



**SAN FRANCISCO**

**AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SOCIETY**

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AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HISTORICAL &  
CULTURAL SOCIETY**

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Photos: Ceasar Rubio, Ginger  
Smyly, Max Millard, others



**DESPITE OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, WE CAN ALWAYS CELEBRATE LIFE  
AND CELEBRATE IT ABUNDANTLY!**

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2024

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR



- William Hoskins, Executive Director

It was a good year; it was a bad year; and most certainly a challenging year. Waking up the day after the elections, I was in disbelief and asked myself over and over, "What did we do wrong?" This experience is a perfect avenue into Black History Month 2025, "African Americans and Labor."

Responding to an unmet void, Black labor movements have made a major impact on the history of our country. For hundreds of years, Black activists have fought for better labor conditions and representation. The first recorded strike by Black laborers was the Black ship-caulkers in 1835. Until this recent period, Black workers had been totally excluded from major unions resulting in the creation of separate institutions that fought for Black workers. As civil rights in America progressed, major labor movements joined together to champion the rights of all.

The moral here is that we cannot give up but rather we must, as in the past, refocus on the new challenges to insure a bright and rewarding future. In addition, the holidays are a time for reflection and commitment to the things that matter most: family, community and the simple pleasures of life. We wish you a wonderful Holiday Season and thank you for your continued support for the San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society.

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FYI: The week of December 15<sup>th</sup> will be the last week for visiting our current exciting exhibit, *Sargent Claude Johnson*, which explores the career of an outstanding mid-twentieth Black artist.

MUCH BELATED APOLOGY STATE OF CALIFORNIA

- Co-editors

At the end of September, Governor Gavin Newsom signed a raft of bills sponsored by the State Congressional Black Caucus. Perhaps most important of the approved motions, was a formal apology for the State's historical role in the perpetuation of the peculiar institution (AB 3089.) There was disagreement and some falling out among and between the legislators; long awaited legislation related to reparations were not approved in this last session. However, [other key bills](#) were passed.

In the new legislative session with some changes in personnel, we trust that work toward recommendations made by the State Reparations Task Force and the Black Caucus will ensue to bring equity to Californian African Americans and repair what has been broken.

## EXONERATION AND RECOGNITION

*Exoneration, according to an Internet dictionary, means “free from blame.”*

On July 17, 2024, eighty years after the Port Chicago Naval Magazine explosion, the Navy announced the exoneration of 256 African American sailors convicted of mutiny, bad conduct and other charges. Unfortunately, all of the 50 men convicted of mutiny died long before this exoneration. This exoneration serves as a landmark in the fight for equality, equity and dignity.

In the past, military service was segregated; African Americans and other people of color were not allowed to enlist in particular services, were given dangerous and/or dirty work, and often not provided training and safety materials. This was the case for the sailors at Port Chicago in 1944, who were charged with loading live ammunition onto ships leaving for battle. Supervised by White officers, some of whom bet on who’s “gang” could load more and faster, African American sailors realized how dangerous their task was. They repeatedly asked for safety equipment and formal training. These requests were denied.

Then on July 17, 1944, an explosion occurred in which 320 people were killed, 400 injured, two ships and a train were destroyed and the nearby town of Port Chicago was damaged. African American sailors refused to return to work unless their demands were met. After this refusal, the Navy took action to punish the “striking” men; and while some returned to work, 50 men were convicted of mutiny. Despite being defended by the future Supreme Court Judge, Thurgood Marshall, and the NAACP’s Legal Defense, the men lost. In those days, mutiny was one of the most serious charges that a service man could face. These 50 men and their families suffered incarceration, dishonorable discharge and subsequent impacts, (while White officers present at the explosion got leave.)

Through these many years, the NAACP and others have fought for the exoneration of these men. Of note is the late professor Robert Allen, who wrote [Port Chicago Mutiny: The Story of the Largest Mass Mutiny Trial in US Naval History](#). Ironically, he died a few days shy of the official exoneration.

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*Six Triple Eight*, a new film by Tyler Perry, depicts the only female of color army unit that was sent to Europe during the height of WW II with a mission to sort millions of pieces of mail and get them to the troops. See “688” on Netflix or in select theaters. [Learn more about the unit](#) and their mission.

- Ginger Smyly

These stories, though from WW II, demonstrate the fortitude of African Americans, love of country and service and the fight for equality and equity that continues despite all obstacles.

OPPORTUNITIES AT  
BAYVIEW'S BLACK  
ORGANIC FARM

In 1988, San Francisco's last commercial farm ceased operation, leaving a vacant one-acre plot at 1 Diana Street, located on top of a Caltrain tunnel. In 2014, the site gained a second life as a community farm, open to any local resident interested in growing edible crops.

Named the Florence Fang Community Farm after its prime benefactor, it is divided into two sections. One is devoted to Asian vegetables worked mainly by Chinese immigrant women with limited English. The other section is the Black Organic Farm, which specializes in "American Vegetables," including heirloom tomatoes, purple cabbage, kale, beets, collard greens, bell peppers and other vegetables. Crops are started from seed in the greenhouse.

Faheem Carter, Farmer-in-Charge, co-founded the garden and is its hands-on leader. He is one of the very few paid employees. Volunteer gardeners harvest and keep their crops in exchange for their labor. But, "If a neighbor came right now and said they want something, we'd give it to them. We prefer volunteers, but, also, for people to take the vegetables home and eat them."



*Faheem Carter, Farmer-in-Charge*



*The Community Fram*

The farm attracts far more Chinese women than it does African Americans, but Faheem is looking to change that. He is most interested in recruiting local black youth as interns. In this part-time paid position, the intern will experience all the elements of farming under Faheem's tutelage.

A native San Franciscan and Bayview resident, the tall, soft-spoken Faheem is a graduate of the horticulture program at City College. His goal is to inspire at-risk or neglected communities to realize a better future through sustainability and food justice.

- Max Millard

He said the Black Organic Farm was created in 2023 as a way to “invite the community in.” Asked why there aren't more African Americans involved, he said, “I think part of it is outreach. A lot of people don't know about the farm.”

The Black Organic Farm does not assign individual plots; everything is grown collectively in long, narrow rows outfitted with sprinklers. All the land is utilized and well-manicured, and crops are grown year-round. Funded by grants and donations, the Black Organic Farm provides gardeners with organic soil, fertilizer, seeds, wheelbarrows and other tools. Its ultimate objective, is to “help heal the Black community’s relationship with food and land.”

The best time to visit the farm is on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., when the regular gardeners come to weed, dig, and plant. Anyone is welcome to come and help out, or simply take a tour. The farm is generally inaccessible to the public most other times.

The Black Organic Farm is helping in a small way to relieve the food crisis of Bayview-Hunters Point. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has labeled the neighborhood as a “food desert.” Or should it be called a “food swamp” – a place where food is available, but it may not necessarily be healthful or affordable. For more on the [farm](#).

**AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY  
LEGACY BOOK CLUB**



Cover of new edition

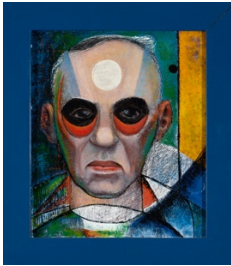
The African American Family Legacy Book Club is a joint program of the African American Center, San Francisco Public Library and the Society. Shawna Sherman, director of the African American Center and Society Board member is the coordinator. The Book Club has generated a whole new group of Society participants, both “new” and “old.” Join, even if you haven’t read the book, the discussion is enlightening.

The next selection is Unbought and Unbossed, by Shirley Chisholm. It is rather fitting to read this book, written by Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman to run for the Presidency. She failed as did Sister Kamala Harris. But each in her own way, raised the bar for men and women who might lead America in the future.

The next Book Club meeting is Tuesday, January 14, 2025, via ZOOM, 6 pm. [Register.](#)



AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE ARTS



"Self Portrait," Sargent Johnson



"Chester," Sargent Johnson

For the last few years, the Society has used the annual Black History Month theme established by ASALH, the organization founded by Carter G. Woodson, the "Father" of Black History Month, as a year-round theme for programming. As we end 2024, just a few more words on "African Americans and the Arts."

First, we note the historic May 2024 exhibition of works by Sargent Claude Johnson at the Huntington Gardens and Library. The Society lent three of its works to the exhibit and several to the exhibition book. We thank our new friend, Dr. Jacqueline Francis, who co-curated that exhibit and has since helped the Society. Many of you heard her numerous talks online or at the Society's exhibit reception in July. She has informed the Society that "Chester," (see left) and the entire exhibit was chosen as one of the top ten exhibits in the Los Angeles area by a leading art critic.

Secondly, we note *Sargent Claude Johnson: A Mid Twentieth Century California African American Artist* exhibit in the Society gallery, curated by Dr. William Hoskins. This has been a feast for the eyes and soul and a provocation for the mind. For the first time in 40 years, the Society showcased its Sargent Johnson collection of lithographs, sketches, paintings, sculpting tools and photographs. Hoskins included items from his personal collection providing an African contrast to Johnson's mid-century creations.



Shona McDaniel: TBWIG 2024



"Michele Obama," Amy Sherald

- Co-editors

In 2024, there were many fine exhibitions of art by African Americans. There are two more of note. *The Black Woman Is God* exhibit, curated by Karen Seneferu, at the Marlowe gallery, 231 Grant Ave. *Amy Sherald: American Sublime*, an exhibit of 45 paintings from the portrait artist who created the official Michele Obama painting, at the SF MOMA. Both exhibits open now.

**A PHENOMENAL WOMAN**

On September 19, 2024, the official unveiling of the public monument celebrating Dr. Maya Angelou took place. Situated on the Larkin Street steps of the Main Branch of the San Francisco Public Library, the bronze monument takes the form of a book, which is fitting to celebrate and acknowledge the gifts of Dr. Angelou to the world. Maya Angelou’s figure is of the young San Francisco woman who was active in arts, education and the community during the late 1960s to early 1970s. The back of the monument is an Angelou quote,

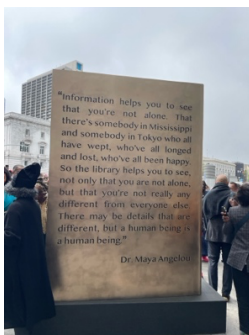
“Information helps you to see that you’re not alone. That there’s somebody in Mississippi and somebody in Tokyo who all have wept; who’ve all been happy. So the library helps you to see not only that you are not alone, but that you are not really different from everyone else. There may be details that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

Lava Thomas, who created the monument was present and gave a few words at the ceremony. Mayor London Breed, Ralph Remington, Director of Cultural Affairs, Michael Lambert, City Librarian and many other dignitaries were present as were community folks. Thanks to the Public Library for giving away Angelou books!

The AAACC held an event to celebrate the re-imagining of the Sargent Johnson Gallery into a lounge dedicated to Mother Maya. A large size print of the Lava Thomas portrait of Dr. Angelou (as seen on the bronze monument) is the focal point of the gallery.

Check out the first San Francisco public monument dedicated to a Black woman when visiting the San Francisco Civic Center. And, next time at the AAACC (762 Fulton Street,) see the Lava Thomas print of Mother Maya.

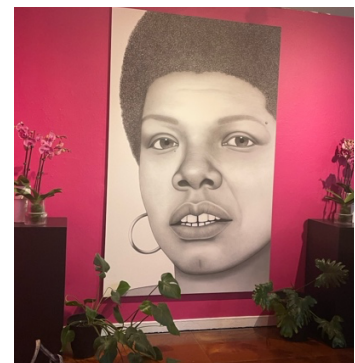
Learn more about [how the monument came about](#). See [photos of monument](#).



Angelou Quote



Mayor Breed, Librarian Lambert, Cultural Affairs Director, Remington at podium



Maya Angelou print, Lava Thomas

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH  
2025**

**SAVE-THE-DATE:  
Friday, February 7, 2025**

In 1928, Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now, ASALH) established the annual Negro History Week (now,) Black History Month observance. The National Black History Month theme for 2025 is “African Americans and Labor.” [For more.](#) This theme “focuses on the various and profound ways that work and working of all kinds – free and unfree, skilled, and unskilled, vocational and voluntary – intersect with the collective experiences of Black people. Indeed, work is at the very center of much of Black history and culture.” More coming to your inbox.

**KWANZAA -  
FRUITS OF THE HARVEST**



Kwanzaa is a 7-day, non-religious celebration of the African American family and social values, celebrated primarily in the United States. In 1966, Maulana Karenga, a professor of Africana Studies at California State University at Long Beach, CA, created Kwanzaa as the first specifically African American holiday, and is celebrated from December 26 to January 1. He borrowed the word “kwanza,” meaning “first fruits of the harvest” from the Swahili phrase.

Each of the days of the celebration is dedicated to one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa (see left.) Each day a candle in the kinara (candelabra), is lit to highlight one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Three red, three green and one black candle in the kinara symbolize the peoples of the African diaspora as proclaimed by Marcus Garvey.

1. **Umoja**, Unity
  2. **Kujichagulia**, Self-determination
  3. **Ujima**, Collective Work & responsibility
  4. **Ujamaa**, Cooperative economics
  5. **Nia**, Purpose
  6. **Kuumba**, Creativity
  7. **Imani**, Faith
- Eldoris Cameron

The table is decorated with a woven mat, the kinara, corn, fruits, gifts and the Pan African flag of red, green and black. A community feast is held on December 31 and is called Karamu. Participants greet one another with the phrase “Habari Gani,” meaning, How are you?

Similar celebrations of Kwanzaa have spread worldwide especially in the Caribbean, Brazil, Canada and France.

Let’s enjoy the Christmas Season and the spirit of Kwanzaa!

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The Society Board wishes you all a **Happy and Peaceful New Year!**

**TRANSITION:  
NIKKI GIOVANNI**

The Society has learned that poet Nikki Yolande Cornelia Giovanni passed on December 9, 2024. She was and is a world renowned African American Poet, writer, commentator, activist, educator. Another great loss of a civil rights activist!



SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Visit us at [www.sfaahcs.org](http://www.sfaahcs.org) or Call 415-292-6172

- ✓ Visit the Sargent Johnson exhibit in the Society gallery until December 21, Wed.-Sat., 1-5
- ✓ [View](#) Dr. Francis in conversation with the Society's Virginia Smyly, on Sargent Claude Johnson, recorded on February 29
- ✓ Society Book Club: Unbought and Unbossed, Shirley Chisholm, Tuesday, January 14, 2025, via ZOOM, 6 pm. [Register](#).
- ✓ Black History Month Kick-Off, Friday, February 7, 2025. More info coming.

THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!

Volunteers are essential to the Society; serve on the Board, join a committee, volunteer at the gallery or in relocation activities. [info@sfaahcs.org](mailto:info@sfaahcs.org) or call 415-292-6172

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS:

THANKS TO OUR RENEWING AND DUES PAYING MEMBERSHIP!!!

WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR BLACK HISTORY MONTH OBSERVANCES AND PROGRAMS IN 2025.

CONSIDER BECOMING A SPONSOR OF THE BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM AND OTHER SOCIETY EVENTS FOR 2025.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

(Your annual membership term is January 1 through December 31.) LIFE members, your donation is appreciated

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign me up as a:

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

\*\*If you do not plan to be an active member, please make a donation

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

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

Membership fees and contributions are tax deductible

Make Your Check Payable/Mail To:

San Francisco African American Historical & Cultural Society

762 Fulton Street, 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            |