts, 72.

⁴¹⁵ "A Slave's Strange Story," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 21, 1963.

⁴¹⁶ Gary Kamiya, "Western Addition, A Basic Historical Essay," *FoundSF*, accessed April 15, 2015.

⁴¹⁷ "A Slave's Strange Story," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 21, 1963.

⁴¹⁸ "Who Shot the Mayor of Fillmore?" *The New Fillmore*, September 4, 2014.

restaurant, and the business was re-christened “Jimbo’s Bop City.” As stated in the Landmark Designation Report for Jimbo’s Bop City:

The network of other, larger jazz venues all over San Francisco brought big name musicians to the City, and when they were done playing their official gigs, often in more formal spaces and for white audiences, they would head to Bop City afterwards to relax and occasionally try out new material or new innovative arrangements in a less formal setting Repeat performers were also honored by the inclusion of their likenesses on an evolving set of murals that graced the walls of the club. These types of unique traditions defined the club, which is remembered as an intimate community that fostered both innovation and tradition.



Performers at Jimbo’s Bop City, 1950s. From left to right: bassist Skippy Warren, alto saxophonist Pony Poindexter, Trumpeter Alan Smith, Tenor Saxophonist Teddy Edwards.
Source: Jimbo Edwards Collection via the San Francisco Chronicle

In 1954 Sullivan began booking entertainment at the Majestic Ballroom, which he renamed the Fillmore Auditorium (extant). Built in 1912, the building had been used as a skating rink and dance hall during the 1940s—a period when it was off limits to Blacks. Sullivan used his business acumen and began booking some of the biggest names in Black entertainment. Sullivan also promoted shows at the Winterland (not extant), a former ice skating rink also used for boxing matches, as well as at the Cow Palace. A former resident of the Fillmore, Lance Burton, recalls:

When Mr. Sullivan put all that together, it was the height of the music business and music influence for Black people. They still talk about the music of the 60s. A lot of what was popular coming out of Philadelphia and down into Memphis and Motown. Mr. Sullivan was the guy who brought those great musicians out to the west coast. He had a circuit. Most of those acts would not come west of the Mississippi. But he could get them out here because he could guarantee the contracts. So that’s why were able to get all those great musicians into the Fillmore Auditorium. So from that point to 1966, he had the major lease on it. And it was his contract,

that he devised, that made it work. Because he forbade the artists to play anywhere else for 30 days.⁴¹⁹

Sullivan's clubs joined the previously discussed "Big Three" (Jack's Tavern, Club Alabam and the Town Club) which had opened in the early 1930s near the intersection of Fillmore and Sutter streets. All of these clubs booked Black, White, and interracial acts and attracted a similarly mixed crowd of revelers.⁴²⁰ *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist and Fillmore District regular, Herb Caen, described the "after hours" scene in the Fillmore district:

Around 1 A.M., the crowd started filing out, to gather in knots on the sidewalk, yelling, laughing, chattering away. The Young San Franciscans, in the glow of health, the time of their lives. The mood was still as mellow as the weather, as redolent of the city's long history as the foghorn that sounded occasionally. I thought briefly of my own youth, of making the rounds in The City That Was, hitting the after-hours spots, "slumming" (what a word) in Fillmore district jazz joints where a guy named Jimbo (Edwards) served up booze in a thick coffee cup.⁴²¹

Notable performers at these venues included Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Chet Baker, Dinah Washington, Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, Dave Brubeck, and many others. African American performers from out of town usually stayed in Fillmore district hotels and boardinghouses, such as the Manor Plaza Hotel, at 930 Fillmore Street and the Booker T. Washington Hotel & Cocktail Lounge, at 1540 Ellis Street (neither extant). The 1949 *Negro Motorist Green Book* also recommended lodging at the Buford Hotel, at 1969 Sutter Street (extant), and the Scaggs Hotel, at 1715 Webster Street (extant).



A party in the Fillmore, 1940s. Jazz great Louis Armstrong and his wife Lucille are seated at right.
Source: newfillmore.com

⁴¹⁹ Burton.

⁴²⁰ Pepin and Watts, 72.

⁴²¹ As quoted in James R. Smith's, *San Francisco's Lost Landmarks* (Sanger, CA: Word Dancer Press, 2005), 86.

Well-known local musicians also played in these clubs, including jazz drummer Earl Watkins, who played with Earl Hines and Dizzy Gillespie; bassist Vernon Alley, who played with the Wes Peoples Band and later Lionel Hampton's band; drummer Eddie Alley (Vernon's brother), who played with the Wes Peoples Band; saxophonist John Handy, who played with Charles Mingus; violinist, bassist, and photographer Johnnie Ingram of the Rhythm Czars; the Frank Jackson Trio and many others.

By the mid-1950s, San Francisco was widely recognized as the center of "West Coast Jazz," a more structured and less frenetic variant of America's most famous indigenous musical style. Most people who remembered the Fillmore district's jazz scene mention how everyone dressed up to go out. Former San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown describes the dress code of the Fillmore in the 1950s:



Patrons in front of Club Flamingo, ca. 1955.
Source: Collection of Wesley Johnson

People would get dressed to kill. You saw great peacocks. Stacey Adams shoes with the white strings showing that they had been cleaned with Clorox. Diamond stick pins. Satin ties and long coats. Great looking jewelry on the women. Fur coats—there was no such thing as an endangered species. Believe me, you didn't go out in jeans and sneakers. You had to be dressed. It was a great, great time.⁴²²

Although it was not a nightclub, the Melrose Record Shop at 1226 Fillmore Street (not extant) was another important business where local residents could buy the latest jazz, blues, classical, and other styles of music on records. Author Maya Angelou worked at the Melrose Record Shop during the 1950s, a time that she also danced professionally at the Purple Onion in North Beach.⁴²³

The musical heartbeat of the Fillmore gradually broadened to include rhythm and blues and rock-n-roll. Famed rhythm & blues singer Etta James lived in the Fillmore, and for a time she and Sugar Pie DeSanto

⁴²² As quoted in Pepin and Watts, 38.

⁴²³ Pepin and Watts, 56.

were part of a girl gang called the Lucky 20s.⁴²⁴ As described by DeSanto, born Umpeylia Marsema Balinton to a Filipino father and an African American mother, the scene in the Fillmore was vibrant and varied:

The Fillmore club scene was a mixture. You'd go in one club, maybe the Sportsman, and they'd be doing blues and jazz. You'd go down the street, and they'd be doing jazz. Then another place would be records. You could just go from one end of the neighborhood to the other, and every block had a club. If you were a musician and needed a gig, you just went to the Fillmore. You could make a living.⁴²⁵



Melrose Record Shop, ca. 1950.
Source: David Johnson via newfillmore.com



Sugar Pie DeSanto.
Source: bittersweet.com

Many people who grew up in the Fillmore do not recall the “blight” and slum conditions that City officials described in planning documents. Rather, they remember a tough but multicultural neighborhood where people of all races got along well enough to create a cultural life that was uniquely San Franciscan. Steve Nakajo, a Japanese American resident of the Fillmore district in the 1950s, described the scene:

I had a mixed group of friends. Japanese, Filipino, Black. Mixed, like the neighborhood. We had the J-town walk. The J-town feel. When we got down to the Fillmore, we'd check everyone out and they'd check us out, because you had to know who your rivals were. The Fillmore was tough, but happenin'.

Walking down Fillmore Street with my friends was so cool. There were movie theaters. Soul food restaurants. Pool halls. A bowling alley and roller skating rink. You walked by different doorways, and you started to hear doo-wop. In the middle of the afternoon, these guys are cutting it up, singing in the doorway because the marble floor gives a better sound.

⁴²⁴ Etta James, “Etta in the Fillmore,” *The New Fillmore*, January 20, 2012.

⁴²⁵ As quoted in Pepin and Watts, 73.

You know how kids in the suburbs go to amusement parks, or someplace like that where kids go there all day for amusement? Well, Fillmore Street was like that for me.⁴²⁶

Changing musical tastes in the mid-1960s led many of the jazz clubs to shut down. The legendary Blackhawk nightclub in the Tenderloin, which had been the venue for live albums recorded by Miles Davis, Thelonius Monk, Mongo Santamaria and others, closed in 1963. This was soon followed by the closure of Jimbo's Bop City in 1965. That same year Charles Sullivan began subletting the Fillmore for concerts promoted by Bill Graham, who took over management following Sullivan's death in 1966. Unfortunately for posterity, the final blow to the Fillmore's identity as one of America's most important African American-dominated entertainment zones, was delivered by the Redevelopment Agency, which demolished nearly all of the district during the 1960s and 1970s. Though several businesses were relocated, and some limped along for a while, most soon closed for good because the community that had sustained them had been scattered to various parts of the Bay Area.

Other Artistic Contributions

bob Kaufman

Music was not the only arena in which African Americans distinguished themselves in midcentury San Francisco. One of the then most widely respected, but today little known, poets of the "San Francisco Renaissance" was bob Kaufman (1925-1986).⁴²⁷ Born in New Orleans to a German-Jewish father and an African American mother, bob Kaufman was first employed as a merchant marine. He met "Beat Generation" poets Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs while studying at the New School in New York during the 1940s.



bob Kaufman at the Coffee Gallery, 1959.
Source: FoundSF.com

The three men left for San Francisco together where they joined Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Jack Kerouac—together forming the core of the city's "Beatnik" community. Kaufman's poetry, which was heavily influenced by the melodic structure of jazz, became very popular in France where he was referred to as the "black American Rimbaud." Kaufman was friends with the pioneering figures of be-bop, including Thelonius Monk, Charles Mingus and Charlie Parker. Kaufman's desire to free poetry from the printed page—much as jazz had freed music from the printed score—influenced his fellow beatniks, including Allen Ginsberg during his first public reading of "Howl."

In San Francisco, Kaufman sometimes performed his poetry at the Coffee Gallery at 1353 Grant Avenue (extant), while other times he read in the streets, eschewing the bourgeois café culture entirely. His

⁴²⁶ As quoted in Pepin and Watts, 40.

⁴²⁷ Kaufman spelled his first name with two lowercase b's.

work was printed by City Lights, the publishing arm of Ferlinghetti's bookstore on Columbus Avenue. He bounced around different apartments in North Beach and Telegraph Hill before moving to New York in the early 1960s.

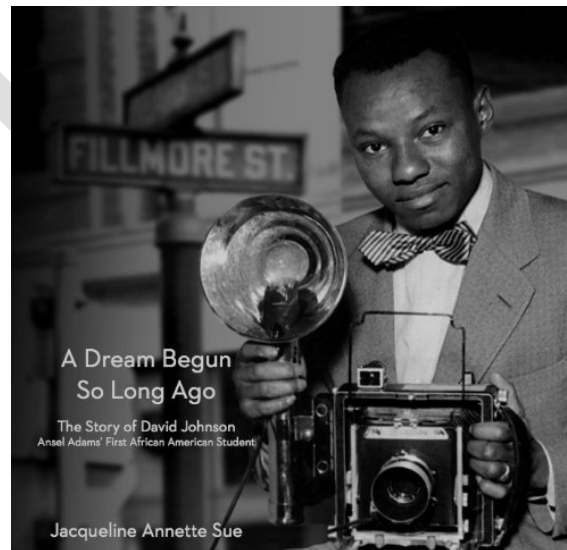
After President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, bob Kaufman took a Buddhist vow of silence that he maintained for a decade. He once declared that "I want to be anonymous my ambition is to be completely forgotten." He died of emphysema in 1986 after a long cycle of poverty and methadone addiction, interwoven with extended creative periods.⁴²⁸

In 2002, the Corner of Filbert and Grant Streets was designated as the official Poet's Corner for the City of San Francisco. At this time, City Lights Bookstore was designated City Landmark No. 228 and the Board of Supervisors changed the name of Harwood Alley to bob Kaufman Alley in recognition of his literary and cultural significance during the Beat era.⁴²⁹

David Johnson

David Johnson was born in Jacksonville, Florida in 1926 and grew up in the care of a foster mother. He developed an interest in photography after winning a camera in a contest at age 12. After a naval tour in the Philippines during World War II, Johnson returned to his segregated hometown. There he read in *Popular Photography* that famed photographer Ansel Adams was to become the director of a new photography program at the California School of Fine Arts, today the San Francisco Art Institute.⁴³⁰

Johnson wrote to Adams requesting a seat in the class and mentioned that he was a Negro. Adams sent back a telegram saying the class was filled, and that it did not matter that he was a Negro.⁴³¹ With G.I. Bill funds in his pocket, Johnson arrived in San Francisco in 1945 with no formal photography training and a \$5 camera. He went to Ansel Adams' residence and stayed with Adams until he found a place to live in the Fillmore District. Adams encouraged Johnson to photograph his neighborhood and to document the faces and places with which he was most familiar. By doing so, he became an important chronicler of Black life in San Francisco in the middle part of the 20th century.



Cover of the 2012 biography of Johnson.
Source: sfbayview.com

After graduating from the California School of Fine Arts, Johnson and his wife opened the Johnson Photography Studio on Fillmore Street, which operated from the 1940s through the 1960s. In a 2011 documentary made about his life, "Positive Negatives," Johnson states: "It was a plus for me in making images, positive images, and being a part of the community—not just as a documenter, but as a participant It was the place where I worked. It was my image farm, so to speak."⁴³²

⁴²⁸ "bob Kaufman: The Enigmatic Beat Poet," Poets.org, accessed May 1, 2015.

⁴²⁹ San Francisco Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 642-02, File No. 021516, Sept. 22, 2002.

⁴³⁰ Katherine Schwab, "Photographer David Johnson in Spotlight," *SFGate*, July 23, 2013.

⁴³¹ Jacqueline Sue, *A Dream Begun So Long Ago* (KHEDCANRON Publishing: Corte Madera, CA, 2012).

⁴³² Schwab.

Many of Johnson's photographs capture the vibrant lives of his neighbors, from couples dancing in jazz clubs to Black and White children playing together outside a local church. To make ends meet, Johnson also worked at the post office and took assignments from a local African American newspaper, the *Sun Reporter*.

Johnson's artistic vision included a desire to depict people positively while capturing the emotions of the civil rights movement. He became involved in the local NAACP chapter and was sent as a delegate and photographer to the March on Washington in 1963. Johnson has photographed famous African Americans such as Thurgood Marshall, Jackie Robinson and Langston Hughes. However, his most published works are images of ordinary African Americans going through their daily routines.



We Demand, 1963
Source: David Johnson

Summary of Significant Themes

Although World War II brought unprecedented employment opportunities for thousands of African Americans, the end of war brought with it a fair degree of retrenchment. As the shipyards and other defense facilities closed, the unemployment rate for African Americans soared to three times that of Whites. At the same time, much of the City's African American population was hemmed into the Western Addition or Hunter's Point, as most neighborhoods in San Francisco and across the Bay Area actively excluded Black residents. The combination of overcrowding and poverty were diagnosed as "blight" by city officials—a characterization that would have extreme implications over the coming decades.

Nevertheless, the same discriminatory factors that inhibited Black mobility—both economic and geographic—resulted in the flowering of the Fillmore as a self-contained residential, commercial, social and entertainment district for Black San Francisco. The post-war period also greeted a new generation of Black professionals, many of whom emerged as leaders in the struggle for civil rights. This included a successful battle to end segregation in public housing, as well as further integration of the City's municipal workforce. Middle class African Americans were also able to expand into areas away from the Western Addition and Hunter's Point—particularly the OMI district.

Extant Properties

This list should not be considered comprehensive, but includes properties mentioned earlier in this section of the report.

- Fillmore Auditorium, 1805 Geary Boulevard
- Jimbo's Bop City, moved to 1712 Fillmore Street (SF Landmark No. 266)
- South San Francisco Opera House, 4705 Third Street (SF Landmark No. 8)
- Residence of Cecil Poole, 90 Cedro Avenue (San Francisco Landmark No. 213)

- Bayview Community Center / Crispus Attucks Club, 1201-1205 Mendell Street
- National Urban League San Francisco Chapter, 2015 Steiner Street
- The office of Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, 1845 Fillmore Street
- Residence of Carlton B. Goodlett, 579 Los Pinos Drive
- Residence of Terry A. Francois, 1608 10th Avenue
- Residence of Seaton W. Manning, 1032 Gilman Avenue
- Residence of Willie Mays, 175 Miraloma Drive
- Third Baptist Church (third location—established 1952), 1399 McAllister Street
- A.M.E. Zion United Methodist Church (third location—1960), 2159 Golden Gate Avenue
- Bethel A.M.E. Church (third location—established 1969), 916 Laguna Street
- Fellowship of All Peoples Church, 2041 Larkin Street

Commemorative Sites

- Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, renamed block of Polk Street in front of City Hall
- Bob Kaufmann Alley, south side of Filbert Street between Grant Avenue and Varnes Street
- Statue of Willie Mays, Willie Mays Plaza, AT&T Park
- Sidewalk plaque commemorating the former location of the Blackhawk Jazz Club, corner of Turk and Hyde streets

F. Redevelopment Demolishes the Fillmore District



**Children removing debris from a vacant lot created by redevelopment, 1960.
Source: San Francisco News-Call Bulletin newspaper archive**

State sponsored urban renewal swept through many American cities after World War II. Often justified by the laudable goal of improving conditions for people living in aging and sometimes decrepit inner-city neighborhoods, urban renewal was essentially a property tax-financed slush fund for private real estate developers. Founded in 1948, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency's avowed mission was to modernize and redevelop "blighted" areas of the City with modern infrastructure and development.⁴³³ However, Redevelopment Agency policy was controlled by prominent members of San Francisco's business community, whose real motivation was the replacement of low-value "slums" with high-value commercial and residential development.⁴³⁴ City officials, anxious for enhanced property tax revenues, did little to stop the destruction of poor and working-class communities targeted by Redevelopment during the 1960s and 1970s.

⁴³³ Chester Hartman, *The Transformation of San Francisco* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984).

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

At first the Redevelopment Agency concentrated on less controversial projects, including the relocation of the old Produce District to Bayview-Hunters Point and the redevelopment of its previous site with the Golden Gateway and Embarcadero Center projects. Another early project involved the condemnation of a ranch and several rural landholdings on Gold Mine and Red Rock Hills to make way for the new community of Diamond Heights. Neither of these project areas contained many residents, so they were completed relatively quickly and without much controversy. The Redevelopment Agency ran into trouble when it began targeting thriving working-class residential neighborhoods, especially the South of Market Area, the Western Addition and the Mission district. Many residents of these three neighborhoods, including many politically savvy union members, were bitterly opposed to redevelopment and successful in opposing, delaying and mitigating some of its worst effects.⁴³⁵

In order for the Redevelopment Agency to establish a “project area” it had to demonstrate that the neighborhood was “blighted.” Though this term was obviously quite subjective, the Redevelopment Agency published reports defining blight as the “unlawful, non-conforming” conversion of single-family dwellings into apartments. Because so much of the housing stock in the Western Addition consisted of single-family dwellings and flats converted into apartments—mostly during World War II—the “evidence” was incontrovertible, the Western Addition was blighted.⁴³⁶ The solution, according to the Redevelopment Agency, was to tear it all down and start over, combining the hundreds of small house lots into large “superblocks” capable of accommodating much larger buildings, including high-rise residential towers and shopping malls.

The local business community, represented by the Blyth-Zellerbach Committee and its advocacy arm, the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association (SPUR), were among the Redevelopment Agency’s biggest supporters. As early as the 1930s, corporate property owners called for the removal of the “dreary Little Tokyo” that lay just west of San Francisco’s Civic Center. In 1943, the *San Francisco Chronicle* began a series of articles covering conditions in the Western Addition, referred to as “Little Dead End.”⁴³⁷ Two years later, the Western Addition was targeted in the 1945 *Master Plan of San Francisco*, published by the San Francisco Planning Department, whose authors stated frankly what many business leaders and government representatives hesitated to say in public:

It is close to the financial district...and contains slopes on which apartments with fine views can be erected. In view of the characteristically low incomes of colored and foreign-born families, only a relatively small proportion of them may be expected to occupy quarters in the new development.⁴³⁸

Of course, none of these reports acknowledged the rich cultural heritage of the Western Addition, its thriving ethnic enclaves, or its bustling commercial thoroughfares. Though the Western Addition certainly had problems, most local residents did not want to move. During a meeting held in July 1948 at the Buchanan Street YMCA at 1530 Buchanan Street (extant), a multiracial coalition of more than 300 residents came together to voice their concerns. Mrs. Michi Onuma, publisher of the *Progressive News*, stated that “no guarantees have been provided that new housing built in the area will not be priced out of the range of the average worker living there.” Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr., then head of the San

⁴³⁵ Hartman.

⁴³⁶ San Francisco Department of Public Works, Bureau of Building Inspection, Urban Renewal Division, *Survey of Converted Residential Structures in Study Areas A-2, A-3, and A-4, Western Addition, San Francisco, California* (San Francisco: November 1958).

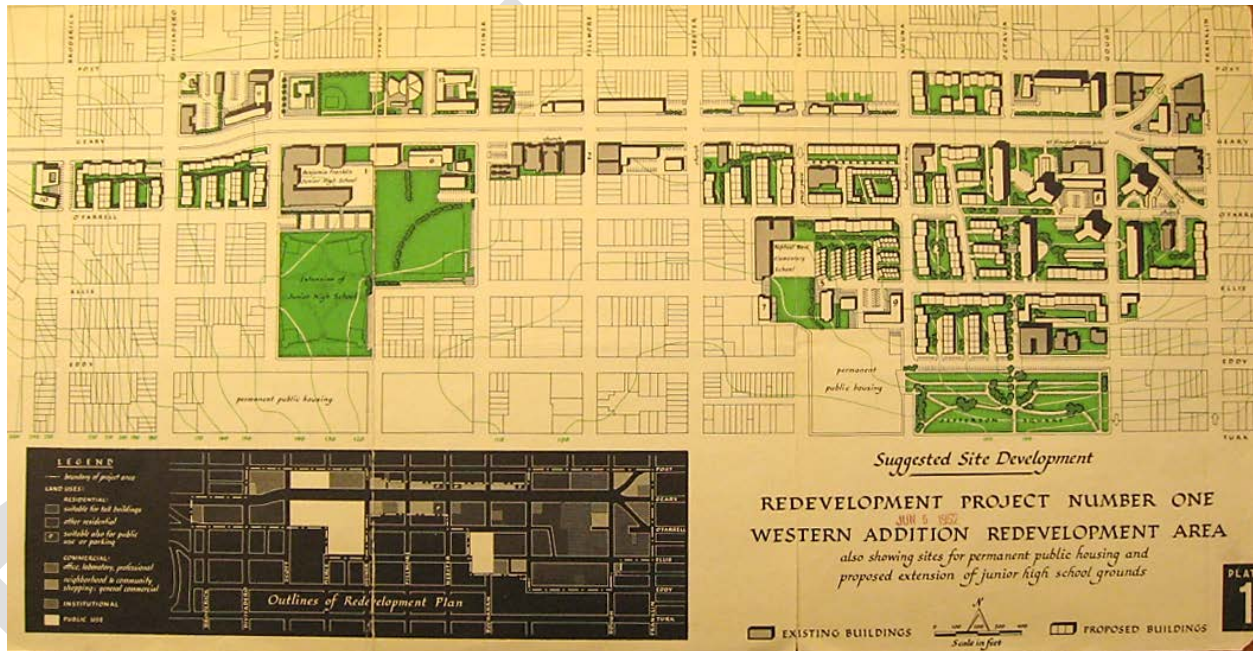
⁴³⁷ Pepin and Watts, 166.

⁴³⁸ San Francisco Planning Department, *The Master Plan of San Francisco: The Redevelopment of Blighted Areas* (San Francisco: 1945).

Francisco chapter of the NAACP, stated prophetically, “scores of small businessmen would be wiped out by the plan.”⁴³⁹

Western Addition Project Area A-1

In 1948, a portion of the Western Addition, including much of Japantown, was selected as the site for one of the first large-scale urban renewal projects in the country. Justin Herman, executive director of the Redevelopment Agency, described his vision for redevelopment. Located just west of the Civic Center and within easy commuting range of the Financial District, the neighborhood was to be redeveloped with high and mid-rise luxury apartments and shopping centers.



Map of Redevelopment Area A-1, date stamped June 1952.
Source: San Francisco Public Library History Center

The first phase of redevelopment, Project Area A-1, was a 108-acre swath bounded by Post Street to the north, Franklin Street to the east, Eddy and O’Farrell streets to the south, and Broderick Street to the west. Geary Street would be widened into a multi-lane, grade-separated boulevard. On the north side of Geary Boulevard, a Japanese-themed shopping center would take the place of Victorian-era housing and businesses. High-rise apartment buildings would go up along Franklin and Gough streets. Plans called for demolishing every building in A-1 except for the Buchanan Street YMCA and two public schools: Raphael Weill (now Rosa Parks) Elementary School, at 1501 O’Farrell Street), and Benjamin Franklin Middle School (now Gateway High School, at 1430 Scott Street).⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, as quoted in Pepin and Watts, 167.

⁴⁴⁰ Successor to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, “Redevelopment Program,” *Western Addition A-1*, Redevelopmentagency.org, accessed May 1, 2015.



Demolition of buildings in the Western Addition, 1953.

Source: San Francisco Public Library

The Redevelopment Agency's A-1 project dislodged at least 1,350 households and 358 businesses from the heart of the old Fillmore. Prior to 1958, the population of the A-1 project area was 6,112. After work was completed in 1973 it was 3,724. It is uncertain where all the displaced people went, but anecdotal information suggests that some moved into the adjoining Haight-Ashbury and Duboce Triangle neighborhoods to the south. Others moved to Bayview-Hunters Point, the OMI District, or out of the City altogether. The evictions were quite controversial and neighborhood residents fought to stay. Resistance was led by a group calling itself the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO). Ably led by the Reverend Hannibal Williams, WACO filed a lawsuit against the Redevelopment Agency in 1967, forcing it to prioritize the rehousing of local residents in the project area.

The following year the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandated that SFRA activities in the Western Addition be reviewed by a project area committee. This led to the formation of the Western Addition Project Area Committee (WAPAC), made up of representatives of various community groups, many of whom were nominated by WACO. WAPAC was successful in securing SFRA jobs for its members, and became the model for the California Redevelopment Law which required the establishment of project area committees for redevelopment projects.

Though the WACO lawsuit was a huge victory, it came too late for most residents of A-1. Most of the businesses and people were already gone. Probably the most beneficial impact of the lawsuit was a commitment from the Redevelopment Agency to prioritize the construction of affordable housing in the upcoming A-2 project.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴¹ Successor to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, "Redevelopment Program," *Western Addition A-1*, Redevelopmentagency.org, accessed May 1, 2015.

St. Francis Square

In addition to WACO, credit for keeping some of the Western Addition's longtime residents in the area goes to the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), a traditionally left-wing union with many African American members. In 1960, the ILWU-PMA (Pacific Maritime Association) Pension Fund sponsored a cooperative housing project on a three square-block site bounded by Geary Boulevard to the north, Laguna Street to the east, Ellis Street to the south, and Buchanan Street to the west. Working with the Redevelopment Agency, the ILWU-PMA trustees founded the ILWU Longshore Redevelopment Corporation. The new venture hired the notable modernist architecture firm of Marquis & Stoller and put together a proposal to build a complex of cooperative garden apartments for union members on the site in May 1960.

The project got underway in 1962 and was completed at the end of 1963. Named St. Francis Square, the complex consists of 299 units in 28 buildings arrayed around verdant landscape designed by noted landscape architect, Lawrence Halprin. The interior of the site is largely free of vehicular traffic, with internal streets and walkways named for famous California ships and prominent union members.⁴⁴² St. Francis Square was instantly successful and became known as a good example of a high-quality, well-run and integrated community housing African Americans, Whites, Latinos, Asians and others. Today St. Francis Square is known for being one of the most architecturally and historically significant midcentury housing developments in San Francisco. It is still extant and very intact.



St. Francis Square, 1965.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

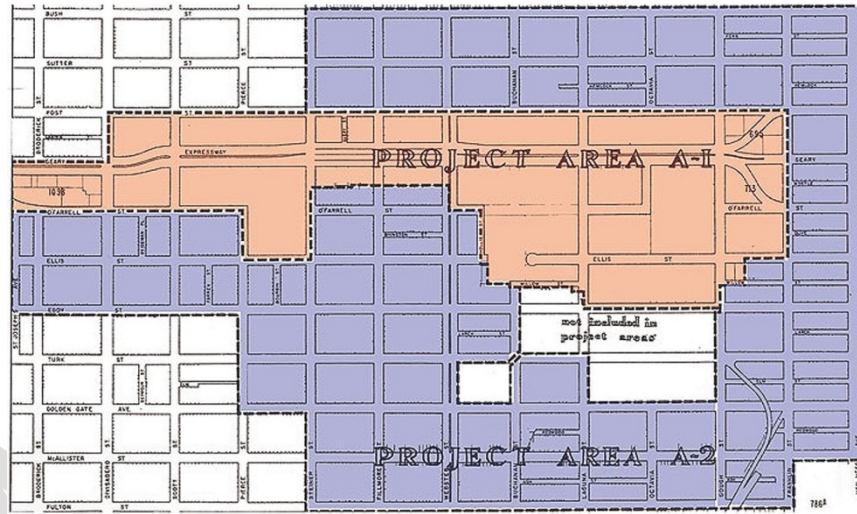
Western Addition Project Area A-2

Much larger than A-1, which it completely surrounded, Project Area A-2 was a 60-block, 277-acre swath of the Western Addition. Though approved by the Board of Supervisors on October 15, 1964, redevelopment of A-2 did not get underway until 1966, in part because the federal government withheld HUD funds following the passage of Proposition 14, discussed at greater length below. Lawsuits filed by WACO further delayed construction. Consequently, construction of A-2 took over four decades, with the final component, the Fillmore Center, not completed until the early 2000s.

In contrast to A-1, A-2 included much more low-income housing, mostly in response to the efforts of WACO and the ILWU. As the A-2 project got underway, the ILWU formed the Joint Housing Committee to ensure that all residents of A-2, not merely union members, could secure decent replacement housing in the neighborhood. As veterans of several major strikes and negotiations with government bodies, the ILWU understood that collective action achieved results. A statement by the union summarized the project's goals:

⁴⁴² Carol Cuenod, "Redevelopment A-1 and Origin of St. Francis Square," *FoundSF*, Accessed May 1, 2015.

Recent expressions from the office of the Redevelopment Agency seem designed to stampede residents of the second Western Addition Project Area into the belief that mass evacuation of their homes is obligatory and inevitable, and that each family would do well to find its own separate solution to the problem of dislocation. The ILWU serves notice now that it will urge its members to join with all other tenants in A-2 in a mass refusal to budge from present dwellings until each and every family in the area has been provided with a home fit to live in at a price they can afford.⁴⁴³



Map showing Redevelopment Project Areas A-1 and A-2.
Source: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

With its experience at St. Francis Square, the ILWU-PMA Longshore Redevelopment Corporation developed an alternative plan that ended up re-housing many longtime residents in the neighborhood. The ILWU plan phased redevelopment of A-2 in stages so that there would be no mass exodus from existing housing. As new housing was completed, current residents would get first priority. The ILWU also assisted local African American groups to develop new co-op apartment complexes modeled on St. Francis Square, including Martin Luther King-Marcus Garvey Square, at 1680 Eddy Street, Loren Miller Homes, at 937 McAllister Street, and Ammel Park Co-op, at 656 Grove Street.⁴⁴⁴ All of these complexes are still extant.

Most of these projects were built within a rectangular area bounded by Ellis Street to the north, Gough Street to the east, Fulton Street to the south, and Webster Street to the west.⁴⁴⁵ This area, which had previously contained approximately 2,500 Victorian-era houses—one of the best remaining collections in San Francisco—was entirely razed, with only a handful of architecturally significant buildings saved, relocated and restored by San Francisco Architectural Heritage.

⁴⁴³ Carol Cuenod, "The ILWU and Western Addition Redevelopment A-2," *FoundSF*, Accessed May 1, 2015.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Successor to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, “Redevelopment Program,” *Western Addition A-2, FoundSF*, Accessed May 1, 2015.



Buildings being moved during redevelopment of the Western Addition.

Source: FoundSF

Though the Redevelopment Agency argued that the replacement housing was better than what was there before, redevelopment took an enormous toll on the once vibrant cultural life of the Western Addition. Especially hard hit was the stretch of Fillmore Street between Pine and Turk streets that had been the commercial heart of the neighborhood. With the businesses scattered, much of Fillmore Street remained as barren, vacant lots for decades to come. Years later, Mayor Willie Brown assessed the impact:

“I think that the people who wanted to redevelop the Western Addition saw the commercial value of the space. It was centrally located; the dividing line between downtown and the Avenues in every sense of the word. I think they saw land and they had to clear the land, and the only way to clear the land was to use the tools of government to achieve that goal. You look at the results and it does appear to be ‘Black Removal,’ but I think the motivation was pure commercial greed. But it was devastating to the Black community. The churches began to lose populations. The black businesses, which had been viable, wonderful, and productive, were totally destroyed. The entertainment world for African Americans virtually ceased to exist in San Francisco. The great life that was Harlem-ish for us was destroyed by the redevelopment process. It was a blow to African Americans. A blow from which we frankly have never recovered.”⁴⁴⁶

Estimates of the number of people displaced from A-2 were as high as 13,500, with 60 percent forced to move out of the Western Addition and 15 percent away from San Francisco altogether.⁴⁴⁷ Though some African Americans eventually returned, especially once the low and moderate-income developments were completed in the early 1970s, redevelopment permanently removed a large stock of affordable housing, replacing it with fewer than 300 units of subsidized housing. By 1971, the Family Service Agency of San Francisco recommended that the agency cease any further demolition activity or relocations from A-2 because of a worsening citywide housing crisis.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Willie Brown, as quoted in Pepin and Watts, 171.

⁴⁴⁷ Miller, 124.

⁴⁴⁸ Miller, 125.

The impact to Black-owned business was even worse. Out of 180 Black-owned businesses operating in A-2 before redevelopment, only 48 were successfully relocated, meaning that 132 went out of business entirely.⁴⁴⁹ With the Western Addition's population scattered across the City and the region, Black-owned businesses that catered mainly to African Americans found it difficult to survive when there were not enough Black customers to sustain them.

During this period the Redevelopment Agency's Western Addition Field Office was located at 762 Fulton Street in a building formerly used by the Acme Brewing Company (extant). When Redevelopment ended, the building was turned over to the community and became the home of the African American Art & Culture Complex, the African American Historical and Cultural Society, and the African-American Shakespeare Company.

Summary of Significant Themes

The redevelopment of the Western Addition was a devastating blow to the city's African American community, resulting in widespread displacement and the demise of the Fillmore District as the heart of Black San Francisco. Dozens of blocks were completely razed, erasing an enormous layer of physical and cultural fabric. The battles over redevelopment did, however, result in the formation of new ethnic and racial alliances, as well as awaken many San Franciscans to the economic and social costs of urban renewal. Thus, although redevelopment of the Western Addition was bitterly contested and resulted in scars both physical and social, it is undeniably a significant event in the history of San Francisco.

Extant Properties

This list should not be considered comprehensive, but includes properties mentioned earlier in this section of the report.

- San Francisco Redevelopment Agency Western Addition Office, 762 Fulton Street
- Buchanan Street YMCA, 1530 Buchanan Street
- St. Francis Square
- Martin Luther King-Marcus Garvey Square, 1680 Eddy Street
- Loren Miller Homes, 937 McAllister Street
- Ammel Park Co-op, 656 Grove Street

Commemorative Properties

- None

⁴⁴⁹ Miller, 126.

G. Struggle for Civil Rights and Equality 1960-1980



Terry Francois leads picketers in front of Woolworths on Market Street.
Source: San Francisco News-Call Bulletin Newspaper Archive

In the mid-1960s, while San Francisco's African Americans were fighting the destruction of the Western Addition, others agitated for equal access to jobs, mirroring similar events across the country. Though San Francisco was no Montgomery or Greensboro, it was forced to reckon with its own less overt but equally demoralizing forms of institutionalized racism. The 1960s witnessed the birth of several influential organizations locally, such as the San Francisco chapter of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), the Unified Freedom Movement (UFM), the Church-Labor Conference (CLC), and the Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination. These years were characterized by the adoption of direct action techniques by traditional civil rights organizations, such as the San Francisco chapters of the National Urban League and the NAACP.

It also included a new generation of activists and organizations, particularly the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.), who staged sit-ins and demonstrations against businesses that refused to hire and/or promote African Americans. Winning several early successes, this younger generation of African American activists and their White allies pressed forward with demands for full racial equality, not only in employment, but also housing, schooling and access to healthcare.

The early 1960s were also marked by important political advances. In 1964, Terry Francois was appointed to the Board of Supervisors, while Reverend Hamilton T. Boswell, pastor of Jones Memorial United Methodist Church, was appointed to the San Francisco Housing Authority Commission. That same year heralded the election of Willie L. Brown, Jr., a brilliant young attorney from Mineola, Texas, to represent the Western Addition in the California State Assembly.

Despite these victories, continued government inaction and growing tensions with the police led to riots in Bayview Hunters Point and the Fillmore. Against this backdrop, redevelopment continued to tear through the Fillmore district, forcing hundreds of Black-owned businesses and thousands of African American residents out of the City. After 1970, San Francisco's Black population began to decline for the first time since 1920.

CORE and the Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination

The early 1960s was a period of generational change, as people who migrated to the Bay Area during World War II began to retire and their offspring, the so-called baby boomers, joined the activist community. Many had grown up in San Francisco and were not as patient with the gradual pace of political change as their parents might have been. Not content to wait quietly for what might never come, many of San Francisco's new generation of activists openly challenged the longstanding dominance of the NAACP, the National Urban League, and other mainstream civil rights organizations.⁴⁵⁰ This younger generation often preferred direct action over political negotiation to achieve their ends, including demonstrations, picketing, and sit-ins.

Shop-Ins

On the national stage, CORE engaged in non-violent direct action techniques, including sit-ins, jail-ins and freedom rides to advance the agenda of full civil equality. San Francisco had an active CORE group, which led protests highlighting employment discrimination throughout the City. In Bayview-Hunters Point, an early CORE protest against Lucky Stores, which employed no African Americans before 1948, successfully compelled the chain to begin hiring African Americans.⁴⁵¹

In 1962, members of the San Francisco Negro American Labor Council and the Bay View Citizens' Committee picketed outside the Super Save Store on Third Street in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood, convincing the Chinese owner to hire two African Americans. One of CORE's more famous series of demonstrations occurred during February and March of 1964 at Lucky Stores (including the extant store at 1549 Sloat Boulevard) and Safeway supermarkets across the City. CORE members held a "shop-in" where they filled their carts with merchandise and then had the cashier ring up and bag the items. The shoppers then refused to pay. The items were unbagged, and the CORE member started shopping again.⁴⁵² As explained by Benjamin Christwell of the Bay View Citizens' Committee:

"Elementary justice demands that Negroes be hired in businesses where they bank and spend their money. Our committee will continue to advise Negroes not to spend their money where they can't work."⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Broussard, 199.

⁴⁵¹ Broussard, 119.

⁴⁵² "Core 'Shop-In' at S.F. Supermarket," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 20, 1964.

⁴⁵³ Benjamin Christwell, as quoted in Miller, 72.

Mel's Drive-In

Another major effort to compel larger businesses to hire African Americans was launched in October 1963. It was led by the Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination, a local outgrowth of CORE, and members of the DuBois Club, a Communist Party organization for young African Americans. Members of the Committee staged protests outside the popular drive-in restaurant chain, Mel's Drive-In, at 1601 Monterey Boulevard (extant), as well as the home of Harold Dobbs, a co-owner of Mel's and a San Francisco Supervisor and mayoral candidate.



Source: Bancroft Library

A mixed group of African Americans and Whites also staged sit-ins at Mel's Drive-in at 3355 Geary Boulevard, near Laurel Village (not extant). The sit-ins were extremely embarrassing for Dobbs and his partner Mel Weiss, and after weeks of protests and much blustering they agreed to hire and train African Americans as waitresses, cooks, carhops, cashiers and bartenders.⁴⁵⁴ Dobbs' political opponent, Democrat Jack Shelley, a union man and a sympathizer with African American causes, leveraged the bad publicity to his advantage and won the majority of the Black vote in the 1964 mayoral election, providing a conduit for African American political influence at City Hall.

Palace Hotel

Success at Mel's inspired the Ad Hoc Committee to launch a picketing campaign against the Palace Hotel. As discussed earlier, the Palace had employed virtually no African Americans since 1889. For years the NAACP had contemplated taking legal action, but the younger generation of activists lost patience. Led by 18-year-old Tracy Sims, a recent graduate of Berkeley High School, the demonstrations at the Palace Hotel gained a significant amount of media attention. During a notable demonstration held on March 1, 1964, 123 people were arrested, including Thomas N. Burbridge, the young president of the local chapter of the NAACP; attorney and soon-to-be supervisor, Terry Francois, CORE chairman William Bradley, and many others.

⁴⁵⁴ Miller, 76. Though there is a Mel's Drive-in in this location, it is not the same building where the sit-in was staged. The original was demolished in 1974; the building there now was built in 1988.

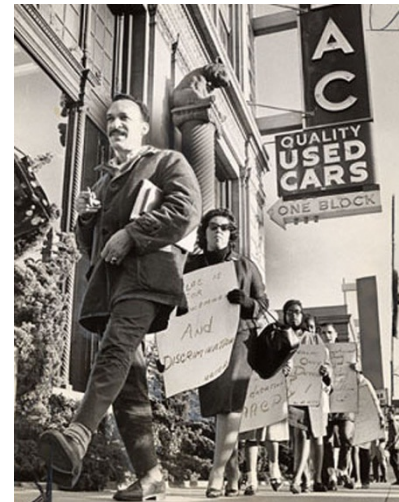


Tracy Sims (right) and other demonstrators at the Palace Hotel, 1964.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

The direct action of the young protestors, which played out over several days and nights, met with disapproval by some older members of San Francisco's African American community, including Cecil Poole and NAACP regional director, Terea Hall Pittman. Mayor John Shelley, with heavy support from the ILWU, negotiated a hiring plan that would increase minority employment levels at the Palace Hotel to between 15 and 20 percent of the total workforce. The management of the Palace also agreed to drop any claims for civil damages against the protestors.⁴⁵⁵ The Palace Hotel is today City Landmark No. 18.

Auto Row

Emboldened by their victories, the Ad Hoc Committee took on Auto Row, targeting the Don Lee Cadillac dealership at 1000 Van Ness Avenue (extant, City Landmark No. 152), where only seven out of 258 employees were Black. On March 14, 1964, 200 demonstrators chanted and sang freedom songs outside the building. The demonstration concluded with the arrest of 107 demonstrators. Mayor Shelley convinced the activists to cease protests for two weeks while he worked out an agreement with the Automobile Dealers Association. Ultimately the action against the Don Lee dealership was not as clear-cut a victory as the actions against the Palace Hotel and Mel's Drive-in, and infighting between the moderate and the more extreme members of the civil rights community soon tore apart the local chapter of the NAACP.⁴⁵⁶



Demonstration in front of
Don Lee Cadillac, 1964.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

⁴⁵⁵ Miller, 81.

⁴⁵⁶ Miller, 85.

Bank of America

After their previous victories, CORE set their sights in 1964 on one of the nation's most powerful banks. Bank of America and CORE had been in negotiations for almost a month when talks broke down towards the end of April. From May to September, CORE and other civil rights organizations engaged in what became a statewide protest campaign, to secure more non-menial jobs for minorities at the bank. In San Francisco at the 1 Powell Street branch (extant⁴⁵⁷), approximately 300 demonstrators sang freedom songs as they faced "hostile heckling" from a crowd of 800-1000 people on the opposite sidewalk.⁴⁵⁸ Inventive pressure tactics and disciplined protests ultimately led Bank of America and other financial institutions to sign oversight agreements with the Fair Employment Practices Commission.

DuBois Clubs

Named after W. E. B. DuBois, the famed writer, activist and member of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), the idea for the W. E. B. DuBois Clubs of America was launched at a national convention of the CPUSA held in San Francisco. The founders believed that the issues for civil rights, peace and the end of poverty shared common roots and had to be addressed. Under the guidance of the Progressive Youth Organizing Committee, a small group was formed in 1961 in San Francisco as the W. E. B. DuBois Club, which laid the foundation for other clubs across the Bay Area, including one at San Francisco State.⁴⁵⁹

In 1964, prior to the DuBois Clubs' national emergence, a Conference on Socialist Youth was held in San Francisco. The meeting featured topics such as labor, civil rights, and peace and disarmament. The first mass youth demonstrations against the war in Vietnam were organized by the DuBois Clubs.⁴⁶⁰ In 1966, the Clubs held a national conference in front of the White House where they protested "for jobs, peace, and freedom" and against poverty and the war in Vietnam. In opposition to the war, the Clubs published literature, lectured on college campuses, and worked within the AFL-CIO to encourage the working class to join the opposition.

In San Francisco, the group worked with CORE to protest for civil rights and against discriminatory hiring practices. Due to their high-profile activities, the Clubs were forced to register with federal authorities as a "communist front" and were targeted by J. Edgar Hoover's Counter Intelligence Program. In 1966, the San Francisco headquarters at 954 McAllister Street (not extant) were bombed, but the crime was never investigated.⁴⁶¹ In 1970, with membership declining, the DuBois Clubs and young members of the Communist Party came together to found the Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL).⁴⁶²



W. E. B. DuBois Club headquarters
after bombing, 1966.
Source: Wisconsin Historical
Society

⁴⁵⁷ The Bank of America building is designated under Article 11 as a Category I, Significant Building, as part of the Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter Conservation District.

⁴⁵⁸ "Mass Bank Picketing Begins in 13 Cities," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 23, 1964.

⁴⁵⁹ Francis X. Gannon, *Biographical Dictionary of the Left: Volume 2*, (Boston: Western Islands, 1971) 181.

⁴⁶⁰ "History," Young Communist League, youngcommunistleague.org, Accessed May 1, 2015.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

Black Panthers

When even the successes of CORE and the Ad Hoc Committee proved ineffectual for some in the African American community, the non-violent direct action agenda of CORE eventually morphed into a more militant branch of activism symbolized by the rise of the Black Panther Party. Dedicated to the premises of protecting the dignity of African Americans and self-defense from police brutality, the Black Panther Party also adhered to an ideology of self-help, ranging from patronizing and supporting Black businesses to its free breakfast program for poor children.

The Black Panthers were founded in Oakland in 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, students at Merritt College. They read, debated and started the organization in the tradition of Malcom X and other Black Nationalists. After the police killed Matthew Johnson, Newton believed he could channel the force of the people into political power and action. He believed that the Black Panther Party should distinguish itself from other organizations by taking the law into their own hands.

The Black Panther Party had a broad agenda that included a focus on improved education, housing and employment opportunities. It also advocated armed resistance to police brutality. The Black Panthers had around 200 members in San Francisco, including several students and faculty members at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University).



**Black Panthers breakfast program,
Sacred Heart Church, 1968.
Source: Ducha Dennis/Found SF**

The organization's headquarters moved often between Oakland and Berkeley, with a San Francisco office operating sporadically in different locations along Fillmore Street. The Black Panther Party created a variety of community social programs, which included community health clinics and a free breakfast program for children. In San Francisco, the children's program operated out of various locations, including the basement of Sacred Heart Church at the corner of Fell and Fillmore Streets (extant, listed in the California Register of Historical Resources).

Education

School Desegregation

For a decade or so after the Supreme Court ruled against segregated schools in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, San Francisco's public schools remained segregated. In 1962, the Council for Civic Unity (CCU) and CORE published a report documenting how many segregated African American students were in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), identifying 17 elementary schools and two junior high schools that were at least 60 percent African American. The report recommended adjusting attendance area boundaries to ensure that schools were integrated. The recommendations were briefly considered by the Board of Education but then quietly dropped.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶³ Miller, 130.



Fillmore Street student protest against discrimination, 1959.

Source: San Francisco News-Call Bulletin newspaper archive via Calisphere

Several years later, Mrs. Arthur Bloomfield, a board member of the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP, urged several Black families to become plaintiffs in a lawsuit to compel the SFUSD to integrate schools through busing. The lawsuit argued that the SFUSD violated the rights of Black students in Bayview-Hunters Point by sending them to equally crowded schools across town in the Western Addition rather than letting them attend under-enrolled, predominantly White schools in the nearby Portola district. After NAACP head, Charles Belle, blasted Mayor Alioto for dragging his feet on the issue, the Board of Education moved forward with a pilot busing program to integrate the City's public schools.

This action was followed by a federal district court decision in 1971 requiring school districts across California to desegregate their schools. Carried out over the next four years, San Francisco's first busing program was a disaster. White parents pulled their children out of public schools en masse, either sending them to private schools or leaving the City altogether. By 1975, White students dwindled to 25 percent of the district's student body, rendering racial integration largely ineffective.⁴⁶⁴

San Francisco State College Strike

The Hunters Point disturbances radicalized entire sectors of San Francisco's African American community. One of the institutions where this played out was San Francisco State College, since renamed San Francisco State University. As recalled in librarian Helene Whitson's "Introductory Essay to the San Francisco State College Strike Collection," the protests evolved from racial tensions over the growing use of student funds for black student education and activities.

The editor of the student newspaper, *The Gater*, was physically attacked by several black students after he wrote an editorial opposing outside funding for the college's "special programs," which included those of the Black Student Union. The first "Shut it down!" was

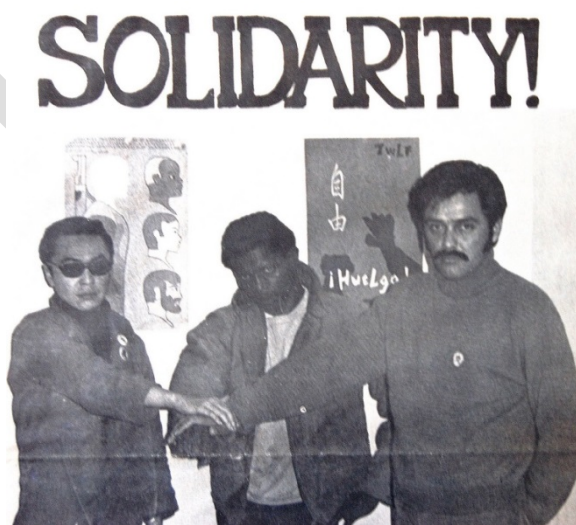
⁴⁶⁴ Miller, 130.

shouted on December 6, 1967 when protestors objected to the suspension of the black students involved in *The Gater* incident. There were to be many more...

The suspension of English instructor (and Black Panther Minister of Education) George Mason Murray on November 1, 1968, was the catalyst for five months of confrontation and tension. George Murray was a graduate student in English and had been hired to teach special introductory English classes for minority students admitted to the college under a special program. At a Fresno State College rally, he allegedly had stated, "We are slaves, and the only way to become free is to kill all the slave masters." At San Francisco State College, he allegedly had said that black students should bring guns to campus to protect themselves from white racist administrators. The Trustees forced President Smith to suspend Murray. That did it! Black students and their white sympathizers viewed the administration's action as racist and authoritarian, and the administration itself as weak, controlled by conservative, uncaring politicians in Sacramento and conservative, rich, white Trustees in Los Angeles.⁴⁶⁵



Front page of *The Daily Gater*, November 7, 1968.
Source: San Francisco State University



Solidarity poster.
Source: San Francisco State University

A coalition of students, led by the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front, declared the student body on strike. The two groups submitted a list of 15 demands to the administration, including the establishment of a Black Studies Program and the reinstatement of George Murray. The results were dramatic. The college had to be closed because of the strike and the sitting college president was deposed. He was replaced by Samuel I. Hayakawa, an English professor. After months of turmoil—which included the faculty union joining the strike—President Hayakawa and the college administrators worked out a settlement signed on March 20, 1969. Some of the major points of the agreement included the establishment of the first Black Studies program in the nation and the founding of several other ethnic studies programs representing other “Third World” groups.⁴⁶⁶

Though housed in a different building than it was in 1969, the Black and African Studies program still exists within the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. The San Francisco State

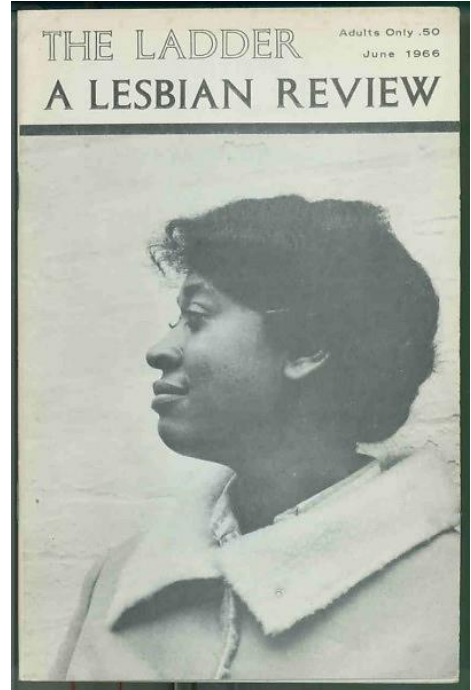
⁴⁶⁵ Helene Whitson, “*The San Francisco State College Strike Collection*” Introductory Essay, (Leonard Library, San Francisco State University).

⁴⁶⁶ Miller, 102-4.

College Strike became one of the most notable events of the 1960s, in part because of the alliances made between Blacks, Asians and Latinos.

LGBTQ Organizing

African Americans have long been a part of San Francisco's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities. This included serving in leadership roles for the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), formed in San Francisco in 1955 as the first lesbian civil rights organization in the United States. According to the *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco*, the DOB was a "predominantly white and middle-class organization, but women of color were part of leadership and membership throughout the organization's history."⁴⁶⁷ In 1960, a blind African American woman, Pat "Dubby" Walker, became president of the San Francisco DOB chapter. Another Black woman, Cleo "Glenn" Bonner, served as the circulation manager for the DOB's magazine, *The Ladder*. In 1964, Bonner was elected the national president of the DOB, becoming the first African American lesbian to lead a nationwide organization dedicated to lesbian or gay rights.



As within the larger society, however, Blacks often faced discrimination in mainstream gay or lesbian establishments. During the 1970s, many African Americans also felt left out of the predominately White gay male identity in the Castro. In response, organizations such as Bay Area Gay Liberation (BAGL) formed a Third World Caucus around 1975 that was specifically open to African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian American LGBTQ members.⁴⁶⁸ In 1980, Michael Smith founded Black and White Men Together (BWMT), which emerged as one of the longest-lived groups focused on race in the gay community. The organization worked to raise awareness of racism within the gay community, and in 1985 formed an AIDS Task Force to support people of color who were HIV positive.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ Donna Graves and Shayne Watson, [Draft] *Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco*, (San Francisco Planning Department, 2015), 147.

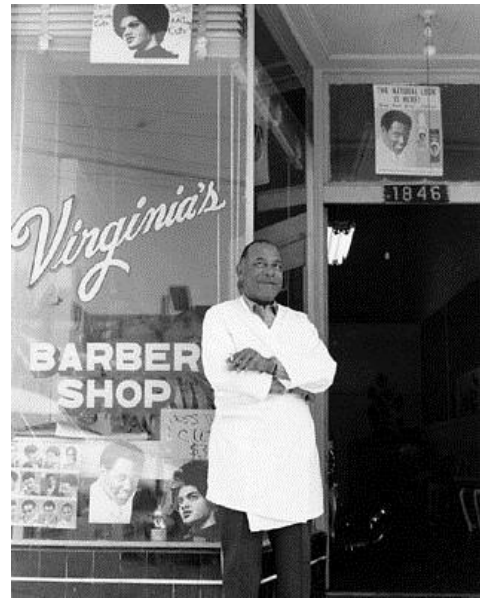
⁴⁶⁸ Graves and Watson, 190.

⁴⁶⁹ Graves and Watson, 192-193.

Employment Trends

Despite comprising well over 10 percent of San Francisco's population during this period, the African American community did not experience a commensurate rise in economic status. Though more African Americans worked in white-collar professions, many more were losing steady blue-collar jobs as the City deindustrialized. By 1970, 21.1 percent of San Francisco's African Americans lived below the poverty line, while only 4.1 percent of the City's overall population did.⁴⁷⁰

As with previous eras, small African American businesses serving the local community were common in areas such as the Fillmore. Various professionals also opened offices, including doctors, dentists and real estate professionals. Some combined more than one business in a single building. Lloyd Dickey, a well-known dentist in the Fillmore neighborhood, operated a restaurant on the ground floor of 1843-1847 Fillmore Street (extant) beneath his dental office. The building remains in the Dickey family and according to Lance Burton, the restaurant closed following space has not been remodeled since Lloyd Dickey's death several decades ago.⁴⁷¹



Virginia's Barber Shop at
1846 Fillmore Street, 1968.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

Trade Unions

African Americans had made significant gains in integrating many industrial trade unions, particularly maritime trade unions, including the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Marine Cooks & Stewards (MCS). The ILWU's predecessor, the International Longshore Association (ILA), had integrated as far back as 1933. By the early 1960s, African Americans constituted a significant proportion of the ILWU's rank-and-file and were elected to important leadership roles in the union, some of which served as springboards to appointments to City commissions.

Conversely, African Americans found it difficult to break into the building trades, particularly various Carpenters' Union locals, Sheetmetal Workers Local 104, Elevator Constructors Local 8, Iron Workers Local 337, Tile Setters Local 19, and Plumbers Local 38. In 1970, the San Francisco Human Rights Commission brokered an agreement with various building trades unions to ensure that at least half of all people hired to work on projects in Bayview-Hunters Point lived in the area, as well as an agreement that the unions would recruit racial minorities and train them in union-run job training programs.

Additional programs that helped boost Black employment in the building trades included an agreement negotiated by Gerald Johnson of the United Minority Business and Professional Association that ensured that 25 percent of all construction personnel hired to work on projects to seismically retrofit San Francisco's public schools represented San Francisco's minority groups.⁴⁷² Johnson also co-founded Asian Black Latino Enterprises (ABLE) to ensure that Black, Asian and Latino contractors were

⁴⁷⁰ Miller, 53.

⁴⁷¹ Burton.

⁴⁷² Miller, 139.

represented on job sites. While these efforts resulted in some impressive advances in the building trades, no successful attempt was made to transfer these hiring mandates to private industry.⁴⁷³

Integration of the Civil Services

African Americans also experienced considerable difficulty obtaining civil service positions, particularly in the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) and the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD). As mentioned previously, the SFFD hired its first African American firefighter, Earl Gage, in 1955. After 12 years on the job, Gage had only three other Black colleagues out of a total force of 1,756 men.



Earl Gage, first African American fireman in 1955 (left), and William F. Tull, first motorcycle officer in 1964 (right).

Source: San Francisco News-Call Bulletin newspaper photograph archive

In 1969, Gage suggested that the SFFD suspend the civil service examinations used to screen applicants or modify them to allow more Blacks to qualify for jobs within the department. When Chief Murray resisted, Black applicants filed a lawsuit charging that the SFFD effectively barred African American and Chicano applicants “solely due to defendants’ illegal and discriminatory, non-merit, anti-ability test.” The lawsuit was successful and in 1971, Judge William Sweigert ordered the San Francisco Civil Service Commission to modify the exams to reflect the actual job requirements.⁴⁷⁴

Lack of minority officers was also a problem for the SFPD. The racial imbalance was so glaring that in November 1973, Federal Judge Robert Peckham ordered the SFPD to hire minorities at a 3-2 ratio until minority employment comprised at least 30 percent of the force, which would still be far less than the overall minority population of San Francisco at the time (43 percent).⁴⁷⁵ One of the City’s few Black homicide policemen, Prentice Earl Sanders, recalled that the City’s institutional racism was more subtle than that he had experienced in Texas: “In San Francisco, racism came at you with a smile. Like they were doing you a favor when they told you that they didn’t have any jobs open after you’d seen a half dozen white guys fill out applications.”⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ Miller, 294.

⁴⁷⁴ Miller, 136.

⁴⁷⁵ Miller, 137.

⁴⁷⁶ David Talbot, *Season of the Witch: Enchantment Terror and Deliverance in the City of Love*, (Free Press, 2012), 208.

African Americans did better in other areas of government employment but they had to compete against an entrenched White (largely Irish and Italian American) civil service that continued to dominate most City departments well into the 1980s. African Americans also had to compete against surging ethnic and immigrant populations, including Asians (primarily Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese Americans), whose share of San Francisco's population increased from 8 percent in 1960, to 13.3 percent in 1970, to 22 percent in 1980. During this same period Latinos grew from around 7 percent of the population in 1960, to 9.7 percent in 1970, and to 12.4 percent in 1980.⁴⁷⁷

Residential Trends

Throughout the 1960s, San Francisco's African American population continued to rise, increasing from 74,383 (10 percent of the city's population) in 1960 to 96,078 in 1970 (over 13 percent).⁴⁷⁸ Most of the newcomers were from the same states that had been the primary sources of Black migration during World War II: Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. While many found new homes in the Western Addition, this period was also marked by the gradual dismantling of extralegal barriers to equal housing opportunity. As a consequence, African Americans began moving in larger numbers to other neighborhoods within the City. There was also a concurrent exodus of Whites from the City to the suburbs (36,700 between 1960 and 1970), which contributed to African Americans comprising a growing percentage of the City's population.⁴⁷⁹

Rumford Fair Housing Bill

Though racial covenants and deed restrictions were stricken down by the courts as unenforceable in 1948, and the SFHA's "neighborhood pattern" policy was dismantled in 1952, less formal means of discrimination remained common for much longer. In response to incidents of illegal housing discrimination, State Assemblyman William Byron Rumford, an African American representing parts of Oakland, Emeryville and Berkeley, sponsored a bill to outlaw informal means of housing discrimination. The Rumford Fair Housing Act, approved by the California Legislature in 1963, prevented property owners and landlords from denying housing to anyone on the basis of ethnicity, religion, sex, marital status, physical handicap or familial status.⁴⁸⁰



William Byron Rumford, ca. 1963.
Source: California State Library

Controversial from the start, the act was quickly overturned by the subsequent passage of Proposition 14 by the majority of California's voters in 1964. Drafted by the California Real Estate Association and supported by many Republican organizations, Proposition 14 amended the California Constitution to give property owners "absolute discretion" in selecting tenants and buyers.⁴⁸¹ In May 1964, Martin

⁴⁷⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960-1980.

⁴⁷⁸ De Graaf, et al., 33.

⁴⁷⁹ Miller, 164.

⁴⁸⁰ Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 47.

⁴⁸¹ Joseph, 47.

Luther King visited the Bay Area to rally and raise support for passage of the Civil Rights Act, and to speak out against the attempt to repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act in California, stating that it would be a major setback for California, for democracy and “what we are trying to do in the South.”⁴⁸² In response to Proposition 14, the federal government cut off all Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds to California. Though Proposition 14 was ultimately declared unconstitutional in 1966 by the California Supreme Court (a decision affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court the following year), Pat Brown lost the 1966 governorship to Ronald Reagan, partly because of his support of the Rumford Fair Housing Act.⁴⁸³

Unable to legally prevent African Americans from buying in White areas, many realtors simply steered Black clients to transitional neighborhoods such as the OMI District. In the private rental market, White landlords would often tell African American applicants that the unit had just been rented even if it had not. Many incidents of discrimination were documented by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission (HRC), which had been established in 1964 to address problems arising from bigotry and discrimination. These included a case in 1967 in which a Black high school teacher named Robert Coleman was denied an apartment at 428 Sanchez Street based on his race. Told over the phone that it was available, an employee of Skyline Realty immediately told Mr. Coleman that it had been rented after Coleman arrived to see the unit.⁴⁸⁴ With 45 percent of San Francisco’s landlords admitting outright that they would not rent to African Americans, it shows how difficult it was for Black San Franciscans to find a place to live in much of San Francisco.

Neighborhood Enclaves

In 1960, more than one-third of San Francisco’s African American community lived in the Western Addition comprising 46 percent of the neighborhood’s population.⁴⁸⁵ By 1970, African Americans comprised at least 25 percent of the population in 14 of the 17 census tracts in the Western Addition. Seven of these census tracts (153, 158, 161, 163, 164, 167, and 168) contained populations that were at least 50 percent African American. Tract 158, an area bounded by Steiner, Geary, Baker and Fulton streets, registered a population that was 80.3 percent Black. When plotted on a map, the heavily African American census tracts of the Western Addition formed a rough square bounded by Arguello Avenue



A cross burned into the lawn of Josephine Brown’s home at 599 Bright Street in the Ingleside District.
Source: San Francisco News-Call Bulletin newspaper photograph archive

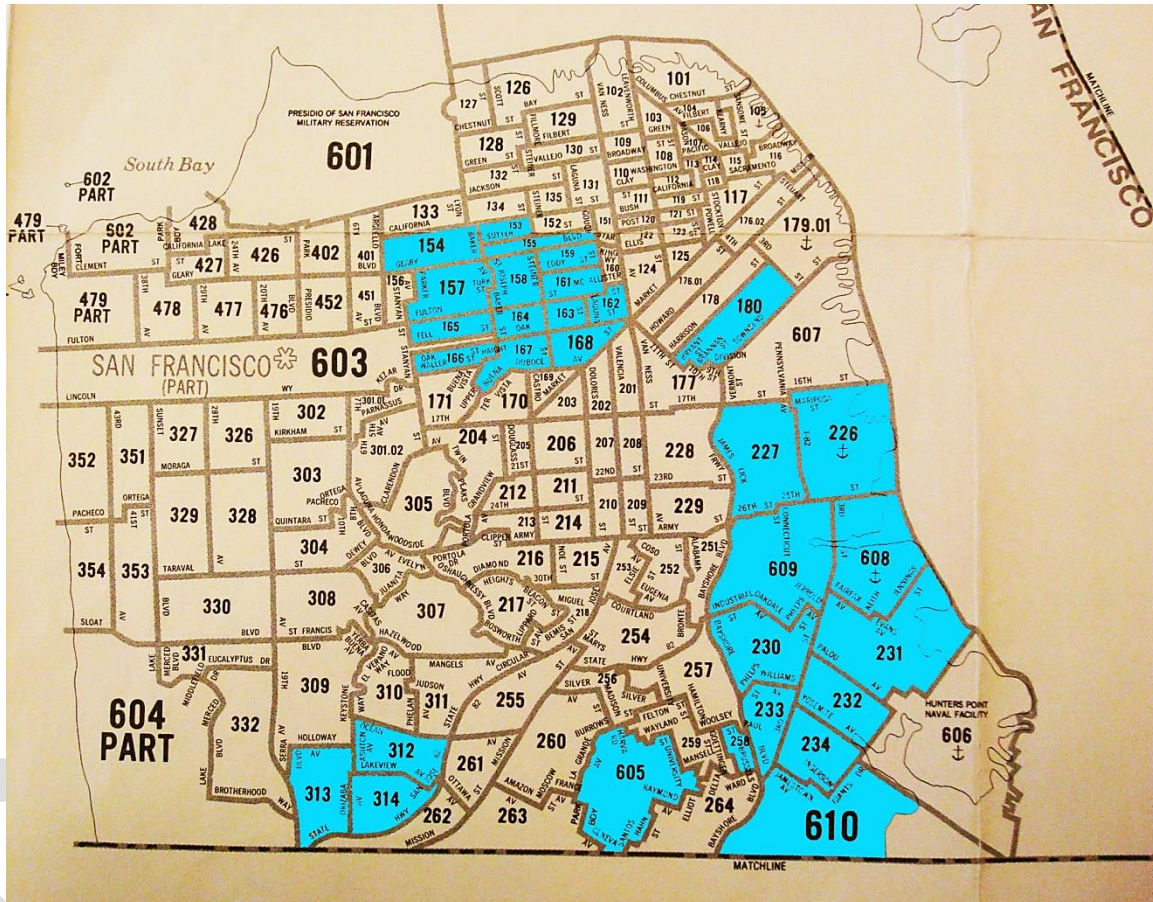
⁴⁸² *News Call Bulletin*, May 29, 1964.

⁴⁸³ Joseph, 48.

⁴⁸⁴ Miller, 119.

⁴⁸⁵ Miller, 165.

and Stanyan and Parker streets to the west, Waller Street and Duboce Avenue to the south, Gough Street and Van Ness Avenue to the east, and California Street to the north.⁴⁸⁶



1970 Census tracts in San Francisco with at least 40 percent African American populations.
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck

The 1970 Census was finalized after the Redevelopment Agency had completed much of A-1 (begun in 1956) and the massive A-2 (begun in 1966) project areas, suggesting that the populations of these Western Addition census tracts were likely much higher during the early-to-mid-1960s. These two projects displaced an estimated 12,000 to 20,000 residents from the Western Addition. Despite relocation certificates issued by the Redevelopment Agency to facilitate relocation within San Francisco, many African Americans had trouble finding new housing in other parts of the City and decamped for other cities.⁴⁸⁷

Some African Americans pushed out of the Western Addition moved to other neighborhoods in San Francisco, in particular Bayview-Hunters Point and the OMI districts. The 1970 Census illustrates significant growth in the African American populations of these two outlying neighborhoods. In 1970, census tracts with at least 25 percent African American populations comprised the area bounded by

⁴⁸⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970.

⁴⁸⁷ Mary Brown, *Duboce Park Landmark Designation Report* (San Francisco Planning Department, 2012).

Bayshore Boulevard and U.S. 101 to the west, 16th Street to the north, San Francisco Bay to the east, and the San Mateo County line to the south. Of the 10 census tracts in this vast area, which today encompasses the neighborhoods of Potrero Hill, Dogpatch/Central Waterfront, Bayview-Hunters Point, Silver Terrace, and Bret Harte/Bayview Heights, seven (226, 230, 231, 232, 234, 608, and 609) had African American majorities, with census tract 231 (an area bounded by Third Street to the west, Fairfax Avenue to the north, San Francisco Bay to the east, and Palou Avenue to the south) registering the highest in San Francisco, at 89.6 percent.⁴⁸⁸



Kindergarten class at Hunters Point School.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

In 1970, the OMI district embraced census tracts 312, 313, and 314 (an area bounded by Ocean and Holloway avenues to the north, 19th Avenue and Junipero Serra Boulevard to the west, and I-280 to the south and east). As described previously, this part of San Francisco began to evolve into a predominantly African American neighborhood during the 1950s and early 1960s. By 1970, all three census tracts were majority Black, with census tract 314 (an area bounded by Orizaba Avenue to the west, Lakeview Avenue to the north, and I-280 to the south and east) registering as 78.2 percent African American. The only section of the OMI district to remain predominantly White was the exclusive Ingleside Terraces neighborhood.⁴⁸⁹ In contrast to the Western Addition, the OMI's residents, both Black and White, were overwhelmingly owner-occupants. Homeownership rates for African Americans were also very high in parts of the Bayview-Hunters Point District, especially the single-family rowhouse tracts of the Bayview proper and Silver Terrace. Indeed, until recently, the Bayview-Hunters Point District enjoyed some of San Francisco's highest rates of homeownership.

Together, the Western Addition, Bayview-Hunters Point/Potrero, and the OMI housed the vast majority of all African Americans in San Francisco. In the rest of the city, 63 census tracts registered populations that were less than 2 percent African American. The only other census tracts outside these three areas that contained substantial African American populations in 1970 were census tracts 180 and 605. Census Tract 180, an area bounded by Harrison Street to the northwest, Third Street to the northeast,

⁴⁸⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

Townsend Street to the southeast, and 11th Street to the southwest, was 40.6 percent African American. This census tract, at the heart of the South of Market Area, once housed many residential hotels where older, single male workers lived out their days, including many retired Black maritime workers. Census tract 605, an area encompassing McLaren Park, the Sunnydale and Velasco public housing projects, and the Geneva Towers housing development in Visitation Valley, was 46.5 percent Black in 1970.⁴⁹⁰

Some families also moved to the Duboce Triangle neighborhood, and for a time, the district was a predominately African American neighborhood. One of the early Black Panther Party rallies was held in the mid-1960s on the steps of 75 Potomac Street, eventually spilling over into the park. H. Arlo Nimmo, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at California State University East Bay and longtime resident on Potomac Street, documented the social and ethnic change of his block in *Good and Bad Times in a San Francisco Neighborhood*. He writes of the shift in the mid-1980s population:

Another elderly Black man, Mr. Crenshaw, also died. He and his wife lived in the top flat above the grocery store at the corner of Potomac and Waller. They owned the building and for many years Mrs. Crenshaw and her sister operated the small grocery store called “Two Sisters” on the ground floor. They sold delicious barbecued chickens as well as cigarettes by the “stick.” I suppose they will be replaced by the ever increasing mainstream Whites who are moving into the neighborhood.⁴⁹¹

Several smaller enclaves could also be found scattered throughout the City in 1970. One of the more notable was in Diamond Heights, a Redevelopment Agency project that created an entirely new residential neighborhood on 325 acres of former ranchland on Red Rock and Gold Mine Hills near Glen Park. Part of the project included the construction of 471 units of moderate and low-income housing along Addison, Moffitt, and Bemis streets. This housing, which was constructed 1962-63, was privately financed using low-cost FHA loans. The first complex, which consisted of 275 units, was called Glenridge. It was a cooperative development similar to St. Francis Square and several others built in the Western Addition. The other three developments were all rental housing. Some of this housing was reserved for African Americans evicted from the Western Addition and by the late 1960s a small African American community had emerged in Diamond Heights. Today the area remains 12 percent Black.⁴⁹²

In addition to relocating within the City, many African Americans began leaving San Francisco during the late 1960s and early 1970s, following jobs and housing to the East Bay and the Peninsula. Leading destinations included the East Bay cities of Oakland and Richmond and the Peninsula suburbs of Daly City, Pacifica, Menlo Park and East Palo Alto. By the late 1970s, African Americans’ share of the City’s population had begun to decline, shrinking to 86,190 in 1980. However, it is worth noting that the City’s overall population shrank at an even greater rate, dropping from 715,674 in 1970 to 678,974 in 1980.⁴⁹³

Bayview-Hunters Point

Though outside observers had long commented on the seemingly harmonious integration of the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood, by the mid-1960s many of the longtime White residents had moved away, leaving behind a population that was increasingly poor and predominantly African American. An influx of African Americans displaced from the Fillmore had made it even more so.

⁴⁹⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970.

⁴⁹¹ H. Arlo Nimmo, *Good and Bad Times in a San Francisco Neighborhood*, (October Properties, 2008).

⁴⁹² Richard Brandi, *A Reevaluation of Urban Renewal in San Francisco* (Master’s Thesis, Goucher College, 2008), 82-5.

⁴⁹³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960-1980.

Some estimates were that the Hunters Point projects were 96 percent Black.⁴⁹⁴ A *Chronicle* reporter writing of Hunters Point in 1963 painted a depressing picture: “There is a terrible bleakness about the place. Hardly any green grass, few lawns, few trees. There is only the gray monotony of the barracks-like buildings stacked like a row of crates on the wind-whipped hillside.”⁴⁹⁵



Third Street and Newcomb Avenue, 1965. These buildings are still extant.
Source: San Francisco San Francisco Public Library

Though many Whites had left, many of the businesses on Third Street remained either White or Asian-owned. Third Street was often described as being lackluster, lacking the vibrancy of the pre-redevelopment Fillmore Street, with many liquor stores and other downscale businesses.⁴⁹⁶ The aging neighborhood, never an affluent area to begin with, was also deteriorating. The longstanding intermingling of residential and industrial uses also contributed to the unpleasant aspect of the area. As described in government documents:

Lack of care in the utilization of separation of these different land uses has made environmental blight one of the major hazards to the financial and physical health of the area's housing. High property taxes, absentee ownership, and tight money, on the other hand, are making it increasingly difficult to prevent physical deterioration of much of the area's housing supply. Lack of sufficient amenities such as recreational facilities, adequate commercial facilities, and greenery, further make the area a less than adequate place to live.⁴⁹⁷

Neil Eddington, an African American anthropologist, took up residence in the Hunters Point projects in the 1960s to assess conditions. His research revealed no clothing stores for women, no doctors' offices, and few recreational opportunities. Eddington wrote: “The reputation of the place (Hunters Point) is so

⁴⁹⁴ Miller, 97.

⁴⁹⁵ “Life in S.F. Ghetto,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (1963), 1, 14.

⁴⁹⁶ Miller, 95.

⁴⁹⁷ Joseph Alioto, “Bayview-Hunters Point Model Neighborhood Agency,” *Guide to the Joseph Alioto Papers*. (San Francisco Public History Center, San Francisco Public Library).

bad that even the low-caste job market is closed to some Negroes when they give an address in Hunters Point.” He added that even residents of the Fillmore looked down on Hunters Point, concluding: “I believe that there’s a conscious plan to create a plantation system. People don’t want these Negroes in San Francisco. They don’t want to give them a choice of where to live.”⁴⁹⁸

1966 Bayview Riot

Relations between the African American community and the San Francisco Police Department grew increasingly tense in the 1960s. In 1960, African Americans, though just 10 percent of the City’s population, represented 35 percent of all arrests.⁴⁹⁹ The *Sun-Reporter* regularly published front-page stories detailing police brutality toward African Americans.⁵⁰⁰ These included the case of Ralph Newman, who owed \$69 in traffic fines and voluntarily surrendered at the Hall of Justice at 850 Bryant Street (extant). Several hours later, he was admitted to Mt. Zion Hospital after being badly beaten by two police officers.⁵⁰¹ Such incidents inflamed tensions and radicalized formerly moderate citizens against the police.

Hugely destructive riots had already broken out in several American cities, including the 1965 Watts Riots, which resulted in the deaths of 34 people and the devastation of large swaths of South Los Angeles. In July 1966, rioting in the Western Addition was narrowly averted after Frank Jackson, an African American robbery suspect, was shot and killed by an off-duty Black police officer. In the wake of the shooting a crowd of several hundred gathered in the Fillmore and began throwing bottles and chanting anti-White slogans.⁵⁰² Larry Scott, one of several people arrested, observed:

Our brothers in Hunters Point, in Daly City, the Bayview and the Fillmore know that was just a warm-up too. You know what happened in Watts and Chicago, man? Well, that’s gonna happen here too.⁵⁰³

Though people might have expected trouble to begin in the Western Addition, the flashpoint actually occurred in Bayview-Hunters Point. September 27, 1966 was an unusually hot day for San Francisco, with temperatures reaching 85 degrees. At 3:10 PM, Alvin Johnson, a White policeman, shot and killed Matthew Johnson, an unarmed 16-year-old African American teenager, in Bayview-Hunters Point. Johnson, a resident of 1145 Hollister Avenue (extant), was shot in the back as he fled from Officer Johnson. After his death, a crowd of angry residents gathered at the corner of Third Street and Palou Avenue. Several non-Black-owned businesses were vandalized, beginning with a shop at 4917 Third Street, located at the northeast corner of Third Street and Palou Avenue (extant). This store was the epicenter of the disturbance.⁵⁰⁴

Local residents gathered at the Bayview Community Center at Third and Mendell streets (not extant) demanding to speak with Mayor Shelley. By the time Shelley arrived the crowd was furious and he was forced to take shelter from bricks and a firebomb thrown by someone in the crowd. The mayor attempted to keep things in check by instructing the SFPD not to make an overwhelming show of force.

⁴⁹⁸ “A Plantation in S.F.,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (1966).

⁴⁹⁹ Broussard, 176.

⁵⁰⁰ Crowe, 85.

⁵⁰¹ Miller, 88.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Larry Scott, as quoted in Miller, 88-9.

⁵⁰⁴ San Francisco Police Department, *Official Report by the San Francisco Police Department of the Civil Disturbance in San Francisco and the Events Related Hereto* (San Francisco: 1966), 7.

However, by this time circumstances were beyond Shelley's control. In addition to the California Highway Patrol, Governor Pat Brown sent in 2,000 National Guard troops to quell the uprising.⁵⁰⁵

The second day of the disturbance was much worse, with high temperatures and looted alcohol exacerbating the already tense situation. Some demonstrators took refuge in the old South San Francisco Opera House at Third Street and Newcomb Avenue (City Landmark No. 8) and began throwing bricks and Molotov cocktails at the police. Shots were reportedly fired from the building and police returned fire, injuring seven people.⁵⁰⁶



Police at Third and Newcomb streets, September 28, 1966.

Source: San Francisco Public Library

Prominent community leaders, including Orville Luster, Willie Brown, Terry Francois and Thomas Burbridge, tried to calm the anger of the hundreds of mainly poor and young residents of Bayview-Hunters Point. Sylvester Brown, a youth organizer at the Economic Opportunity Council in Hunters Point, told a reporter, "We're going to work, we're going to talk to them as best we can." Brown, whose voice was close to tears, told a reporter from the *Chronicle* that Matthew Johnson had attended a youth meeting the previous week.⁵⁰⁷ Another civil rights worker told the same reporter, "All bedlam is breaking loose. I hate to see this happen. I really feel bad about this happening here." But he said, the "anger and rage" of the neighborhood youths might be too much for anyone to stop.⁵⁰⁸

The disturbances ended on October 1, 1966 due to a combination of factors, including the deployment of National Guardsmen on September 28th and a drop in daytime temperatures. The five-day

⁵⁰⁵ San Francisco Police Department, 12.

⁵⁰⁶ San Francisco Police Department, 16.

⁵⁰⁷ San Francisco Police Department, 7.

⁵⁰⁸ "The City's Troubled Night—Looting and Arson Erupt," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 28, 1966), 1.

disturbances resulted in 161 injuries (including 10 from gunshot wounds), 457 arrests, and 253 incidents of property damage totaling \$135,782.⁵⁰⁹

Many liberal White San Franciscans were surprised by the events that took place in Bayview-Hunters Point, the Fillmore, and other pockets of the city in September 1966. After all, this wasn't Los Angeles or the Deep South. Many had to finally acknowledge San Francisco's "polite" racism. The Hunters Point disturbances called attention to many of the issues that continued to plague San Francisco's African American community, especially unemployment and poverty. Some people in authority understood that declining employment opportunities at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, as well as the gradual exodus of other high-paying manufacturing jobs from San Francisco, were partly to blame for the troubles. Lack of quality housing and endemic police brutality were additional triggers of the unrest. In response, Edward Howden, the executive director of the California FEPC called for the formation of a "blue ribbon commission" to conduct a "thorough and dispassionate" study of the disturbances in Bayview-Hunters Point.⁵¹⁰

Several specific solutions proposed by Howden included working with banks and realtors to end "red-lining," a practice making it nearly impossible for residents of inner-city neighborhoods to obtain mortgages or home improvement loans. Howden also cited the need to reduce the high rate of youth unemployment among African Americans, which was believed to be three times higher than White youth. Unemployment was frequently cited as a major cause of youth alienation, which often takes the form of "restless or destructive actions." Howden also mentioned the persistence of police brutality and the need for training programs to curb prejudice and violence toward African American residents. Finally, Howden recommended that the SFPD discourage lethal shootings by instituting regulations to clarify what officers were allowed to do when confronted with a variety of situations.⁵¹¹

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In the City's African American neighborhoods reactions to the 1966 disturbances varied. Some welcomed the efforts of government officials and outside organizations to help solve longstanding problems. Others reacted with disbelief at the ignorance evident in the recommendations, especially the idea that simply making jobs available to poor Black youth, without addressing the underlying lack of access to education and job training, would be sufficient. Government agencies often assumed that private business and other agencies would be willing to provide extensive on-the-job training to people with little formal education and few job skills. Unfortunately, this level of commitment in the business world was in short supply.⁵¹² According to Eunice Elton of the San Francisco Private Industry Council, an employment office:

It was very interesting. As a result of the riot, the Chamber of Commerce decided to get into the problem and help with the employment problem, and they were so naïve. They went out on the radio and said to everybody, saying "Give us your job opening so the young people can be employed." Well, a job opening for a secretary has to be able to do this, this, this, this. The jobs that came in were jobs that nobody in the unemployment group was going to be able to qualify for.⁵¹³

San Francisco authorities were perhaps more successful in addressing the physical blight of the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood, in particular the blighted Hunters Point housing projects. According to an article in the September 7, 1967 edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the City aimed "to make the

⁵⁰⁹ San Francisco Police Department, iii.

⁵¹⁰ Jerry Burns, "A Call for Full Study of S. F. Riot," *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 22, 1966).

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Tom Fleming, as quoted in: "Naval Facilities Engineering Command," D-41.

⁵¹³ Eunice Elton, as quoted in: "Naval Facilities Engineering Command," D-40.

area's ramshackle housing less ugly and more livable."⁵¹⁴ To that end, the Board of Supervisors appropriated \$350,000, combined with \$150,000 of SFHA funds, to re-roof, paint and make other exterior repairs to the buildings. Although local residents applauded the improvements, resistance to the circumstances that forced so many Black San Franciscans to live in public housing continued. According to the Reverend Hamilton T. Boswell, Chairman of the San Francisco Housing Authority Commission:

I have mixed opinions. As chairman, I am proud of this accomplishment ... it expresses the spirit of a new day. But as a citizen, I say that this points up the dismal failure of the private housing industry to provide adequate housing for the city's people. I hope the day will come when this will not be necessary.⁵¹⁵

Bayview Neighborhood Center and the "Big Five"

One of the most influential and politically effective groups in San Francisco's Black community during this period was an ad hoc group of five women, consisting of Ardath Nichols, Louise Westbrook, Julia Commer, Ocela Washington and Bertha Freeman. Nicknamed the "Big Five," the group was at times augmented by Rosa Lee Williams, Ethel Garlington and Ruth Williams. The women began meeting in 1956 at the Crispus Attucks Club, a community center founded in 1954 in a house at 1201-05 Mendell Street (extant). The women later became the core of the Bayview Community Center at Third and Mendell streets (not extant), which served as a social center and social services clearinghouse for residents of Bayview-Hunters Point.



Elouise Westbrook speaks at a meeting, 1972.

Source: Bancroft Library

From this base the women worked diligently to improve conditions in their neighborhood. In addition to other accomplishments, the Big Five overturned several wrongful evictions; picketed businesses that refused to hire African Americans, and successfully secured funding to complete important infrastructure projects in Bayview-Hunters Point.⁵¹⁶ Five streets in the neighborhood are named in their

⁵¹⁴ William Chapin, "A New Look for an Ugly Old Ghetto," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 7, 1967), 1.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Miller, 144.

honor, including Ardath Court, Bertha Lane, Commer Court, Garlington Court, and Oceola Court. The Big Five influenced a new generation of women activists, some of whom remain active, such as Espanola Jackson.

Black-Owned Businesses in the Bayview

Other than the Fillmore, the only other significant business district in a predominantly Black neighborhood was Third Street in Bayview-Hunters Point. The 1966 City Directory shows that the heart of the commercial district was marked by a number of barbershops and beauty salons, grocers and butchers, shoe stores, TV and record shops, as well as a few restaurants and a number of liquor stores.

One of the most important and long-lived establishments dating to that era is Sam Jordan's Bar, at 4004-06 Third Street. Sam Jordan was an African American Navy veteran who arrived in San Francisco after World War II. He bought a tavern in an 1883 Italianate-style commercial building on Third Street in 1958. After renovating the building, he opened Sam Jordan's Tavern in 1959. The bar, which has served as an important linchpin of the Bayview-Hunters Point's community, has remained in business in the same location for 55 years. In addition to the role it has played in the local community, the bar served as Sam Jordan's campaign headquarters when he ran for mayor in 1963. It is San Francisco City Landmark No. 263.⁵¹⁷



Sam Jordan's Bar.
Source: Christopher VerPlanck

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Redevelopment of Bayview-Hunters Point 1967-1973

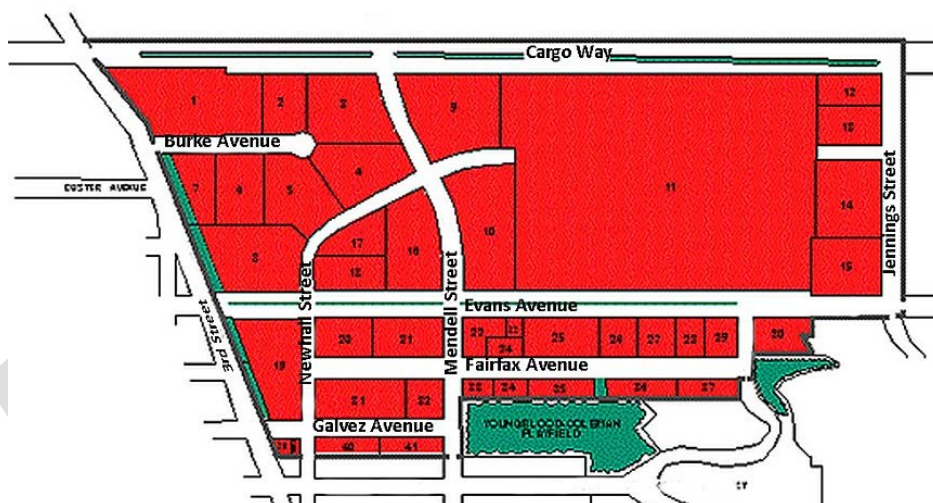
Although proposals by the Redevelopment Agency to rebuild parts of Bayview-Hunters Point dated back to the early 1960s, the 1966 disturbances provided momentum for the first major redevelopment projects in the area. Fearing displacement, many local African American residents initially opposed redevelopment in Bayview-Hunters Point. Having learned its lesson in the Western Addition, the Redevelopment Agency changed course in Bayview-Hunters Point by emphasizing economic development and the reconstruction of deteriorated public housing.

In 1967, the Redevelopment Agency designated the entire southeast corner of the city, an area defined by the San Mateo County line to the south, Bayshore Boulevard to the west, and Army Street to the north, as the Bayshore Redevelopment Area. Within this area, which largely conformed to the boundaries of Bayview-Hunters Point, the Redevelopment Agency designated several specific project areas, beginning with Butchertown. This was a decaying enclave of commercial slaughterhouses, tanneries, junk yards, and abandoned buildings bounded by Cargo Way to the north, Jennings Street to the east, Hudson Avenue to the south, and Third Street to the west.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁷ Stacy Farr, *Landmark Designation Report: "Sam Jordan's Bar"* (San Francisco Planning Department, 2013).

⁵¹⁸ Ron Markowitz, "South Bayshore Renewal Project," *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 21, 1968).

Redevelopment Agency chief Justin Herman first announced the details of the Butchertown project on January 14, 1969. Funded by a \$30.4 million grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the project envisioned the demolition of the remaining slaughterhouses and junkyards of Butchertown and their replacement with a modern industrial park. The Redevelopment Agency used eminent domain to assemble the site, relocated the existing businesses and demolished 276 of the 309 buildings. The area was then re-subdivided into larger parcels conforming to modern industrial park standards. Most of the steep north-south streets were abandoned and/or reconfigured and the east-west avenues were widened to provide better vehicular access.



Map of India Basin Redevelopment Project Area.

Source: Successor Entity to the Redevelopment Agency; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck

Construction of the new buildings got underway in 1969, and the 81-acre India Basin Industrial Park was completed in 1973. In addition to new industrial facilities, the industrial park housed a City College branch campus, the US Postal Service's main sorting center for San Francisco, and a neighborhood shopping center. The project, widely viewed as a success, employed 4,000 people within a year of its completion.⁵¹⁹

In addition to the industrial park, the Redevelopment Agency busied itself during the early 1970s with the replacement of the final remaining World War II-era defense workers' dormitories on Hunters Point Ridge with new residential townhouses. Paid for with a \$33.9 million grant from HUD, the Hunters Point Project Area resulted in 2,000 new homes, a childcare center, schools, churches, parks and playgrounds, and a new community center. Youngblood Coleman Playground and Hilltop Park were also constructed as part of this project. In November 1973, the Nixon Administration cut \$15 million from HUD's budget when the project was only one-third completed. In response, the "Big Five" traveled to Washington, D.C. and successfully lobbied to get the funding restored.⁵²⁰ Today, much of the housing on Hunters Point Ridge, which encompasses two of the remaining African American-majority census tracts in San Francisco, dates from this redevelopment project of the early 1970s.

⁵¹⁹ Scott Blakey, "Federal OK to Rebuild Butchertown," *San Francisco Chronicle* (January 15, 1969), 1.

⁵²⁰ William Moore, "A U.S. Shocker for Hunters Point," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 8, 1973), 2.

Hunters Point Shipyard Closure

The decade between 1960 and 1970 saw manufacturing employment in San Francisco decline by an astounding 19 percent. Hundreds of industrial enterprises moved to the suburbs where they could have access to improved freeway connections, modern infrastructure and facilities, lower taxes and a less union-friendly political environment.⁵²¹



The aircraft carrier, *U.S.S. Ranger*, being repaired at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in 1963.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

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The 1974 closure of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard dealt another serious blow to African Americans. Over five thousand workers lost their jobs, both White and African American. In a city already in the throes of deindustrialization, the closure of the shipyard drained the largest reservoir of high-paying skilled and semiskilled jobs for non-college educated people. As community activist Espanola Jackson described it: "The community died when the shipyard left. There was nothing. Everything that was here disappeared."⁵²²

Although the Navy tried to help the laid-off workers find comparable jobs at other bases, the impacts on San Francisco's African American population were devastating. Already afflicted with a double-digit unemployment rate, the number of Bayview-Hunters Point residents mired in poverty surged to 20 percent.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Miller, 53.

⁵²² Espanola Jackson, as quoted in: "Naval Facilities Engineering Command, D-44."

⁵²³ Daniel Jacobson and Chris Stallworth, *Bayview-Hunters Point: Urban Transformations and Community Cooptation* (Paper prepared for Urban Studies Class at Stanford University, 2009), 13.

Religious Organizations

Glide Memorial Methodist Church

African American pastors, always-important political and cultural forces in San Francisco's Black community, made important contributions to San Francisco's cultural and artistic life during this period. In 1963, a young African American minister named Cecil Williams came to San Francisco to minister to a declining, mostly White congregation in the Tenderloin called Glide Memorial Methodist Church. Along with his wife, Japanese-American poet and dancer Janice Mirikitani, Reverend Williams created upbeat, jazz-filled "Celebrations" which attracted many new parishioners representing a cross-section of San Francisco's communities.



Cecil Williams (right) and Maya Angelou.
Glide Memorial Church, 1974.
Source: Bancroft Library

Glide ministers helped form the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, and later stood up to the police who raided a dance benefitting the organization. The church became a home for political and spiritual change, offering a safe space to groups ranging from the Hookers Convention to the Black Panthers. When San Francisco State University erupted in protests over demands for ethnic studies and affirmative action, the Glide community and Reverend Williams helped lead the demonstrations. In 1974 Glide's importance as a meeting ground for all people was underlined when Randolph Hearst turned to Glide to help secure the release of his daughter, Patty, from the Symbionese Liberation Army. In 1978, when gay City Supervisor Harvey Milk was murdered by fellow Supervisor Dan White, the Glide community opened their doors to comfort those who were frightened, grieving and potentially violent. The church's fame continued to grow, attracting celebrities such as President Clinton, Robin Williams, Maya Angelou and Oprah Winfrey, who commended Glide as a model of compassionate community action.

Today Reverend Williams is respected and recognized as a national leader in the struggle for civil and human rights. He was one of the first clergymen to preside over same-sex weddings—forty years before today's same-sex marriage struggles. His vision for a contemporary church can be seen in Glide's unique blend of spirituality, principled compassion and community outreach programs. Over a period of four decades, Williams and Mirikitani have built dozens of programs that provide education, recovery support, primary and mental health care, job training, housing and human services to San Francisco's marginalized communities. Mirikitani's passion has been to create programs for women and families as they struggle with



Glide Memorial Church.
Source: SFEnvironment

issues of health, childcare and education. Mirikitani was appointed in 2000 as San Francisco's second Poet Laureate.

Located at 330 Ellis Street, Glide Memorial United Methodist Church remains a cornerstone of the Tenderloin community and a refuge for San Franciscans of all races.⁵²⁴ The church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributory building to the Uptown Tenderloin National Register Historic District. The property also appears to be eligible for designation as an individual City Landmark for its architecture, for its association with significant events spanning decades of San Francisco's history, and for its association with Reverend Williams and Janice Mirikitani.

Nation of Islam

The Nation of Islam (NOI) was founded in Detroit in 1930 by Elijah Muhammad. He believed that before Blacks were enslaved and brought to the U.S., they were African Muslims, descendants of the slave Bilal and members of the lost tribe of Shabazz. A by-product of the Pan-Africanist movement, The Nation of Islam was founded as a peaceful organization intended to reconnect Blacks with the spiritual roots of their ancestors. As with the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam also made self-determination and self-sufficiency central parts of its mission, including the establishment of bakeries, moving companies and other Black-owned enterprises.

San Francisco's Muhammad Mosque No. 26 was founded by Minister Henry X Majied around 1960. In 1963, the mosque was located at 1570 Ellis Street, but soon moved to 1745 Fillmore Street (neither mosque extant). When renounced NOI member and civil rights leader Malcom X was assassinated in 1965, the door of the Fillmore Street mosque was doused with kerosene and set ablaze. This mosque was also visited by Muhammad Ali in July 1967. By 1973 Mosque No. 26 had relocated to 1805 Geary Boulevard, today home of the Fillmore Auditorium. More recently, Mosque No. 26 was located at 5048 3rd Street with the Muhammad University of Islam located nearby.

During the early 1970s, a bizarre string of killings dubbed the "Zebra Murders" took the lives of several dozen Bay Area residents. The majority of the attacks were carried out by members of a splinter group of the Nation of Islam. A massive response by the San Francisco police was given the name "Operation Zebra." It received national attention when Mayor Joe Alioto endorsed a desperate and ill-advised plan to have the police treat every Black man on the street as a potential suspect. Once a person was "cleared," they were issued a "Z-card" to be presented to other officers. Black Panther leader Bobby Seale declared, "Every black man in the Bay area is in danger of losing his life."⁵²⁵ The Reverend Cecil Williams of Glide Memorial Church claimed that the entire black community was "under a police state that could erupt into a racial war."⁵²⁶

When the SFPD offered a reward of \$30,000 for information leading to the arrest of the killers, it did not expect one of the killers to respond. In need of money to support his wife and child, Anthony Harris contacted the police and confessed in April 1974. He, along with other killers, worked for the Black Self-Help Moving and Storage Company located at 1645 Market Street (extant), and were members of the

⁵²⁴ "Our Story," Glide Memorial Methodist Church, accessed May 1, 2015.

⁵²⁵ Prentice Earl Sanders and Ben Cohen, *The Zebra Murders: A Season of Killing, Racial Madness and Civil Rights*, (Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2013).

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

Nation of Islam Mosque No. 26.⁵²⁷ In all, four men were prosecuted for the crimes, though it appears that some killers were never charged.

Peoples Temple

During the mid-1960s a preacher from Indiana named Jim Jones arrived in California. His leftist convictions, combined with his outspoken integrationist views had made it difficult for him to stay in conservative Indiana, where Jones had begun preaching a vision he called “apostolic socialism.” In 1971, the Reverend Jones’ “Peoples Temple” opened a branch in the former Albert Pike Memorial Scottish Rite Temple at 1859 Geary Boulevard (not extant). Located in the heart of the Fillmore district, Jones purchased the property in 1972, and in 1975 he relocated the Peoples Temple’s headquarters to San Francisco.⁵²⁸



Peoples Temple, 1859 Geary Boulevard, 1989.
Source: San Francisco Chronicle

Reverend Jones continued to build his church membership in San Francisco, attracting a multiracial congregation that included a large proportion of African Americans. Members of the Peoples Temple lived together in communal residences sprinkled throughout the Western Addition. At first the Peoples Temple was praised by San Francisco’s liberal leaders for its multiculturalism, as well as Reverend Jones’ support for progressive causes and candidates.

As Jones’ reputation grew, his Peoples Temple became the subject of several media exposés, in particular an article by *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Marshall Kilduff in *New West* which characterized Jones as a cult leader.⁵²⁹ Other exposés emerged. Feeling persecuted in the United States, Reverend Jones made plans to relocate Peoples Temple to Guyana, where he had leased a tract of jungle from the Guyanese government. This future “socialist paradise,” which Jones called the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project, was informally called “Jonestown.” With pressure growing, Jones fled to Guyana in July 1977, where he began arranging for his followers to emigrate. By 1978, Jonestown’s population was just under 1,000.

On November 14, 1978, Congressman Leo Ryan and a delegation of 18 people, including his aide, present-day Congresswoman Jackie Speier, set off for Guyana to investigate charges of abuse. Four days later Ryan and his delegation were attacked by Jones’ men when they tried to fly out of the area. In this incident, Congressman Ryan and four Peoples Temple defectors were killed. Nine others, including Jackie Speier, were injured.

⁵²⁷ Located at 1645 Market Street in the 1974 City Directory. (Although an unaccredited photo shows the building located at 1629 Market Street; both buildings extant).

⁵²⁸ Marshall Kilduff and Phil Tracy, “Inside Peoples Temple,” *New West Magazine* (August 1977).

⁵²⁹ Tim Reiterman, *Raven: The Untold Story of Jim Jones and His People*, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1982), 266.

Immediately following the attack, Jones' aides prepared a large vat of Flavor Aid laced with valium, cyanide, and other chemicals, and either forced or convinced hundreds of Peoples Temple members to drink it. In total, 918 people died, including 270 children. Approximately three-quarters of those who died were African American, including many from San Francisco. The Jonestown Tragedy was the single-largest loss of American civilian lives until September 11, 2001.⁵³⁰ The former Peoples Temple building at 1859 Geary Boulevard was demolished after being severely damaged by the Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989.

Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church

Saint John Coltrane Church is another well-known cultural institution with roots in this period. Founded in 1971 by Archbishop Franzo King and Reverend Mother Marina King, under the original name of "One Mind Evolutionary Transitional Body of Christ," the church's founders were inspired by a live performance by John Coltrane that took place at the Jazz Workshop in San Francisco in 1965.

Reverend Franzo King had been raised in the Pentecostal Church and knew the "feeling of presence of the Lord through the Holy Spirit." When he heard Coltrane perform, he was taken back to his childhood, and believed he was feeling the presence of God—a feeling he referred to as a "sound baptism." The founders believed that Coltrane was not "just a jazz musician, but one who was chosen to guide souls back to God." King's ideas placed him outside mainstream Christianity, but eventually he associated with George Duncan Hinkleson, an archbishop of the African Orthodox Church (AOC). This organization emerged in the late 19th century in South Africa and took root in America largely through Marcus Garvey's back-to-Africa movement. Followers of the AOC worship a black Christ.⁵³¹

King stated that in order to become an AOC member congregation, "We demoted Coltrane from being God, but the agreement was that he could come into sainthood and be the patron of our church." Franzo King was consecrated as Archbishop of the AOC in 1984.

Since its inception the church has aimed to establish ecclesiastical and spiritual freedom for Blacks and people of color. Aside from its religious purposes, Saint John Coltrane Church is also a cultural organization dedicated to John Coltrane's "sacred" music, particularly "A Love Supreme." Saint John Coltrane Church began at 351 Divisadero Street (extant) in the Fillmore, but was compelled by escalating rents to move into a smaller storefront at 1286 Fillmore Street in 2007.⁵³² The church remains active



Saint John Coltrane Iconography.
Source: Saint John Coltrane Church

⁵³⁰ Reiterman, 527.

⁵³¹ Samuel Freedman, "Sunday Religion Inspired by Saturday Nights," New York Times, December 1, 2007.

⁵³² "About Us," Saint John Coltrane Church, accessed May 1, 2014.

today.

Cultural Contributions

The period spanning 1960 to 1980 was a tumultuous one for San Francisco's African American community. It began with the destruction of the Fillmore district, which since World War II had been the heart of Black San Francisco and the location of many of its most important cultural, commercial and community institutions. By the mid-1970s, the cultural center of Black San Francisco had shifted east to Oakland and south toward Bayview-Hunters Point. Nevertheless, San Francisco's African American community continued to produce individuals and institutions that contributed greatly to the cultural life of the City and the region.

Literary Contributions

Marcus Books, Julian and Raye Richardson

Few African American businesses survived from the old Fillmore. Until recently, one exception was Marcus Books, which was the nation's oldest continuously operating, independent Black-owned and Black-themed bookstore.

Marcus Books was founded by Julian and Raye Richardson in 1960. It was an outgrowth of the family's printing business, the Success Printing Co., which they established in 1947. The Richardsons were both graduates of the Tuskegee Institute, and believed that San Francisco was in need of a center for Black intellectualism. Marcus Books became that space, and continued to serve that purpose for decades, weathering changing urban conditions and demographics with creativity and perseverance.⁵³³

Julian Richardson was born in 1916 in Birmingham, Alabama, and Raye was born in 1920 and raised outside of Chicago. The Richardsons met in 1937 while attending the Tuskegee Institute. Both studied under renowned scholar George Washington Carver and alongside author Ralph Ellison. Julian studied printing and lithography, and after graduation in 1940 the Richardsons moved to California. After a brief stint in Los Angeles, Julian and Raye settled in San Francisco in 1941. Julian worked as the first Black typesetter at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while Raye took a job at the post office. After shelving his original plan of starting a Black newspaper, Julian began the process of opening a print shop, but was drafted into the United States Army in 1942.⁵³⁴

When he returned to San Francisco in 1944, he found a city transformed by World War II. The Black population had exploded, tripling between 1940 and 1944. Raye Richardson recalled that the Fillmore "was bustling. It was ... it was warm. It was friendly. There was a joy in the people, a love of life."⁵³⁵

Julian established his printing business and began serving the needs of the Black community by printing flyers for political meetings, pamphlets, celebration programs, business cards and newsletters. At the same time, Julian recalls, "My wife and I began looking for Black literature ... but we had to go all over the country to find it."⁵³⁶

⁵³³ Mary Brown, Preservation Planner, *Marcus Books Landmark Designation Report*, San Francisco Planning Department, 2013.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Mary Brown, *Marcus Books Landmark Designation Report*, 2013.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.



Julian and Raye Richardson.

Source: Marcus Books

What started as a search for personal reading material quickly grew into a broader community role for the Richardsons. “You had to scout so hard for books by the Harlem Renaissance writers such as Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, and Anna Bontemps, that when I would find them I would buy extra copies, mainly for friends. I began putting them in my window and selling them.”⁵³⁷ Response from the community was strong, and Julian and Raye embraced their shop’s emerging reputation as a gathering place for the City’s Black intelligentsia. They began using their printing presses to reissue texts that they considered canonical to the Black community and that were unavailable at other general interest bookstores in San Francisco. In 1960, the Richardsons turned their book printing and selling operation into a formal retail establishment, naming the store Marcus Books after Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey.⁵³⁸

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Throughout the following decades, both Julian and Raye Richardson were regarded not just as business leaders but as mentors and teachers within the Black community. Both were closely associated with the student strike at San Francisco State College in 1968-1969, allowing student groups to meet at their bookstore. When students were barred from using university printing presses, the Richardsons published the student newspaper, *The Organ*, and the Black student newsletter, *Black Dialogue*. When the college’s Black Studies Department was formed, Raye was appointed its first interim chair in 1970. Raye retired in 1988 as the first Professor Emerita of the School of Ethnic Studies at SFSU.

Julian taught journalism at SFSU, and both were recognized with Doctoral degrees in Humanity and Letters given by the University of California at Berkeley’s Graduate Theological Union. Julian also became a director for the Fillmore Community Development Association, a group which opposed the A-2 redevelopment of the Fillmore and sought community-based strategies to improve and redirect the plan.⁵³⁹

Originally located on Fillmore Street between Bush and Sutter Streets, Marcus Books was forced to move several times because of rising rents and the widespread demolition resulting from redevelopment. In 1980 the bookstore moved into its final home, a Victorian-era house at 1712-1716 Fillmore Street. Previously the building had been located at 1690 Post Street where it housed the famed club, Jimbo’s Bop City, during the 1950s and early 1960s. The building had been rescued from demolition and relocated, along with other Victorian-era houses, to a small commercial redevelopment

⁵³⁷ Brown, *Marcus Books*.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

project known as Victorian Square. Marcus Books remained on Fillmore Street for more than three decades. In 2013, the owners lost the property to foreclosure and the new owners evicted the business the following year. Marcus Books continues to operate in Oakland, but the loss of the San Francisco store signaled the end of an era in the Fillmore district.⁵⁴⁰

Julian Richardson passed away in 2000 at the age of 84. For their legacy to the city, the Richardsons were recently honored in the naming of a new housing development, the Julian and Raye Richardson Apartments, located in Hayes Valley. The building that formerly housed Marcus Books was designated as City Landmark No. 266 in 2014.

Musicians and Performers

Redevelopment of the Fillmore during the 1960s and 1970s destroyed the most notable concentration of jazz venues on the West Coast during the post-World War II era. Though some clubs tried to reopen elsewhere in the City, the combination of demographic losses and changing tastes worked against them. Whereas jazz was the soundtrack of San Francisco in the 1940s and 1950s, rock bands dominated the scene in the 1960s and 1970s.

There were several widely acclaimed African American singers and musicians from San Francisco during this period. One was Johnny Mathis, raised in the Richmond District and a star athlete at George Washington High School. He later attended San Francisco State on an athletic scholarship, and was noticed singing at a jam session at Ann Dee's 440 Club. Mathis subsequently signed to Columbia Records around 1956—the same year he was invited to try out for the US Olympic Team as a high jumper. Mathis chose a career in music and in 1958 he relocated to Southern California and would go on to become one of the most famed African American performers of the early 1960s.

Another important musical artist from this period was Sly Stone and his rock/funk/soul band, Sly and the Family Stone. Born Sylvester Stewart in Denton, Texas, his family relocated to Vallejo where he attended high school. In his early 20s he became a popular DJ on San Francisco's R&B radio station KSOL, where he mixed British Invasion bands with the station's established format. In 1964 he lived at 155 Haight Street (extant).⁵⁴¹ In 1966 he formed Sly and the Family Stone, an interracial, mixed gender band that defied established norms in the music industry. The band was hugely popular during the late 1960s and had several number one hits.

Several prominent African American musicians also recorded albums at Wally Heider Studios (today known as Hyde Street Studios) at 245 Hyde Street. These included *Head Hunters* and *Sextant* by Herbie Hancock (1973), *Steppin'* by the Pointer Sisters (1975), *Salongo* by Ramsey Lewis (1976), *Do it All Night* by Curtis Mayfield (1978), as well as more recent recordings by Tupac Shakur, Digital Underground and Too Short. During the height of the disco era during the 1970s, African American drag queen Sylvester (Sylvester



Sly and the Family Stone in 1970
Source: Wikipedia Commons

⁵⁴⁰ "History of Marcus Bookstores," macrusfillmore.wordpress.com, accessed May 1, 2014.

⁵⁴¹ Joel Selvin, *San Francisco the Musical History Tour*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996), 107.

James, Jr.), was one of the top performers at venues throughout the city, and recorded a debut album for Fantasy Records in 1977.⁵⁴²

A few nationally prominent African American actors and performers from San Francisco rose to prominence during the 1970s and 1980s, including actor and San Francisco native, Danny Glover. However, many of the Bay Area's most notable African American artists and performers during this period were associated with Oakland, increasingly the center of Bay Area African American culture.

KPOO Radio Station

Although African American performers could be heard on radio stations across the Bay Area, San Francisco had no radio or television outlet offering dedicated coverage of Black issues. In 1971, several organizations joined forces with broadcasters Lorenzo Milan, Jeremy Lansman and Ron Grele to create the community-based radio station, KPOO. In 1973, management of the station was taken over by Joe Rudolph (1938-2001), one of the organizers of the 1968 San Francisco State College strike and a founder of the Fillmore Media Center. Rudolph dubbed KPOO the "Poor People's Radio," and the station became the only black-controlled independent public radio station west of the Mississippi.⁵⁴³

KPOO offered more than just programming geared to San Francisco's African American community. It also became the first Bay Area station to play rap, salsa and reggae music. According to a history of the radio station:

Prime time programming included *Black Community Report*, *Women's Community Report*, *Latino Community Report*, and *Asian Community Report*. Additionally, KPOO broadcast shows such as *Renter's Rights*, *Campaign Countdown* (non-stop election coverage), *Poetry for the People*, *Music from Polynesia*, and *KidSpace*. KPOO aired issues important to women, prisoners, veterans, and the LGBT community.⁵⁴⁴

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The station was originally located at Pier 39. From 1973 to 1982 it operated from a garage at 532 Natoma Street in the South of Market (extant). In 1985 the station purchased its present location at 1329 Divisadero Street in the Western Addition.

Summary of Significant Themes

In San Francisco as well as the rest of the country, the Civil Rights battles of the 1960s rank among the most significant events of the late 20th century. Although their methods and priorities differed, organizations such as C.O.R.E., the NAACP and the Black Panthers were all dedicated to achieving full social, political and economic justice for African Americans. These efforts were often rooted in direct action, and spilled over into a larger cultural milieu of anti-war, anti-establishment protest. Redevelopment of the Western Addition also reached its apex during this period, displacing residents and businesses in what many perceived to be government-sponsored "black removal."

Despite several important victories in housing and employment discrimination, San Francisco's African American community did not experience a commensurate rise in economic status. Most Blacks

⁵⁴² Graves and Watson, 271-272.

⁵⁴³ African American Art and Cultural Society, 51.

⁵⁴⁴ "About Us," KPOO website, accessed June 14, 2015.

continued to work in blue-collar jobs that were fast disappearing as San Francisco de-industrialized. The closure of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, as well as the decline of the Port of San Francisco, were both particularly hard on the African American community. Many Blacks with the economic means to leave for the suburbs began doing so, ushering in a trend which continues to this day.

Extant Properties

This list should not be considered comprehensive, but includes properties mentioned earlier in this section of the report.

- Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, 330 Ellis Street
- Sam Jordan's Bar, 4004-06 Third Street (SF Landmark No. 263)
- Marcus Books, 1712 Fillmore Street (SF Landmark No. 266)
- Don Lee Cadillac dealership, 1000 Van Ness Avenue (SF Landmark No. 152)
- St. John Coltrane African Orthodox Church (original location), 351 Divisadero Street
- Wally Heider Recording / Hyde Street Studios, 245 Hyde Street
- Apartment of Sly Stone, 155 Haight Street
- KPOO Radio (since 1985), 1329 Divisadero Street
- Residence of Matthew Johnson, 1145 Hollister Avenue
- Lloyd Dickey dental office and restaurant, 1843-1847 Fillmore Street
- Mel's Drive-In, at 1601 Monterey Boulevard
- Various Lucky and Safeway Stores
-

Commemorative Sites

Streets in Bayview-Hunters Point named for community leaders: Ardath Court (Ardath Nichols), Bertha Lane (Bertha Freeman), Commer Court (Julia Commer), Garlington Court (Ethel Garlington), and Oceola Court (Oceola Washington)

G. Epilogue—Black Exodus from San Francisco 1980-2014



The Fillmore Street overpass above Geary Street, 1982.
Source: San Francisco Public Library

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This final section of narrative history discusses more recent developments affecting San Francisco's African American community. The dominant theme during this period is dislocation, as thousands of African Americans have left San Francisco for other communities throughout the Bay Area and beyond. Any properties identified in this section that are less than 50 years old would need to show exceptional significance in order to be listed in local, state and national registers. They are mainly included to provide continuity between the past and more recent events.

Population Decline

Between 1970 and 1980, nearly 10,000 African Americans left San Francisco.⁵⁴⁵ Since 1980, San Francisco's African American population has continued to decline, dropping to 78,931 (10.9 percent) in 1990, 60,515 (7.8 percent) in 2000, and 48,870 (6.1 percent) in 2010.⁵⁴⁶ The earliest phase of this exodus can in part be explained by redevelopment and the concurrent opening of housing opportunities to African Americans elsewhere in the Bay Area. Another was the decline of the Port of San Francisco, and with it the loss of thousands of unionized jobs along the waterfront. Lance Burton recalls that the exodus of longshoreman was a serious blow to the African American community:

⁵⁴⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census.

⁵⁴⁶ MTC-ABAG Library: Bay Area Census.

The longshoremen were really the backbone of the community. Because there were thousands of black men who worked there, and they were doing well. All their kids dressed well and had the latest clothes and had money for lunch, that kind of distinguished them from other people. These were men who had wives who were also maybe working, and they owned homes because they actually had enough money to buy them. When the A-2 announcement came in, it was made largely through the churches that were supported largely by the families that were doing well at the waterfront, or had jobs working for the post office—they were the ones who were in church on Sundays. They were getting the word, and that the waterfront was going to go away because the containers were going to the East Bay. Folks who had money to make the move, started making the transition. They were going out to east Oakland, or if they really had it going on were going to the hills, or San Leandro, Hayward, Richmond, Vallejo. They could make that transition.⁵⁴⁷

The suburban exodus of African Americans was a statewide trend, as Black San Franciscans and Oaklanders departed for outlying communities.⁵⁴⁸ Many left for the same reason that Whites had fled the cities a generation earlier: substandard schools, high taxes, fear of crime, and deteriorating public infrastructure. Rising property values provided an additional incentive, allowing some longtime homeowners to sell at a substantial profit.⁵⁴⁹ During the 1990s and 2000s, many took advantage of rising property values to move to places such as Antioch, Fairfield, Vacaville, Stockton and Sacramento, or even out of state.

A second factor that pushed African Americans out of San Francisco was the crack cocaine epidemic. Drug gangs, operating mainly out of public housing projects, ravaged Bayview-Hunters Point during the 1980s and the 1990s. Rising drug crime fed on the cycles of poverty and joblessness, leading to rising homicide rates. Drug gangs battled over turf, often killing innocent bystanders in the process. According to a December 2001 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, these conditions rendered Bayview-Hunters Point a “no-hope outpost hundreds of miles away from the city’s glittery center.”⁵⁵⁰ In 2004, Bayview-Hunters Point accounted for half of the City’s homicides.⁵⁵¹

These conditions were demoralizing for many longtime African American residents. Those who could move out often did so, selling their property to more affluent buyers who in many cases were not Black. Popularly known as “gentrification,” this process has been blamed for the continuing exodus of Black San Franciscans from San Francisco. The trend first occurred in the Western Addition in the 1970s and the 1980s. Until recently Whites had not been moving into either Bayview-Hunters Point or the OMI district in large numbers. Instead, most of the newcomers in these neighborhoods are from mainland China. Chinese immigrants are now a majority of the population in Visitacion Valley and in most Bayview-Hunters Point census tracts west of Third Street. Indeed, Chinese immigrants appear to be becoming a majority in most outlying neighborhoods in San Francisco.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁷ Burton.

⁵⁴⁸ De Graaf et al, 419.

⁵⁴⁹ MTC-ABAG Library: Bay Area Census.

⁵⁵⁰ Susan Sward, “The Killing Streets: A Cycle of Vengeance,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 16, 2001).

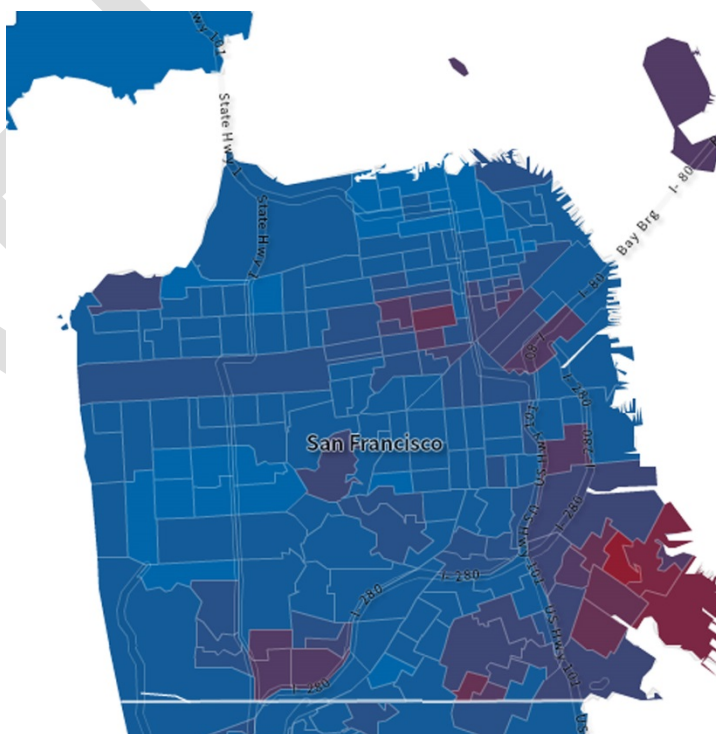
⁵⁵¹ *Joseph Alioto Papers*.

⁵⁵² U.S. Census, 2010.

Leaving the City

In 1993, the San Francisco Human Rights Commission published *The Unfinished Agenda: The Economic Status of African Americans in San Francisco, 1964-1990*. The report acknowledged the decline in the City's African American population and analyzed its reasons, concluding that the decrease was not solely the result of increased opportunities elsewhere. Many African Americans left San Francisco because of the loss of affordable housing and increased competition with other ethnic groups for lower-cost housing. The trend began with the redevelopment of the Western Addition in the 1960s. Because the pace of rebuilding was slow, many African Americans resettled outside the City before the new housing developments were completed. Remaining Victorian-era properties within the Western Addition were bought up by real estate investors, rehabilitated, and sold to affluent and moderately affluent Whites. In the OMI, Bayview-Hunters Point, and other African American enclaves, gentrification was less of an issue than competition from Asian and Latin American immigrants, who in many cases were able to outbid African Americans for housing by pooling resources and living together in extended family units.⁵⁵³

The Unfinished Agenda also attributed the Black exodus to San Francisco's shift from manufacturing toward highly specialized white-collar occupations. Many of these new occupations required advanced degrees or training that was not historically accessible to working-class African Americans. The result was a gradual socio-economic bifurcation of San Francisco's Black population into two communities: highly educated and high-income Blacks dispersed throughout the city, and a growing unemployed and underemployed lower class trapped in public housing. In effect, San Francisco's African American population, not unlike the City as a whole, was hollowed out from the center, resulting in a population consisting of the very poor and the very well-off.



Map showing census tracts with significant concentrations of African Americans in San Francisco (in red), 2010.
Source: Anti-Eviction Mapping Project

The trends identified in *The Unfinished Agenda* continued to play out during the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 2008, an African American Out-Migration Task Force assembled by Mayor Gavin Newsom made several sobering findings. It determined that in the previous ten years the number of African Americans living in very low-income households had increased. The number of African American-owned

⁵⁵³ San Francisco Human Rights Committee, *The Unfinished Agenda: The Economic Status of African Americans in San Francisco, 1964-1990* (San Francisco, 1990).

businesses had declined, and African Americans had gone from having the highest rate of home ownership to the lowest. Additionally, African Americans, who made up fewer than six percent of the City's population, comprised almost half of all residents living in public housing.⁵⁵⁴ African American unemployment in San Francisco stood at five times that of Whites in 2008.⁵⁵⁵ The Out-Migration Task Force offered many recommendations, including implementation of a violence prevention plan, rebuilding public housing, improving schools, and promoting minority-owned business development. In the years since it was published, very little progress has been made.

Between 1970 and 2010, San Francisco's African American population declined by approximately half. Population declines occurred evenly across the City. In comparison to the 1970 Census, when there were 15 census tracts that were at least 50 percent African American, by 2010 there were only two, both in Bayview-Hunters Point.

The most heavily African American census tract in the Western Addition was Census Tract 161, which was 38 percent Black. This census tract, which is bordered by Eddy Street to the north, Gough Street to the east, Fulton Street to the south, and Steiner Street to the west, contains many low and moderate-income housing projects and cooperative apartments built during the 1970s. No other census tract in the Western Addition had an African American population exceeding 20 percent, and the total percentage of Blacks in the entire neighborhood fell to 15 percent in 2010.⁵⁵⁶

Similarly, the OMI district saw a significant decline in the number of African American residents. What was once a middle-class area with a majority Black population now has no census tract that is more than 18 percent African American. The only area where the Black population increased was Treasure Island. Following its decommissioning by the Navy in 1997, the City offered low rents and subsidies for middle and lower income San Franciscans to live in former Navy housing.

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According to a study completed by the San Francisco Planning Department, *San Francisco's Neighborhoods: Socio-Economic Profiles*, the neighborhoods with the highest percentages of African American residents in 2010 included the following:

- Bayview-Hunters Point (32 percent)
- Treasure Island (25 percent)
- Western Addition (15 percent)
- Visitation Valley (13 percent)
- OMI (12 percent)
- Civic Center/Tenderloin (10 percent)
- South of Market Area and Potrero Hill (each 9 percent)
- Financial District, Diamond Heights/Glen Park, and Twin Peaks (each 6 percent)

None of the remaining 25 neighborhoods in San Francisco had African American populations exceeding 5 percent.⁵⁵⁷

The densest African American neighborhood in 2010 was located within Bayview-Hunters Point in the area bounded by Innes Avenue to the north, San Francisco Bay to the east, Yosemite Avenue to the

⁵⁵⁴ "Black population deserting S.F., study says," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 10, 2008.

⁵⁵⁵ Joy M. Tyler, "The State of African American Business: Surviving the Economic Crisis?" (August 31, 2009).

⁵⁵⁶ San Francisco Planning Department, *San Francisco Neighborhoods: Socio-Economic Profiles* (San Francisco: 2011).

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

south, and Third Street to the west. All of the census tracts west of Third Street that were majority-Black in the 1990 Census had transitioned to Asian majorities or pluralities. Even in the two census tracts where African Americans retain a majority (census tracts 23102 and 23103), there were marked declines between 2000 and 2010.

With the demolition and reconstruction of the Hunters View housing project, it is expected that the Black population of these two tracts will continue to decline. Nevertheless a number of traditional African American enterprises survive along Third Street, including barbershops and salons, specialty shops, and a number of restaurants. The latter group includes B&J Burgers, which has operated for more than 35 years at 6202 Third Street. Others include the soul food restaurants Auntie April's, Frisco Fried and the Old Skool Cafe, as well as Yvonne's Southern Sweets.



Businesses along the Third Street corridor. Clockwise from upper left, African Outlet (4942 Third Street); B&J Burgers (6202 Third Street); the Jazz Room (5267 Third Street); and Ebony Beauty Supply (4820 3rd St).

Source: San Francisco Planning Department

The area along and adjacent to the Third Street corridor in Bayview also features one of the densest concentration of churches in San Francisco, including a number of storefront churches. These include:

- Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church, 6190 Third Street
- Greater Abundant Life Church of God in Christ, 6221 Third Street

- Evergreen Baptist Church, 6270 Third Street
- Little Bethany Baptist Church, 1636 Armstrong Avenue
- Emanuel Pearlgate Baptist Church, 19 Bayview Avenue
- Bayview Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1775 LaSalle Avenue
- Providence Baptist Church, 1601 McKinnon Avenue
- St. Peters Missionary Baptist Church, 1616 Newcomb Avenue
- Metropolitan Baptist Church, 1682 Newcomb Avenue
- New Home Missionary Baptist Church, 1763 Newcomb Avenue
- Saint John's Missionary Baptist Church, 825 Newhall Street
- Bayview Baptist Church, 1509 Oakdale Avenue
- Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, 1629 Oakdale Avenue
- St. Paul Tabernacle Baptist, 1789 Oakdale Avenue
- Olivet Baptist Church, 1667 Revere Avenue
- Double Rock Baptist Church, 1595 Shafter Avenue



Evergreen Baptist Church (left) and Metropolitan Baptist Church (right) in the Bayview District
Source: San Francisco Planning Department

African Americans in Government

The demographic decline of San Francisco's African American community in recent decades stands in contrast to the growing political influence of several prominent African American individuals, chief among them, Willie Brown.

Mayor Willie Brown

Following his first election victory in 1964, Brown went on to become one of the most powerful politicians in California's history, serving as Speaker of the Assembly from 1980 to 1995—the longest tenure of any Assembly Speaker.⁵⁵⁸ In 1996 he was elected as San Francisco's first



Mayor Willie Brown.
Source: baycitizen.org

⁵⁵⁸ Broussard, 242.

African American mayor, signaling both the political apex of his career and the rise of African American politicians to positions of power and influence in non-Black majority communities. Brown's election also generated high expectations among the City's remaining African American residents.

Mayor Brown presided over a period of tremendous economic expansion in San Francisco during the late 1990s and early 2000s. During his tenure, Mayor Brown completed many major public works projects, including the restoration of City Hall, building a new DeYoung Museum, spearheading the redevelopment of Mission Bay, and building the new International Terminal at San Francisco International Airport. He also launched the redevelopment of the long-closed Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. Despite his considerable accomplishments, Brown was often criticized for not paying enough attention to the City's poorest residents.

African American Supervisors

Other notable political victories include African Americans elected to the Board of Supervisors. These included Ella Hill Hutch (1977-1981), Doris Ward (1979-1992) and Reverend Amos Brown (1997-2000). Following the restoration of district elections in 2000, African Americans were also elected to office in Supervisorial Districts 5 and 10, despite the fact that African Americans are no longer the majority in either district. In District 10, Sophie Maxwell (2001-2011) was succeeded by Malia Cohen (2011-present). In Supervisorial District 5, London Breed was elected to office in 2012 (2012-present). African Americans also continue to be well-represented as appointees on various other boards and commissions, including the Human Rights Commission, the San Francisco Housing Authority, the Board of Education and the Planning Commission.



Doris Ward
Source: San Francisco Chronicle

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Cultural Contributions

As the City's Black population has dwindled, sustaining a sufficient audience to support Black cultural institutions has been an ongoing challenge. Nonetheless, during this period several notable institutions recognizing the long-term contributions of African Americans to San Francisco were founded or expanded. Established in 1989, the African American Art and Culture Complex, which highlights African American-themed visual and performing arts, moved into the Western Addition Cultural Center at 762 Fulton Street. The African American Historical and Cultural Society, a descendent of the San Francisco Athenaeum and Literary Association, maintains an archive and a gallery in the same building.

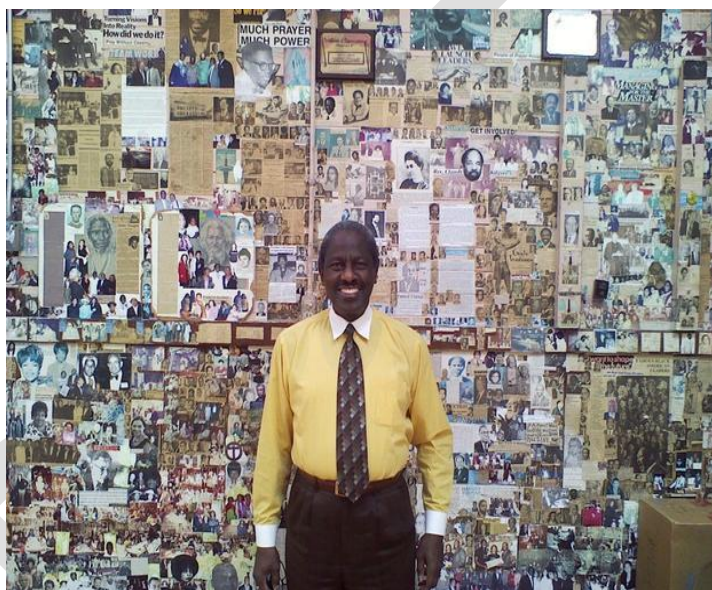
In 1995, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency established the "Historic Fillmore Jazz Preservation District," an attempt to restore some flavor of the old "Harlem of the West" to Fillmore Street. Though several jazz clubs remain in the area, the ongoing viability of the jazz district is in question. In 1999, San Francisco opened the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD), which moved into the first floor of the St. Regis Tower at Third and Mission streets.

Artistic Contributions

Artistic contributions of San Francisco's African American community have continued to enrich the City since the 1980s. African Americans have painted murals on the sides of buildings throughout the Western Addition and the Bayview-Hunters Point district.

Reverend Roland Gordon and *The Great Cloud of Witnesses*

One of the most notable murals is an indoor collage and mural entitled the "Great Cloud of Witnesses," created by Reverend Roland Gordon (1944-present), pastor of Ingleside Presbyterian Church at 1345 Ocean Avenue. The collage/mural has evolved over three decades. It features thousands of images of prominent people in the Civil Rights movement and members of the local community.



Reverend Roland Gordon in front of his Great Cloud of Witnesses.
Source: Ingleside Presbyterian Church



Gymnasium Wall.
Source: Planning Department

Born in 1944 in Gary, Indiana, Reverend Gordon enrolled in the San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1978 and was offered a position as student pastor for the dwindling congregation at Ingleside Presbyterian Church. He was ordained in 1983. Drawing on his athletic background, Gordon immediately organized basketball programs for young boys in the community. The Ingleside Church Basketball League stressed respect for authority, self-discipline, sportsmanship and the importance of education. It soon became "the place" for the development of many boys, some of whom became outstanding student athletes.⁵⁵⁹ In order to further inspire the neighborhood's youth, he pasted a magazine article about Muhammad Ali on the wall of the gymnasium.

Over the course of thirty years, Gordon continued to add images until the walls of the gym were covered with a "Cloud of Witnesses." He then moved to the stairwells and hallways. Around the top of the gym he commissioned a mural to prominent Black San Franciscans, including former Supervisor Reverend

⁵⁵⁹ "Our Pastor," Ingleside Presbyterian Church, accessed April 8, 2015.

Amos Brown; Thad Brown, former Tax Collector for the City; former Mayor Willie Brown, and Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr.

Gordon believes *Cloud of Witnesses* is his greatest work. Its name references Hebrews 12:1 in the Bible: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”⁵⁶⁰ In his biography for Ingleside Presbyterian, Reverend Gordon states:

My prayer is that people of all races (especially African American youths) will be blessed by learning the truth about the rich contributions the sons and daughters of African descent have made to civilization and most especially to our country.”

Gordon has served as a board member for a host of community organizations, including the San Francisco Council of Churches, the Children's Services Committee, the Bay Area Black United Fund and the Thad Brown Boys Academy. He has also been honored with a Koshland Committee of San Francisco Foundation award for Outstanding Community Service.

Ingleside Presbyterian Church is currently listed on the Historic Preservation Commission's Landmark Designation Work Program for its association with the development of the Ingleside Terrace Neighborhood, its architecture, and for its association with Reverend Gordon. Both the exterior of the church and the *Cloud of Witnesses* are planned for landmark designation.

Literary Contributions

Alice Walker (1944-present)

A San Francisco resident since 1978, Alice Walker was born in 1944 in rural Georgia to sharecropper parents. She graduated from high school in 1961 as class valedictorian, and received a scholarship to attend Spelman College in Atlanta, one of the first Black women's colleges in the country. While there she became active in the civil rights movement, attending the 1963 March on Washington, and studied with such influential radical historians as Howard Zinn and Staughton Lynd. She grew impatient with the restrictions at Spelman, however, which at the time saw its mission as turning “black girls into refined ladies and teachers.”⁵⁶¹ With the help of Staughton Lynd's mother, Walker received a scholarship to the elite Sarah Lawrence College in New York. Mentored by teachers and poets Jane Cooper and Muriel Rukeyser, Alice devoted herself to becoming a writer.⁵⁶²

While in college, Walker studied in Kenya and Uganda where she witnessed the ravages of colonialism and became disillusioned with the African independence movements of the day. An unwanted pregnancy also nearly brought her to suicide. After an illegal abortion, she produced a flood of poetry that became her first book, *Once* (1968). After graduating with honors from Sarah Lawrence College, Walker worked for the NAACP Legal



Alice Walker.

Source: San Francisco Bayview

⁵⁶¹ “Alice Walker,” FemBio, accessed April 8, 2015.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

Defense Fund to establish civil rights in the segregated South.

In 1982, she published her most famous work, *The Color Purple*, which addressed issues such as “incest, domestic violence, lesbianism, religion, racism, poverty, and motherhood as manifested in a poor, black southern community.”⁵⁶³ While critically praised, the novel was controversial for its negative portrayal of Black males, as well as its positive portrayal of a lesbian relationship. The following year she became the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the first to win a National Book Award.

Along with fellow African American female writers Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou, Walker has been credited with the resurrection of Black literature. Walker has also been instrumental in rediscovering and promoting other Black women writers, most notably Zora Neale Hurston (1901-1960), whose work she has edited and interpreted.

Musical Contributions

African American musicians and rappers have continued to represent San Francisco since the 1980s. R&B singers such as Cindy Herron and Chanté Moore have scored several hits. Though lesser-known, Bayview-Hunters Point became a hotbed of the underground rap scene during the 1990s with artists such as Mr. Cee and Hitman.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

IV. CONCLUSION

The African American Citywide Historic Context Statement was prepared to assist the City and other stakeholders identify and evaluate individual properties and other historical resources associated with San Francisco's African American community. Though African Americans did not comprise a sizable percentage of the City's population until World War II, they were among the earliest settlers of San Francisco. Far from the rigid racial strictures of the East, many pioneer African American settlers prospered in San Francisco, making outsized contributions to the City's early economic, social and cultural life. San Francisco was by no means free of racial oppression, however, and several hundred Black San Franciscans emigrated to Canada in 1858.

The 1906 Earthquake resulted in an exodus of Black San Franciscans to Oakland, where unionized jobs with the railroads lured additional Black San Franciscans in later decades. After 1920, San Francisco's tiny African American population began to grow as unionized job opportunities opened up along the waterfront. The explosion of defense industry work during World War II, especially in the Bay Area's many shipyards, caused San Francisco's African American population to surge with new arrivals from across the country, reaching 33,000 in 1950.

The number of African American residents continued to grow after the war, as friends and relatives of wartime migrants fled the Jim Crow South. But as defense jobs dried up and discrimination intensified after the war, prosperity and good quality housing proved elusive. On the other hand, the postwar period represented the apogee of African American cultural life in San Francisco, especially the flowering of the "Harlem of the West" in the Fillmore District during the 1950s and early 1960s.

Since 1970, San Francisco's Black population has steadily declined. The causes are many, including the redevelopment of the Fillmore district, crime and deterioration, and the parallel growth of job and housing opportunities in the formerly majority-White suburbs. This exodus continues to the present day. It is the purpose of the African American Citywide Historic Context Statement to document the physical and cultural presence of African Americans in San Francisco, and to recommend potential strategies to preserve this fragile legacy. This is also a living document meant to be amended as new information becomes available.

V. GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING HISTORIC PROPERTIES

This chapter provides guidelines for evaluating and registering properties at the local, state and national levels. It includes the identification of a thematic framework for San Francisco's African American community, a definition of common property types, and a discussion of integrity thresholds required to register properties.

A. Thematic Framework

The African American Citywide Historic Context Statement identifies several themes and periods of development that will assist City staff, decision-makers, property owners and other stakeholders in evaluating the potential significance of historic properties. According to the National Park Service's Thematic Framework, themes are used to organize and interpret events, activities, communities and development patterns that have influenced the physical, historical and cultural development of a particular area.

In 1994, the National Park Service revised its method of identifying historic themes away from the traditional chrono-centric approach in favor of eight overarching themes that are intended to capture "the complexity and meaning of human experience and for understanding that past in coherent, integrated ways." The following list includes themes derived from the National Park Service's thematic categories:

- **African American Settlement in San Francisco:** This theme relates to early areas of African American settlement in San Francisco, including Chinatown, the South of Market and the Western Addition. It also includes the expansion of African American settlement into Bayview-Hunters Point, the OMI, Visitacion Valley and elsewhere during and after World War II. EXAMPLE
- **African Americans and San Francisco's Economy:** This theme relates to categories of work and business where African Americans were heavily represented in San Francisco, such as railroads, longshoring, shipbuilding and hotel and domestic work. It also relates to important, longtime African American-owned businesses, particularly those related to the Fillmore district or the Third Street corridor. Sites that could be registered under this theme could include the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard and the Pullman Hotel. An existing City Landmark that embodies this theme is Sam Jordan's Bar, Landmark No..
- **African American Social and Cultural Institutions:** This theme relates to sites, both formal and informal, that are important for their association with African American social, cultural and intellectual life. These can include institutions such as the site of The Athenaeum and Marcus Books. Houses of worship may also be registered under this theme, including the three pioneer African American churches: A. M. E. Zion, Bethel A. M. E. and Third Baptist Church. This theme also encompasses properties associated with significant African American artistic expression. Two existing City Landmarks that embody this theme are the Madame C. J. Walker Home, Landmark No. and Jimbo's Bop

City/Marcus Books, Landmark No.

- **African Americans and the Political and Legal Landscape:** This theme relates to local and national organizations that worked to obtain civil rights for African Americans in San Francisco, including the local headquarters of the NAACP and the National Urban League. It can also include properties associated with the struggle for integration, as well as places where important political victories were won, such as San Francisco State University and Mel's Diner on Geary Boulevard. This theme may also include properties associated with prominent persons associated with the struggle for civil rights, such as Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr. Leonard Poole House, Landmark No.

B. Definition of Property Types

This section identifies and describes common property types associated with African Americans in San Francisco that may be eligible for historic registration. As opposed to a traditional historic resource survey, where architecturally significant buildings are typically the focus, the San Francisco African American Historic Context Statement is concerned primarily with culturally significant properties. According to the National Park Service's *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, a traditional cultural property is one that is "associated with the cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that are (a) rooted in the community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community."⁵⁶⁴

Traditional cultural properties range from historic European, Asian or Latino settlements to Native American sacred sites. Traditional cultural properties associated with San Francisco's African American community primarily consist of churches and social institutions. But they can also include locations "where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity."⁵⁶⁵

- **Residential Properties** encompass any building whose primary purpose is housing. Common residential property types in San Francisco include both single- and multi-family dwellings, such as houses, flats, apartments, boarding houses and residential hotels. For the purposes of this context statement, hotels whose primary purpose is accommodating transients who do not live in San Francisco are classified as commercial properties.

Residential properties in San Francisco that could be registered as historic resources include dwellings significant for their association with persons important to African American history, such as the residences of Willie Mays in Sherwood Forest, or Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr. in Westwood Highlands. Early public housing projects may likewise be significant for their association with desegregation battles, though the North Beach Housing Project, which was the subject of the 1952 lawsuit that overturned racial segregation in public housing, is no longer extant.

⁵⁶⁴ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 38: "Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* (Washington, D.C.), 1.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.



Willie Mays House, 175 Miraloma Drive.
Source: Christopher VerPlanck

- **Commercial Properties** are those that accommodate all types of non-industrial businesses including stores, restaurants and office buildings. Most commercial properties are used during regular business hours, though properties such as hotels and restaurants may be operated around the clock.

In San Francisco, many of the commercial properties that were part of the Fillmore district were destroyed by redevelopment. Thus there would be relatively few eligible commercial properties in this area, which was once the cultural heart of African American San Francisco. Other commercial districts such as Third Street in Bayview-Hunters Point and Ocean Avenue and Broad Street in the OMI district retain much of their older building stock including several buildings that have housed longtime African American-owned businesses, such as 4618 Third Street in Bayview-Hunters Point. Some of these commercial buildings may be eligible for registration, though additional research is required to document their individual histories.



Auntie April's, 4618 Third Street.
Source: Christopher VerPlanck

- **Industrial properties** include any building or structure where goods are manufactured, assembled, stored, sorted, processed or repaired. Industrial properties can include factories, warehouses, auto repair facilities, machine shops, mills and power plants.

In San Francisco, African Americans have long been disproportionately employed in transportation, maritime work and heavy industry, particularly shipbuilding, longshoring, railroad work and warehousing. Most of these industries, though, also employed people of other races, so it is unlikely that most industrial facilities would be registered solely for their association with African Americans. A more likely scenario for historic designation would be an industrial property associated with a historic event, such as a labor strike or civil rights demonstration.

- **Institutional Properties** include private assembly buildings such as social and fraternal halls, religious facilities, community centers and YMCA or YWCA buildings. For the purposes of this context statement, government-owned properties are discussed under civic properties.

Perhaps more than any other property type, churches are the most tangible built artifacts of African Americans in San Francisco. Long after neighborhoods transitioned from being predominantly African American, the churches remain, with many parishioners commuting in from distant suburbs for services. During the postwar period, when San Francisco's Black population was growing rapidly, several of the older mainline churches, including Third Baptist, A. M. E. Zion and Bethel A. M. E. constructed new churches in the Western Addition. African Americans also became the majority parishioners in several Catholic parishes, including Sacred Heart, All Hallows and Our Lady of Lourdes. African American evangelical storefront churches remain relatively common in many outlying neighborhoods. The Nation of Islam also operated mosques at various locations, including building a mosque and school in Bayview-Hunters Point. Further study may indicate that several of these religious properties are eligible for listing in the local, state, or national register.

In addition, the Buchanan Street YMCA, one of the few buildings to be spared from demolition in the A1 and A2 redevelopment project areas, has longstanding associations with both the Japanese American and African American communities.



All Hallows Church, 1440 Newhall Avenue.

Source: Christopher VerPlanck

- **Civic Properties** are government buildings used by the public and government employees. Examples of civic properties include city halls, libraries, recreation centers, post offices and schools. Civic properties may also encompass public parks and open space, as well as public art and civic monuments.

Designed to serve all residents of San Francisco, there do not appear to be any civic properties that are exclusively associated with San Francisco's African American community. However, some civic properties have longstanding and predominant associations with African Americans. These include several public schools, including Rosa Parks, Malcom X and Paul Revere schools. Similarly, certain parks and playgrounds in traditionally African American neighborhoods have important associations with the Black community, not only for their intrinsic value as open space, but because they were built with the impetus and input of local residents. Examples include Youngblood Coleman Playground and Hilltop Park in Bayview-Hunters Point, and the Raymond Kimball Playground in the Western Addition.

Public art made by and for African Americans is located throughout San Francisco. Some examples include the installations by Sargent Johnson at George Washington High School and Aquatic Park, the statue of Willie McCovey in China Basin Park, and "Ndebele," a sculpture at 1601 Griffith Street. Several murals dedicated to prominent African Americans may also be found on the sides of buildings in Bayview-Hunters Point, the Western Addition, Visitacion Valley and the OMI.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁶ All of these can be viewed at the website: www.sfpublicart.com



Murals in the Bayview District along the Third Street corridor, 2015.
Source: San Francisco Planning Department

C. National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's comprehensive inventory of historical resources. Administered by the National Park Service, the National Register includes buildings, structures, sites, objects and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological or cultural significance. Typically, resources 50 years of age or older are eligible for listing in the National Register if they meet any one of the four eligibility criteria *and* retain historic integrity. Resources less than 50 years old may be eligible if it can be demonstrated that they are of "exceptional importance" or if they are contributors to a historic district. As mentioned previously, there are currently no National Register listed properties in San Francisco that were designated solely for their association with African Americans.

National Register criteria are defined in depth in *National Register Bulletin Number 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. There are four criteria under which a structure, site, building, district, or object can be eligible:

- **Criterion A (Event):** Properties associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- **Criterion B (Person):** Properties associated with the lives of persons significant in our past
- **Criterion C (Design/Construction):** Properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction
- **Criterion D (Information Potential):** Properties that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

In addition to meeting at least one of the four eligibility criteria, a property or district must retain historic integrity. This means that it must retain essential physical characteristics that allow it to convey its historic significance. A fuller discussion of integrity is included below under Section F.

D. California Register of Historical Resources

The California Register is the authoritative list of significant architectural, archaeological, and historical resources in the State of California. State Historical Landmarks and National Register-eligible properties (both listed and formal determinations of eligibility) are automatically listed. Other historic resources automatically listed in the California Register include resources designated as local landmarks by city or county ordinance.

Properties can be nominated to the California Register by local governments, organizations or private citizens. The evaluation criteria used by the California Register are closely based on those developed for the National Register. In order to be eligible for listing in the California Register a property must be significant under one or more of the following criteria:

- **Criterion 1 (Event):** Resources that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States
- **Criterion 2 (Person):** Resources that are associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history
- **Criterion 3 (Design/Construction):** Resources that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values
- **Criterion 4 (Information Potential):** Resources or sites that have yielded or have the potential to yield information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation

As with the National Register, a property determined eligible for listing in the California Register must retain historic integrity.

E. Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code

City Landmarks are administered under Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code, established in 1967. The purpose of Article 10 is to “provide examples of the physical surroundings in which past generations lived” and to “protect, preserve, enhance and encourage continued utilization, rehabilitation and, where necessary, adaptive reuse of significant cultural resources.”⁵⁶⁷

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Most San Francisco landmarks are buildings. But they can also include sites, structures or features of special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest. Collections of properties may also be designated as landmark districts. San Francisco presently has 268 City Landmarks and 13 Landmark Districts. As discussed in the San Francisco Planning Department’s Historic Landmark Designation Application:

Landmarks can be significant for a variety of reasons. The criteria are based on those used by the National Register of Historic Places. They include:

- Properties significant for their association with historic events, including the city’s social and cultural history
- Properties significant for their association with a person or group important to the history of the city, state or country
- Properties significant for their architecture or design
- Properties that are valued as visual landmarks, or that have special character or meaning to the city and its residents
- Collections of properties or features that are linked by history, plan, aesthetics or physical development

⁵⁶⁷ *Preservation Bulletin No. 5*, (San Francisco Planning Department), 2.

Any member of the public may request that the Historic Preservation Commission initiate designation of a landmark site or district. The Historic Preservation Commission may then choose whether or not to adopt a resolution in support of the initiation request. Landmark initiation may also be made by resolution of the Board of Supervisors or the Historic Preservation Commission.

As mentioned previously, there are only four San Francisco landmarks designated specifically for their direct associations with African American history:

- Madame C.J. Walker Home for Girls and Women, 2066 Pine Street (Landmark No. 211)
- Joseph Leonard/Cecil F. Poole House, 90 Cedro Avenue (Landmark No. 213)
- Sam Jordan's Bar, 4004-6 Third Street (Landmark No. 263)
- Marcus Books/Jimbo's Bop City, 1712-16 Fillmore Street (Landmark No. 266)

All of these properties were nominated by architectural historians Tim Kelley and Stacy Farr within the last fifteen years. One other property appears to have an indirect association with African American history, the Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church, 2135 Sutter Street (Landmark No. 202). The designation report lists Martin Luther King, Jr. as a guest speaker at the church.

F. Integrity Thresholds

Properties eligible for listing in the National Register, California Register, or for designation as a City Landmark must retain historical integrity. Integrity is defined by the California Register as "the authenticity of an historical resource's physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance."⁵⁶⁸ The National Register, California Register and Article 10 each recognize seven aspects that define integrity. A property does not have to retain all seven aspects, but it should retain a majority of them. *National Register Bulletin 15* provides in-depth definitions of each of the aspects:

- **Location** is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- **Design** is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- **Setting** is the physical environment of a historic property.
- **Materials** are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- **Workmanship** is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

⁵⁶⁸Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistance Series #6 "California Register and National Register: A Comparison"* (Sacramento: 2001), 2.

- **Feeling** is the property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- **Association** is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

Integrity Considerations

The degree of integrity that a property need retain is often related to its property type. For example, commercial and industrial buildings are much more likely to have prior alterations. That's because these types of buildings were often subject to incremental changes to accommodate new tenants or new methods of production. The evaluation should also include some basis of comparison. For example, what is the general level of integrity for that type of property in the neighborhood or the city? Careful judgement is required when evaluating property types that are extremely rare, or appear unique.

The aspects of integrity that are most important are related to the reason, or reasons, a property is significant. For example, a property significant for its architecture must retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. These aspects of integrity are also important when a building is significant for its association with a significant person or event. But the most essential aspects are integrity of feeling and association to the period when that person used the building, or when the event occurred.

Similarly, integrity must relate to the period when the property became significant. For example, the period of significance for an architecturally significant building usually relates to the year it was constructed. In other cases, a building may become significant for its association with historic events that occurred long after it was constructed. In those cases, the evaluation of integrity should relate to its character as it existed *at the time of the significant event*, and not necessarily what it looked like when it was originally built.

Some types of alterations may affect integrity more than others. Alterations to primary façades are generally more harmful than alterations to rear or side elevations. Alterations that are difficult-to-reverse, such as removing original finish materials or ornamental details, are also severe detriments to integrity.

Eligibility Requirements

Presented below is a list of integrity thresholds that a property should retain in order to qualify for listing in the National or California Register, or Article 10 of the Planning Code. As mentioned above, these requirements should be related to period when the property achieved its significance, and not necessarily when it was constructed. Comparisons with similar properties should also help inform the evaluation.

- Retains historic form and roofline, especially at the street façade(s).
- Retains most of its original pattern of windows and doors.
- Retains at least some of its historical ornament (if applicable). The retention of entry, window and roofline ornament is generally most important.

- Prior replacement of doors and windows is generally acceptable as long as the replacements conformed to the pattern and size of the original openings.
- Retention of the original exterior cladding is generally crucial to integrity, but not absolute—especially when most other character-defining features remain intact.
- Prior additions may be acceptable as long as the essential character of the historic building was preserved. In particular, rear additions, or additions built on other non-character-defining elevations that respected the scale of the historic building, can be acceptable.
- Properties that were been moved in association with historically significant events or patterns can retain integrity.
- The retention of original site walls, landscaping, outbuildings and other features which provide a setting for the building enhance its integrity.

There are differences between the California Register and the National Register in regard to integrity. In some circumstances it may be possible that a property that is ineligible for listing in the National Register due to loss of historic integrity may still be eligible for listing in the California Register if it maintains the potential to “yield significant scientific or historical information or specific data.”⁵⁶⁹

The California Register is also more lenient in regard to registering buildings that are less than 50 years old, so long as there is sufficient historical perspective to understand their significance. The California Register is also more lenient in regards to moved properties, especially if they were moved in order to ensure their retention. Properties less than 50 years old can be listed in the National Register only if they can be demonstrated to be of “exceptional significance” under Criterion Consideration G.

⁵⁶⁹ Department of Parks and Recreation, 6.

VI. PRESERVATION GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The African American Citywide Historic Context Statement is not meant to be a comprehensive history of San Francisco's African American community. Rather, it is a preliminary step in documenting the contributions of African Americans to the cultural and physical fabric of San Francisco. Further research is needed to identify additional significant persons, events and institutions, and extant properties that may be associated with them. Historic context statements are considered to be living documents that can be amended by additional research and documentation.

The following section builds upon the Planning Department's recent work in the Japantown and Western SoMa neighborhoods, the cultural heritage work recently undertaken by San Francisco Heritage, and discussions with the Historic Preservation Commission's Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee.

A. TOOLS TO PRESERVE SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

There are a number of existing tools that can help promote and sustain African American cultural heritage in San Francisco. The following list briefly outlines tools that are primarily concerned with preserving extant properties. The San Francisco Planning Department, the State of California, and the federal government offer some preservation incentives to assist property owners with the costs of owning and maintaining registered historic properties.

- a. **Encourage the Use of the Mills Act for designated historic resources.** Enacted by the State of California in 1976 and adopted by the City of San Francisco in 1996, the Mills Act allows the City to enter into a contract with owners of privately-owned historic properties to ensure the rehabilitation, restoration, preservation and long-term maintenance of the property. In exchange, the property owner receives a reduction in property taxes for the life of the contract.
- b. **Encourage the use of the California Historic Building Code (CHBC).** Historic buildings may not meet the standards of modern building codes, including the Uniform Building Code, City Building Code, Fire Code and Plumbing Code. However, the CHBC can often provide creative solutions to achieve health and safety requirements in historic buildings. The measures permitted by the CHBC are more sensitive to the historic conditions of a building than standard building codes. Building owners may also enjoy substantial cost savings when rehabilitating a historic structure using the CHBC. The Department of Building Inspection applies the CHBC, including determining which buildings are eligible.
- c. **Encourage the use of the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Incentives.** The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program is one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs. There are two levels of tax incentives. A 20 percent Rehabilitation Tax Credit is available for properties rehabilitated for commercial, industrial,

agricultural or rental residential purposes, but is not available for properties used as private residences. A 10 percent Rehabilitation Tax Credit is available for the rehabilitation of non-historic buildings placed in service before 1936. The building must be rehabilitated for non-residential use.

- d. **Encourage façade easements for designated historic resources.** A façade easement ensures the preservation of a property's significant exterior features while allowing the owner to continue to occupy and use the property. The easement is created by deed and is typically donated or sold to a public or private preservation organization. Either the City or a qualified preservation group, such as San Francisco Architectural Heritage, can hold title to the easement. It allows the property owner a one-time tax deduction and the easement holder has the right to review any changes to features covered by the easement.
- e. **Landmark Designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code.** As previously mentioned, Article 10 landmarks encompass individual buildings and districts considered historically, architecturally or socially significant. Buildings designated under Article 10 receive specialized review and protection by the City. As a benefit, property owners are eligible for various preservation incentives, such as the Mills Act and use of the California Historic Building Code.

Each of the tools described above can be used to rehabilitate and preserve important buildings and structures. Many preservation tools, however, require that buildings meet rigorous criteria. This can be a challenge for culturally significant properties which may not rise to the level of significance necessary for local, state or national designation.

Designation of City Landmarks and National Register Nominations

Based on the recommendations contained in this report, as well as the results of the cultural heritage survey proposed above, the City, in conjunction with community stakeholders, should pursue the registration of properties associated with San Francisco's African American community. As mentioned previously, there are currently only four local City Landmarks with any significant associations with Black San Francisco. There are no National Register-listed properties in San Francisco that were nominated for their association with African American culture or history. The following is a list of properties identified in this Historic Context Statement that may be eligible for local City Landmark, California Register or National Register status. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, only a starting point.

- A. M. E. Zion Church, 2159 Golden Gate Avenue
- African American Art and Culture Complex, 762 Fulton Street
- All Hallows Catholic Church, 1440 Newhall Street
- Bethel A. M. E. Church, 916-70 Laguna Street
- Buchanan YMCA, 1530 Buchanan Street
- Buffalo Soldiers' Barracks, Presidio of San Francisco
- College of Ethnic Studies, San Francisco State University, 1600 Holloway Avenue
(This is the address for SFSU. The College of Ethnic Studies is no longer housed in its original building; the original building should be identified and examined for its significance as the birthplace of the Black Studies program.)
- Crispus Attucks Club, 1201-05 Mendell Street

- Fellowship of All Peoples Church, 2041 Larkin Street
- The Fillmore (formerly the Majestic Ballroom), 1805 Geary Boulevard
- Glide Memorial Church, 330 Ellis Street
- Hannibal Lodge No. 1, 2804 Bush Street
- Hunters Point Naval Shipyard
- Ingleside Presbyterian Church, 1345 Ocean Avenue
- Mel's Drive-In, 3355 Geary Boulevard
- Minnie's Can-Do Club, 1915 Fillmore Street
- National Urban League Headquarters, 2015 Steiner Street
- Office of Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr., 1845 Fillmore Street
- Pullman Hotel, 236 Townsend Street
- Residence of Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, Jr., 579 Los Pinos Drive
- Residence of Terry Francois, 1608 Tenth Avenue
- Residence of Joseph James, 2806 Pine Street
- Residence of Willie Mays, 175 Miraloma Drive
- St. Francis Square Housing Development
- Sacred Heart Church, 554 Fillmore Street
- Third Baptist Church, 1399 McAllister Street
- Town Club, 1963 Sutter Street

Each of these properties requires further research to determine whether they qualify for historic registration. Those properties deemed eligible for local landmark status can be proposed for inclusion on the Historic Preservation Commission's Landmark Designation Work Program. Individual citizens or community organizations can also submit landmark nominations to the Planning Department via the Department's *Application for Historic Landmark Designation*. Grants and other funding mechanisms should be explored to pursue nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. It should be noted that nominations for religious properties may require the permission of the congregation.

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B. TOOLS TO PRESERVE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTER

The following strategies can help address some of the areas of concern identified in the previous chapter. These include tools to address the preservation of cultural and social heritage assets, which are often intangible elements that cannot be managed through current preservation practices. Some tools would be implemented by City agencies, such as the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) and the Planning Department. They also include tools that would require implementation and oversight by the community itself.

1. San Francisco Legacy Business Registry and Preservation Fund

The Legacy Business Registry is open to businesses and nonprofits that are 30 years or older, have been nominated by a member of the Board of Supervisors or Mayor, and in a hearing before the Small Business Commission, prove that they have made a significant impact on the history or culture of their neighborhood. Only 300 businesses can be nominated annually and all applicants must agree to maintain the historic name and craft of their businesses. The legislation

is directly inspired by, and builds upon, Heritage's Legacy Bars & Restaurants initiative launched in 2013.

Proposition J was approved by voters in the fall 2015 which created the Legacy Business Preservation Fund. The program allows Legacy Businesses on the registry to be eligible for an annual grant of \$500 per employee, as well as offers an annual \$4.50 per square foot grant to property owners who extend 10 year leases to Legacy Business tenants. Annual grants will be capped at \$50,000 per Legacy Business and \$22,500 for building owners. Annual costs for the fund are projected at \$3 million for the first year with an estimated annual new appropriation to the Legacy Businesses Fund of \$3 million per additional year. The program is administered through the San Francisco Office of Small Business and the San Francisco Planning Department.

2. Create a Cultural Heritage Corridor/Special Use District (SUD)

The intent of a Special Use District (SUD) is to help protect neighborhood character by requiring Planning Commission approval for certain retail uses in the neighborhood. For example, the Japantown SUD, which was established in 2006, covers the area between Fillmore Street, Bush Street, Laguna Street and Geary Boulevard. The SUD is unique in that it specifically aims to protect the cultural character of the Japanese American community. It does so by requiring conditional use authorizations from the Planning Commission for changes in use or the establishment of any formula retail use. Formula retail is defined as any retail establishment with eleven or more locations within the United States. To receive conditional use authorization, the Planning Commission must determine that the proposed land use is compatible with the cultural and historic character of the neighborhood.

An African American Cultural Heritage Corridor SUD could help enhance the viability of businesses located within the district, while also ensuring that new businesses reflect the neighborhood's culture and history. Creating an African American Cultural Heritage Corridor SUD requires cultivating a collection of culturally relevant businesses—a factor which may be a considerable challenge. Given the dispersion and relatively small size of the African American community in San Francisco, establishing businesses and ensuring their economic viability is not guaranteed.

3. Create a Cultural Heritage Corridor Community Benefit District (CBD)

Community Benefit Districts (CBDs) are public-private partnerships that enable property owners to pay for enhanced services that confer a benefit to the owners over and above what a local government normally provides through its general fund. CBDs are established by a specialized assessment district that requires property owners to contribute towards a fund for such services as maintenance, marketing, economic development, parking, special events and streetscape improvements. Cities throughout California typically adopt baseline services agreements that require the city to not withdraw services once the special benefits district has been formed. This ensures that the CBD is providing enhanced services, not replacing basic services. There are currently 12 CBDs in San Francisco, including Castro/Upper Market, Civic Center, Noe Valley and Union Square.

Funds generated through a CBD could be used to provide a number of benefits such as maintenance and public safety, streetscape improvements, interpretive displays and economic

development. These benefits could be targeted to longstanding businesses as well as support cultural events. Creating a CBD is a substantial challenge. Logistically, it requires extensive outreach to property owners and businesses that will pay the assessment. It also requires community stakeholders develop a management plan with defined boundaries, services, assessment rates, terms and a governing body. Typically, a two-phase special election must take place beginning with a petition vote, followed by legislation approved by the Board of Supervisors. Business owners in Japantown previously considered adoption of a CBD and prepared a preliminary plan. They did not proceed with adoption, though, due to a lack of broad support by property and business owners.

Examples of Local Cultural and Social Corridors

There are several existing proposals designed to recognize, preserve and sustain cultural heritage resources in San Francisco. The following examples could help provide support for existing African American businesses and organizations, as well as provide a foundation for establishing an African American Cultural Heritage District.

1. Calle 24 SF Latino Cultural District

Another model worth examining is the Calle 24 SF Latino Cultural Historic District, which embraces a 16-block-long stretch of 24th Street in the Mission district. It is a collaboration of local business owners, the San Francisco Latino Historical Society, Supervisor David Campos and San Francisco Heritage to facilitate the retention of longtime Latino businesses associated with *El Corazon de la Misión (The Heart of the Mission)*.⁵⁷⁰

The Calle 24 SF District idea originated with former Supervisor Jim Gonzales, and coalesced with the formation of a neighbors' and merchants' association known as Calle 24 SF. In 2014, the district was recognized by Board of Supervisors. The designation ordinance describes significant Latino-based organizations, family-owned businesses, murals, festivals, landscapes, parks and public plazas that contribute to the district's strong Latino and Chicano identity. Calle 24 has since received a grant from the City's Invest in Neighborhoods program to undertake a community planning process for the district. SF Heritage is also working with Supervisor David Campos to develop a package of financial tax incentives, including tax breaks for landlords who agree to maintain reasonable rents for legacy businesses. This has the potential to preserve local businesses which are unable to afford rents in competition with well-financed national chains or newer, high-end establishments.⁵⁷¹

The San Francisco Latino Historical Society and SF Heritage are also collaborating on a series of projects, including a youth-developed bilingual walking tour, *Calle 24: Cuentos del Barrio*, and a citywide historic context statement, *Nuestra Historia: Documenting the Chicano, Latino, and Indigena Contribution to the Development of San Francisco*.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ San Francisco Heritage. *Strategies for Conserving Social Heritage Assets*. (San Francisco, 2014).

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

2. SoMa Pilipinas Social Heritage District

In 2011, the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force proposed a Filipino Social Heritage Special Use District (SUD) to preserve and perpetuate the neighborhood's deeply rooted associations with the Filipino community.⁵⁷³

The task force engaged neighborhood residents and stakeholders to map important buildings, businesses, parks, murals, streets and festivals. Although many of the sites would not qualify for City Landmark status, they provide space for cultural activities that express the continuing Filipino presence in SoMa. The Special Use District, also known as SoMa Pilipinas, would use urban design elements, zoning tools and economic incentives to protect certain uses. The proposal has not yet been finalized for adoption.⁵⁷⁴

The Filipino-American Development Foundation also produced an educational "Ethnotour" and a bilingual (English/Tagalog) printed booklet of important Filipino historic and cultural sites. The self-guided walking tour was used by SF Heritage during a pilot youth-education program where middle school students from the Galing Bata after school program at Bessie Carmichael School were led on a series of field trips to learn about Filipino and Filipino American history in San Francisco.⁵⁷⁵

3. LGBTQ Social Heritage Special Use District (Proposed)

The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force also proposed an LGBTQ Social Heritage Special Use District (SUD), which would establish a Social Heritage Citizens Advisory Committee to guide the Planning Department on the preservation of cultural heritage assets, support LGBTQ businesses, and leverage Community Benefit Agreements.⁵⁷⁶

The proposed district would "use the urban landscape to celebrate public history, using public features as a way to educate and accept diversity, leaving an important legacy at the heart of the neighborhood."⁵⁷⁷ The SUD recognizes a host of LGBTQ resources, and proposes a variety of interpretive strategies including a heritage path and the renaming of streets for prominent figures in the LGBTQ community. The draft report describing the proposed district also discusses urban design guidelines, economic incentives and strategies for mitigating the loss of heritage resources. The report was presented to the Planning Commission in 2011, but no further actions have been taken.⁵⁷⁸

4. Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHES)

Years in the making, the JCHES provides a path for the Japantown community to implement a variety of tools to support, enhance and preserve the neighborhood's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Prepared by the Japantown Organizing Committee, the Planning Department and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, JCHES is the first City-adopted policy document to officially endorse a comprehensive approach to neighborhood cultural heritage conservation.

⁵⁷³ SF Heritage. *Strategies*.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Western SoMa Citizens Task Force, *Recognizing, Protecting and Memorializing South of Market LGBTQ Social Heritage Neighborhood Resources*, March 4, 2010, 2.

⁵⁷⁸ Heritage. *Strategies*.

The JCHESS includes a needs assessment and vision for Japantown informed by a number of community planning initiatives dating back to 1999. The report describes more than a dozen economic-based strategies, many of which have been discussed above, aimed at securing Japantown's future as the cultural of the Japanese American community. These strategies include the creation of a Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District and a Japantown Community Land Trust.⁵⁷⁹

During the process of developing the JCHESS, the Planning Department and its preservation consultant, Page & Turnbull, created a "Social Heritage Inventory Form" to document the full range of cultural heritage assets associated with Japanese American history in Japantown. These include restaurants that prepare traditional foods, classical dance performers, cultural events and festivals, and community organizations.⁵⁸⁰ The program also promotes landmark designation to protect the most significant historic sites in Japantown.

C. TOOLS TO PROMOTE AND EDUCATE

1. Create a Program to Commemorate Historic Sites

Due to a number of factors, the inventory of extant buildings associated with San Francisco's African American community is not extensive. Prior to World War II, San Francisco's Black community was very small and concentrated in enclaves that were destroyed in the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. Additionally, many buildings, businesses and other sites associated with post-World War II Black San Francisco were demolished by the Redevelopment Agency during the 1960s and 1970s.

In those instances where a building associated with an important person, event or institution is no longer extant, the City and/or community organizations could install a historical plaque to commemorate the history of the site. The plaque should include text and, where possible, images that provide a valuable and instructive experience. If space is available, especially for highly significant properties, larger interpretive displays could be installed.

Presented below is a preliminary list of candidates for historical plaques. Over the course of their histories, several religious and cultural institutions moved multiple times. For these institutions, the various dates and addresses are included.

- Leidesdorff Street
- A. M. E. Zion Church: 1864-1906, 1200 Stockton Street
- A. M. E. Zion Church and San Francisco Chapter of the NAACP: 1912-1960, 1669 Geary Street
- The Athenaeum, 273 Washington Street
- The Blue Mirror, 935 Fillmore Street
- Booker T. Washington Community Center

⁵⁷⁹ SF Heritage. *Strategies*.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

- 1919-1923, 45 Farren Street
- 1923-1942, 1433 Divisadero Street
- 1942-1952, 2031 Bush Street
- 1952-present, 800 Presidio Avenue (1952 building demolished in 2015)
- Booker T. Washington Hotel and Cocktail Lounge, 1540 Ellis Street
- California Theater, 1650 Post Street
- Club Alabam, 1933 Sutter Street
- Ellis Theater, 1671 Ellis Street
- Jack's Tavern, 1931 Sutter Street
- Law office of Terry Francois, 2085 Sutter Street
- Long Bar, 1633 Fillmore Street
- Magnolia Saloon, 808 Pacific Avenue
- Melrose Record Shop, 1226 Fillmore Street
- New Orleans Swing Club, 1849 Post Street
- Newspapers, including the *Pacific Coast Appeal*, *Western Outlook* and *Western Appeal Spokesman*
- Primalon Ballroom, 1223 Fillmore Street
- Purcell's Cafe / Olympia Cafe, 615 Jackson Street
- San Francisco Council for Civic Unity (CCU) headquarters, 437 Market Street
- St. Cyprian A. M. E. Church, intersection of Jackson Street and St. James Place
- Stone Street and the surrounding "Colored Colony," San Francisco's earliest African American enclave bound by Stockton, Kearney, Washington, and Broadway streets
- Texas Playhouse/Club Flamingo, 1836-40 Fillmore Street
- Third Baptist Church
 - ca. 1857-1906, intersection of Montgomery and Union streets
 - 1906-1952, 1299 Hyde Street
- Thomas Bell Mansion, 1661 Octavia Street

This list of sites is not comprehensive. Additional research would be necessary to develop a methodology for determining which sites are worthy of recognition, as well as additional information on when important persons, businesses, and institutions occupied these sites.

2. Create Materials for Walking Tours / Virtual Tours

Most of the properties and sites listed above are located in geographical clusters. These include areas in Chinatown/Jackson Square, the former Fillmore District, and in Bayview-Hunters Point. In areas where these sites, both extant and non-extant, are sufficiently dense, self-guided walking tours could be developed. Such tours could be facilitated with brochures or historical plaques, such as Boston's Freedom Trail or New York City's Harlem Walk of Fame. Periodic guided tours led by members of the African American Historical and Cultural Society, or others, could enhance such efforts.

The tours could also be virtual, using handheld devices that display information about individual properties and the neighborhood as a whole. Background information for a tour commemorating early African American history in the Chinatown/Downtown area could be based on *A Walking Tour of the Black Presence in San Francisco during the Nineteenth Century*, mentioned previously in this report. Another area with strong potential for a walking tour that

commemorates the post-World War II African American experience is Fillmore Street and its environs from approximately Page Street to Pine Street.

3. Fund Youth Cultural Heritage Educational Programs

Youth engagement is an essential part of maintaining cultural memory from generation to generation. Youth-led walking tour programs are especially effective at documenting and promoting neighborhood history. Such programs also cultivate leadership skills and community pride. There are currently at least two successful youth-led tour programs in the City that could be emulated through partnerships with non-profits, schools and universities, neighborhood associations, and City agencies:⁵⁸¹

- **The Chinatown Community Development Center** (Chinatown CDC) introduced its “Alleyway Tours” program in 2001 as part of its “Adopt-An-Alleyway” initiative. Youth participants conduct archival research and oral history interviews to develop a tour route, script, and training manual. The “Alleyway Tour” program demonstrates the potential links between heritage tourism and community empowerment, particularly among youth.⁵⁸²
- **The Calle 24: Cuentos del Barrio**, as previously mentioned, is a partnership between San Francisco Heritage and the San Francisco Latino Historical Society to produce a youth program to document and promote 24th Street in the Mission District. Students conducted oral history interviews with long-time neighborhood residents and then created a self-guided walking tour booklet. They also offered tours to the public during a “Sunday Streets” event in the neighborhood.⁵⁸³

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4. Market Cultural Heritage Neighborhoods through SFTravel

The San Francisco Travel Association (SFTravel) is a non-profit whose mission is to “enhance the local economy by marketing San Francisco and the Bay Area as the premier destination for conventions, meetings, events and leisure travel.” About half of SFTravel’s funding is public money generated from the City’s assessment on gross hotel room revenue. Much of the rest comes from the private sector in the form of membership dues, advertising and program revenues. SFTravel provides visitors with the information they need for an enjoyable and productive visit. This includes places to stay, eat and shop, as well as information about cultural activities and recreation. SFTravel membership provides admission to events, market briefings, partner business exchanges and access to the convention calendar.

SFTravel’s marketing materials, website, and partnerships can be leveraged to promote cultural heritage corridors, such as Third Street in the Bayview or Fillmore Street. This can help increase turnout for cultural events and festivals, as well as support affiliated organizations. This process can help these corridors capture more of the billions of dollars spent annually by tourists in San Francisco.

⁵⁸¹ Heritage. *Strategies*.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

5. Implement Streetscape Improvements along Cultural Heritage Corridors

The City adopted the Better Streets Plan (BSP) in December, 2010. The BSP provides a blueprint for the future of San Francisco's streets, which make up 25 percent of the city's land area. The purpose of the BSP is to ensure that streets serve multiple uses—not just the movement of vehicles, but also for recreational opportunities and as community space. This can result in increased neighborhood attractiveness and enhanced economic activity. The BSP guides the design of streets, curb alignments, crosswalks, and parking lanes. The BSP also offers guidance for sidewalks, street trees and plantings, lighting, street furnishings and wayfinding signage. Implementation of the Better Streets Plan is handled by the Department of Public Works in coordination with other City agencies. The Better Streets website (www.sfbetterstreets.org) provides information on funding mechanisms and other technical considerations that can help get improvements implemented.

D. ADDITIONAL TOOLS

The following strategies can be used in combination with any of the tools listed previously or on their own to promote cultural heritage corridors or implemented citywide.

1. Implement Invest in Neighborhoods

Invest in Neighborhoods is a new program of OEWD. The purpose of Invest in Neighborhood is to foster job creation and economic development in neighborhood commercial districts through the strategic deployment of existing City programs. These programs offer an array of tools focused on neighborhood revitalization and business development that could assist with the preservation of heritage in these cultural heritage corridors. Invest in Neighborhoods can provide a range of benefits, including:

- **Design and development assistance** could be targeted to specific businesses and buildings (e.g., compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act) and/or be provided to the neighborhood in general.
- **Loans/grants/financial assistance** could be targeted to businesses, organizations, and institutions, including the SF Shines: Façade and Tenant Improvement Grant. Auntie April's on the Third Street corridor in the Bayview recently took advantage of this grant.
- **Marketing services, business recruitment and programming** could all be targeted to commercial corridors and cultural events. They can also be used to market neighborhoods to other San Franciscans.
- **Technical assistance** can help businesses, organizations and promoters of cultural events navigate the City's permit system.
- **Organizational support** could be targeted to specific organizations, including those that are involved with traditional arts, crafts and practices.
- **Creating a single point of contact** within City government to help support all cultural preservation and enhancement efforts.

2. Utilize Funds from San Francisco Grants for the Arts

The City of San Francisco levies a Transient Occupancy Tax on every hotel room in San Francisco. Five percent of this revenue is directed to the San Francisco Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund (GFTA). The City established GFTA in 1961 as an independent agency under the Office of the City Administrator. GFTA has a goal of providing general operating funding for performing, visual, literary and media arts organizations. GFTA also provides funding for annual celebrations and parades. Since its inception, GFTA has distributed more than \$320 million to hundreds of nonprofit cultural organizations in San Francisco, including \$11.2 million in Fiscal Year 2011/2012. GFTA funding can be used to help fund a neighborhood's public performances, as well as annual celebrations and parades. For example, in Fiscal Year 2012/13, GFTA allocated \$30,000 to Japantown's Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival.

E. FURTHER RESEARCH AND FIELD WORK

1. Cultural Resources Survey

As stated in the Introduction, very little work has been done to document the cultural and physical imprint of African Americans in San Francisco. Though this Historic Context Statement provides a starting point, it is only a broad-brush overview of the community's history as it relates to the physical environment. This report has made an attempt to identify the most important properties, but was limited by the information available in the secondary sources that were consulted. As a result, there are surely significant persons, events and properties that have been omitted from this document.

To create a more comprehensive inventory of cultural resources, this study recommends a citywide survey of cultural heritage resources which have significant associations with San Francisco's African American community. This survey must include additional background research, particularly oral histories that focus on identifying properties not noted in this document. This is because many traditional cultural properties would only be known to residents of San Francisco's traditional African American neighborhoods.

The background research would then be used to inform a field survey which documents and evaluates eligible historical resources on the ground. Evaluation is the process of determining whether the identified properties meet the criteria of historical, architectural or cultural significance necessary for historic registration.⁵⁸⁴ The final product is the survey inventory, which organizes the survey results into a comprehensive report.

If a citywide survey proves infeasible, smaller neighborhood-based surveys should be used as time or funding allows. Obvious examples include surveys designed to document the remaining cultural heritage assets within the Fillmore District or along Third Street in the Bayview. This inventory could simultaneously aid in the development of district boundaries for landmarking purposes and/or for the development of Community Benefit Districts.

⁵⁸⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 24: "Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, rev. ed. 1985), 2.

Any citywide survey of African American cultural heritage should also include a list of notable public artwork that commemorates the Black experience. Such works range from sculptures and murals by well-known African American artists, to neighborhood buildings with murals painted on their sides. Though the San Francisco Arts Commission has jurisdiction over officially commissioned public artwork, the City could commission a survey of all public artwork with an African American focus to ensure that important examples of unofficial “vernacular” works are retained to the degree possible.

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VIII. APPENDIX A: ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Project Consultant, Tim Kelly of Tim Kelley Consulting and Planning Department Interns, Jonique Green and Nicole Jones conducted ten oral history interviews during the summer of 2014. Five of those interviews were transcribed and included in this Appendix in alphabetical order, they are:

- I. **Mrs. Carol Bassetti**, mental health counselor and long-time resident of San Francisco's Bayview neighborhood
- II. **Mr. Lance Burton**, community activist, owner of Planer Fillmore Communications, and former member of the African American Chamber of Commerce
- III. **Dr. Espanola Jackson**, long-time Bayview-Hunters Point community activist
- IV. **Mrs. Annie Shynebaugh**, former nurse and Manager for the Diamond View Residents Association, in San Francisco's Diamond Heights neighborhood
- V. **Mrs. Doris Ward**, former San Francisco Supervisor, former President of the Board of Supervisors and former City Assessor

The additional five interviews have not been transcribed as of this date, but could be included in the document at a later date.

Each of the oral histories was transcribed as a conversation between the narrator and interviewer, as spoken, in order to best capture the narrator's voice. This includes dialects, vernacular language and colloquialisms that help to convey the narrator's personality, thoughts, and feelings. In contrast to typical oral history transcription methodology, usage of the expression "*sic*," which means "thus it was written," and denoting that the quoted matter was transcribed exactly as heard, complete with errors, has not been used throughout the text. It should be assumed that all errors, grammatical or content-based, have been transcribed as spoken.

A. Carol Bassetti

Interviewer: Tim Kelley, Tim Kelley Consulting (TK)

Tim Kelley: Okay, so, this is an oral history interview conducted August 7th, 2014, by Tim Kelly with Carol Bassetti, in connection with the African American Citywide Historical Context Statement being conducted by the Planning Department. So, start, if you would, with your full name.

Carol Bassetti: Carol Lynn Bassetti.

TK: Where were you born?

CB: Born in San Francisco.

TK: What year were you born?

CB: 1958.

TK: Did you grow up in San Francisco?

CB: Yes, I did.

TK: Lived here all your life?

CB: Yes.

TK: Did you attend San Francisco schools?

CB: Yes, I did.

TK: Which ones?

CB: Okay, for elementary was John Sweat and Burnett Elementary; which no longer exists, neither one of them. Junior high school was Pelton, which no longer exists, that turned into a high school. Then, I went to Lowell High School.

TK: My kids went to Lowell. Do you have any children?

CB: Yes.

TK: How many?

CB: Two.

TK: How old are they?

CB: I got to think...

TK: They'll be listening to this...

CB: 33 and 37.

TK: And, do they live locally?

CB: No. The youngest one, the son lives in Daly City, locally, and the daughter lives in Virginia.

TK: What are your parent's names?

CB: Anna and Herman.

TK: Where were they born?

CB: Anna was born in Oklahoma in 1923 and Herman was born in Texas in 1912.

TK: When did they come to San Francisco?

CB: Okay, Herman, my dad, came to San Francisco in 1931 and my mother Anna in 1943.

TK: Okay, did your family have any special sayings or expressions specific to San Francisco?

CB: I would have to think on that... It's always been known as "The City." (*Laughter*) Everybody would know where you lived if you said I'm going to "The City" or I live in "The City."

TK: So, what neighborhoods have you lived in San Francisco?

CB: So, started off when I was born, it was in the Western Addition, in the Fillmore area. That was from 1958 to 1961, and then from 1961 to 1964 it was Civic Center/Hayes Valley on Grove Street. Then, from '64 on up, it was Bayview off and on, outside of moving to different places in the Bay Area.

TK: Uh-huh. I know you told me once before that you were living in the Bayview when trouble started in the 60s.

CB: Yes, I can remember like it was yesterday.

TK: You want to tell us about it?

CB: I can remember, I was 8 years old. Let me see... in the Bayview, when I was growing up, we was always able to go down on Third Street and go to stores like, five and dimes stores, shopping and... that all really stopped in 1966; which, seems like everything stopped in time. A lot of things I didn't know... what was going on right at the moment, but as days went on, I found out that there was a teenager that had been shot and killed in Hunters Point, and that he was unarmed, and that several people were very upset and started rioting down on Third Street. I heard the gun fire, I saw the National Guard, and I saw so many police cars and helicopters ... it was really unreal it's like, "what is going on to my town?" Actually, I knew it had to be pretty bad as an 8-year old, and watching CBS news, seeing Walter Cronkite reporting from the corner of Third and Palou. If Walter is here it got to be bad!

TK: But if Walter is here it's going to come under control. (*Laughter*)

CB: That was the beginning of, really, the down fall of the Bayview. We were completely cut off. Once the riots were over with, we never got any services out there in the area after that, at all. So many businesses packed up and moved, it was a lot of boarded up buildings, people they left... The Whites left, I call it the White flight... they moved down to mainly the Peninsula to get away. And, then I went from going to school where it was racially mixed to being 99% Black.

TK: So, it had been mixed up until then? That was where? At John Sweat?

CB: No, I had already left John Sweat. That was Burnette... on Newcomb.

TK: So, I mean, you went to a racially mixed school. Did you have racially mixed friends?

CB: Yes, I did! And also some kids their parents, their fathers, were in the military; so, they came to school with us, because ... it was a lot of different races because of the military.

TK: Was that standard? Was that kind of the way it was in the whole neighborhood?

CB: Yes.

TK: That it was mixed?

CB: Yes. It was mixed. Especially when we moved there in '64, it was really racially mixed. I mean everything, just everything – Asians, Whites, a lot of people from Europe; Russians, Italians, Irish, it was a Maltese, big Maltese community. Extremely big Maltese community. They for years, had their social club on Oakdale and then moved down to South San Francisco.

TK: After the trouble it all shifted...

CB: It all shifted, I didn't consider myself... like, I really didn't understand about race back then. At that age, 8, that's when that happened. Then, I figured out there's something different with us.

TK: How did your parents react?

CB: My parents were very religious; so, it was like, "We just have to pray for them." You know, especially my mom and grandmother, was very heavy in the church. My brother and I, we didn't have any time to get into trouble and a lot of the kids didn't because you went to church all the time. I mean it's like, on... you would go to Baptist Training Union, like, on a Wednesday night or Friday was always something – prayer meeting, Saturday... it was always something. Choir rehearsal...

TK: What church?

CB: This was Third Baptist Church.

TK: Third Baptist Church is?

CB: 1399 McAllister, right. So, I was raised Baptist; but, when I became an adult, I converted over to being Catholic. But, that's what I grew up on, especially on Sundays, you go to Sunday School [at] 9:30, 11:00 you have worship, 3:00... Oh, they let you out finally around 1:00, and then, they allow you to go home and get something to eat, and now come back for 3:00 for some sort of reception, or whatever they had. Oh and then don't forget Baptist Training Union that night at 6:00. You didn't have time to get in trouble you were at church all the time.

TK: You could get in trouble there if you really had a mind for it... (*Laughter*) What other... It seems like church took up a lot of your time. What other institution was there, what else did you do with your time as a child?

CB: God, what did I do? I got into music, and actually I am still in touch with my music teacher from elementary school. I don't play anymore, but it was a Russian guy who taught me to play the violin and I've been really blessed with the people I met. He got me a scholarship to go to Conservatory of Music, here in the city. So, I was really busy with my music, learning the violin, piano, and the clarinet. So, that's what I did to stay busy. That was my way of just relaxing, but and then when I got into high school, unfortunately, I was so busy trying to pass grades at Lowell I didn't have time for the music. So, I had to give it up, but I've always been busy, busy.

TK: So, how did it change as you grew older after the troubles in Bayview? How long did you continue living there?

CB: Okay, I moved there when I was 6, and I left when I was 17, and what my goal was after all the violence, I wanted to get out, and go as far away as possible. So, I was offered two scholarships, a full scholarship to the University of San Francisco and also... or, go down to Pepperdine down in Malibu for a 90% scholarship, and I took the Malibu, just to get away. So, that way when I learned that we were in the ghetto and I had to find my way out of it somehow. So the education that my parents....My parents always taught me that education was the key to getting out and making yourself a better person. Even though they weren't well off, they instilled in me about the education, and made sure...

That's another thing, if they knew that another thing about school, if they found out that another class, or school someplace else in the city, was ahead; they would fight to get me the best education possible. Back in the 60s, which I was telling a co-worker, a lot of people don't know that back for many, many years the public schools was funded by the property taxes in the district in which you lived. So, if you're in the Bayview, the property taxes are low and you're not getting that much money. So, we got outdated books, even though the teachers I had were very dedicated, it was only so much they could do.

So, even though I was a straight A student when I got to Lowell, that's when I found out how much that I had not been taught. There were so many things that I should've been taught in junior high school, and I was now trying to take remedial classes and it was hard. So, my grandmother had worked in the Marina district and, actually, the person she had worked, for had told her, "If you really want your granddaughter to go to school out here, you can just use

the address.” She ended up not doing that but, I thought that was a nice gesture. Back then, trying to get a better education... But, yeah, the poverty... I know I’m going around in circles, but it’s that... Let me put it this way, the teacher was so busy trying to control the children in the classroom, that it was hard for them to really teach.

TK: What did you study at Pepperdine?

CB: What did I study there? Psychology, and so I stayed there a year, and got home sick, and moved back to San Francisco, went to City College, and it’s funny... I moved back to the Fillmore. So, I was back in the Fillmore, I was at Alamo Square, and now, I laugh about it because I was only paying \$160 a month for a large studio apartment on Fulton and Steiner. You know 1976. (Laughter) I don’t want to know how much it cost now. But, yeah, so, I moved back and went to City College, and went on to San Francisco State, and got my Bachelors in Psychology, and Masters in Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling.

TK: And, do you work at that now?

CB: Yeah, I do that all on the phone; I do all counseling on the phone.

TK: At your own practice?

CB: No it’s through an insurance company and, so, the department is an EAP Employee system program, so, we have about 150,000 employers that hire us; that when their employees or family members are having any type of mental health issues, substance abuse issues, that they’ll call us and we’ll talk and get them set up to go see a counselor in-person.

TK: That’s here in the city?

CB: Yes, Downtown in the Financial District.

TK: I don’t mean to keep on this, but you’re a living witness to some big changes, you know, in the city and in the Bayview, in particular. So, I mean, is that when you started? When you were first in school until the troubles, it was racially-mixed, and then later it was more segregated. And, there were behavioral problems in the school, I mean, had that been like that with those kinds of problems when it was more mixed?

CB: I don’t feel so; I think it might have gotten worse. When you get into middle school, junior high, that’s when it really, really changed. And, the people that you’re now in the class with, they’re not just in your neighborhood. Bayview/Hunters Point is so big and so, actually, today, I don’t know my way around Hunters Point. None at all. And, I’m only two-and-half blocks away from the border, but it’s a different world. And, when I have gone up there, I’m like, “How can people live like this?” I mean just horrific...

TK: Where did you live first in Bayview?

CB: Always.

TK: But where? What street?

CB: On Palou, where I'm back at now. So, it's the family home. They bought it back in 1964. So, I had left... so, while my mom and grandmother they had stayed there for many years. I, then, went off to do what I wanted to do and that's how I ended up moving back to the Fillmore, and then I moved over to Oakland for a little while, then I moved down moved down to the... I mean, I moved to Monterey for three years. I was down in South San Francisco for, forever. I was down there for years. I still go down there. I was down there for years, then 1995 I permanently moved back to the family home on Palou Avenue 'cause my parents got sick and passed away and it was like, "Now, what do I do, here?" I have the house, and I did not want to move back. I did not want to move back because of the violence, the segregation. I liked it better in South City, but right around that time, that I was moving back, friends that I had grew up with in the neighborhood were going through the same thing. So, I have so many neighbors on my block that we had grew up in the '60s, and now we're taking over our parents' home.

TK: Great.

CB: Yeah. It was really a hard decision to move back, but a good friend of mine that's a contractor told me things are going to change out in the Bayview. You might not think it will, but it will. I had to put my trust in God because it was really hard to move back. Especially, because my son was a teenager, then. I had to uproot him and he had grew up in South City.

TK: Is it changing?

CB: It is. It's like a little bit at a time. Now, every time I turn around I'm going like, "That wasn't there before, or I remember the time, if you saw anybody that was non-Black walking down the street or driving through the area, they're here only to score some drugs. Or, even on the bus, it's so funny on the bus, it used to be that anybody that was non-Black used to get off the bus stop before... depending on the route... but, they would get off at the one before Silver Avenue and now, they're still on the bus, even after I get off the bus. (*Laughter*) I'm like, "Do they know where there are going? Did they mean to get on the 44 [bus] going toward Golden Gate Park? No, they're going home to Hunters Point (*Laughter*) and then also the community groups. There have been community groups before but, now with the internet... There are like Bayview Yahoo groups on there. There's an organization called BRITE.... I don't know if you've heard of them It means Bayview Residents Improving Their Environment, and I think, it's like 60-something people in the group and there like majority non-Black.

TK: And, there's no tension going on out there?

CB: With me... I don't see it! I don't see it.

TK: But you're not being displaced...

CB: Right, I not being displaced, but every time I turn around... I mean, every time a Black person moves out. It's not a Black person moving in. That I haven't seen.

TK: Well, but you're saying that people you grew up with are moving back in.

CB: Yeah. They're moving back to their family homes, but if a house goes up for sale, that's it.

TK: Same all across the city really, so you own the house?

CB: Yeah, I have a mortgage on it but, I'm the sole owner. Yes.

TK: Do you have any siblings?

CB: Yes, I have one sibling. He's a Baptist minister here in the city.

(Laughter)

TK: And, you're a practicing Catholic now?

CB: Well, hey! But just like it's not my fault I was born Black, it's not my fault I was raised Baptist. So, it's just for me. This is the funniest thing people say, "Why did you convert over to being Catholic?" I go, "I did it when I was in my early 20s." Two things stood out to me, number two they didn't have to get all dressed up to go to church and the thing I really noticed they just went into that church at 12:00 and they're out at 1:00! *(Laughter)* I mean, I thought, "Let me go in here and see what's going on." So, I did. I was talking to a MUNI driver one day, and he said, "Why go to All Hallows?" He's said he goes to mass on a Saturday. I said, "On a Saturday?" I said, "I go to mass everyday." So, I asked if I could go with him on a Saturday and he said okay. See, when I was growing up I thought that Catholics were only Whites and then I was amazed to find out there were actually Black Catholics, you know. Then, I went into the church and sat in the back and was like, "Oh, this is pretty cool." So, I went a few Saturdays, and then told the priest that I want to join the church, and then he's like, "It's not that easy." Well, because with Baptist churches, you just go up there, and want to join. Okay, you're a member of the church. No, you actually have to go through catechism as an adult.

TK: Yeah, I know my wife was an adult convert.

CB: Okay, so yeah. I had to go through all those catechism classes for a few weeks, and go through the confirmation, all of that good stuff.

TK: So, you're pretty active in All Hallows?

CB: No, not like I should. It's like one of those things, just like when I go to the gym. Like, I would be at the gym, right now, but I had something else to do today. It's like once I get started...

TK: But, they don't charge you every month.

(Laughter)

CB: So, no, I'm not active. I used to be... pretty much... but, stuff happens. It's on my list to get back into it. For a long time, we lost that church 'cause they had closed several churches in San Francisco and that was one of them that they had closed for a long time.

TK: Oh, really. Did they actually close it?

CB: Yeah, so, it was... I think, that was the point where you was so hurt it's like, "How could they do this?" I just didn't go to church for a long time. Then, what they did was, eventually, they opened it but they merged it with Our Lady of Lourdes in Hunters Point. So, now, they call it, it's Our Lady of Lourdes but it's the All Hallows Chapel.

TK: Oh, really. Okay. Is it priest-in-residence?

CB: Yes, but it is like having to handle both churches.

TK: The business changed on Third Street when the White flight happened?

CB: Oh, God, yes! I still so miss Rexall Drugs at Third and Palou, which is now a Dollar Store.

TK: Is there a Walgreen's around?

CB: The Walgreen's is few blocks down at Williams, but um... The Rexall Drugs, and then we had the five and dime. It was so many boutiques and stuff that you can go in. We had the pharmacy that was run by a Black guy, Mr. Fuller. So, over the years things just disappeared. Oh! But what I forgot to say, what I did, too, to keep out of trouble over the years growing up, I was at the library all the time. The library is not where it is now right now. The library that was in the 1960s was on the same block, but it was basically looking like a little storefront, brick building. And, had a wonderful, wonderful Black librarian named Mr. Alfred. I'll never forget Mr. Alfred. Oh, my God and he was... The love of books! I was able to dive into that. They would allow you to take out like seven books out at a time. I would take out the whole seven. So, that's what I forgot to mention too, that having this Black librarian in there.

TK: [Are] Your kid's big on books?

CB: Yes, but they're into that Steven King stuff. You know me, what was I reading at age 10? I was reading the Third Reich and World War II. I can't think of his name... Toussaint in Haiti... that was the stuff I was reading. I was just so much into...

TK: You are like my wife's age and she grew up in Detroit, you know, at a time when she was one of the only white kids in the class, you know. There was a lot of teaching of Black Power, Black... Jessie Jackson; did that happen here, too?

CB: Oh, yes. There was a lot of that, too, and the Black Panthers, but for me, I was afraid of the Black Panthers. To me, they just looked too...too scary, I mean, for me. But, it's a lot of things I didn't understand. I was so young, I didn't understand what they were trying to accomplish. It's just that the things I saw. It was the negative things. That was because what was being broadcast on

the news. A lot of stuff you didn't know what was really going on, it was just whatever the news would actually put on. In which I'm really glad what I told you about how I recently found out about those old news archives. You can go back, and you can see that stuff about that '66 riot and really get an idea of what the feeling was...When I watch that, even now, 40-something years later, when I look at it I can feel myself like it happened yesterday. I'm just so glad they released these and I'm hoping they show it to the kids in the schools. Because a lot of people they don't even know, they say, "What riot?" I'm like, "Oh my God, you didn't know there was a riot here? I mean didn't you ever wonder how the neighborhood just deteriorated like that?" I mean that just me; "Don't you want to know your history?"

TK: But, you knew that before that. So, you knew it deteriorated.

CB: Right, I didn't think it would ever turn around. That's why I left. I had never had any plans for coming back, but that's just the way fate is sometimes. Now, I can't, as much as I miss South San Francisco, I'm still close enough, I can still spend time down there... I can't even imagine what people are... I mean the housing crisis. Oh, my God. I just can't believe what people are paying.

TK: I know. I mean, we are living through that...

CB: If my parents didn't buy the house, and pass it on down, I probably wouldn't be here. Most likely, if the economy was the way it is now... I was a single parent; I raised my kids alone and sent them to Catholic school. I don't even know how I would've been able to do any of that stuff. Now. I wouldn't be able to afford rent.

TK: You sent them to Catholic schools in South City?

CB: No, actually, here. I sent them to two different schools... All Hallows had a Catholic school it ended up closing down, but they were there for a while, a very long time, but I ended up pulling them out around '89. Even though I lived in South City, the reason I had them go to school in San Francisco, [was] because of my parents, and they would have somewhere to go after school. 'Cause I was always working and going to school. So, that's how that happened. And the reason I pulled them out of All Hallows was because there was a drive-by right in front of the school. I was thinking, "This was the exact reason why I moved out in the first place." So, what I did was (it was hard for them, but they did it) I sent them all the way to school out in the Richmond District at Saint Thomas the Apostle, way out on 39th Avenue and Balboa. They had to take three buses; they had to take SamTrans to get to Daly City, Bart, get on the 28-19th Avenue, then get on the 31-Balboa. I had to do whatever I had to do to keep the kids safe and they got a good education, as well.

TK: And live long enough so they can get a good education.

CB: Right, I guess the things I went through and how I grew up had an effect on the way I end up raising my kids.

- TK:** So, where did kids and or teenagers hang out? Was there a hangout? I asked that question in another interview and it was a minister and he said, we did not hang out. Did you hang out?
- CB:** I didn't hangout. I definitely did not hang out, but just like today, people hanging out on Third and Palou people was hanging out back then in front of the liquor stores. That's one thing that will not ever change?
- TK:** I'm a corner kid, myself...
- CB:** I definitely didn't hang out or my friends didn't hang out. They hung out down on Third Street or maybe they would go to the Josephine Lee Community Center and it was so run down. The toilets wouldn't flush, it was so nasty there, but they have rebuilt it, and it's really nice there, now. There wasn't hardly any place for the kids to go. You would watch TV and see "Leave It to Beaver" and they're having these Girl Scouts meetings... It's like Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls. My friend's mom started a Campfire Girl thing, but the stuff we saw on TV, that was not what was happening.
- TK:** I know that feeling, too. You've never been a union member? Because of what we're doing here – this context statement the Planning Department – can you think of any buildings that are important in history, or in your personal history, or in the African American community history, anywhere in the city?
- CB:** I think a lot of people know about Marcus Books. It's kind of a sad case, the house right next to me. Did you have that book about African Americans in San Francisco? They had like different cities, no, it was about Bayview/Hunters Point. I'm trying to think of what company came out with it. They came out with different parts of the city... [She is referencing the Arcadia Publishing *Images of America* Book Series.] The house right next to me is all run down, it's in bad shape. What's so sad, is the lady that lived there is the first African American to purchase a house in the Bayview. I'm not sure what year it was, but you can look it up, but the address is 1371 Palou. It's awful right now, I mean, it should be bulldozed. To try to make a long story short the house was passed down to great-grandkids, and it's falling apart, and it's in foreclosure. He's trying to on hold on the house with bankruptcy, but I don't think he'll be able to; he doesn't have the wits to. I know I'm getting off the topic, but houses that's been passed down to the kids that don't understand the value of it, and just let it run down, and not taking care of it, or sell out to highest bidder, that really don't care about anything their parents went through ... I get so mad that Blacks don't vote like they should and considering my parents fought for the right to vote. You don't even understand what they went through; I wish kids were more educated. I don't know what happen by the wayside.
- TK:** Were your parents politically active?
- CB:** No, but my grandmother, what she would do, she would work at the polls and she was real big on you need to vote. That's the only place that I can think of but, like I said, it's in such bad shape. It really is historical for an African American to buy a house out here, which people don't

understand is that it's certain places that Blacks could buy homes. Do you think Blacks always wanted to stay in Fillmore all the time? No, they had no choice.

TK: You know this Crispus Attucks house? It used to be the African American Community Center in the 50s. I would have to go check the address...

CB: Also, when I was growing up...Another thing when I was growing up, I know they have moved now but, they're called now the African American Cultural Society or something like... that I think there on Fulton. For years it was the Negro Historical Society. We grew up there as members and it was great.

TK: Al Williams is the Director of that, and working with us on this project.

CB: If I could think of something, Tim, I'll let you know; but, I can't think of anything right offhand, but believe me, I will think of something.

TK: You know how to get me. What about relationships, friendships, or other relationships between the different African American neighborhoods; you know, Western Addition, Bayview, OMI. Did you have friends there when you got to Junior high or high school, citywide?

CB: High School...

TK: Citywide?

CB: I had friends from all over the city.

TK: But, not earlier than that?

CB: I didn't know anyone outside of Fillmore or Bayview growing up. Until I got to high school and that was because where I went, with so many different races that was going there. Before that, I really didn't realize how a segregated neighborhood was and like I said in the beginning it wasn't that way. It also made me, you know, when it came to raising my kids... even when we were living in South San Francisco or even when we was staying here on Monterey, I wanted them to see how other cultures... So, on weekends almost every Sunday, we would go down to California Street take the cable car up to Nob Hill and let them play at Huntington Park, up there. We did that for a long time, or we would switch it up go down to Washington Square. My son says that he has cousins in Oakland that's never ever been to the beach, they've never seen the Pacific Ocean. It's like, "Wow!" At least we had Playland at the beach...

TK: I have relatives that have never been outside of Suffolk County, Massachusetts.

CB: My friend in South City, if he's going to go out of town, he's going to Daly City.

(Laughter)

TK: So, I'll get to the last one. Is there anything else that we haven't asked you about, that you want to tell us about, growing up African American in San Francisco?

CB: I still have to think... See, that's why you should have sent me something I could think of some things. I could get back to you. Do you have a deadline?

TK: If you do, just give me a call, I'll add it to this recording, just over the phone. I guess that's it unless you want to add something else?

CB: Well, like I said, I could talk forever.

TK: I'm not stopping you.

CB: I know. When I look back, I remember growing up being on the 15-Third bus.

TK: How do you feel about the lightrail?

CB: I feel like most in the Bayview feel about the lightrail. It can go to hell and put the 15 back.

TK: That's right. That's right. The bus beat the hell out of it.

CB: We were able to go so far! We could go to City College through Sunnydale, Third Street to Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf. I mean! Now, I feel like we are cut off. Even though it's great that you can take one train to downtown, I feel like in a way, we are cut off again. It's a pain 'cause if you want to go to North Beach or Chinatown you have to get off and take so many buses.

TK: The bus was faster.

CB: Yes, sometimes when I walk home, I can beat the bus home. An hour and forty five minutes...

TK: Okay! Well, we'll end it now.

CB: Don't get me started on that.

TK: Well, Thank you!

B. Lance Burton

Interviewer: Tim Kelley, Tim Kelley Consulting (TK)

Tim Kelley: Okay, so it's the 29th of August 2014, and this is the beginning of an oral history interview being conducted by Tim Kelley with Lance Burton in connection with the San Francisco African American Historic Context Statement, being conducted at Tim Kelley Consulting offices on Monterey Boulevard. Good Morning.

Lance Burton: Good Morning, Tim.

TK: Actually, let's just say up front, you and I had already mentioned that I wanted to talk about street social life as you experienced it in San Francisco in your lifetime, especially in the Fillmore. I would like to start with some kind of general questions. Your full name...

LB: I'm Lance Burton.

TK: Where were you born?

LB: Little Rock, Arkansas.

TK: And what year?

LB: 1951.

TK: Did you grow up in San Francisco?

LB: I did. We came here in 1957. We got here because the Central High episode had just happened in Little Rock and my granddad came, and got us, and brought us here.

TK: He was here already?

LB: He was here already, working for United as a skycap, He drove down, and got us in October. The kids were being marched in in September, and [in] October, he came and got us.

TK: So, you were six?

LB: Yeah, I had just started 1st grade.

TK: So, then you attended schools mainly in San Francisco?

LB: All the way through.

TK: Which schools?

LB: Every year I went to a different school. I started out around the corner from their house at Golden Gate Elementary on Golden Gate. Then, we went to Raphael Weil when we moved around the corner on O'Farrell. Then, in 3rd grade my mom sent me to my aunt's house out in

Potrero Hill. I went to Daniel Webster in the 3rd grade. Came back to the Fillmore in 4th grade and went back to Raphael Weil, which is now Rosa Parks. In 5th grade, we moved out to the Mission, at 20th and Folsom Street, and I went to Hawthorne for the 5th grade. For the 6th grade, I came back to the Western Addition, over near St. Mary's Hospital on Schrader and Hayes and went to Andrew Jackson. While at Andrew Jackson, busing started, and they bused our class out to Robert Lewis Stevenson in the Sunset, out on Ortega. And, then we moved across the park. When I started junior high and I started at Roosevelt at Arguello and Geary. As we got settled on Clayton and Frederick, just up from Haight, it turned out I'm in Herbert Hoover District, and rode the bus out to Herbert Hoover. Though, I was just a few blocks down Frederick from Polytechnic High, but they didn't want me to go to Polytechnic, then. So, I spent 10th [grade] at Lincoln; 10th and 11th. And, so many things...

I spent most of my high school years in the Haight-Ashbury in the peace, love, and madness generation; so, I never did finished 12th grade. Until the John Adams Adult School became part of the landscape as part of the community college and Unified School District made that agreement to any kid that was 18, who was still not finished with high school or older, and needed to go to John Adams. So, I went over there, but I didn't really spend much time trying to get a GED. My cousin had told me, "Look, you need to go to out to City College, because if you go to City College, and you keep your grades up, and you can pass the entrance exam, you can go to City College." Which I did in the nick of time, because of course, the Draft was in place. You know, particularly in the Haight or the Fillmore, without a Draft card, which I didn't have at moment, they pick you right up and take you to Fort Ord and six weeks later, you're in Vietnam. Fortunately, I passed the exam, and got into City College, and the rest is sort of history, as they say.

TK: Uh-huh...

LB: The next year, they went to the Draft Lottery and my birthdate was somewhere... [number] 275, or so, and they only took the first 75, or so. To answer your question, yeah, I went to school in San Francisco.

TK: You went to school everywhere. What did you study at City College?

LB: Well...I went there to play baseball.

TK: Oh, really?

LB: Yeah! In my view, I was a great baseball player. *(Laughter)* And, that's what prompted me to want to go to City College. I didn't have any studies in mind; I didn't have any kind of academia, or anything that was motivating me. But, once there, I ran into a young lady. She said, "You know, you got this voice, you should go into broadcasting. *(Grumbles)* "I'm not interested in broadcasting. She said, "No, no, no, no. Come on. Come on." Took me by the hand, and we went over to the broadcast department, which was above the theater there at City College, then. And, she's taking me around the little rooms, I looked over my shoulder and there was this

glass, looking over this studio. There was television studio down there and I said, "Well, now! That interests me." And then going forward, I was a Broadcast Major with an emphasis on Television Direction and that's what I did. I did that and transferred over to State and got my degree, my undergrad, in Broadcast Communications.

TK: You worked in that field?

LB: For ten years I worked for ABC and CBS, and Motown Records. And, you know, it was very exploitive. The fact was, as I envisioned it, my mission was to create feature stories, profiles about the African American experience in the United States because at that time, you know, right on up, the time TV had come on air up 'til that time, 1972-73, you had the *Nat King Cole Show*, *Amos and Andy*, and Bill Cosby was doing *I Spy* and finally they brought in Dianne Carole as *Julia*. You know, we have a larger view of ourselves than just that. I am saying, I want to learn all of these aspects of broadcasting; from writing, to shooting, editing, ownership, licensing, and that whole package – in order that we are able to not get caught up in what we been caught up in.

And, so, I thought that I would get out of school in '75 and start my own company. But as it were, you know, the bills started coming in and I had to get a job. That's when I started working for ABC and CBS. And, why I say they were exploitive because... I can't complain about the fact that I became a member of the Directors Guild of America, the greatest union in the country. And, so, that benefited me; but, the rest of it... I created a program, ABC said, "Well, it's our program," and they never paid me a dime for it. It's a program called *Good Time Cafe* that was in syndication in 149 markets. I never got a dime. This is the kind of thing that I was there for, right? Great stuff, but didn't get paid for it; something that has some meaning. I happened to be at ABC, at KPIX, I was on the very first set of evening magazine shows, as Assistant Director, with Jan Yanahiro and Steve Fox, back in 1976. And, they rolled that out to their entire Westinghouse network of five stations and then they began to syndicate that and I never got a dime.

TK: Was there a racial element to that? Or, did they say, you know, I mean, did they exploit everyone?

LB: Yeah, they exploited all young people. You know...probably the talent, as well. I don't think Van Amberg, Jerry Jensen, and those guys, who I worked with at ABC, got exploited. But it's a sort of a learning process. Everyone wants to be in television. All the kids coming out of Broadcast want to be in television. But, I had significant roles as a Stage Manager, Assistant Director, and I created a treatment for a program, and the Program Manager loved it, and made it a template for some of the programs we see on the air today.

TK: Right.

LB: But you are working for the corporation. You are a "Westinghouse-man." You're doing this for Westinghouse. For George Westinghouse. Rest his soul.

(Laughter)

LB: You don't really need the money...

TK: He didn't either, though.

LB: You're a television man, you know... But I realize...The training was great. The exposure was great. You're also... you're caught up in the bright lights. You meet all these current celebrities – I mean Johnny Carson came through – Muhammad Ali, anybody you can name that was somebody in this period in the '60s, '70s, '80s, they would arrive at the station. Dick Clark, I mean, I remember sitting in a limousine with Dick Clark for about 20 minutes talking about music, sitting in front of the station, waiting on the crew to get their things together. Just he and I; it was an amazing moment. You get caught up in that. But, ten years was enough. Technology was beginning to arrive in the mid- to late '80s and so I kinda saw that it would be useful to be in that industry, here. And, I kinda rode along that startup wave running from the moment of Commodore 64, you know, whatever those little computers that Business-land, Computer-land was selling. Right on into the transition of DOS to Windows and doing the training for that for a company that was enabling all the corporate groups to transition from DOS to Windows. So, my legacy in that marketplace is phenomenal in terms of companies. I went in and showed them how to turn it on and put in some Harvard Graphics, and Lotus, 1,2,3 or Word... whatever that word processing... Star... Word... anyway... It just goes on and on.

TK: Yeah, that's a whole history in itself. So, I want to go back to what we had mentioned, originally. The social life, especially street social life...

LB: Oh, man!

TK: Let me ask you this, I mentioned this to you the other day, in conducting these histories I find that there is some type of cultural class divide going on here. Some people are offended to even suggest that they even know anything about that. What about you?

LB: When you say cultural clash, do you mean in the Black community, itself? Well, yeah there is. Not everyone wanted to be considered to someone who is out hanging out in the streets. You have people that go to church; it's just like the music thing. You playing that devil's music, right? While we're here in the church you playing that devil music. The notion that...There is always some kind of philosophical or ideological break within the African American community, because of the divisions that have been created over the centuries, right? Since coming here, (in this case, what we're talking about are in San Francisco) the long history of African Americans who came in were free people.

Actually, in the early 1800s as the British were breaking up slavery, West Indies, Jamaicans came to San Francisco, they were free. They were ready to go... the British, French, Dutch, helped them become industrialist and entrepreneurial and they were on it, they were after it. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the United States is still in enslavement, and then, thirty-some-

odd years later, finally suggesting that Black men could be free. Yet, unless you were in the North where you had opportunities to work in an industry that was thriving, you know, you were meandering around the South trying to find your way. That lasted through Reconstruction. As Reconstruction found Europeans starting to come and compete for the jobs that African Americans had once done for nothing and now couldn't get a job because you had to have some pay. You created this milieu of men, who were trying to find their way. Systematically, the governors of some of these Southern states, said that if you find men kinda meandering around you can, you know, put in these loitering laws, right. Vagrancy laws. Now, you a vagrant. Now, we're going to put you to work on the chain gang. Right?

Now, of course, as we come into the whole sharecropping era, where Black men, now, [are in the position being a sharecropper and say,] "I'm going to work for you and I'm going to pay you and give you all my money." Now, there this distancing themselves from that. Now, [they say,] "I'm not going to go back to being a slave." Because you know this whole sharecropping system is a way of being enslaved. And so, now, you got a whole group of men determined to that they're going to do things their own way... Entrepreneurial skills; they had none, but would be attempting to do whatever it took to make their way; these "make-their-way" kind of things become criminal. Not by nature, but by the very way this system has crafted laws that make what you do criminal.

Now, you're going through this criminal justice system long before slave management, is what we're talking about. We get into the 1800s and we get into the time where, now, Black men are eligible to go into the military, to find their way, their skill, find their voice, find themselves. But when they come back to the city, unless they were at a time say....and the 1920s... the period when Ford finally starting letting folks back up North, and to Ohio and Indiana, where there were industries that needed that labor pool, and also allowed them to educate themselves a little bit, then Black men started to blossom a little bit.

Meanwhile, all these other Black men, who are festering around without a strong and powerful need for labor... The European community which felt that these Black people were just tools, you know, we can use them when we need them, and put them to the side when we don't. So, what are you going to do? You now are relegated, as we have known, Black people have been under-employed for the most of this past century, and it's starting out in the 21st Century the same way. Fifty percent unemployment among African Americans is not unusual, not unheard of, so, you got a lot of Black people unemployed.

In San Francisco, as the War ends, the waterfront is vibrant; as it has been throughout our history here in the United States, the water is where Black men have thrived. In the early 1800s right into the '60s and Liedesdorff and the Gold Rush where Black men were on the waterfront as drayage men, boarding, housing the folks that came needing these services. They were there until it became important that the European community that was coming in be able to take over those areas. As I say, getting into the Fillmore after the War, Roosevelt had decreed Social Security, the GI Bill, all those things we're supposed to get... [The] Federal Housing

Administration enabled some Black folks to get housing, but largely in that redlined community of the Fillmore. And, so, you had these brothers who are now getting out of the military and landing here; the reality was, if it was after dark, they were supposed to be in the Fillmore. The jobs that many of them had were the graveyard shifts, you know, and the nightshifts, and so, during the day, you didn't have a lot of places you could wander off to. You could wander off into them, but you didn't feel comfortable wandering off into them.

Truth be told, from the very early parts of the '40s right up until the early parts of the '50s military police did most of the policing in San Francisco, and in the Fillmore, in particular. They were the ones that would knock you over the head. Up until Mayor Christopher in 1956, '57, or so decreed to [San Francisco Police Department] Chief Thomas Cahill, to do whatever it takes to get these people out of Western Addition. There was no real adversarial relationship between Blacks and the Police Department. Beyond that... '58, forget it! That's because the military police started backing off in the Fillmore. Up until then...

Here's the thing on the hanging out... In Europe, during the War, the soldiers... had been taught the behavior of watching out for each other's back. You moved about, you moved about in packs. This is what you did to protect yourself. When they got back, that behavior remained. Those brothers, those sailors, those marines, they ran in packs. In the Fillmore they did that. Black men did in particular; you are coming back from combat. These are the people that you now can relate to. Those are the people you sought to hang out with and they hung out where they could. Those are the people you hung out with in bars and street corners. We are talking about a period, coming back, when music is starting to take hold in America in the '40s were talking about how there was no television, no radio, people gathered around the radio, like they gathered around televisions when it first came out.

The men in the Fillmore, there was enough gathering around a radio to listen to a big band... "Let's go out and find that Big Band, make some Big Band music ourselves." Some of these guys were Big Band musicians. Jimbo Edwards, Leola King... Promoters, engaging people to come and play and enjoy the comradery and the socialization in these hundred-some bars and restaurants in the Fillmore. From Waller and Fillmore to Clay and Fillmore, so, now, you got an entertainment and socialization industry developing. There were some-800 Black businesses in San Francisco between Bayview/Hunters Point and the Fillmore with some small groups in the Tenderloin. The fact is, a lot of them were social clubs as well as businesses. Why that was, was... You know, segregation—

TK: What was a social club? Semi-private?

LB: Semi-private, yeah. Fraternities and sororities, The Elks... I'm trying to think of the one that used to do a picnic at Alam Rock in San Jose... it was the greatest, biggest picnic on the Fourth of July and everyone went there for it. There were women's clubs and men's clubs. My father was a member of the Shasta Lodge. I was Shasta Lodge Junior Herd member. And, so, it was a way that people could get together and socialize in a house or in the basement of a storefront, and there

were a lot of those, a lot of those. Those rolled into... for us as kids, young people social clubs... we had what they refer to now as gangs, but they weren't gangs. We were emulating the behavior that we'd seen of the adults. The men we'd seen on the street, again, who were largely men coming back from World War II and.... you know, just trying to find some way of integrating back into society... with the socialization of, you know... and having some of the same issues, where they were battling redlining, or the battling notion they were supposed to get a GI bill offered, or they were waiting in line for a GI Bill, or they were waiting for healthcare, or they had mental issues that weren't being addressed and the only people that could relate to what they were talking about what they were doing were military men. And, they gathered out on the street corner of the Fillmore and along Divis [Divisadero Street] in threes, fours, fives – sat in the car with their beverage of choice. And, you'd see a pack of men sitting in a car on a corner any one of the streets; Post and Fillmore, Eddy and Fillmore; and they'd be there all day. Nothing more to do, nothing more to do.

TK: Yeah.

LB: You know, maybe they were waiting 'til it was time to go to work that night, or maybe they didn't have a job... Maybe they were just there... Because this is where they could go to feel comfortable. Again, we're talking segregated society, we're talking about walking into... having a few... not wanting to be involved in some madness because you're up along California and Leavenworth or down in the Marina, where you're not supposed to be, where Black folks had lived in the 1800s and during the Panama Exposition. So, you know, you're trying to find yourself in a town where tolerance is supposed to be, but the unspoken boundaries did exist and after dark, you're not supposed to be east of Van Ness Avenue.

TK: Yeah. You're talking about, really, your parent's generation...

LB: I am.

TK: But, now you're socializing as a younger guy in these "not gangs." So, what did you do?

LB: Yeah. Here's the thing, I'm 6,7,8,9,10 [years old] in the Fillmore. We lived at O'Farrell and Fillmore. 1775 O'Farrell. We, as kids, were different, I think, than kids are today. Certainly weren't as subjected to the kind of craziness that I think kids are subjected to today. We're the parents. You know, parents can't turn their back on...and the next thing they're gone... Poof! At 6 or 7, I'm running up and down Fillmore Street.... because I'm doing errands for my mother's friends in the apartment building; "Run down get me a loaf of bread at the little market," which is now a police station on Turk and Fillmore; or the midtown market there on Eddy between Fillmore and Steiner, or the Safeway on Geary and Steiner; or to the meat market Frank Omarata's that had been Rosales Night Club; there, that had been the Omaratas' Brothers market. There were several Omaratas, but this was the big one, where Rosales is. The big meat market, and that's where everybody went to get their meat, largely. You know, or down to the ice cream parlor.

So, there were all these little errands to do... So, you're out and about. You know, you better behave because people knew you. In the community and everybody knew you. It's really a small community and everybody knows everybody and they know everybody's kids. They know the kid that you're hanging out with, so it can easily circle back....So, I'm out and about around 7 or 8 [o'clock] and supposed to be in the house at a certain time, but as I begin to get older... particularly, when I got back in the 6th grade from having been in the Mission, having the Mission experience, which lasted about a year. That Potrero Hill experience lasted about a year.

TK: So, when you're in those neighborhoods, they're not as "Black" as the Fillmore?

LB: They are.

TK: Are they?

LB: Well, no, no. They aren't as Black as the Fillmore, no, because the Mission was heavily Hispanic, but there were a lot of African or Black people, there in that community as well. But they weren't the dominate color, they weren't the dominant race that was happening. There were a lot of Black folks there speaking Spanish, because they were coming from South and Central America. You know and Spanish was native to them. I forgot, ... I don't even know that I ever knew what color I was, actually, but in the Mission I knew I didn't speak Spanish, but there was a vibrancy to it. When I got back, out of that experience and into the 6th grade, it was a full on Black community in the Western Addition and at Andrew Jackson, anyway, the elementary school.

And, this busing took hold, and we were sent out to Robert Lewis Stevenson, and we, as kids, we were introduced to that at the start... the segregated school yard that we were in. That was sort of the first time that I witnessed that kind of thing. These kids over here, well-to-do, and us, not poor, but certainly, when we got on the yellow bus to go back to the Western Addition, Hayes Street and Andrew Jackson... Their parents would roll up in nice cars and they were nice kids, nice kids. We knew we weren't "nice" kids the way they were. We had "nice" kids in our class, you know, but these were nice, well-behaved kids, that weren't going to do anything wrong, and I don't know if they were fearful of us, or anything, but they were quiet. They were well-mannered; they did what they were told to do. We had come out of, you know, well... we do what we wanted to do, more or less. Some of the kids in the class, but I don't want to put that on all of the kids, because I thought I was a well-behaved kid, I was a quiet kid, and I did what I was told to do, but there were some of us who were rowdy, by comparison.

Anyway, getting back into the 6th grade and moving over to the 7th grade... Look, we're talking about the Baby Boomers of 1946, right, started coming up and were talking about this twenty year collection of kids, and I was born five years into it. So, I had these kids who were five years older than me, four years, three years, two years... and that five year group, in my vision, those kids were... and I never really thought about this 'til more recently, about that pack of those kids, that were in that twenty year-span, that we all went through as Baby Boomers, who came out with the men finally getting what they thought they should get – some respect for having

gone through the War. Some strong Black men, strong Black role models. Black men who were business men, insurance men, storeowners, that dressed in suits that rolled up in nice cars.

The musicians who came, sometimes it was difficult to discern who were the successful musicians that were coming into the Fillmore, who were the pimps that were coming into the Fillmore, and who were the business owners, you know. It all kind of melded together as a community, because you know, when you get on Fillmore, you come to impress. The longshoreman who were off for a day or two went to the cleaners to pick up their cleaning and dressed up and looked just like, you know, Nat King Cole or Duke Ellington. As I watched these young guys ahead of me begin to grow into this... zone... of wanting to follow the role models that they saw in the Fillmore, the men who were again, twenty-five to fifty-year-olds who had come from the War, who had come from the South and brought their families and were doing well, so to speak. This group of guys ahead of us wanted to appear to be doing well, too, and some of them were because some of their fathers were longshoremen and as long as you're a longshoreman in San Francisco you were making it.

Here's the thing, San Francisco was a boxing town and a gambling town and this is what the race tracks, the horses, right was...? This was the prevalent thing that was going on amongst the, what shall I call it? The... milieu of the men along the corridor. What horses? What jockeys? Who won last night? You know, where is the next dice game? When is the gotch ball going to be here and who will be the big time gamblers that will show up? The players?

TK: What's gotch ball?

LB: Gotch ball was a card game and every year, there was this gotch ball tournament up at Sutter and Fillmore Street and it was the Super Bowl of cards and the game was called gotch. I don't know how it's played, I'm too young to even know but I've been fortunate enough to have been raised by people like Bonnie Simon, and had long conversations, and taken under the wing by Leona King, and her son, and Herman Moorhen who was one of the guys that owned some of the Black clubs on Divisadero Street, the Half Note....Just engaging them in a conversation and....Mr. Holly, who was the tailor to the stars, and why I say that is because anybody that rolled through there that needed to get anything done Mr. Holly was the tailor who did it.

TK: Where was his place?

LB: His place was on Ellis between Fillmore and Webster across from the Booker T. Washington Hotel. He saw everybody and he was a golfer and a few times... his nephew and I were longtime friends, which reminds me of the other element of hanging out. Frank, Mr. Holly's nephew, and I used to go over to Peacock Gap when he was playing at Peacock Gap, I would and so-call "caddy" for him. What we would do is we would get the carts and were supposed to be driving them along but most time they would walk from hole to hole and we would take those carts and race around like little fools. Frank's father was a drummer and drummed in a lot of what they call the.... Well, when they were trying to have jam sessions the best players would be playing and when you realized you were not part of that level that level you would back out and

somebody else shows up. His father drummed and he had picked up somehow, through osmosis or maybe from his dad's direction, skills in singing and designing harmonies and he had an ear for harmony and he could assign your part in a song. This is what our hanging out lead to, and, as we hung out and when we gathered and connected, one of the things that were taking shape, of course, was music. That went right along with the gambling, horse racing and you know, hangout elements. There were these talent shows that were being produced at the YMCA and at the Booker T. Community Center and Hamilton Recreation Center, which by the way again, to give you the sense of why there was this hangout, is that the Hamilton Recreation Center was the one place that Black folks in the Western Addition could actually go and have a gathering of people. Initially, it was the Hamilton Field right up until, as you probably know, already know, there were two shacks...

TK: It's the one on Geary?

LB: Geary and Steiner. Between Steiner and Scott. So that square, Hamilton Square, was just dirt and gravel and the club house... well, these two shacks that were left over from the 1906 Earthquake refugee camp that had been situated there. In 1938 or 1939, they took most of those away and they dot the landscape around the Western Addition from that location, but when you go around San Francisco you see those refugee buildings...

TK: Yeah, we deal with them all the time.

LB: You see, so you see....So, they had two that were there and that was the recreation center for the Black community in Western Addition up until 1954, when they replaced it with the Hamilton facility that's there now – swimming pool, gymnasium, and so on. That was a meeting place for all the young kids; baseball, football, basketball, and swimming. That was our spot. And, talent shows between the talent shows at that location, the Booker T. [Washington Community] Center, the Sutter Street YMCA, and Buchanan YMCA... we began to really generate some talent out of that community.

And, so, singing on the street corner, became, you know, that's what you did. You practiced your choreography, you practiced your harmony, you practiced those songs you were hearing on the radio from the Mills Brothers to the whole Motown era. That that was a galvanizing kind of opportunity for young people that was taking place, not only in the Fillmore, but also out in Hunter's Point, and later on then in Ingleside. But, in those '50s, that's what you heard and saw – you saw young kids trying to get their act together and they might be hanging out on a street corner trying to pull it together.

TK: Yeah, yeah.

LB: Then, of course, that obviously begins to lead to some damage because you're supposed to be in school, and now you'd rather hangout, and sing, and get with the fellas. And then, of course, when you're hanging out with the fellas, you're out shooting dice, and then shooting dice leads to other madness, and, then, the next thing you know, the whole community is upside-down. I

think that your initial point of this... division... is because the good people of the church wouldn't want any of that to happen to the kids, right? "Don't go down that path. Don't be out on the street hanging out." While others would say, "That's our social setting, and we don't have a whole lot of opportunities," and you know, we are talking about a short distance away from Jim Crow and the South, where a lot of the Blacks folk come from.

A lot of Black folk relished coming to the free north or west where opportunities are wide open and we should race to get them as fast as we possibly can. So, don't be wasting your time out on the street; true enough, but those opportunities, as we approach the mid-1950s and the waterfront started to go away... and, if you hadn't got a Post Office job... then, you were probably until the great sky-rise, high-rise boom, then you were relegated to some second-class citizenship job, or other, or none. By 1958, '59, '60, of course, all those jobs started to go away unless you worked in a hotel and a lot of Black folks did work in the hotel industry up until the strike of about 1968, '69, or so, when Alioto went in and mediated and basically busted the union.

TK: Oh, really?

LB: Uh-huh, and they have those strikes every three years, so it seems, right? But for whatever reason, this strike was lingering, lingering, lingering, and Joe said, "Well, I'm going to settle it," and went down to the meeting at the Holiday Inn on 8th between Market and Mission, walked in there and two hours later, the union was busted, and it was like, "get back to work."

TK: Wow... yeah.

LB: Yep. Back to work. The union wasn't necessarily dominated by Blacks but there were a lot of African Americans that were in that union and was working as doormen, and chefs, and we had a lot of the service working in the hotels and hospitals and when that union busted, then the whole profile view of the workers changed from African American to Asian, Filipino. And, so then, once again, you have Blacks back on the streets and those that have money, as we talk about in the 1950's coming to a close, and Redevelopment coming in, and making the changes in the Western addition, and those that had money left and you know went to the East Bay, Palo Alto and Richmond and so on. Those that didn't have any money, couldn't make that transition, that move out, remained as renters and, of course, the legacy of that that whole body of people continues. Story continues to be told.

TK: So, were you...I'm not tracking where you were living when Redevelopment came in; were you living in the Western Addition?

LB: So, here's what happened; we got here in October 1957. A-1 was already in place, they were already widening Geary Boulevard and soon, thereafter, they dug that hole underneath Fillmore, so the dirt was piled up there for the longest time and the buildings were still being torn down across the street from my granddad's house, who lived at 1745 Ellis, and that's just across the street from what is now Raymond Kimball Field. Those houses were still being torn

down in February of 1958, [and] four or five months later, Redevelopment (inaudible) convened with a meeting with all of the leaders to tell them that A-2 was going to take place, and it was the beginning of the tearing down, and removal of about 4,000 families, and we had to move around. We were on O'Farrell, and as I said, my mom sent me to live with....and just the notion that this was going to happen, we didn't know what was going on, or what was going to happen because there were no bull dozers coming right at our block, right at that point, but there were bulldozers on the next block over across the street from my granddad's house.

TK: Right... Yeah, yeah.

LB: I went to Potrero Hill for that year... what was it 1959? And, then came back in 1960, and then we moved out to the Mission in 1961, and then came back in 1962; but, a lot had started to ruminate because some of the housing tracks had started to be torn down, some had started to be lifted up, some businesses had started to move out and close. And so, by '62, we went further west; the Fillmore was not the Fillmore that we had known when we got there in 58', '57. It was starting to... because fighting had started, and the resistance of moving out, that was taking shape. We would go down to the Fillmore because the Fillmore was still about the... talent shows at the Buchanan "Y," and the Booker T., and the Hamilton, and so forth, and the Fillmore Auditorium still existed, and the Wonderland still existed as a magnet for us to come. This is where we saw all the greatest entertainers of that era – in terms of R&B, anyway. Whether it was Little Richard, Temptations, James Brown or Ike and Tina Turner and so on and so forth and right on up and through when Mr. Sullivan was killed in '66 and then, of course, thereafter Mr. Graham took over and it became a whole, new different kind of scene, but he tried to transition it in a way that continued to attract Black folks, because he would pair...

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TK: Oh, really? He would pair acts?

LB: Yeah, pair acts. Yeah, I saw Stevie and the Rolling Stones, Credence Clearwater and Isaac Hayes, and Sly Stone and somebody, I don't even remember who it was, but they would always be the second act, second billing. That was getting into '67, '68, '69 but that period between 1959 to 1965 or so, '66, which I was now a teen, when I got back here into the Western Addition on Hayes in the 6th grade in 1962 through 1965, was a hot period of time in the Black community because all the folks were, like, starting to move from even the projects. That had been, interestingly enough, the projects had been a nice place to live in 1959, when I had got here. I knew plenty of people... because I was in the drum core from the second grade, which was maybe 1959... I was in the drum core from 1959 to like 1962-ish or so, and those kids that were in the drum core with me, many of them lived in the projects. So, we socialized and hung out and the buildings were nice, the facilities were clean, the kids were good, there was nothing going on.

Then, Redevelopment happened. Redevelopment began to squash it all into where people were on top of each other, and those could that afford to take their goods because they had the money or equity in a home, or they sold a home and could take it and go live in Oakland Hills, or

go live in East Oakland, which is what a lot of them did. Buy a house out there which is now the most dangerous part of Oakland. Those folks that were left became like crabs in a barrel all over each other and, naturally, people are all over each other and that's a recipe for some kind of community damage, and the damage continues, but the hangout of those kids beyond the 1960s, say '66 or so didn't have anything to do. As the Japantown Center began to rise out of the ashes... '67 or so, the hippies are here, now. Here's this whole new... well, needless to say, people stop hanging out because, now, you're going to be a Panther, part of the Nation of Islam, or you're going to get out of all that mess and go to school, or you were going to get drafted and be on your way to Vietnam.

Now, the mix is starting toward this, the Haight-Ashbury where all the action was taking place because of the Vietnam protests and, of course, because of everything else that was going on. Because there were a lot of girls up there with very little clothing on, and the drugs that were going on, and there the scene was wide open, and it seemed to be the place to go to. So, that action was moving up toward the Haight Ashbury daily, daily and the police are up there, and the new tactical squad was up there. So, now you're hanging out in the Haight, and right on down to the Lower Haight. People are seeking out the alternative, mind-altering drugs like pot, cocaine, LSD – or even worse – the heroin; which was an interesting transition, because Black folks had been nailed and with – I say nailed particularly because I believe and many people do that; the heroin as well as crack cocaine has just been injected into the community.

I see the triumph of the IRS, FBI, Federal Housing Administration, and later HUD that really prevailed on the community, along with Redevelopment, to really undermine and cut that community right of its existence. I think the drugs were...and heroin was a vital component of that, because when I got here as a kid in the '60s and mid-50s, I saw young people, young men, on the corners strung out, right? And these guys were nodding, and it was sad... they were scratching and unconscious, basically, and you knew you did not want to be like that. That was the good news; that was not the person I wanted to be, because that was embarrassing, out in the broad daylight in the middle of the street corner; they're nodding and scratching and completely oblivious to anything that was going on. But, that was a moment of conquering for those that wanted Black folks out of the Western Addition. It's like, here is an example, you know, this is what hanging out will do for you, you know. So, you don't hang out! Don't hang out!

TK: Okay.

(Laughter)

LB: Don't hang out unless you're with your boys and you guys are singing some great songs. But, one would say, "Hell that's no career," you know. It's an amazing thing, music, because for Europeans they study it, they learn it, they get it, and they go out, and make a tremendous amount of money in the opera, or symphony, or whatever. This is really interesting. Today, you know, we are coming out of... Hell, back in the day of the Barbary Coast, with the Pullman

Porters Club up on Pacific Avenue, and the So Different Club, and Mr. ... whatever his name is, that had his club up there, and the Buffalo Soldiers coming over, and playing horns, and that whole thing and that whole scene, and right on up until... As a kid, when I got here, moving from playing horns to singers and singing Frank Sinatra and Elvis, huge money makers, right? But doing stuff like Black people had begun to do and like the church would say, "Don't be go out there doing that the devil's music. James Brown, Sam Cook, Lloyd Price, you guys are killing us. Don't be doing that stuff."

So, you have this division and some of us are looking at it like, "Man, yeah! I want to be a horn player. I want to be Charlie Parker I want to be Miles, Louie Jordan, or Arnett Coleman, or some of those people. This is man's music. Then, falling in love with the songs of Nat King Cole, Jonny Mathis, and then, Smokey Robinson and being a Temptation and this is what being a man is all about. Literally. And then singing these love songs, and we love women, and we want to croon to them and make them feel sweet, and we would be on the street corner and the girls be checking you out. You were like, "Yeah!" That was all part of the hang out, but just don't lose your shirt shooting dice (*Laughter*) because guys know how to set the dice, and the next thing you know, you're going home without no money.

TK: Where would the dice get shot around here? Right there on the corner?

LB: Oh, yeah. Yeah, as we've agreed, San Francisco is a gambling town, and my dad and granddad were gamblers. They came from Hot Springs and it's a resort town, and where Capone hid out, and when they were not out doing what they did, they spent their holidays in Hot Springs. So, it's a gambling town and horse racing center for a while, and, so, in San Francisco everybody gambled; the police gambled in Belden Alley, behind the police station on Kearny, and, of course, the Chinese gambled; everybody gambled; but, in the Fillmore, and they had gambling dens, a lot of gambling dens for the adults and again for the kids, it's the behavior you learn. We're talking about that twenty year pack of Baby Boomers, right? Of young Black boys, largely, who were influencing the dynamic of the relationships of our era? Those that are – when I'm five, who are like, twelve years old – they're the ones that are making the influences and they're shooting dice, you know, with their processed hair, and shark-skin slacks, and mohair sweaters, and alligator shoes and they've gotten that look and design from the older men who, in many cases have done well because, for whatever reason, during that period after the Depression when Roosevelt comes in, and does the work program, and starts to put things back together, and folks are starting to gather themselves, and then the War hits, and the economy explodes as the War ends, and then people have opportunity, and so those opportunities have made some men capable, and so, now, here are these young boys that are seeing these capable, particularly Black men... They don't know anything else. These Black men have made it and they're coming to San Francisco from all over, by the way, because they have learned that San Francisco is the nugget out there and, now, they're coming from St. Louis and Chicago and Philly and Georgia, you know, to get to San Francisco because it's the spot.

And, here they come rolling up in their nice cars, and their winter coats, and were like, “You don’t need that fur coat and this hat, so, get rid of that stuff,” so, they have made it. So, now, these youngsters are watching them, and it’s the greatest, probably, piece of entertainment that up until television sets in, right? Real life going on up and down Fillmore Street, and as a youngster your eyes are bright and wide, so whatever they’re doing you want to do it. If they’re shooting dice, we what to shoot dice. If they’re playing cards, we want to learn to play cards. We want to learn how to play cards, so, we’re in the 6th grade in the school yard playing cards, so, the church would say, “No, no, no. We have to forbid any of that because these kids are going to grow up and grow the wrong way and we need them to be understanding.” That it’s really about W. E. B. DuBois, and Booker T. Washington, still, and Marcus Garvey, still. It’s like, “Be industrious and be ready, continue to work.” The work ethic from Booker T., “We are the laborers; we can keep it going because they need us. As long as we work, and keep our nose to the grindstone, and our eyes on the prize, we’re going to be okay.” W. E. B. is like, “Yes, that ten percent that needs to be out there leading the way, but agitating for, like, the other ninety percent to come along.”

Now, you got us running around hanging out trying to sing songs. Barry Gordy did it. But, what we didn’t know is the beauty. See this what bugs me, and I know I’m off topic, and rambling, but you know Barry is symbolic of what America could be or could have been, but I don’t know if there is still an opportunity for this, as, like, Europeans and Africans assemble here and began to build this country, you know? In partnership, in collaboration, of course, we didn’t get that cotton money or sugar cane money, which, unfortunately, if we could and if the world were right, then they would go back and say, “Your family, you know what? You should get some of this cotton and cane money and then the world be right.” But, in doing right, in doing right, Barry Gordy assembled these great musicians and artist and made them this creative force.

What people don’t know is that the other half of that equation was Barney Ales, and he was Motown President and Barry Gordy’s partner, and were it not for Barney, and I know this because I worked for the company, right? If it weren’t for Barney, none of the radio stations would’ve played the music, and none of the wholesalers would’ve bought the records, and none of the distributors would’ve distributed into the marketplace, and nobody would’ve known about Motown Records. And, that is the story because Barney had the sales organization. Motown was the only major record label, at that time, and maybe still that was distributed by independents; Warner Brothers, Columbia, and those other folks, major networks because that’s the business, you know. But you have all these Jewish organizations, Jewish record companies, and Jewish distributors that would not touch the Black music without having some ownership enveloped in in it and that’s what Barney Ales was able to do, because he had been a wholesale operator ...as Barry Gordy begins to come in.

TK: Barney Ales was a Black man?

LB: No! He was a Jewish man. It was his son Steve Ales was the one who actually hired me. This was the sales and distribution side of the business, but over there, the microphones and bandstands

and all that and those guys,” A and R who put them out on the road, and had them performing and everything... but over here, we got the records pressed, we sold the records, we got them delivered to the stores, and made calls to make sure that the first of all the trade magazines knew that the records was out there, and that they were selling, and we made sure that records stores reported their sales to the trade magazines, and that when the trade magazines called the radio stations that the radio stations made sure that they told the trade magazines that they were playing the records. And, that when the record stores called the radio stations, made sure they knew that the record was doing well, and to buy more records, and then, tell trade magazines they were buying more records so, the trade magazine would say, “Yeah, it has a vote and people would go out and buy it.”

That is really the untold story of Motown, just because it seems like, Wow, Barry Gordy had these great artist and musicians, and people just loved it, and it just magically happened, but no. Barney Ales. I say that with just the notion that with that kind of collaboration you had one of the most sensational businesses of all time. Ronald Reagan came along and knocks things out of the box with taking all the music out of the public schools, and killing arts, and everything. I love the inspirational, entrepreneurial and industrialist of hip-hop artists, but it’s also, you know.... Have you heard of the Willie Lynch story?

TK: No.

LB: Willie Lynch; some would say, it’s mythical, but, it’s a printed small book about twenty pages and it tells the story of Willie Lynch who was a slave trader during that period of time when the Atlantic slave trade was happening. He was an expert on managing slaves and he had come to the United States to a trade show, if you will, a conference of plantation owners, to help them understand how to better manage their slaves, because they had been having trouble with runaways, and slaves who were creating issues and trouble. So, what he did, he convened this conference and he told the slave owners, “There’s a few things you need to do in order to make sure that your slaves are always in line, and it includes when a slave runs away, then when you get them back, you chop off their foot in front of all the other slaves,” you know. The point was that if you show all the other slaves that bad things will occur, then, they will not do bad things.

I point that out in a sense that we believe that the media now serves as the Willie Lynch papers because they’ll do the same thing, but what it also does is it justifies the punishment that the slave gets because he did something bad that ruins everything for everybody. Here’s what we have in the media today the same thing; they continue to flood the airways with these stories, this that and the other, where Black folks are criminal, they deserve to be in the penitentiary, or he deserves to be shot because what he was doing. The point I was trying to make... I don’t know what point I was trying to make – Oh, I know. That thug music, which is a variation of hip-hop, but not hip-hop, it’s just bad behavior, right? The whole notion of calling women out by their name... those guy deserves to be punished, but it has a way of leaking back to everyone else... and unless you really understand and separate hip-hop from thugs; then, they’re all like

thugs and anyone that looks like that they're all thugs. So, the music has changed in such a way the Motown music is a snapshot in history that we may never have again.

We went from all these great musicians, Count, Duke, on and on and on, who have suddenly vanished off the planet, like, "Where did all these great musicians go?" The great singers and the Top 40 short-lived period from the late 1940's to just about 1975, when disco hit in 1980 and Evelyn Champagne and Michael Jackson and Donna Summers were last of the greatest of the songsters. James Brown is gone, Miles Davis is gone and there's no real replacements, and that void is there outside of that hip-hop thug thing that now were kind of locked into. While classical music, and opera, and symphony will always be there for people to aspire to in college, you know, "Learn that violin. Then, go get yourself a \$175,000 dollar seat at the opera, or symphony, and you can make a living and secure your family's future. Black folk can't do that. I mean, they can, you can, 'cause you can go get a seat and could learn the violin and go get a seat, which some have done, but that's not classic African American music. Classic African American spiritual music that continues to invade our culture with the spirit of greatness that we think that we have seen happen over the decades and the century. No more hanging out! Let's get to work.

(Laughter)

TK: Listen, well, our hour is up, but it's still running if you want to continue...

LB: I'm fine because I have to go down to the Bayview and get some stuff to do a piece tomorrow. I'm still trying to do feature stories; the feature stories and profile thing. I haven't had real time to craft the stuff. I've been doing more capturing than creating, and as a service to the community, really, because what I've learned to do over thirty years or so, of working with the media, and working in technology arena, I've tried to combine the group, again, going all the way back to what I was saying... Look, I need to understand how to make it, how to own it, and how to sell it. Combining the ten years of television experience with this twenty years of understanding intellectual property licensing of the technology, and building the marketing platforms, and understanding how to work within the technology usage, itself, you know has kind of put me in this position where if I could remain in San Francisco, and I say if I could remain, because, you know, growing up as a kid, we knew where the tourist spots were. Did you grow up in San Francisco?

TK: No.

LB: Well, there used to be, you know, where all the tourist traps were so you didn't go to those and you avoid those.

TK: They're coming after you now.

LB: You knew where to get a good meal at a good price, and where to park so you wouldn't get a ticket and you could be there for two or three hours and not get a ticket. Those days are over.

So, yes, they're coming after me in the sense that I failed to buy property because that was the thing. For fear, you know, of home ownership and I'm gurgling over the words because I've got too much ego to submit to the notion that I would be afraid to buy a home. In actuality, some would say, this is the 21st century. History doesn't matter and no, it does matter and looking back on, what I say is a 30 year career... Well, thirty years is enough time to pay a mortgage, right?

And those thirty years came with some bumps and jumps and bruises. As I started out in those thirty years, and the mindset that I have, I was going to do my own thing, which meant I wasn't going to succumb to having a nine-to-five job, and getting a paycheck every week, and putting it in the bank, and having the bank draw out to get my mortgage paid. No. Even though in 1975, '76 at that moment the house I was living in in McLaren Park, off Mansell Street across from Sala Burton High is this three bedroom, two bath house with this expansive view that I was renting since the days I was a college student. When I ran upon this lady that said, "We just moved out to the other side of the football field to a bigger house, and I'll be happy to rent this house to you for \$300 a month," right? That was in '73, and then she came to me, you know, "You want to buy this?" and said, "Ed and are getting divorced and do you want to buy this house?" I said, "Well, Marge, I don't know if I can buy it..." and she only wanted \$35,000 and that house is worth about a million dollars now, but I had never bought a house, and my parents never bought a house, and nobody had ever trained me how to buy a house or to think that way.

We been renters from the time we... because my mom moved over here on Chenery Street in 1966, because my dad left in '66. He left because the jobs had dried up and he knew hanging out while waiting for work to occur could lead to a mess, and he has four boys and a wife in San Francisco, and jobs were not, like, just jumping into your lap. Even though, my granddad tried getting him a job at United as a mechanic in the big maintenance building down there, but they wouldn't hire him fulltime, they kept giving him piecemeal work, piecemeal work, piecemeal work... So, he left...he could never establish himself. So, he left and took my 2 year-old little brother with him, and they went back to Arkansas and my mom and me along with my next two younger brothers. And my dad gave me specific instruction by telling me, "Make sure these boys go to school and that you mind your mom." I'm the oldest. They were five and seven years younger, and the youngest was thirteen years younger, and we're up on 776 Clayton Street, at the top of the hill there on Frederick, two blocks off Haight Street, and the hippies are coming and they set up across the street this '53 Cadillac convertible all dirty and white with flowers and peace signs on it and these guys had just came out of the South from the Freedom Marches, this is 1963, and we're like.... *(Laughter)*

And the thing was, they weren't to the extreme they would inevitably get. These guys only just had their hair just down below the nape of neck, right? And wearing corduroy smoking jackets, with the patches, but these were hippies and they didn't have on any shoes and the girls didn't have on any bras, and their hair was all scraggly, and everything. They were hopping around all, "Hi!" typically, but that was.... The floodgates were open, and the next thing I know we're all hanging out, embracing it, and hanging out on Haight Street... Hanging out on Haight Street.

What's next? What are we going to do now? Hundreds of thousands of people came down to the protests, right? And, now you got the tactical squad and the hippies, right there at Clayton and Haight Street. That's hanging out.

TK: Alright, thank you.

LB: You're welcome, Tim.

TK: That concludes the oral history interview.

C. Dr. Espanola Jackson

Interviewers: Nicole Jones, Intern, Planning Department (NJ)

Nicole Jones: Today is Tuesday, June 17th 2014. My name is Nikki and I'm here with Mrs. Espanola Jackson –

Dr. Espanola Jackson: Doctor.

NJ: Dr. Espanola Jackson. And, let's just go ahead and get started, let's start with the basics. What's your full name and what year were you born?

EJ: My name is Dr. Espanola Jackson. I was born February the 9th 1933. So, that means I'm 81 years of age, as of this date.

NJ: So, when did you come here to San Francisco?

EJ: My mother came to San Francisco 1943.

NJ: And you came along with her?

EJ: Yes, I said my mother and myself came to San Francisco in 1943. I was 10 years of age. I was in the 5th grade, at that time. Coming from Texas, in order to go to school here in San Francisco. What happened is that I went into the school system and what they did was they sent me to a school on Hayes Street.

NJ: Where was this school located?

EJ: On Hayes!

NJ: Hayes and..?

EJ: Oh, around Buchanan and Hayes.

NJ: Do you remember what the school was called?

EJ: I can't remember right now, but it might have been Hayes Valley.

NJ: Okay, it–

EJ: It was an elementary school. I was in the 5th grade. On the ground, you know you go out during some periods. I had seen a frog, but I had never seen this big tortoise coming toward me, and they said it was over a hundred years old, and I was looking at this big tortoise and I was walking real slowly. All of a sudden I saw three White girls, that was dressed in uniforms coming towards me. Being from Texas, I had never seen anyone with Down syndrome. I had never heard of Down 's syndrome and when I saw these girls I thought they were coming to eat me. I started screaming and hollering, because I thought they was zombies. And, they took me to the

principal's office, saying, "They going to eat me, they zombies, they zombies." And, I finally quieted down, and when I quieted down, here one came through the door. When they calmed me down, then here another one came through the door, and I started up all over again. They knew I couldn't go to that school because, at that time, I didn't know about Special Ed. and the nature of that, and they sent me to another school closer to where I lived off of Lyons, L-Y-O-N-S, and Geary.

NJ: Okay.

EJ: What we called, at that time, the Fillmore. So, I went to this school and I was there one semester.

NJ: Which elementary school was it?

EJ: It was called Geary Elementary.

NJ: Okay.

EJ: And what occurred was the fact that they skipped me and I didn't see the 6th grade. I was skipped to the 7th grade and was sent to a school called Girls High. Girls High, it closed and the name was changed. The last graduating class was in 1952. What happened at Girls High, I was in Special Ed. and I knew that but I thought that meant I was someone special not knowing that meant no education.

NJ: Right.

EJ: I had a teacher, her name was Ms. Kelly, and I was in Ms. Kelly's class for everything, except lunch and gym. And, when I was in the 10th grade, I had an aunt to pass in Houston, Texas, where I had originally come from. When we went there for the funeral, my mother and I, they put me back to the 9th grade. The statement was, "because you haven't had English or Algebra, we going to have to put you back to the 9th grade in order for you to go to college." I thought "Oh! Go to college... Alright!" I wanted to be the first in my family to go college. In fact, my people were sharecroppers. None of my people were educated; my mom, my grandma, and my great-grandma, because my great-grandma was a slave – so, I'm from the slavery. My grandma she was slavery.

(Laughter)

NJ: Oh, wow.

EJ: We was picking cotton, when we was kids in the summertime. We would be out there in the field with a (inaudible) [pick] sack, honey. I was just telling someone the other day that I never sweat, I used to sweat on my nose but I don't sweat on my nose anymore. Grandma would have three rows of cotton to pick; she would have one on the left, one in the center, and one on the right, so that's how she would go, from left, center, to right. And, she come toward me and I got

my little (inaudible) [pick] sack on, okay..., and I'm picking cotton, I'm doing it. And, she said, "Gal! You not sweatin'. You not doing nothin'." I looked at Grandma and I'm like, "I'm doing the best I can!" My uncle heard her and my uncle, he got a little jar, a mayonnaise jar, and he put water in it, so I could put it in my pocket the next day. He said, "So, when Momma come close to you, take the water and throw it on your face." But, what I did, I threw the whole bottle in my face and when grandmother came by and seen that she said "Now, you workin'." So, that's me in the cotton field.

NJ: So, when you came here in 194—

NJ: What year was it?

EJ: When I first came here, 1943.

NJ: Where did you move to?

EJ: I told you. I lived at 2748 Geary Street with my aunt. And... so, I had relatives here already.

NJ: Oh, okay. Were they also in that same neighborhood?

EJ: That's where she lived on Geary. I had another—

NJ: What about your relatives?

EJ: That was my relative.

NJ: Oh, okay...

EJ: That was my aunt. My mother sister.

NJ: Right.

EJ: They was writing back and forth. Which, I'm reading the letters and she's saying to mother because of the Golden Gate Bridge this was Heaven, so you going be, mother thinking coming here to San Francisco she going to be closer to God... Not knowing, not knowing about the Golden Gate Bridge, not knowing about the Bible, not really being able to read. Now, my grandmother, she could not read, but she could tell you everything that was in that bible back to front.

NJ: Right...

EJ: Because of what she heard, she memorized everything. My grandmother was a very strong Black woman, and I wanted to be like her, because she was such a (inaudible) big woman. She was part Indian. So, then I had another aunt out here, she lived in Chinatown, 949 Clay St. So I was going to tell you about coming back from Texas to San Francisco in 1948.

NJ: After your aunt's funeral.

EJ: Right, after my aunt's funeral. I went to the principal's office and stated that I wanted to continue with my English and Algebra. I done got the hang of it, being there in Houston. And the principal says to me, "Oh, you won't need that. You're going back to Ms. Kelly." And the first time I ever said no to an adult was to that principal. I said, "No, I'm not going back to Ms. Kelly." She said, "Well, if you don't go back..." because, see, I'm in Ms. Kelly class all this time not learning anything. Not going nowhere, still reading out of the same 5th grade book all the time and they're passing me along.

NJ: Right.

EJ: According to my age. So, what happened is she says to me, "If you don't go back to Ms. Kelly, you'll have to go to school until you're sixteen." and I said, "Well, I'm not going to Ms. Kelly." So, then she decided well she's not going to send me to Kelly. "Okay" she said, "you have to go to continuation, because you have to go to school until you're sixteen." So, I said, "Very good," and they sent me. The school is still over on Mission, to this day. 16th and Mission. And, I would only have to go to school for four hours, but you'll have classes for two hours. I took cooking, I took it first because I knew whatever I would cook, I could eat and then for the next two hours I took typing. They had that whole big typewriter, and I'm just there, and I was just waiting five months – five months. Because this was in September 1948, and, so, on the 9th of February, five months, I'm going to be out of here. And, that's exactly what happened, sweetheart.

NJ: So, those schools that you went to, you said three; Hayes Valley, Geary and Girls High, were they integrated?

EJ: No, not really.

NJ: So, you were one of few Black students?

EJ: You see Girls High was mainly school for Black girls.

NJ: Oh.

EJ: The majority of the girls were Black. I remember seeing one Asian there.

NJ: Hmmm. Now, this was in the Fillmore?

EJ: Yes. I believe it, what is that... It's on Geary across the street from the park. It's called something else now. The school is, but the building is still there. Now, let everybody know that this was the old Girls High.

NJ: Do you remember the cross street?

EJ: Well,

NJ: If you don't, that's okay.

EJ: You'll be able to find it. I think. It may be Pierce?

NJ: So, the building still exists?

EJ: Oh, yes.

NJ: But, the name is no longer?

EJ: The name of the school has been changed several times. It's named something else now. It's even named after a Black guy, that guy used to be a referee. They named part of the school after him because they wanted to change the name to his name, after him. It was a Black guy but the Whites were saying Abraham Lincoln, no not Abraham Lincoln, because the school... What's the name of the school? Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Franklin was the President, talking about some dead president... Well, the school wasn't Benjamin Franklin; it was Girls High, because I attended the school. That's how they was able to name certain classrooms after this guy, that was a football referee. I can't think of his name but he was well known. He had gone to Washington, and I think he played football himself. I was just talking to someone the other day about the high school, because this young lady said she had graduated from... and she named the school. And I said, "Oh, yeah. That was the school where all the Blacks went, Black young men, went to that school." They had clubs; the young men were called the "Lucky 20s" and the girls was called the "Lucky 12s." They were fighting groups.

NJ: Oh, wow...

EJ: The girls, the Lucky 12s, they were tall like Amazon girls. They were big girls.

NJ: Did you have gangs at Girls High?

EJ: I just said they were called the Lucky 12s.

NJ: Okay, I didn't know you were referring to the Girls High...

EJ: Huh?

NJ: I didn't know you were talking about the Girls High...

EJ: Oh, yeah, because most of them went to Girls High. Some went to Roosevelt Junior High School. Roosevelt Junior High was manly Blacks. They didn't have schools for Blacks in Bayview/Hunters Point. What occurred was, when you hear "annex," they built schools and called them "annex" that was for Blacks. It was in the late '50s or early '60s, we had to go before the Board of Education to demand to have a junior high school built here in Hunters Point, in Bayview, which was called Pelton. Pelton Junior High was the first school. Then, we went and fought to have a high school. That's the high school my children went to. I can't think of the name right now...

NJ: Okay, that's okay.

EJ: That's where my children went. So, anytime you hear the word "annex" that means Black people.

NJ: Okay, that's good to know. So, moving forward, I know it's, like, moving pretty far ahead in your life-

EJ: No, go ahead, baby...

NJ: When you began to get involved with the welfare system and helping people to advocate for their rights, I read that you helped challenge a Health and Inspection Code. So, fathers could actually return home to their families that received aid...

EJ: Yes.

NJ: I'm curious to know how you got involved with that issue.

EJ: Well, what happened was, I was married with six children and my husband was in the Navy, okay? Then, we divorced and he said he was not going to give me any money. When I was married to him I was getting a \$136 with five kids. So, most the women, they didn't have husbands and I was told at the time that the man could not be in the house in order for the wife to get care for her children. A lot of people had been working; got laid off at the shipyard and other places got laid off. The husband had to leave the home in order for the family to eat, and I thought that to be very unfair. So, I was going back and forth to Sacramento to testify before the legislature and it was Ronald Reagan, who was the Governor at the time. I made a statement, because of these laws that was being passed and I didn't know the language. And, I said, Man, I don't know who wrote this"... And, he said, "I'm the author." And, I said, "Well, 'Mr. Author'..."

(Laughter)

EJ: "'Mr. Author'," I said, "what you're saying is that if I get pregnant I won't be able to eat, and my baby won't be able to eat, but when he gets 18 years of age you want to call him to fight your war, but you want to fatten him up first, where he can go and be killed...". I started crying, you know, about the fact that blacks have served this country and now they don't receive anything. And, it was that day that the Governor listening and I also said you all have a statement about illegitimate children and there is no such thing as illegitimate children. There is no such thing, every child has a father and a mother-

NJ: Right...

EJ: I said, "The only ones that are illegitimate is the parent and not the children," and they heard me. The governor passed the resolution where the father coming into the home because it's changed from AFDC, Aid to Family with Dependent Children, to AFDC/U, Unemployed Fathers. So, the fathers if they were unemployed, they didn't have to leave home, because I told them they were making liars of me and my children. I'm a Christian woman and you're saying my children don't know who their father is. Every child knows who their Father is. So that's how that got passed.

NJ: When you were working-

EJ: Working?

NJ: No, doing this activism work – going to the hearings, making statements – were there any other African American officials or people who held office or who were activists in the community that you admired going?

EJ: During the EOC day, that's in the 60s, I was going to these meetings, you know. I saw this big woman her name was Eloise Westbrook. She was a big, strong black woman. She didn't care what she said and I was amazed by her, you know. So, what happened is, I had taken a friend of mine down to the welfare department and there was a social worker passing out pamphlets that said there will be a meeting in my neighborhood, here in Hunters Point, that night. On there it said "you have rights" and I was thinking, "I didn't know we had no rights." So, I go to this meeting, and they told me to find my leader and the woman told me to go to Potrero Hill. But, the next morning, I went to Mendel where the EOC office was, and told the woman, Ms. Beatrice Dunbar, who was the one I was following, going to the Board of Education and being involved around in the community, going to the meetings and things, I was just going and listening. And, I wouldn't speak because I was always a shy person, so I just listen. Going to that meeting, I went to Ms. Dunbar the next morning and told her about this meeting I had went to and she said, "Well, you wait on Ms. Westbrook so I waited on Ms. Westbrook in her office. When I heard her feet coming in, I stood up as if I wasn't scared of her. I told her about the meeting and she told me I could be my own leader. What? I don't know nothing. She assigned staff to work with me and put pamphlets in my neighborhood. We had a meeting and the next thing I knew they had appointed me as the Acting Chair. Until the next meeting, the second meeting, and I had to pass out flyers again. Even at the second meeting they elected me as the Chair of Hunters Point Welfare Rights. Not knowing nothing. But because of the fact that Ms. Westbrook had assigned some educated, young people to work with me, that knew the laws and things, and I didn't forget nothing that I hear. I'm a very good listener. So, that's how I got started. Not knowing nothing.

NJ: Hm.

EJ: When you would see me I would always have a Bible under my arm, at all times. I was a missionary for my church. When you see me and I was praying, when they would call on me to speak, I don't know nothing about what those people was talking about. In the scripture it said, in the hour of need, God will be there for me, you know. So, I would pray before going to the meeting and I would say, "Now, Lord I don't know what they're going to ask of me, but you said in the hour of need, you would give me an answer." He had already shown me that he would give me an answer by me being at a house one night having Bible study. This gentleman asked me, not knowing he was a pastor, and he said to me, "You really gave a good lesson and taught well," he said, "but, I have a question for you. Who was the first missionary?" Honey, my feet started burning. It burned all the way up my body, up to my throat, and out came "Mary Magdalene." He didn't tell me I was right and he didn't tell me I was wrong. I started questioning God and asking people who was the first missionary, duh... duh... duh...? Most

pastors' churches you go to have these big old Bibles, and I was calling them, and asking them, and they didn't know.

NJ: Hm...

EJ: So, what happened one day, my neighbor's boyfriend came by and I knew he was a deacon in the church in Richmond, or Oakland, or some place, and I asked him, "Who was the first missionary?" He told me to look in the Scripture where Jesus was crucified. So, I looked it up and started reading, and then I read three Marys. You know that was it, and it was Mary Magdalene. When Jesus rose and he said go and tell them that I have risen. I said from that day I said, "Lord, I will never question you again and please forgive me," because He gave me the answer when I was unwilling to accept it. So, now, whatever God give me today, I accept everything, sweetheart. So, when I go out to these meetings, I pray while I'm driving my car, "Lord, get me there safely." When I'm able to move over to another lane on the freeway, I say, "Lord, thank you, Jesus," because I could've been in a accident. So, I thank Him for everything and I say what I want to these Supervisors and these people at the meetings, but when I get to the microphone, everything... and I make little notes on the agenda what I'm going to talk about. *(Laughter)* When I get to talking, the whole conversion change and when I get to the car I look up to heaven and say, "You fixed my little booty again."

(Laughter)

NJ: So, when you were with the Hunters Point Welfare Rights Commission—

EJ: It's never been a commission. It was an organization.

NJ: Organization. Excuse me.

EJ: I was the California State President, but we organized.

NJ: Where were the meetings held?

EJ: What happened is... before it was Welfare Rights; I started organizing in all the projects in public housing, welfare rights groups.

NJ: Wow.

EJ: And then what had occurred was, I was at the Welfare Department and one of the social workers told me, "Ms. Jackson, they have free lunches in the schools in the Sunset and that was the White area." She said, "You should ask the principal in your district..." you know, free lunch. I went to her and she told me she wasn't having no free lunches at her school. So, then I went to Ms. Westbrook and what this lady had told me [was] to fix my kids a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I said, "What if I don't have peanut butter and jelly?" "Well, I guess it's tough love then." And, it got around about my concern about the free lunch program. I was on TV and went to the Board of Education about this principal and had her removed because the school don't

belong to you. It belong to the community, and she was removed, and the free lunch was approved citywide.

NJ: Nice! Wow.

EJ: I was in the newspaper with my little hat on, because I always wore hats, and the headliner read "Feed My Hungry Childrens."

NJ: What year was that?

EJ: It was in... let's see... '60s. It was in the '60s

NJ: Where were some of the buildings? Or, where did you guys meet?

EJ: We was meeting at the Opera House.

NJ: Oh, okay.

EJ: On 3rd street. That's where the meeting were (inaudible) by the EOC staff...

NJ: Did you know...Ms. Doris Ward?

EJ: Oh, yes. I knew her when she was a Supervisor for the City and County of San Francisco. In fact, Doris Ward and even Willie B. Kennedy, who was a Black Supervisor woman. Her husband, Willie B. Kennedy['s] husband, was the first Director for the City for the EOC program, the citywide EOC program.

NJ: What's EOC?

EJ: Economic Opportunity Council, and that program is still in existence, but it's at the Mayor's Office. But, it started here, in Bayview/Hunters Point, and I can give you the information for all the programs that started here in Bayview/Hunters Point. And, the City is still receiving all those grants from those funds, but we're not getting anything, here in Bayview/Hunters Point.

NJ: Hm.. So, which public housing projects did you work with?

EJ: What do you mean housing projects?

EJ: Oh, you talking about public housing!

NJ: Yes.

EJ: Bayview/Hunters Point, Fillmore, Sunnydale, and what's that place called... North Beach.

NJ: North beach? Where was the public housing in North Beach?

EJ: Right there at Bay Street. Projects are still there.

NJ: I did not know that...

EJ: A lot of people don't know that. What happened is... Oh, it is right at the end of where the cable car turnaround at. Those projects there, those buildings there.

NJ: I don't ever think I've seen them.

EJ: Have you ever been on the cable car?

NJ: Yes.

EJ: And, went to the very end of the cable car into Chinatown? On your right-hand side you'll see some buildings, they're public housing buildings. They don't look like public housing buildings, maybe that's the reason.

NJ: When I talked to you on the phone, you talked about how you were part of the Auto Row demonstrations in the 60s.

EJ: What happened is, in 1962, I want you to get that, 1962. We went to picketing the Bank of America and Wells Fargo, because we was putting our money in the banks, but they didn't have no black managers or black tellers. So, they hired the first black manager there. I can't think of the man's name, he done passed away, who was the first black manager. Then we went to the grocery store because we was buying our groceries and they were delivering, but they didn't have any black tellers, cashiers. Here, we're in a community where the men... Butchertown, where you have a lot of black men butchering, but they didn't have no butchers working in the stores.

NJ: Butchertown? Where's that?

EJ: Our area, here. Our area here used to be called Butchertown.

NJ: Oh...

EJ: From... Evans Street up to...maybe... it was a couple of blocks. Where they slaughtered the cows and things, down here on Third Street. Right across the street from Jordan's... night club, one of the oldest night clubs in this area.

NJ: Sam Jordan's?

EJ: Sam Jordan's.

NJ: That's right.

EJ: Right across the street. Where the mall is.

NJ: Okay.

EJ: That used to be where the slaughterhouse was.

NJ: Oh, okay.

EJ: The stores did hire. The stores started hiring cashiers and also butchers. That's how they started getting Blacks hired in all the stores, in Safeway, and all of them.

NJ: So, it started with the butchers?

EJ: No, no, no, no. It started with us picketing.

NJ: Right—

EJ: So, what we decided to do when we left the grocery stores, we went down on South Van Ness, because the DMV was there at South Van Ness off of Mission Street. That was a Mel's Drive-in, right there, right on the corner. So, when we leave the DMV, we go stop at the drive-in and these little white girls would be on skates, coming out to get your order, and bring the food back. And, we decided we would go there and see some blacks on skates. They closed it down in order not to hire blacks there, but they did open it back up further north on Van Ness, Van Ness and Sutter, I believe. This was Mel's drive in—

NJ: This was located where?

EJ: It was on South Van Ness and Mission.

NJ: Oh, wow.

EJ: So, we decided okay, so we walked across Market to... Auto Row, which was on Van Ness it started at McAllister up to California on both sides of the streets. There was cars. We buying cars, but there was no black salesperson and it was Roger Boyd's Pontiac, who hired the first black salesperson. And it was, I believe his name was Mr. Murchison, and he passed away about 3 or 5 years ago.

NJ: Oh...

EJ: But now, you can go, to.... Oh, by us doing all of this, John Shelly was the Mayor at the time and he don't want to see people picketing the city, so, he wanted to know what did we want. He set up the first Human Rights Committee to find out what these colored people want. What was our concerns. Well we didn't have any jobs, education was bad, and health bad, and we had to catch three buses to get from here to San Francisco General Hospital. The same things we're going through today we was going through it then. The committee was set up and after two years it became a Commission (inaudible) and when the Commission was established, everything that had been discussed. What the Black concern was, it went up on the shelf. No more discussion. Then, they start trying to call it the unfinished agenda.

NJ: I have a question about the picketing; was it non-violent?

EJ: Yeah! It was non-violent!

NJ: Did the police come?

- EJ:** No, no. It was just peaceful picketing. We had our children out there with us. One young man was telling me, "I remember it in the 70s." I told him, "no, no, no, it was the '60s," and he said, "I wasn't nothing but eleven years old." I told him, "That's right. You were nothing but a baby when we was picketing."
- NJ:** So, as a woman holding public office, as an African American woman holding public office, in the 1960's, I'm sure you encountered many challenges. Were you involved with any feminist movements?
- EJ:** No, no. When the feminist movements came about I was already the California State President of the Welfare Rights Movement. They came, you know, later, but I did attend some of the meetings; but that was not my interest.
- NJ:** Right.
- EJ:** I only dealt with what God wanted me interested in, and that was children and seniors. Because I got a job with a company during the EOC days working with self-help for the ageing and this was all seniors, White seniors living in the South of Market area in the hotels and things. What happened is, before I was hired I went to a luncheon and they wanted to talk about the Welfare Rights Movement. I said, "I serve on the EOC Board and I been appointed by the Governor, dah, dah, dah, dah." And, I noticed, being the Chair of the Personnel Committee on the EOC Board, it has "A""A", but it got that "O" "R", it's equivalent, and they have a B.A. or its equivalent, and tried to push that big chair back, and I said, "I feel like I have the equivalent a Ph.D. and I'm still unemployed."
- (Laughter)*
- EJ:** So, that afternoon a friend of mine an instructor at Berkeley University, she was a White woman, but she had twenty-five students that she had assigned to me to work with me, to the my fifteen Welfare Rights groups that I had. There was always two students with me, at all times. These two students is the ones that helped me to say words and I would hear words and say, "What? What are they talking about?" Say, delete... I was at a meeting, and this lawyer was standing up there, saying "delete"... dealing with the Welfare Institution Code, honey! I said, "What is 'delete'?" to this little White girl, "What does that mean?" And she said, "That means to take out." And I said, "How you spell it?" "D-E-L-E-T-E." I wrote it on my hand, honey, when they called my name; I walked down the walkway and was praying. When I got up there, I was the one deleting behind and adding. Everything that's in the Welfare Institution Code, today, is everything that I asked to be deleted, and everything I asked to be added. Because I had to say what the law was, and what it meant, and how they was making us be criminals. Girl, God has been so good to me. In fact, I was down at a meeting at City Hall two or three months ago, and this little White lady, she said to me, "Are you still practicing law?" I said, "Oh, no. I retired!" *(Laughter)* A lot of people thought I was a lawyer 'cause I watched some Perry Mason.

NJ: I already asked you if you knew Ms. Doris Ward, but did you know any other African American women who held office?

EJ: Yes. I told you Willie B. Kennedy, she was a Black Supervisor.

NJ: Okay.

EJ: Now, oh, I can't think of her name, but she's out in Los Angeles. She's in Congress... She used to be with the Welfare Rights Movement.

NJ: She's Black?

EJ: Yeah! Tough Black girl.

NJ: I'll look into that. And, you say she's with Congress, now?

EJ: Yes! Yes, honey.

NJ: I'll look into that...

EJ: Also, we've had, in the past eight years we done had two Black Supervisors.

NJ: Right.

EJ: In the District elections....Well, London Breed is in for the 5th District. Right here in Bayview/Hunters Point, we had Sophie Maxwell and now we have... I can't think, (inaudible) but he didn't do anything, nothing. It was all about money and developers. Nothing. Hasn't done one thing. My feeling is this; if you don't do your job, you don't need to be there. I don't care what color you are; because see, in my family we have all types of nationalities. I'll give you a little story; my grandma had five girls and three boys. Her first boy was Guarantee; the second boy's name was Have To Be, the third boy name was Must Be. The third boy went off to the Army with Guarantee in the early '40s, when he went to join the Army. And, I tell you to look it up, and I tell people to look it up. They used to have a newspaper [article], *Believe it or Not*, have you ever heard of that? It was a column they had.

NJ: In San Francisco?

EJ: It was all over; it was in the South. It was everywhere, all over. I don't know what newspaper it was. Called Believe It or Not, but it was in the '40s and I'm sure you can find out where it's located. It's in the archives somewhere. And, so, so when Uncle Guarantee went to join the Army, they had it in the newspaper about his brothers. His name Guarantee, his brother Have To Be, and his brother Must Be. People thought it was a joke, but it wasn't. Those were my uncles. What happen is, when, when my brothers got older, they were embarrassed by their names. So, they changed them. Uncle Guarantee changed his name to Maurice (inaudible), and Has To Be changed his name to Jimmy Lee, and Must Be changed his name to Henry Lee; but, it was never done legally.

NJ: Oh.

EJ: It was just want they wanted to be called. They didn't want no girls calling them Have To Be and Must Be. I had heard rumors, because I was an only child, so, I listen to the old folks talking and I heard rumors about my grandmother and this White man giving Grandma all this land. They had said when Uncle Guarantee was born, they said he was a white boy and Grandma said, "I guarantee you, it's a nigga." When Have To Be was born, he was dark brown-skinned and she said, "This have to be a nigga," and when Must Be was born, he's about your complexion, she said, "This must be a nigga." After being a woman, an adult, I asked Grandma, "If you had another child what are you going to name him?" She said Gonna Be. So, that's how the names came about.

NJ: Wow. Interesting.

EJ: Yes. My grandmother was a very interesting woman. She was a very strong woman. Like I said, she could not read or write, but she was a strong, Black woman. She died signing her name with an "X." They said she had killed this White man and this other White man is the one that had stopped her from going to jail, and said, "No, she didn't kill him." So, that's what the rumor was. So, I don't know...

NJ: Thank you for sharing that.

EJ: Uh-huh.

NJ: So, I had read that, and you were talking about earlier, you worked with the Ohlone; you were their spokesperson?

EJ: So what happened was, City Planning, the City Planning Department, I had heard for many years that the City Planning Department was all rich, White men. I heard that they would meet and plan for twenty years and then they would go to Hawaii, you know. They would plan how things was going to be. So, I said, "I'm going to this meeting about the City Planning and see what these White men are talking about." So, they were talking about Bayview/Hunters Point and where they were going to knock down stuff and build on the Bay, this, that, and the other. And, they put together this plan. During this time I had these students, you know, that was working with me, and they could read, they understood what the plan was. They called me and said, "Ms. Jackson, they saying your house don't exist." I said, "What?" So, they came and sat right here on this floor and showed me in this plan book where there was a red dot; that meant your house don't exist.

So, I got on the phone, and called the Planning Department and this young man said to me... and I told him what page to look on, and he said to me, "You don't know what that means?" I said, "Yes, it means that my house don't exist, but my house is here, and there are no empty houses on my block. And, I said, "I'll tell you what you can do, sweetheart, cross your legs and put them on the desk, because this shit is not going to fly. So, with that, I had a girl working with me, and

she had quit her job, she was a White girl and she had quit her job to come volunteer in my office. Because I was the... had drawn the line and things for district elections and I was the Chair of District 7 Democratic Club. So, she had seen me in City Hall, came to work with me, and was very helpful with getting this guy on TV Channel 6, for me to go on Channel 6 with this Planning book. I opened it up, and the camera guy was over my shoulder, I was showing where the red dot is and I said to the audience, "Any of you go to City Hall and get this book and see if your house exists."

And honey, the next week, I was down at City Hall and people asking, "Ms. Jackson is that a red dot on my house?" She lived on Van Dyke and what their intentions was to level from, you know, Jamestown all the way to Palou and from Third Street to the bank. I said, "It will never work." In fact, that was one time I was asking that we be apart from the City and County of San Francisco. I was going to name this area. I had drawn the lines from Highway 101 to Army Street and from Bayshore to the Bay because we were divided. Like, we're out here by ourselves, all the traffic, Highway 280, and all of that crap. No one cared and the shipyard's right here. So, listening to educators, I mean people, and politicians and watching how they do things. Hm hmm. So, I know the system backwards and forwards. Can't anybody tell me nothing about how the City operates. They are so...the City and County of San Francisco, it's good that there's an investigation going on, because they need to close down City Hall. It's corruption in this City, and just about everybody is a part of the corruption in this City, even the preachers.

NJ: What about your work with the Ohlones?

EJ: Well, my work with the Ohlone was that when they were talking about doing all of this, the White girl that was working with me, she the one that told me about the Indians. I said, "Indians?" I'm thinking all the Indians was dead and gone, watching and seeing the movies and everything. So, they contacted Rosemary, and came to my office, and I sitting there listening, you know, and finding out about that story, and everything that was going on. They were getting ready to build some houses up here on the, this hill, Bayview Hill. They had already torn down part of the hill, then some of the workers had come to me because they had heard about me and the Indians. They said, "Ms. Jackson, out there at the parking lot of Candlestick; there's a lot of bones there." So, when I heard that, I went to Park and Rec and asked them to hold a meeting, which they did. They had a group together, and they couldn't build, tear down anymore of the hill, here, because that was the burial sites for the Ohlone Tribe.

NJ: Wow.

EJ: Uh-huh. In doing that, I was able to get them to put together a resolution and I went before the Board of Supervisors during June or July, when they were having the budget hearings, and they too busy to notice anything, and I asked them to put this resolution on for me. They passed it, that Ohlone Tribes was the aboriginals of the San Francisco Bay Area.

NJ: When was this?

EJ: '92. '92. Then, we went before the Human Rights Commission and got them to do a resolution and, as I stated, the Human Rights Commission passed that resolution, as well. When that happened, this guy writing for the newspaper he said, "The City don't know what they just did; they done gave Espanola Jackson carte blanc [*carte blanche*] to take over the Presidio and all the land. (*Laughter*) Because the Indians have the First Right of Refusal–

NJ: What's that?

EJ: Any federal land like the Presidio, the Navy, any Army Base, Navy Base, is considered federal land. So, when they got ready to close down all these areas, I said, "I want my land," because Indians have First Right of Refusal to say whether or not they want the land. I even wrote a letter, and my girlfriend was the Chair of the Hunters Point Shipyard. So, I wrote them a letter, the Citizens Advisory Committee, asking them to support the ... Muwekma Ohlone getting the Shipyard, which they did. I introduced the Ohlones to Willie Brown, when he was Mayor, and in fact, in 1996 or 1997 we had the first Pow-wow, here, at the Presidio; where we had the reunion of the Buffalo Soldiers and the Indians.

NJ: Wow. And, how was that?

EJ: Beautiful.

NJ: Wow.

EJ: Willie Brown came. And, because of my work with the Indians, they just took me as part of them. We're like sisters, you know–

NJ: Yeah.

EJ: And, they just made me an Elder.

NJ: Wow.

EJ: I'll get my I.D. and show it to you.

NJ: Did they give you a name, too?

EJ: No. My name is still the same, but I'm an Elder for the Tribe. Then, I set up my own tribe–

NJ: You set up your own tribe?

EJ: (*Laughter*) And, everybody ask, Mrs. Jackson, "Can I join your tribe?" (*Laughter*) To everybody I say, "I got my own tribe." So, it's been beautiful. They've been fighting over, at least, 30 years to get back on the Federal Register. Because up until 1927, they had bounty hunters out for the Indians, and every head they would get, they would get \$5 a head. So, they thought they had killed all of the Muwekma Ohlone.

NJ: Bounty hunters!?

EJ: Yes! Yes, baby.

NJ: To kill people?

EJ: Yes. For every head they would bring, they would get \$5 dollars.

NJ: Why?

Ej: They wanted to kill all the Indians off.

NJ: That was legal?

EJ: You know the White man make things legal. It went on up until 1927, and I was born in 1933. You know, there was, I have information on some of the Indians.

NJ: Do you still work with them?

EJ: Honey, yes. They call me “Baby.” Rosemary Campbell, who is the Chief of the Ohlone Tribe, I met with her about a month ago. Now, that the, the President or somebody passed something not long ago, I had it on my internet; now, I done took it off. Where it’s going to be easier_ see the white man up in Sacramento scratched off over 100 tribes, and bands, and groups, like they did not exist any longer. These tribes had to fight and go to court. They spent millions of dollars trying to get back on the Federal Register and because, now, the fact that they know the existence of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, they just don’t want to put them on the Federal Register, because they would be asking for the land, because I had already requested land. We had even asked the Presidio for a hospital because the Indians didn’t have a hospital. They are so wrong, and it’s the Representatives. And I said, “I know Diane Feinstein and Nancy Pelosi don’t want to see no little Indians and Blacks running in their backyard”; because, we’d be right in their backyard, there at the Presidio. The guy who had written the paper said, “Ms. Jackson going to get all the land – and I was after it – but they never got back on the Federal Register. Now, they going to be. Soon, I hope, to back on the Federal Register.

NJ: That’s true. Wow, that’s amazing. Amazing, and I think that’s–

EJ: I’m the first Black woman who’s ever been given that positon by a tribe. I had met with another guy who was with the tribes in New York.

NJ: Right...

EJ: He came here, he had heard about me, and he said he had been working with them for years in New York and other areas, and he said, “They never made me a member.” I said, “That’s you and this is me.”

NJ: Wow. What an honor, and I think it’s the fact that you collaborated with this other group, and you know, were stronger in numbers–

EJ: Mm. Hmm. (*agreeing*)

NJ: And when we find commonality–

EJ: Mm. hmm. (*agreeing*)

NJ: We're able to get work done quicker. And, I just really, really admire that you did that.

EJ: Well, you see, people don't realize, [as] I stated at a meeting about two or three weeks ago, "You, you, you," and its different nationalities in the room, "we're all sisters and brothers up in here."

NJ: Right.

EJ: I said, "God the Father," you know, "We have got to watch each other's back you know we have to look out for each other."

NJ: Right.

EJ: This is the way I was brought up. Do you know, I didn't know about racism until I was an adult with children living on Oakdale. I never heard the word. If I did hear it, I didn't know what it meant.

NJ: Right...

EJ: Because, it wasn't taught in my home. My mother, she didn't read. So, we didn't have a *Jet* magazine or an *Ebony* magazine, you know, where I could read, or see that that black men was being hung in the South. All my mother did was work and go to church. So, we didn't know anything about that. I'm 81 years old today. But then, I started watching what I'm hearing. And, I said, "Oh, yeah. San Francisco is worse than the South. They will look you in the face, and smile, and stab you right in the back. San Francisco is more racist than it is in the South. At least in the South, you know it's racism; but, you don't know it here, because they don't talk it, but they are. I've noticed it. This is what I've seen... with the.... City Planning Department, I've seen with the Supervisors, the Mayors and departments of this City. When, here, in Bayview/Hunters Point, no one should be living here.

The work that's going on, should not be going on, should not be done because of all the toxins in this area. Like, if that guy, my neighbor over there, he owns that land over there; if he would grow vegetables over there I wouldn't eat nothing because of all the radiation that is in this area. All the different toxins that is in this area. It blows all over this city. We are more damaged, here, and this community has the highest rate of cancer, the highest rate of... asthma, the highest rate of everything. Right here, in Bayview/Hunters Point. It's written in books, but do anybody care? No, they don't care.

NJ: I do.

EJ: I'm not talking about you. God cares. God anointed me to do the work that I do. God cares and I'm fighting for His children and everyone is His children. I let him know we have Asians here,

Latinos here, we have Samoans, we have Russians, and Italians... and Blacks in this community. Six different groups. Who do you see out there fighting? Myself and this young man, Francisco DeCosta. He does most the writing and talking about it. Have you ever seen his... blog?

NJ: Blog. Yeah, when I was researching you his name came up. He wrote an article about you.

EJ: Yes, honey, he is good.

NJ: Is he Ohlone?

EJ: No, he was born in Africa.

NJ: Oh...

EJ: And he knows more about America than I... I've learned from him. He was with the Muwekma Ohlone. I was introduced to him by the Muwekma because he was working over there in the Presidio. That's how they was in touch with him.

NJ: Okay. I see.

EJ: I got to meet him through them. And we been together ever since.

NJ: So, just kind of transitioning here... For African American history, we're really interested in spaces. Like community centers, clubs, and social halls I just wondering; with the time you've spent here in the city—

EJ: Can I just say this? With the expansion of the sewage plant in my neighborhood, this is what I want you to see.

NJ: Okay.

EJ: When we started talking about the expansion of the sewage plant and they wanted to build a park over the sewage. I said, "No, I want me a college." 1800 Oakdale is a San Francisco community college. Southeast Community College. I demanded a college, because of the fact our people have not been educated; they can't read, and with the college, we would have a GED, and we would have a nursing program. Things that we needed in this community, and going beautifully. Now, PUC is saying... trying to say it's their building. In fact, I will be meeting with them tomorrow.

NJ: PUC?

EJ: Public Utilities Commission, and Julia Ellis is the one who wants to claim it, but I'm not letting her claim nothing.

NJ: Right. We're also interested in social places too.

EJ: It's no social places for people to go in San Francisco. When I was growing up, we had skating rink, we had bowling—

NJ: Okay. Where was the skating rink? Where was bowling?

EJ: Huh?

NJ: Where were these places?

EJ: They had them in Fillmore.

NJ: Okay. Do you remember where in Fillmore?

EJ: I think it used to be on Ellis. We had theaters. Like, five theaters over there in Fillmore.

NJ: This is where Black folks went?

EJ: Yeah. The Blacks were in Fillmore, and here, and Hunters Point. Majority of the Blacks were in Fillmore. The Blacks here, they had built temporary housing for Blacks, because we could not live next door to Whites. You can go on the internet and see it; when public housing was built in 1938, it was built for low income White folk. It was not until 1954, when the integration law was passed, that we were able to move into —

(Interview paused for fire engine sirens.)

NJ: So, you were saying about the PUC... and meeting with them. Oh, no... We were talking about theaters in the Fillmore.

EJ: There was about five theaters in the Fillmore. Even then, where the Temple Theater was, between Sutter and Post, you could learn how to do hair.

NJ: Do you remember seeing any musicians or singers?

EJ: Oh, listen, honey! They had clubs up the yang-yang.

NJ: Any memorable experiences?

EJ: Yes. They had like, Johnson... Johnson Play House, he was the one that did 19th of June every year; Juneteenth. They had the Glass House and the Chicken Shack. I used to go to the Chicken Shack.

NJ: Really?

EJ: My girlfriend, I was like 15 or 16 years old, and she was like 19 or 20 years old.

NJ: What kind of music did they play there?

EJ: The Fillmore Auditorium, they would have the big bands to come, like B.B. King and all of them back in the day.

NJ: Were these clubs integrated or just Black folks?

EJ: White folks would be there, too.

NJ: Really? This was in the 50s?

EJ: The '40s and '50s, yes. They had a club called the Blue Mirror ...but, they had the jazz club.

NJ: The Blue Mirror? Mirror, like on the wall?

EJ: It wasn't like this (*gestures with hand*) on the wall... It was a window, it was blue, and the club was called Blue Mirror. The Blacks had all the restaurants, and barbeque places, and things of that nature, and the clubs and everybody just having a good time. I used to go to this club with my girlfriend and I [would] sit by the window so I could watch everybody go up and down the street. (*Laughter*) I didn't drink, but I would have my beer in front of me and have my strawberry soda under the chair. (*Laughter*) They knew I didn't drink, but I would dance on the bars!

NJ: Oh!

EJ: I was a dancer. I could do it, and I was the best dancer when was in high school.

NJ: What kind of dances did you do?

EJ: All kinds. What they call the booty shaking. What I call booty shaking...

NJ: There is something that I thought of that I want to ask you about. I think in 1962, James Baldwin came to San Francisco, and he did a tour, and he was coming here commentating on the state of Blacks. He said something very similar to what you said, "That there's no difference between was it Greenville, Alabama, the very famous town where they were spraying folks with water hose and putting dogs on them. There is no difference between that city and San Francisco." And, I'm wondering if you...They did a documentary on it called, *Take this Hammer* and it's with James Baldwin, when he came to town. Have you heard about that?

EJ: Yes. I heard. In fact, I met him, but I didn't know about his status or anything

NJ: Oh, my goodness!

EJ: I had prayed when I started my doing my work. I seen a lot of people and a lot of Blacks that had their nose stuck up to poor Black people. A lot of Blacks, you know. I had asked the Lord to never let me forget from whence I came, and He has not allowed me to forget. I came from public housing, and the cotton picking road, and I haven't forgotten that, and I can talk about that with pride. When I talk to young people, and I talk to a lot of school children, you know, letting them know what's important is getting their education, because I didn't get the

education that I needed. And, what happen to me, I don't want to happen to others. That's why I'm fighting to keep this college open and they understand that it belong to the community and not to PUC; because they want to make an office building out of the college. They have greenhouses there, and these greenhouses, people there train our Black youth. They supposed to have a classroom and never occurred. Everything good that has happen to us, at least when I was involved, has tried to be taken away. PUC... We had four of five daycare centers, that were given to us through the devolvement for Hunters Point and... under the... Southeast Facilities Commission, we took over those centers to make sure they stayed in the community.

PUC came in and had this commission, baby, to give them up to the City so we don't have nothing; and here they come trying to take away the college, and give a portion of the green house away to an organization, and I'm saying, "Oh, hell no. You're not doing this. I'm not going to allow this to happen. If I have to sue the City, I will sue them." And, I've had lawyers come to me and said they been watching you for a long time and will be my lawyer pro-bono. You understand me? I'm not worried about them, and that's why you see a smile on my face; but, I get angry every time I think about this. Here you come, and they don't know nothing about this community, and stuff they wrote-up they want the committee to pass on tomorrow. The meeting will be from nine to four; they got a draft in there, and I'm saying, "Oh, hell, no. This will never happen...." Look at that draft; this is the draft they want the Commission to pass on that tomorrow.

NJ: I want to take a look at this, but, I just got....

EJ: I want you to see the years here. You the first person to come here without a camera...

NJ: Oh, really?

EJ: Yes! They usually scan... whatever y'all do with cameras... Like this right here, and this shows you when we got started with this.

NJ: Is this your only copy? Maybe I can come back...I guess I can take a picture of it. I would love a copy of this; but, I have a few more questions, and then we will wrap up, and I do want to look at this. So, are you a member of any church here in San Francisco?

EJ: Uh-huh...

NJ: Which one?

EJ: Yes. My church is at 1121 Oakdale and my pastor is Earnest Jackson.

NJ: What's the church?

EJ: It's Holiness Church.

NJ: Is this the church you've been a member of for a while?

EJ: No, no, no, baby. No. I belonged to another church that's over in Richmond. Because of my age, and this church started over here, and my daughter got saved there, and I joined that church. I was a member of Providence on Third Street for many years, my mom, we all was... For many years. I joined that church to make sure that my daughter stayed saved. I remember when... because, when I got saved, there was nobody to tell me how the devil worked, and I wanted to make sure she was okay and she still saved. Her name is Gwendolyn. We call her Gwenny. The church moved because it grew. They moved over there to Richmond, and because of my age, five years ago, I started going to Richmond and then it got to where five years or so, I didn't know my left from my right, and I would be getting lost. So, I said I need to find a church home here.

NJ: It's more convenient.

EJ: Yeah.

NJ: Just to wrap it up. Are there any buildings or spaces in the city that you can think of that are relevant to the African American experience here?

EJ: Any building left standing? They have torn down everything and they want to do that here in Bayview/Hunters Point because of development. When they started putting on Third Street, in those islands with the palm trees, a statement was made "For every palm tree, that mean a Black person gone." They didn't build that for us. The waterfront; do you think their building all of that for the people that is here now? No, no, no... We have a homeowners' association and I see a lot of Blacks there, and they had public housing right down the street, called Alice Griffith. I said, "Look, when they tear down Alice Griffith, we're next. Don't think because you're getting rid of public housing they won't get rid of you." I saw on the news where they had built this big motel and they needed a highway to go through. They tore that sucker down and built up a highway. So, you can't ever think because you're a homeowner that they're not going to touch you, because you're not that important. At all. You're important to money.

NJ: Is there anything else that I haven't asked you, or we haven't talked about that should be known about African American history here in San Francisco?

EJ: Maybe you know about... How they have just... Because of the development that's going on now and how they are trying... What they're doing is using public housing to privatize, to give to developments, to get Blacks out of Bayview/Hunters Point. That's what's going on today, is to get Blacks out of San Francisco, because don't none us make \$100,000 or \$200,000 a year. I stated it to the Supervisors, because before the Supervisors was only making \$38,000 a year and most of those Supervisors were White lawyers citywide, and they would miss out on the meetings when they go to court. It came about if we give them \$120,000, or so, that would cover their expenses, you know, and them working.

These Supervisors we have today, if there's a holiday, you're off Saturday, Sunday and Monday, they don't come to work on Tuesday. And, they take off Tuesday too. They take off more than

any Supervisor I know and I said, “We need to bring their salaries back down to \$38,000. Cut their salaries because they’re not servicing us.” Even the President of the Board cut our time down to speak from three minutes, to two minutes, to one minute and those of us who want to get up there and speak, they cut us off. I mean, that’s a slap in the face and they wanted to hold these meetings on June 19th, especially PUC, and another group, and I told them, “You guys can’t hold these meetings then. That’s ‘Black Day’.” That’s when we found out that we was free. You can’t do that.” So, I made them change the meetings day from the 19th to tomorrow.

NJ: Well, when Mrs. Jackson says something, you better fall in line! Thank you so much for sitting down with me and sharing your stories, memories and experiences.

EJ: Thank you, Sweetheart.

NJ: Thanks for your time.

EJ: I hope you get some big award.

D. Annie Shynebaugh

Interviewer: Tim Kelley, Tim Kelley Consulting

Tim Kelley: This is September 10th, 2014. This is Tim Kelly, Consultant for the African American Historical Context Statement project. I'm going to interview Ms. Annie Shynebaugh for that project. Good morning.

Annie Shynebaugh: Good morning. How are you?

TK: Good. Thank you. How are you?

AS: I'm good.

TK: So, could you state your name?

AS: My name is Annie Shynebaugh and I've lived in the community for over 40 years. I raised two of my kids here and they both went to private high schools and private elementary school. They're both working at Saint Ignatius High School.

TK: Oh, really. Let's just say for the record that here is Diamond Heights. So, you lived in Diamond Heights for 40 years?

AS: Yes.

TK: Wow. Where were you born?

AS: Athens, Louisiana.

TK: What year?

AS: 1943.

TK: '43. That's my year, too.

TK: How long have you lived in San Francisco?

AS: Since I was 16, so, over 20 years now.

TK: Where did you live before Diamond Heights?

AS: Over in the Western Addition; that was on Hayes Street. When, when I first moved to California I lived on hm..., oh, gosh...

TK: Well, don't worry about it.

AS: Before I moved here, I lived on... um...in the Western Addition.

TK: Why did you move here?

AS: Because it was a new project and they gave me a job here.

TK: Oh, really? Who did?

AS: Cocoa [spelling?] properties.

TK: Oh, yeah okay, this was a HUD financed project?

AS: Yes.

TK: And, it was brand new?

AS: It was brand new, yes.

TK: Where were you working before?

AS: At Kaiser Hospital, as a technician.

TK: So, you raised how many kids here? Two?

AS: Yes.

TK: You were born in Louisiana? Your parents were born there?

AS: Yes.

TK: And, you came here, you came to California, you said when you were 16? So, you were still with your parents?

AS: 16, yeah. Yeah, I lived with my parents when I moved here...

TK: Well, what brought them here, to California?

AS: Well, I came by myself; they packed up my clothes and put it on one of those wooden boxes...and I took the bus here.

TK: Oh, really. Why did they do that?

AS: Well, that the only thing they knew... what to do.

TK: Do you have brothers and sisters?

AS: I had three other siblings, but I'm the oldest of four. So, it's just me and my sister that's still alive. My other two brothers are dead.

TK: Where is your sister?

AS: She lives in Houston Texas, but when I first came out here I lived with my aunt and uncle, who lived on Sutter Street in San Francisco.

TK: What did your parents do for a living?

AS: They were just labor people, my dad worked on the railroad and my mother did domestic work.

TK: So, you were finished with high school by the time you came here.

AS: Yeah. I finished high school at age 16.

TK: Wow. What did you do for a living when you got here?

AS: I went back to school and got a certificate for LVN and then I worked as an LVN for quite some and then I went back to school and got my nursing degree from USF.

TK: What prompted you to change to property management?

AS: Well, because I lived here, and they were looking for a manager, and I thought it would be interesting work to do.

TK: So, you were the first batch of people who lived in the place?

AS: Yeah, I was in the first batch of people...

TK: Who were they? I mean I know there are large numbers of African Americans who live here now.

AS: Well, the first Black person who lived here I think was Mildred Blackman and she still here.

TK: Oh really. Wow. So, it was mixed, the people who lived here?

AS: Yeah...

TK: What happened to that mix over the forty years?

AS: We still pretty much have a well-balanced [population]. So, we have a waiting list with the time of races and ages of people and so... when we try to fill the vacancies we look at the ethnic background.

TK: Yeah.

AS: Then select them from that.

TK: The income, too?

AS: Yes.

TK: And you were doing that for forty years? Any stories you want to tell us about that?

AS: Well, there's no particular story...

TK: So, are you a member of a church?

AS: San Francisco Christian Center.

TK: Oh, really. Down on Mission? I know Pastor Green.

AS: He's my pastor.

TK: How long have you been a member of that?

AS: For quite some time now.

TK: So, what schools did your kids go to?

AS: The elementary school that my oldest went to was Saint Paul's over on Turk Street; then, Cathedral for middle school; then, for high school he went to Saint Ignatius High School. Then, my youngest son went to Saint Paul's down the hill, here; then, he went to Reardon High School.

TK: All Catholic schools?

AS: Yeah, all Catholic Schools.

TK: You weren't Catholic?

AS: No, no. (Laughter)

TK: Why were you sending them to Catholic schools?

AS: Because, I knew they would get a good education.

TK: Yeah. What do they do now? Let me see, you told me that...

AS: My oldest son teaches and coaches at Saint Ignatius and my youngest just coaches there.

TK: Oh, really. And, so, do you remember racial discrimination in Louisiana? Do you remember it here?

AS: Yeah. Well, and that what I found so different when I came here, I had so much freedom of speech compared to the speech in Louisiana.

TK: Yeah. You needed to keep your mouth shut, you know, in Louisiana.

AS: In Louisiana you were to be seen and not heard.

TK: Where you lived, there, was it racially mixed? I mean the town, or, was it all black?

AS: No. It was all predominately white people and all the houses was little shot gun houses.

TK: And, it was different here even from the beginning?

AS: Well, not from the beginning. It was like it is now, so when I first came here it hasn't changed at all, the racial tension is um... has changed a little bit, compared to Louisiana...

TK: Yeah. Did it change a little bit compared to Louisiana?

AS: Well, it's a significant difference between the racial tension in Louisiana and here.

TK: What about the racial situation in San Francisco when you first moved here compared to now?

AS: It's okay...I don't know how to explain it, but it's a little bit different than when I first moved here.

TK: Better or worse?

AS: It's better.

TK: So, you worked at Kaiser?

AS: I worked at Kaiser for 31 years.

TK: So, that was an integrated workforce? From way back?

AS: Yes.

TK: Then how many employees are there, here? (For the record, we are in Diamond View Apartments.) How many apartments are there?

AS: 58.

TK: How many employees?

AS: Six. There are six of us. Two maintenance guys and three office people.

TK: So you lived for some years in the Western Addition?

AS: Yes.

TK: Was that before Redevelopment?

AS: Well, It was during redevelopment time because my aunt and uncle, that I lived with, bought their first property through Redevelopment on Sutter and Laguna, back in that time you can buy a house for like five thousand dollars and they bought a couple of houses, then.

TK: Oh, really. They were not demolished? They're still there?

AS: They're still there.

TK: How long did they own them?

AS: They still do.

TK: There still with us?

AS: Yes, there still with us.

TK: Wow. Well, two houses.

AS: Well, right now, they have seven houses, because every time they got a chance, they purchased another home.

TK: What did your uncle do for a living?

AS: He worked for the meat company... What's the name of that meat company? It starts with an "A," um... I don't remember the name, but my aunt was a nurse at Green's Eye Hospital. Do you remember that place?

TK: No. Where?

AS: Green's Eye Hospital it was an ENT hospital on Laguna and Bush Street.

TK: Wow... seven houses.

AS: Yeah, she owned seven houses.

TK: How many kids do they have?

AS: Four.

TK: So, everybody gets a house.

AS: Yeah. Yeah. Plus she bought property in Louisiana, too.

TK: That's interesting, did you know any other people in the Western Addition that did that sort of thing. That bought up...

AS: No. I don't know of too many people that still alive that still over there.

TK: But, I mean when you aunt and uncle were starting to buy them were other people doing the same thing?

AS: I think so, but I don't remember who they were.

TK: So, the Western Addition when you lived in it, was pretty much a Black neighborhood?

AS: Well, no, because a lot of Chinese families lived there and a lot of white families lived there and then...

TK: Japanese?

AS: Some Japanese people.

TK: What is the racial mix in Diamond View now? You say it's pretty balanced?

AS: It's pretty balanced, yeah.

TK: So, then it's Black, White, Asian, Latino, South Pacific Islanders... So, you retired from the hospital when you were_

AS: Yeah, I retired in 1999, but I maintained my employment at Diamond View and then I got bored then went out and got another job at the YMCA in Stonestown. So, I had to be there at 4:30 in the morning and then I went there, and worked five to six hours in the morning, then I came here to the property and worked for eight hours.

TK: What did you do at the YCMA?

AS: I opened and closed the YMCA.

TK: At 4:30?

AS: The gym opened at five o'clock and then people would get there about four forty five and then I open all the doors and turn on all the machines, so, they can get ready and turn on the sauna and put towels out for everybody.

TK: So, was Diamond View built before these other developments around here?

AS: Diamond View was built in 1970.

TK: Okay, do you happen to know what the other one here is? It's uh..?

AS: Glen Ridge...

TK: Glen Ridge...

AS: I think they were building them at the same time or during the same time.

TK: You know those people. Do you know the people there?

AS: Do you want to talk to the manager at Glen Ridge?

TK: I might, yeah.

AS: Well, their office moved to Berkeley Way.

TK: Oh, really. I know where it is.

AS: The office manager name is Barbara Goody, but yeah, I don't know Glen Ridge's phone number but...

- TK:** I can find it. I know where the office is. Didn't they use to be right down here?
- AS:** They just moved up there a few months ago.
- TK:** What's the difference between the two developments?
- AS:** Well, there's a slight difference... there it's on the same principles, it's for low-income families and uh...they judge your rents according to what you make. And, it's for working class people.
- TK:** Is Diamond View a co-op?
- AS:** Yes, we are a co-op slash association.
- TK:** What does that mean?
- AS:** We have the same rights as a co-op, but we function as an association.
- TK:** Oh, really, okay.
- AS:** That's kind of confusing.
- TK:** But, basically people who live here get to control it and I think Glen Ridge is a co-op?
- AS:** It's a co-op, also.
- TK:** Okay, so they're the same sort of thing. I guess I'm trying to ask about moving... of course, the Western Addition was racially mixed.
- AS:** Yeah, well there were more Blacks in the Western Addition than White people, more Blacks and Chinese and Japanese people than Whites.
- TK:** So, but there was also Black-owned commercial districts.
- AS:** There were more black businesses than now. I mean back in the '50s and '60s, than there are right now.
- TK:** Yeah, but there's really nothing like that up here?
- AS:** No, no, no. no.
- TK:** So...Once you moved did you go back there for any commercial...
- AS:** I went back to some of the restaurants. There's some very good restaurants and they have one or two black restaurants down there. Have you been to the 100 Club, yet? You should go and have some fried catfish. It's really good.
- TK:** What about hairdressers?

AS: Oh...you have those on Ocean Street, right now. There are more Black beauty shops on Ocean than in the Western Addition.

TK: Where do you go?

AS: I go on Ocean Avenue.

TK: There used to be a Black salon right down there in Glen Park.

AS: But they moved to Ocean.

TK: Oh, did they?

AS: Kay's you remember Kay's?

TK: On Diamond Street? Yeah.

AS: She moved to San Jose Street between Ocean, I don't know what the cross street is. Then the lady that does my hair, I forget the name of the shop, but it's by Junipero Serra and... right across the street from Commodore Slope Elementary School.

TK: Yeah, I do know the place. You drive?

AS: Yes, well, I haven't been driving since I had the stroke a year ago. I have to be re-trained, again.

TK: How are you feeling?

AS: I feel good now, yeah.

TK: Do you still get out for entertainment?

AS: Yes, yes I have a group of people I hang out with over the weekend, like this weekend, Diamond Heights Association is having they're health and safety fair. I have one booth that I'm going to be in talking about the YMCA.

TK: Is it going to be at Police Academy?

AS: Yes, and it starts at ten o'clock in the morning, so, if you don't have nothing to do you should come out. It's going to be fun. They're going to have a lot of food, and a lot of entertainment, and all that.

TK: Saturday?

AS: Yes, Saturday.

TK: Where do your kids live?

AS: My youngest son, after finishing college, and after his marriage broke up, he moved back in with me to help take care of me. So, he lives here with me now. My oldest son with his family lives down on Cayuga Street, right down the street from Balboa High School.

TK: And teaches at SI?

AS: Yes. He teach at SI.

TK: What's he teach?

AS: He teaches P.E., Psychology, and he's the Head Football Coach.

TK: And, he played, the second one played, for Reardon?

AS: No. Jamal is the youngest one and he played basketball for Reardon and San Diego State and Steve played football for SI, and football at Santa Barbara University, and then they called him back there to SI to coach and teach.

TK: Yeah. I don't know if I explained this but this is a project I'm working on for the Planning Department but underlying the whole thing is to understand African American history in San Francisco so that it can help the Planning Department understand any buildings or things like that that might be important to that history? What would you say about that? Can you think of any buildings you would consider important like that?

AS: Yes. That African American Culture Center [The African American Art & Culture Complex] on Turk Street. Have you ever been there?

TK: Yeah, I'm actually...the head of that... Al Williams is working with us on this project.

AS: I'm trying to think of another person that could help you with that.

TK: Well, we can get other people. So, you would say the African American Culture Center.

AS: Culture Center, yes.

TK: What about Booker T. Washington Rec. Center?

AS: Booker T. Rec. Center, that's a good place to start.

TK: And, we also... I don't know if you know the Madam C. J. Walker House. We got that and another old community center down in Bayview.

AS: I forget the name of that one...

TK: Crispus Attucks. A lot of buildings in the Western Addition that were the music places...

AS: The jazz places. They don't have too many other them anymore. I wish someone would bring them back again.

TK: Did you go to them?

AS: Yes, like the Hungry Eye, I went there, and the places of Divisadero. The off plaza of Fulton Street... there was so many places, but... we don't have those any more. We just have 1300 Club, now. There's a club up the street from the 1300 Club that plays jazz on the weekend, Friday and Saturday...

TK: Where is it again? That's on Fillmore?

AS: On Fillmore Street. Fillmore and Geary.

TK: There both old time clubs?

AS: Yes,

TK: There's a new jazz center south of Geary...

AS: The new jazz center is on Franklin and Grove, I think.

TK: Do you play? Could you play?

AS: No, I don't play, I just listen.

TK: You don't sing at the Christen Center?

AS: I sing with a group of folks, with a crowd.

TK: How long you been a member of that church, now?

AS: About ten years now. My younger years, I went to church every day of the week.

TK: Oh, really?

AS: My grandmother was really into the church and... my mother was really into the church, and... we had to go to church every single day, seven days a week, sometimes twice a day on Sunday. So, I said if I ever left home I wasn't going to go back to church. (Laughter) For the first few years when I got here I didn't go to church. My aunt called my momma and asked her "How come Annie don't go to church anymore?" She said because she went her whole life while she was living at home.

TK: She filled her quota?

AS: Yes, I filled my quota already.

TK: But, then you came back into the Christian Center?

AS: Yeah.

TK: I been there a couple times, as I said, I know Reverend Green. I used to work with Andrea; do you know Andrea?

AS: Yeah.

TK: Well, is there anything you think we should know?

AS: That's the only thing I can think of right now. That's all I can think of right now that's important. I'm going to give somebody else your phone number, okay?

TK: That would be great, who's that?

AS: Her name is...

TK: Don't worry.

AS: Ms. Hughes... and she go to Third Baptist Church. Are you familiar with that church?

TK: Oh, yeah.

AS: Reverend Brown is there. Did you interview him?

TK: You know, we didn't actually interview him, but he's been to our meetings. Let me tell ya, he's been interviewed a lot of times. Well, that would be great. Does she live here?

AS: Yes. She's out of town right now, she's on vacation.

TK: Well, thank you.

AS: You're welcome.

AS: I hope I was some help to you?

TK: Oh yeah, oh yeah, you know. Yes, you were.

E. Doris Ward, Former City Supervisor and Assessor

Interviewers: Nicole Jones, Intern, Planning Department (NJ); Tim Kelley, Tim Kelley Consulting (TK)

Nicole Jones: Okay, Ms. Ward—

Doris Ward: Doris.

NJ: Okay, Doris, we're here from City Planning and were working on this history project. It's called the African American Historical Context Statement and it's a very big comprehensive history project going back to the sixteenth century. We're interviewing people in the community and collecting their own personal stories and their recollections of building and events that are relevant to African American history. Thank you for meeting with us today. We're just going to ask some general questions about your background and your involvement with the city and being a Supervisor and anything else that you want to share, you can share that towards the end. Is that okay?

DW: Yes, that's fine.

NJ: Let's just start with the basics. I know you are from Indiana, What year were you born?

DW: That's something you should never ask.

NJ: That's fine. You don't have to tell us.

DW: That's fine. I was born in 1932.

NJ: So how old were you when you came to San Francisco? What brought you here?

DW: I came in 1968, whatever the math shows. I came here because all over the country they were giving awards in various fields at U.C. Berkeley in their School of Education, they gave a scholarship, and they were looking for diversity. I took advantage, and took that scholarship, and came out here. By the time I graduated, I was teaching in Indianapolis, Indiana and graduated from Indiana University and I have a Masters. I didn't come out here to work on a Masters, because many people that became a part of that institute, they came out here to work on an advanced degree. I didn't. I came out here to see California at the government's expense.

(Laughter)

DW: I had never been to California and always wanted to come California. I felt if I didn't take advantage of this [opportunity, then] I'll never get to California. I took advantage [of it] and I came out here. Just really to see California. I knew that I wasn't going to get a free ride so I had to study and everything. Even if I wasn't working on a degree I had to maintain a B average to join in order to keep the scholarship, and that was ok, that didn't bother me. I went everywhere and saw everything. I went down to Southern California. [I thought] this is it I will never be back,

so I wouldn't go back home and say oh, I wish, I woulda, coulda none of that, this was going to be it.

NJ: Did you come here alone? Did you have children?

DW: No, no, no. I was married to John. We got a divorce and we never had children. I got pregnant, but I had a miscarriage after six months and I thought I would get pregnant again but that didn't happen. Then, John and I got a divorce. I thought I would get married again, but I never did. He remained my very, very best friend. I had met him at Indiana University and he was completely blind. He was a... scholar; I'm trying to think of the name of the scholarship he got when he went to law school at NYU. Very famous name but I can't remember.... Anyway, he went there and got his law degree and then he went to set up practice in Indianapolis, Indiana. His whole desire was to desegregate the Indianapolis Public School System because in 1968 the school system was segregated. And he did, he accomplished that goal before he died. He was very proud of that and so was I. I have been told recently, that Indianapolis is going to recognize him, which they should have done a long time ago. John was not afraid of anything or anybody and he was a great inspiration for people who had desires. I used to think of him when I got scared to do something. I would say John would not be afraid to do this. I thank God he came into my life... I'm sorry we were not able to make it, but he was not handicapped. If it was anybody it was me.

Tim Kelly: So, he was blind?

DW: He was born blind and when he was very young he went to a blind school. He no longer wanted to go to a blind school and his mother who had been a teacher. She didn't want him to go to a blind school anymore. She wanted him to learn how to live in a sighted world because that's where he was going to have to live. Then he came to Indiana University and that's how I met him. Oh, he was a Root-Tilden Scholar when he got his law degree.

NJ: Thank you for sharing that personal history with us. So, I want to transition a little bit to your involvement with the City [of San Francisco]. When I spoke with you on the phone, you told me you were a Supervisor. What year was that?

DW: Yes. I was that's a good question and I have a resume somewhere around here.

NJ: That's ok if you can't think of it offhand. I'm just curious.

DW: I'm trying to remember what year and the last time I became a Supervisor was in the '80s or, no, the '90s. The last election I had, which I ran number 1, they did away with the districts. We had decided to go back to districts as the City had done many, many years ago before I was here. Then, I got elected as the supervisor from the district.

NJ: What district was that? Do you remember?

DW: Do you mean the district I was elected from?

NJ: Yes, ma'am.

DW: Yes, it was District 10.

NJ: Okay, is that the Richmond?

DW: It took place right where I'm sitting now. It was crazy. It took in the Financial District of San Francisco, along with Potrero Hill, along with Bayview Hunter's Point.

NJ: So, the whole Eastside –

DW: Yeah, but to put the Financial District in with Bayview/Hunter's Point, it didn't make any sense.

NJ: Different Community, different needs.

DW: What I heard at the time from those who knew. They were trying to punish the people down here by putting Bayview/Hunter's Point in with them. So I don't know who was mad at who[m] but their attitude was we are going to punish you by putting Bayview/Hunter's Point with you. We don't care if you don't like Hunter's Point or not...

TK: How'd that work out for them?

DW: I thought it worked out fine, as I found out that many of them had the same needs, as the elected official. There are a lot of core needs that everybody has; you know, the need for employment the need for housing, the need for a healthy environment, and how they can get healthy, and education, and all sorts of things. There are a lot of things that connect us, so, finally a lot of the people that live down here in this district didn't want to be with Bayview/Hunter's Point anymore so they took it out.

TK: Right.

NJ: Right.

DW: It made sense to take it out and I don't know who the Financial District is connected with now.

TK: Were you in office before the first district elections? There was city wide, and then it was district, and then it was Dan White, and then it went off again.

DW: I was not the supervisor during Dan White's rage. No, not all, it was shortly after he did what he did. Then I became the Supervisor.

TK: Then we went to city wide for a couple of years, then back to the districts.

DW: When they first started it was city wide, then they went to district, and that's when I got elected to the district. OhI can't remember where I was, but I had to move into the district and that's when I moved to Potrero Hill.

NJ: That's right. I want to talk about that neighborhood and what it was like, but I also want to know what inspired you to run for public office?

DW: All my life. When I got older and got into high school I was active in politics, always into politics. Even as a school girl, I followed closely who was running for this and who was running for that. Also, when I was at Indiana University I had participated [in politics]. Politics was always in my blood, something I was interested in and wanted to do. When I got here, the first office I had was as a community college trustee.

NJ: That's right, that's right.

DW: Yeah, that was the first, as a community college trustee.

NJ: That's a huge accomplishment! You were the first African American woman to be on that board. Wow. What was that like? What were some of your challenges?

DW: Let me put it this way, I was accustomed to growing up like that because, like I said, I grew up in Gary, Indiana. When I grew up in Indiana, there was only one school that wasn't integrated. My family, my grandparents, brought their family out of Mississippi, as all Black people did in those days, to the north to make sure that they got a better education and men got better jobs. My grandfather, when he brought his family to Gary, Indiana, they were really on their way to Detroit, but for whatever reason they stopped there and stayed. Now, when my grandfather stopped in Gary, Indiana there were two schools their kids could go to; Frable, which was a mixed School, or Roosevelt, which was an all-Black school. My grandfather wanted his kids to go the mixed school, not the black school, because he knew the white kids would get an education and he wanted his kids to be at a school where they would be educated. He did not know anything about Roosevelt and didn't know if they would behave like in the south. Not that the school would be interested in them, but they would be sitting next to the white kids, so they would hear what the whites kids would.

NJ: So, it seems like you have a background with going to integrated schools. So when you came here as the first African American woman on the Board of Trustees for SF Community College, did you encounter any sort of challenges? Or -

DW: When I was in high school, now let me put it this way, I was interested in things that Blacks weren't in because I was in an integrated school. I was in a lot of things that they weren't in. I was on the debate team and I had a white debate partner and we became the best debate partners in the whole city because we would debate the other schools. Mary Balasara and I used to team up and [I] became the (inaudible) stars in the Gary system of that time, and I loved that. Then I went to college-

NJ: Where did you go college?

DW: Indiana University. I wanted to go to Vassar. My mother said I have no Vassar money. So I had to find another college. I had a friend that who was three years older than I, but I looked up to

her she lived across the street, and she went to Indiana University. She said oh, no you must come to Indiana University. She was in a sorority and said you must become an AKA. That was the first Black sorority, and whatever Ruth said I would become, I became, AND Ruth also picked out my husband.

NJ: We'll just pause here-

DW: I didn't really get into it. I got around the edges.

NJ: What's her name?

DW: Ilene Hernandez, she's African American.

NJ: She must be Latina.

DW: No she is not she was married to a Latino. Clark is her maiden name.

NJ: I'm curious to know if you had any mentors or people you admired that are African American during the time you held office.

DW: Oh yes, the man that led me into all this is, Terry Francois. He was the very first Black supervisor and he became my mentor.

NJ: What was he like? What was his personality like?

DW: He was a strong man that didn't take "no" for an answer. He was strong he was pushy, he was all of those things but he was for the right kind of things. He was very pushy in the integration movement and making sure that Blacks got what they were supposed to get. I was that [way] also in high school. Whatever you want, you go after. We didn't have any Black teachers, but some of the White teachers were very, very close to me, and very concerned that things went right, I was never worried about that.

NJ: Speaking of support, when you ran for office were there any churches or organizations that supported you? Where were your campaign offices?

DW: Oh, my campaign offices, well, I can't remember when I was with city wide. Wherever we could find an office and it wasn't too expensive. Because this area was (inaudible) it didn't matter since downtown was in.

NJ: Where you a member on any church?

DW: Third Baptist Church?

NJ: Were they supportive of you when you were in office?

DW: Yes. Yes.

NJ: Third Baptist is where?

- DW:** Geez, this is ridiculous. I can't even remember where it is.
- NJ:** Is it in the Western Addition?
- DW:** Yeah, yes, yes. Amos Brown is the minister and Amos Brown became a Supervisor.
- NJ:** When you were younger you were always involved with politics?
- DW:** Yes, but I was too young and it wasn't that I was directly involved.
- NJ:** Yes, but you were curious and passionate about it, so you have that personal connection. So, when you came here in 1968, in the heart of the Civil Rights Movement, there were the Auto Row demonstrations...
- DW:** Oh, see, I had just missed that. And, you have done well with your history. Right?
- NJ:** I'm curious to know, what was your impression of it and your involvement in it? Did you collaborate with anyone?
- DW:** No, not when I got here in 1968.
- NJ:** What was your impression of it? Did you see protests occurring did you see any kinds of sit-ins?
- DW:** Yes, I saw some protests.
- NJ:** Do you remember where they were?
- DW:** The Western Addition and the Bayview/Hunters Point, those would be the two places and all of that stirred my emotions. I knew I wanted to be a part of all of that. Politics became a driving force for me. I really loved... I really liked it very, very much.
- TK:** So, you served also as Assessor.
- DW:** Oh, yes. How that came about by that time Frank Jordan was the Mayor and we had an election it wasn't too long ago. They had gone back at-large and I had run as number one, which made me President of the Board. I was not elected by my colleagues and that was really, really an honor to me because, here, had been elected by the City as number one.
- NJ:** So, the citizens voted?
- DW:** Yes, had they known the rules maybe the Whites that were prejudiced might have not voted for me. I don't know but the bottom line was they voted for me and I had more votes than anybody else. So, I became the President of the Board of Supervisors.
- NJ:** Wow.
- DW:** It was Frank Jordan who took me off the Board and I really, really hated that because, here, I was in a position that I could never be in. Possibly –

NJ: Why did he take you off the board?

DW: He wanted his “play niece” who is Ann Marie Connelly to take my seat.

TK: Oh yeah...

DW: She wasn’t really his niece she was his play niece, to be on the Board of Supervisors. He did me a big favor and I didn’t recognize it. At that time, he took me off the Board and at that time, we were paid almost nothing. I think I got almost \$20,000 for my job. He appointed me as the Assessor for the City and County of San Francisco, which gave me a six-figure salary. There was no way I would turn that down.

(Laughter)

DW: He had to make it sweet because I would’ve said no and Ann Marie could have never got on, but he knew that giving me a hundred and-something-thousand [dollars], I would take it. I thank him for that, because it opened a door for me. Otherwise, that door would not have been opened.

NJ: I want to hear more about that experience, but I just remembered and I don’t remember what year, but there were strikes for the Ethnic Studies [program at SF State].

TK: I think it was 1968?

DW: When I got here, I wasn’t part of that but I heard about it.

NJ: I was wondering if you heard saw anything.

DW: Yes, I heard about it but wasn’t a part of it. Then, when I went to San Francisco State, and one of the guys, one of the professors, we became very, very good personal friend.

NJ: What’s his name?

DW: Jerry West.

NJ: Talking about that kind of Civil Rights activities, political rights activities; do you remember any particular buildings or places that were used for organization or activism?

DW: If I did I can’t remember now, but I was never focused on buildings.

NJ: Okay, it can be churches, cafes, bars, restaurants or parks...

DW: No, no, no. We would meet wherever we could meet. If someone told me to be there at a certain time, I would be there. That was my focus to get there where the meeting was. But, no, I never thought of a building that had grandeur.

NJ: It doesn’t have to have grandeur-

DW: No, I know, but I'm saying it was just a place to meet. It was always acceptable.

NJ: Your role of Assessor what were some of your primary duties and responsibilities?

DW: Well, the duty... I didn't know what an Assessor did and I didn't care as long as I got my six-figure salary.

(Laughter)

DW: It had to do with money for the City and I liked that.

NJ: So, like budgeting...?

DW: Yes, from my office.

NJ: What office?

DW: The Assessor's Office. And I was interested in the money situation for the entire city.

TK: You were the one collecting it.

DW: Yes, but we had a tax collector. I put value on the buildings. I would say this building in worth x number of dollars, so that was my job. We had a tax collector and he was a Black man, too, and his name was Thad Brown, he was the tax collector and he collected the money. I just told you how much money you would get.

NJ: Did you hold that office during the Urban Renewal or Redevelopment, when they were in the Fillmore and redeveloping the whole neighborhood?

DW: Yeah, but I didn't hold it during that time during the prime.

NJ: That was more like the 60s and 70s. Okay, but you were here in San Francisco or no, you just got here?

DW: I came in 1968.

NJ: That's right. So you said you lived in Potrero Hill. What was the neighborhood like? What were the demographics?

DW: I liked that neighborhood.

NJ: Was it mixed race? What kind of people lived there?

DW: Black and White people and some Asians and Hispanics.

NJ: Were there any tensions?

DW: Oh, no. there was no tensions and I think Potrero Hill was one of the nicer neighborhoods. I've never lived in a neighborhood that had tension in San Francisco and I'm very happy about that.

Maybe if I would have lived in Hunters Point they would've had tension but I don't think so. At that time, there was nothing but Black people. Now, I'm exaggerating, but if you find Black people in Hunters Point, you are doing well. Now, that's not true, there are Black people there, but so many Hispanics have moved into that neighborhood and Asians have moved there. In a few years, if you can find one Black person that would be remarkable.

TK: What do you think about that? People are upset about that.

DW: Well, I am too. I would love to see that neighborhood to be a mixed neighborhood, because all of my life has been mixed, because my parents made certain. You know, that we lived in mixed neighborhoods that I went to mixed school, and I'll never, it was because of my attitude, I think. Now, there were some things that Black people could not do even at a mixed school. We could not go swimming with the White kids. I did experience some of those kinds of things, but I always had a positive attitude that if you want to do anything prepare yourself for what you want to do and you can do it. I wanted to be a drama student when I was in high school and I could not be a drama student, so therefore—

NJ: Because of race?

DW: Yes, because of race. Well, actually, they didn't tell me I couldn't; but they had no roles for Black kids. We weren't called "Black" back, then. We were called "Negroes" or "Colored." In fact, if you had called a Black child "Black" instead of "Colored" or "Negro," you would've had a fight on your hands.

NJ: It was disrespectful...

DW: Yes. Black had not taken on the positive role that it has. Were we Italian? No. We knew we weren't that. Were we Irish? No, we knew we weren't that. Were we Jewish? No, we knew we weren't that. Were we Czechoslovakian? Because we went to school with a lot of Southern Europeans, you know.

NJ: Oh, wow.

TK: Steel mill workers?

DW: It was a still mill town and White people that had come from Europe from Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia and many of them came to Gary, Indiana. As I said, we were called Colored or Negro and we wanted to be called Negro. Had you mentioned Black I would've said, non, I would never thought. The attitude would've been don't call me Black. Well, are you Chinese? Are you Asian? Are you Irish? Are you Italian? No, no, no. Well, what do you mean you don't want to be called Black? So that doesn't make sense and it was only during the Civil Rights Movement that Black people came to recognize that we were Black and wanted to be called Black and all the positive things that went with that word after that; but, not before then.

NJ: So, do you preferred to be called Black American or African American?

DW: Doesn't matter, because it's one in the same thing. So, I don't care.

NJ: So, what other neighborhoods did you live in other than Potrero Hill? Did you stay there for a long time?

DW: I lived in 1333 Gough Street.

NJ: Where is that? Is that Western Addition?

DW: It's close to Geary Street.

NJ: What's the address again?

DW: 1333 Gough and I loved that building. It was just like this building, a huge building.

TK: Is it an old building or was it part of Redevelopment?

DW: It was part of Redevelopment. Yes, and it was on Gough and Geary and that's where I lived. And after that, I moved here. The reason I moved here, no I didn't I moved to Potrero Hill, the reason I moved to Potrero Hill was to run for office. I left Potrero hill and moved here. I didn't... Oh, I could either move to Hunters Point, or Potrero Hill, or here in order for me to be elected. Many of these neighborhoods had psychological...

(Phone rings, Interview paused)

NJ: You could only live in Bayview or Potrero Hill...

DW: Right in order for me to be elected. Bayview or Potrero Hill and this building were the entire same neighborhood, District 10. I knew I could be elected from there, I didn't want to go to Bayview/Hunters Point because I like to live in a mixed environment and it was not mixed at that time it was all Black.

NJ: Right.

DW: I didn't want to move down here, because I didn't want to give the impression that I thought I was too good to live out there and I had to come down here. So, psychologically, I could not move here.

TK: Potrero Hill is in the middle.

DW: Exactly. So, Potrero Hill was okay so, I moved to Potrero Hill and everybody was pleased with that. *(Laughs)* That was a mixed neighborhood and so I was very pleased with that and so was everyone else. I really liked it, and I would have stayed there but at that time wanted atwo bedrooms situation. So, that's why I moved down here and I left Potrero hill otherwise I would have stayed there...

NJ: What about fun? Where did you go, did you see any music like any jazz clubs or lounges?

DW: Not really, I didn't do a lot of that, but I loved music. When I went to college, I went to college to be a concert pianist. I remember when I went to Indiana University I spent my whole first year ... I didn't want to major in music, I wanted to major in piano. That's what I wanted to be. It was a movie I saw with Cornel Wilde; he played the life of Chopin. Ah... and I always liked Chopin's music. I fell in love with that movie and that's when I said, I'm going to be a concert pianist. I saw that movie on television one day and I said oh my god, this is the movie that influenced my mind, you'll see it sometime and it's about Chopin and Cornell Wilde is the star of that movie.

I went to Indiana University and I majored in piano, an. Some people would say "What if you don't become a concert pianist, Doris?" Well, that was an absolutely appropriate statement to make. Then what will you do? Will you teach?" No, I don't want to teach. "Well," they said, "You need to think about doing something else, because you may not become a concert pianist." And I said you know what you are absolutely right. I hadn't thought of that, I just saw myself as concert pianist (*Laughs*) and so I thought about it I said you know what I'll do, I'll go to law school. And I did go to law school. And I was in law school two and half years.

NJ: Where did you go to law school?

DW: Indiana University.

NJ: Okay, so you stayed there. That's when you came here to U.C. Berkeley, after law school?

DW: Yeah Right,

TK: You met John there?

DW: No, I met John at Indiana University when I went there as an undergraduate. He was an outstanding man everybody talked about him. He walked around without a dog and didn't have anything or anybody to lead him any place. He did everything himself; he was a phenomenal, phenomenal man and he taught me to not use the words "cannot do this or that" because he did all and everybody loved him. He went to a blind school until his mother took him out, because he wanted to go to a regular school. And she did. He didn't have his nose in the air. His attitude was lot of people says if you can do it, then why can't so, so can't do it. Well I did it why can you do it. HE was absolutely against that. He didn't have the attitude; I can do it why can't you do it? He was absolutely against that, you know. He felt each person needs to do what they can do and what to do and whatever. So I loved his attitude about himself and about people. He didn't have any arrogance at all. I saw him as a role model, Many people saw him as a role model, he was a very, very strong man. That's where I met him.

NJ: Was he also African American?

DW: Yes, Oh, yes, he was. And I think about him often and one of his best friends and my best friends is Gorge King is here in Sacramento, California. We met him at Indiana University. He came to IU to get a Ph.D.in History, that's how we met George. George has remained my close friend; he

came out here because of me. He and his wife were in the east and when I got to San Francisco, I told him this is a wonderful place. George said, "You know what, I think Cathy and I..." I mean Shelley, that was his second wife, I met him with his second wife, he now has a third wife, *(laughs)* "Cathy and I will come there," so they came here and I put him in touch with Willie Brown.

NJ: Oh wow. Were you personal friends with Willie Brown?

DW: Yes.

NJ: Do you have any memories or...

DW: I didn't see Willie as much because he was always so busy, but we had a good relationship.

NJ: Did he support you when you were in public office?

DW: Yes, yes. But, actually, I was closer to Terry Francois, the Black person that was on the Board of Supervisors because Willie was at the state legislation. It was Terry Francois that got me to be a Board of Supervisor. He helped me become elected to the board at community college.

NJ: Is there anything else that you can think of people, events, [or] places that you think should be known for African American history here in San Francisco?

DW: Let's see,

NJ: [Is there] anything that we didn't ask you that comes to mind?

DW: What have I identified?

NJ: Well, we have talked about places you lived and the people you've known. We are really curious about buildings and physical spaces because a part of this process could be landmarking.

DW: You mean some of the buildings? Now, for that I would need to talk to some of the people who were really a part of all that before I was here. A few people like Amos Brown or whatever. Ilene Hernandez, that I just...the woman I just spoke to. Right, she was the President of Black Women Organized for Action.

NJ: Oh...

DW: Yeah, Black Women Organized for Action.

NJ: What time period was that around? Or, are they still around?

DW: Yes, they're still around... Because I'm a part of that group.

NJ: And it's San Francisco-based?

DW: Yes. That group was formed in San Francisco.

NJ: In what year?

DW: Oh, that I don't know. I'll find out from Ilene and I'll definitely let you know.

NJ: Maybe she would be interested in sharing some of her history with us.

DW: Oh yeah. Let me get her on the phone.

NJ: Oh, no. No, we could call her another time...

DW: You can set up a time with her.

NJ: We don't want to take of more of your time.

DW: Well, remember, I was going to take you down and treat you to lunch.

NJ: Oh, you're so special...

TK: I can't do it, but thank you very much. I want to ask you in Potrero Hill I'm trying to remember the woman's name that ran the community center there... Nola...

DW: Maxwell.

TK: Maxwell, Yes. You must have known her?

DW: Yes, absolutely.

NJ: Maxwell. What's her husband's name? I think Reverend Gordon referred me to them.

DW: I don't know but she wouldn't have been known by her husband.

TK: She was known by her hats.

NJ: Oh!

DW: Right she always wore hats. Right, Nola Maxwell.

NJ: And what was her...

DW: Yes, Nola Maxwell...

TK: She ran a community center there...

DW: Yeah, she's dead now; she would have to be dead. I don't remember when she died, but she would have to be dead, because I knew her when she was at her height. And, you are right; she had all those big hats.

TK: She had great hats.

DW: Yes, she did.

NJ: If there isn't anything else, Tim, can you think of you want to ask? Or, Mrs. Ward—

DW: Doris.

NJ: I'm sorry. I'm so used to... Mrs. Doris. Then, I think we can wrap the interview up.

DW: Thank you and you've honored me. And I am sorry; I cannot take you guys to lunch.

NJ: Oh... Bless you, Bless you, God Bless you.