



SAN FRANCISCO

# *African American Historical & Cultural Society*

PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER, Fall 2020 – Special Edition – VOTE TUESDAY NOVEMBER 3, 2020

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

*Greetings, Society family and friends:*

I hope this message finds you and yours safe and well in these challenging and difficult times. The impacts of ongoing systemic racism, the pandemic and the collapsed economy have a more devastating impact on San Francisco's African American communities than on other populations. The Society extends our condolences to all who have been negatively impacted.

The oppression we experience, including the destruction of the thriving communities that many of us grew up in, is intentional and systematic. As we have done throughout our history, we must make a way out of no way and continue to move forward. The San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, along with other community institutions, will continue to do its part to re-establish vibrant, thriving and empowered African American communities in San Francisco.

Like the San Francisco Athenaeum and Literary Association of the 1850s, the Society will continue to be the "Griot" of San Francisco's African American community. We will continue to document, preserve

Continued on next page

## CONGRATS!

**SENATOR KAMALA HARRIS  
MAKES HISTORY in HER NOMINATION  
AS VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE**

See 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Women's Suffrage on page 3

## CONGRESSMAN JOHN ROBERT LEWIS

**"THE BOY FROM TROY," CIVIL RIGHTS ICON**

**Congressman John Robert Lewis** died on July 17, 2020 in Atlanta, Georgia at the age of eighty. He was elected to Congress in 1986. Born on February 21, 1940, he was one of 10 children of a share-cropping family purchased their own farm that they still own.

Congressman Lewis shall forever be known as a champion of civil and voter rights, who risked his life at an early age to fight for *freedom, justice, and equality*. To paraphrase Congressman John Lewis, *if you see something that is not right, that is not fair, it is your moral obligation to say something, to do something; to Get into Some Good Trouble!*

Lewis was one of the organizers and the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington. He led the March 7, 1965 march onto the Edmund Pettus Bridge where he and other marchers had been beaten by members of the Alabama State Troopers. This led to the passage of the 1965 VOTING RIGHTS ACT signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson on August 6, 1965.

Each year for twenty-eight years, Congressman Lewis introduced a bill to establish the *National Museum of African American History and Culture*. That became a reality on September 24, 2016. In 2011, President Barack Obama bestowed the President's Medal of Freedom on Congressman John Robert Lewis.

Six Days of Memorials and Services were held to pay homage to Congressman Lewis: **Saturday, July 25**, Troy University Service; **Sunday, July 26**, Edmund Pettus Bridge Crossing, Selma; lying in repose for public viewing, Montgomery State Capitol; **Monday, July 27**,

Continued on page 3

Continued, President's Message

and share the history of African Americans in San Francisco.

Historian John Henrik Clark reminds us, "History tells a people where they have been and what they have been; where they are and what they are. ... an understanding of history tells a people where they still must go and what they still must be."

Dr. Clark also reminds us that "Powerful people cannot afford to educate the people that they oppress, because once you are truly educated, you will not ask for power. You will take it."

As former First Lady Michelle Obama said during her speech to the 2020 Democratic National Convention "If we want to keep the possibility of progress alive in our time, if we want to be able to look our children in the eye after this election, we have got to reassert our place in American history." The Society has been, is, and will be relentless in reasserting the place of African Americans in San Francisco's history.

Educating African Americans and others about the rich history of African Americans in San Francisco history is more important now than ever. During the 2020 Black History Month, the Society and *Citizen Film* created a short film based upon the Black History Month theme "African Americans and the Vote." Here is a link to a short clip from that film: <https://vimeo.com/431978350/a8cd47c682> The complete film is coming soon to our web site at [www.sfaahcs.org](http://www.sfaahcs.org). Enjoy the film and please share these links with others.

By now you've received a Save-The-Date flyer for the Society's 2020 Annual Meeting, September 20, 2020 at 2:00 pm via ZOOM. Before that meeting, members will receive ballots to vote for candidates to the Society's Board Directors and proposed amendments to the Society By-laws. Please complete and return your ballots as soon as possible.

As members and friends of the Society each of us can contribute to the important work of educating African Americans and others about who we are, what we have accomplished, and what we have contributed. You can help advance this work in the following ways:

- Nominate Society members as candidates for the Board of Directors
- Complete and return your ballots for Board candidates and By-Law amendments
- Participate in the September 20<sup>th</sup> online annual meeting
- Share the "*African Americans and the Vote*" video clip link with family and friends
- VOTE and encourage others to VOTE in the November 2020 elections.

Stay safe and be well. Thank you.

- Al Williams, President

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## SAVE THE DATE!

**Annual Society Meeting via ZOOM!  
Sunday, September 20, 2020 at 2 pm**

RSVP to [info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org) or 415.292.4172 for meeting link or request a ballot

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**Confused? Questions? Need more information?  
Need help? Comments? Input? Contact us at:**

[info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org) or 415.292-6172.

**100<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE  
KAMALA HARRIS MAKES HISTORY!**

Continued, Congressman John R. Lewis

August marked the 100th anniversary of the passage of the women’s right to vote. We’ve heard about White suffragettes, but little is promulgated about the African American women who fought for the vote. From Emancipation to the mid-60s, Black women organized, supported, and led in the movement to gain the vote. Recent news reports highlight some of these women and speak to the power of their presence in their times and today.

Women are not single-issue organizers-voters; they work for child welfare and education, equal housing, health care, women’s reproductive health, voting rights, equal pay, against police brutality ... Locally women, including Frances Albrier, Society member, were instrumental in the 1956 voter registration campaign. African American women “*show up and show out*” in the voting booth and have been vital in recent races in southern states. Some ran for and hold office: Californians Maxine Waters, Barbara Lee, London Breed, AND;

**Congratulations, the Honorable Kamala Harris, Senator, upon her nomination as the Democratic candidate for Vice President in the 2020 election.**

The Society urges you to exercise your hard earned right to vote this November; **any** method. Be mindful of deadlines; make sure your vote is counted. The official election day is Tuesday, November 3, 2020.

New York Times’ subscribers, read “The Final Battleground in the Fight for Suffrage,” “For Black Suffragists, the Lens Was a Mighty Sword,” AND, WBHS’s “5 Essential Figures in the Women’s Suffrage Movement”

<https://www.wgbh.org/programs/2020/06/26/5-essential-black-figures-in-the-womens-suffrage-movement>.

- Ginger Smyly

Read Black Suffragette, Sojourner Truth’s speech on next page

Congressional Memorial service, the Capitol building, Washington, D.C.; **Tuesday, July 28**, lying in repose for public viewing, Washington, D.C.; **Wednesday, July 29**, lying in repose for public viewing, Georgia State Capitol; **Thursday, July 30**, “**Home Going**,” Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, where *Presidents Bush, Clinton, and Obama spoke*. A message from President Jimmy Carter was read. Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, recognized Congressman John Robert Lewis as “**the conscience of Congress**.”

**Can we continue to carry on the torch for freedom, justice and the right to vote? Are we willing to get into some GOOD TROUBLE?**

**REVEREND C.T. VIVIAN IN MEMORIAM**

**Reverend C.T. Vivian** was a civil rights organizer and field general for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was an active member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with Reverends Fred L. Shuttlesworth, Ralph Abernathy, and Wyatt Tee Walker. During Reverend Vivian’s lifetime as a Baptist minister, he led many non-violent protests. In 1961, he was one of the first Freedom Riders to travel by bus to Jackson, Mississippi. Through his civil rights work with other freedom fighters, the **CIVIL RIGHTS ACT of 1964** and the **VOTING RIGHTS ACT of 1965** were passed.

He lectured, founded educational and civil rights organizations, promoted jobs for Black Chicagoans, and wrote **Black Power & the American Myth**, in 1970. **Reverend Vivian** received the **Presidential Medal of Freedom** from President Barack Obama in 2013. **Reverend C.T. Vivian** died on Friday, July 17, 2020 at the age of 95 at home in Atlanta.

**Thanks to warriors like Reverend Vivian, we have benefited from their fight!**

- Eldoris Cameron

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” President Barack Obama

Over the past weeks across the nation, demonstrations have made the message clear: we must find resolution to the ongoing struggle for equality, widespread injustice, discrimination and economic disenfranchisement. Three hundred and fifty years of depravation, victimization and racial discrimination coupled with the coronavirus pandemic has lent urgency to the movement. As citizens, this should be a clear call to each of us to **BLACK LIVES MATTER** and other movements seeking justice, equality, and the unimpeded right to vote. We must work together to ensure that no one will ever be forced again to say, “I can’t breathe.”

Surely reforms are needed, but the greater need is not just to reform but to transform, to make a dramatic change in the nature and essence of our institutions toward ensuring a just and equitable government and society. Our constitution states that “...we are all created equal and that justice is for all.” We know, however, that our nation has not yet lived up to these ideals.

It is uncanny how prophetic the speeches of Frederick Douglass were, reflecting the issues we are dealing with today. His oratory, writing skills and the support of antislavery groups had a major impact on slavery and human rights. Now, as in the time of Douglass, presses us to address historic inequalities.

Our current exhibit, “*Barack Obama: A Legacy of Hope*” curated by member Francee Covington, with related artwork by the artist *Courageous*, captures the spirit of much of what we are now experiencing.

At present the exhibit is inaccessible due to the shelter in place guidelines. Our current goal is to make the exhibit available virtually. Stay tuned.

We appreciate your continued support and input; looking forward to meeting your expectations.

Please be well and remember to **VOTE**. Best wishes.

- William Hoskins, Executive Director/Curator

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## SOJOURNER TRUTH, “AINT I A WOMAN?”

*... That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me. And ain't I a woman?*

*... that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? ...From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!...*

- Sojourner Truth, speech delivered at Womens' Rights Convention, Akron, OH, 1851

**AFRICAN AMERICAN NOTABLES:  
EUGENE WHITE AND EARL GAGE HONORED**

San Francisco and the African American community welcome and celebrate a street named in honor of the first African American firefighter, **Earl Gage, Jr. Gage**, the first Black firefighter hired in 1955 by the S.F. Fire Department, led the way for a decade before other Black firefighters were hired. Gage moved to San Francisco in 1945, graduated from U.C. Berkeley, and was drafted into the Army before serving as a S.F. firefighter for nearly 30 years.

In July, Supervisor Dean Preston and the San Francisco Black Firefighters Association were successful in renaming a section of Willow between Buchanan and Laguna streets bordering Rosa Parks Elementary School, **EARL GAGE, JR. STREET**.

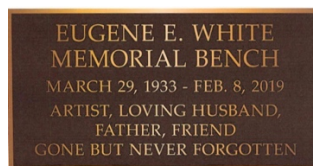
**Earl Gage, Jr.** was a true icon and leader in the San Francisco African American community. He passed on July 30, 2017. In his honor, a mural is being planned by artist *Crayonne*, known for his civil rights mural at 22<sup>nd</sup> and Mission Streets. A street celebration will be held after the current health crisis.

**EUGENE E. WHITE BENCH**

**Artist, Eugene E. White**, a 60-year fixture in San Francisco was honored again with a bench in Golden Gate Park Panhandle. White was born on March 29, 1933 in Ozan, Hempstead County, Arkansas, into a sharecropper’s family. Although Eugene E. White was a self-taught artist, sketching and painting all aspects of African American life and culture, he was, also a **Changemaker**. White is featured in the book, **CHANGEMAKERS, Biographies of African Americans in San Francisco Who Made a Difference.**

White arrived in San Francisco in 1958 and opened an art gallery in 1962. *Kujiona Gallery* at the Buchanan Mall in the Fillmore, opened in 2016, was his last. When the Fillmore was rejuvenated, Eugene E. White was honored at the Buchanan Mall with a bench topped by his portrait. His works remain at Ella Hill Hutch Community Center, Ingleside Presbyterian -

Church, and in the African American Museum & Library of Oakland.



The **Eugene E. White bench** is located at **Fell & Cole Streets in the Golden Gate Park Panhandle**. The San Francisco Recreation & Park Department approved the bench installed in May 2020. Lynnette White, his wife, is carrying on his legacy with her active involvement in the African American community! EC

- Eldoris Cameron

**CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING TECHNOLOGY**

The Society Board recognizes the prolonged strain of this pandemic on us all. “How will we eat and pay rent” weighs heavily. We are re-traumatized with the pain of racial injustice and brutality, while America marches for “defunding the police” and beyond.

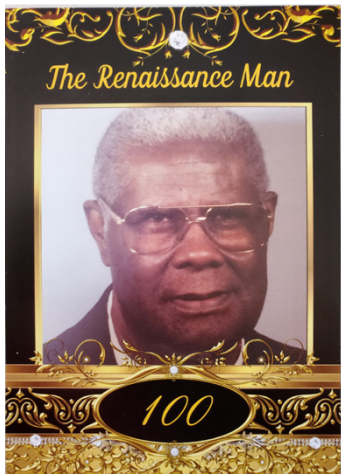
Despite today’s realities, we are still here. The Society is still here! We must adapt to a new reality. We ask you to adapt too. We must rely on new-to-us ways to outreach and educate – **new technology**. Please join us via Internet-enabled devices. Check your phone and Internet connections for ZOOM before the **September 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Membership meeting at 2 pm.**

We are planning a virtual and internet-based **Black History Month Kick-Off, on Friday February, 5, 2021.** Mark your calendar.

- The Society Board of Directors:  
Al Williams, William Hoskins, Ginger Smyly, Marisa Williams, Kiwan Gore, and Louis Garrett, Sr.

## RENAISSANCE MAN AND STILL COUNTING

Behold how good it is to know a Brother that has served humanity and family in outstanding ways. San Francisco's own past Master Mason, Mack Watson, of Bayview Lodge #64 in San Francisco, was born in the town of Plum, Texas on July 3, 1920. Mr. Mack left the fields in Texas to toil in the fields of Prince Hall Masonry. Mack joined Bayview Lodge #64 in 1953 at the age of 32, and by 1962 was elected to serve as Worshipful Master.



Mack then continued his travels by joining Victoria Consistory #25 in 1957. In 1959, he helped establish Thutmose Temple #74, and by 1965 served as the Illustrious Potentate while hosting Imperial Session in San Francisco. In 1960 he became a member of the Holy Royal Arch Masons and later joined the Knights Templar in 1965. In 1977 our beloved brother joined the Heroines of Jericho #6.

After leaving Plum, he moved to San Antonio, before joining the Army in 1942. He served honorably in World War II in Okinawa in a transportation unit. Upon discharge in 1946, he settled in the city by the Golden Gate, San Francisco. Mack had one sister and two brothers. He is the father of one son and two grandchildren and ten great grandchildren; the many great joys of this Renaissance man.

Mr. Mack has been active at the Bayview Lodge for 68 years. He served in all the chairs and there are very

few meetings he has missed. A few months ago, I saw him waiting on the corner for a ride to go to lodge meeting (at the age 99!) What a blessing for a mason after 68 years to still help keep his lodge active.



A Bethel AME member since 1984, Mack is an emeritus usher and steward, and takes pride in being an active member of the Sons of Allen Church group. He enjoys this church work, and he says it has kept him on the path of Brotherly Love his entire life.

Mr. Watson worked for the U.S. Postal Service; he was a baker for Continual Bakery. He worked as a Jitney cab driver on Mission Street. Mack continues to be a very active SF Giants fan; he enjoys listening to games on the radio and TV. At one time he enjoyed games at Seals Stadium and later at Candlestick.

The contributions Mr. Mack made to the lives of so many people, and masons in particular, have given them a solid foundation upon which to build a productive life. Mr. Mack is outstanding in his inspiration to all the travelers with which he comes in contact. Now at the age of 100, Mr. Mack is going strong and looking forward to his next activities.

**Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Mr. Mack!**

- PM Louis L. Garrett, Sr., Hannibal Lodge #1/Board Member

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USF – SOCIETY CLASSROOM PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Thanks, freshmen and sophomores of the University of San Francisco, Marshall-Riley Living Learning community focused on African American history, culture and life, and Candace Harrison, Ph.D., professor of history. Two teams, quickly adapted to working online, across the country, and in different time zones due to the pandemic. One team, inventoried and compared the availability of the late Rev. Howard Thurman’s lectures, meditations and sermons.

The other team, worked on the *Sixty-Two Heroes and Pioneers of the Western Addition* project. 62 individuals are honored at the Gene Shuttle, Jr., Plaza. The Society, commissioned by the now defunct Redevelopment Agency, developed a booklet describing each hero.

The students researched and wrote 14 expanded biographies, placed their work in a “virtual” museum, created a template that could be used by future interns, and developed a set of transportable posters of the 14 heroes.

We are most appreciative of the work of the USF students, one of whom suggested an internet-based format that can be used as a template. With additional student teams, the *Sixty-Two Heroes of the Western Addition* project will be completed as a virtual exhibit which the Society can make available through our website.

- Fannie Preston, Ph.D.

**SERVE** on the Society’s Board - your skills and commitment are needed. Only members in good standing are eligible. Pay your 2020 dues before the Annual Meeting!  
Apply to [info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org) or 415.292-6172

HOWARD THURMAN, MENTOR TO PEACEMAKERS

"Don't ask what the world needs, *ask what makes you come alive, and go do it...* because what *the world needs are people who have come alive;*"

These are some of Howard Thurman’s most well-known words. The Reverend Dr. Howard Thurman was an unseen, yet influential man to some of the world's greatest peace makers: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi.

Thurman was born on November 18, 1899 in Daytona Beach, Florida, and died on April 10, 1981 in San Francisco. Throughout his life, Thurman was a religious and spiritual trailblazer who deeply touched the lives of everyone he encountered. He went from living a life of miserable poverty in Florida, to being a spiritual mentor to Dr. King. He was a professor, the Dean of Boston University’s Marsh Chapel, and the co-founder of the Church of Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco.

He was a man who had the ability to “calm the anger in your heart,” as said commonly by people who knew him. He was a prolific author, TV personality, and most importantly, a spiritual guide for humanity.

Thurman’s most famous work, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, touched the hearts of many in their spiritual journeys. Thurman never led marches, protests, or rallies, but he did influence many. He was a man focused on religion through the lens of social justice. For him, that was the true purpose of faith. To connect with your humanity, and therefore the humanity of others.

- Prepared by USF students, Natalya Bomani, Jada Commodore, Sankofa Decuire, Trinity Haynes, Taleah Johnson, Aliyah Washington

**PAPERLESS DELIVERY**

Got email? Please let us know; it saves postage and keeps us safe.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

*Annual Society Membership Meeting  
Sunday, September 20, 2020 at 2 pm  
via ZOOM!*

RSVP to [info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org) or 415.292.4172 for meeting link or to receive ballot

Paid your 2020 membership dues yet? Only members in good standing are eligible to vote.

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

*Praisesinger* Newsletter, September 2020  
762 Fulton Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> fl., San Francisco, CA 94102  
415.292.6172; [info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org); [www.sfaahcs.org](http://www.sfaahcs.org)

Editors: Eldoris Cameron and Ginger Smyly  
Photos: Eldoris Cameron, Louis Garrett  
President: Al Williams  
Executive Director: William Hoskins

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL**

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

LIFE members, your donation is appreciated

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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Please sign me up as a:

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

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

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

Membership fees and contributions are tax deductible

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

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

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

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

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

Date rec'd      check/cash      roster      thank you

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