



SAN FRANCISCO
AFRICAN AMERICAN
HISTORICAL &
CULTURAL SOCIETY

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G. Smyly

2026 BLACK HISTORY MONTH
A CENTURY OF BLACK HISTORY COMMEMORATIONS

70 years of Service to San Francisco

Black History Month Kick-Off
Wednesday, February 4, 2026
12:00-1:00 pm
San Francisco City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Reception to follow the kick-off

For more information visit www.sfaahcs.org

Mayor Daniel Lurie hosts the Society's 71st Annual Observance of Black History Month 2026 at City Hall with guests, Supervisor Shamann Walton, District Attorney Brooke Jenkins, Noah Griffin, Jr., and other notables, dignitaries, Society members and the community, **Wednesday, February 4, 2026**. Please join us on Wednesday, February 4, 2020 at noon at City Hall.

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE
PRAISESINGER

- ✓ Black History Month: "70 Years of Service to San Francisco"
- ✓ 100 Years of Black History Commemorations
- ✓ 70 Years of Inspiration: Society Founders
- ✓ The African Affairs Committee
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- ✓ About Emory Douglas, Iconic Art
- ✓ African American Legacy Book Club
- ✓ Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Remembrance and Action

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026:
Negro History Week, Black
History Month/ African
American History Month

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH, now ASALH) established Negro History Week. Then, as now, the commemorations are meant to educate, uplift and advocate for the Negro and make knowledge of her presence, achievements, history, culture and life. Annually, ASALH selects a theme, implements national events and provides resource materials for use at the local level. Negro History Week evolved over time to Black History Week and then to Black History Month (also known as African American History Month.) "Black History Month" became more common nationwide during the 1976 Bicentennial.

It is unclear whether Negro History Week was acknowledged in San Francisco between 1926 and the mid-1950s. In the mid-1950s, The *Sun Reporter* newspaper organized and sponsored an annual Negro History Week observance with a contest to identify distinguished Negro leaders and organizations. On February 12, 1956, an Annual Negro History Week Observance, sponsored by the *Sun Reporter*, was held at Third Baptist Church; the keynote speaker was a Mr. Washington, a representative of the National Republican Committee. Merit awards were made to the 10 most outstanding clubs in the Bay Area, the 10 most outstanding citizens in the East Bay, the 10 most outstanding citizens in San Francisco, and an anniversary award to the NAACP; the man and woman of the year would be named at the event. Featured in this same newspaper, was a photo of the Negro History Week Committee with an article noting that aid to Mississippi would also be part of the Week's observances.

The earliest Society Negro History Week Observance was held in 1957. After the Society's organization as an ASNLH chapter and subsequent consolidation with James Herndon's group, "The first major project sponsored was the celebration of Negro History Week, February 10 -17, 1957... The theme ... was, 'Negro History in Development of Human Understanding.' The first program was held at the Hamilton Recreation Center on February 10, 1957. A musical recital was presented by Elizabeth Rease. Programs were held on the radio and at various churches over the city," as reported in early Society documents.

- Ginger Smyly

Since 1957, the Society has planned and conducted an annual Negro History Week, Black History Week or Black History Month observance. Governors "Pat" Brown and Ronald Reagan were approached to give proclamations recognizing Negro History Week, as were the Mayors of San Francisco. The 1966 proclamation from Mayor Joseph Shelley appears to be the first given. Around this time, the Society became the chief organizer of city-wide Negro History Week commemorations. The Society organized Black History Month Planning Committees

made up of representatives of African American organizations, city government and departments, colleges and universities, the business community, professional groups, civic clubs and the faith community to co-sponsor, plan and implement a “kick-off” program in which a keynote speaker addressed the selected theme. We believe that the first “kick-off” at City Hall was held in 1974. Thereafter it was held at City Hall Rotunda with few exceptions from the early 1980s to present.

At each observance, the Society presents the National Negro Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” a member of the faith community offers an invocation, notables and invited city officials and others are recognized and provide remarks. Local talent, often youth, provide song, music, dance or spoken word. Each Black History Month program is unique in that the local theme corresponds in some way to the national theme, but is given in a San Francisco context.

The Society, often with co-sponsors, offered a week- or month-long series of programs, some related to the theme, but primarily activities to educate: lectures, book readings and signings, genealogy workshops, etc.; and activities to inspire: art and historical exhibits, films, musicales, theater, the spoken word and dance. In the heyday of the African Affairs Committee, visiting African dignitaries were invited guest speakers. Well-known African American artists, writers, professors and analysts were often the center of these post- “kick-off” events.

Some of the more notable Society Black History Observances were:

- 1966, “Freedom from Racial Myths and Stereotypes through Negro History: The Truth Shall Make Us Free,” Dr. Price Cobbs, keynote speaker

- 1968, “Black Youth in Revolutionary Change,” Prof. Harry Edwards, San Jose State University, keynote speaker
- 1976, “Constitutional Status of Negroes,” Dr. Derrick Bell, Harvard University, keynote speaker
- 1978, “Roots, Achievements and Projections: San Francisco,” Thomas Fleming, keynote speaker & note the exhibit, “Roots, Achievements and Projections,” a photographic display of San Francisco’s leading African Americans and African American organizations
- 2019, “Black Migrations: Moving Forward,” Lateefa Simon, President of the Akonadi Foundation, keynote speaker & note the Society produced film, *Black Migrations*
- 2020, “African Americans and the Arts,” Ralph Remington, Director of Cultural Affairs, CCSF, keynote speaker & note the exhibit, “Sargent Claude Johnson,” featuring art work acquired by the Society in the early 1970s.

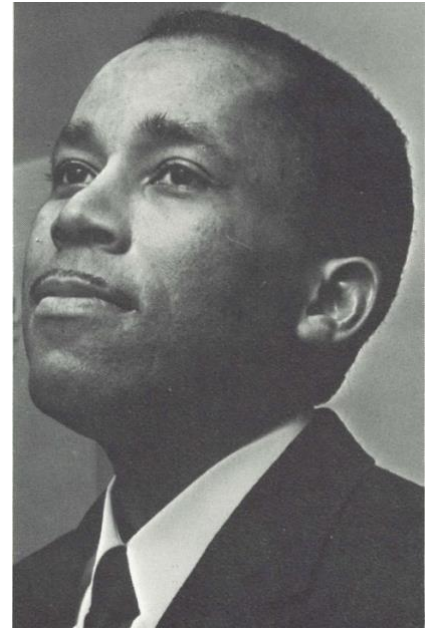
The spirit of the Society founders and current leadership, much like that of ASALH founders and leaders, provides impetus, value and meaning in these annual commemorations. Black History Month is a vehicle to educate, uplift and advocate for African Americans, acknowledging his and her presence, achievements, history, culture, life and human dignity. ALL people can relate to and find meaning in this.

Watch for further essays and images of the Society’s during its 70th year of operation! AND [Email](#) to receive the full essay with references

70 YEARS OF
INSPIRATION:
SOCIETY FOUNDERS

*I. Frances Roston-Miller
r. James Herndon, Esq.*

Frances Roston-Miller
Co-Founder
1898 - 1979



Mrs. Miller's life in San Francisco was highlighted by an all-consuming interest and concern to help in establishing several of the community's most serviceable organizations. She was a leader in the early years of the National Council of Negro Women. She was active in the struggle to win jobs for Black men as street-car motormen and conductors; she worked with the Louisiana Club in an effort to secure better housing for Blacks migrating to the city. And she founded the San Francisco Chapter of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, securing its charter from the national office in Washington, D.C., in 1956 or 1957.

Mrs. Frances Roston Miller was born November 12, 1898 to Joseph and Mary Walker, in Shreveport, LA. She attended public school in Shreveport and then attended Southern University at Baton Rouge, (among the first fourteen Black women to enroll,) graduating in May, 1919. Mrs. Miller established the first kindergarten in the city for Black children, before such schools were incorporated in Shreveport's public school system. She taught school in Tulsa, OK. In Tulsa, she met and married David V. Roston and from this union came five children.

In Tulsa, Miller was the first Black real estate saleswoman of the area. She organized Le Fleur Garden Club for the creation of natural beauty in the community, using this organization as a springboard to edit a cookbook as a guide to young homemakers, with the profits given to liquidate the mortgage on the only receiving home for Black girls supported by the City Federated Colored Women's Clubs of Tulsa.

Upon her move to San Francisco in 1946-1947, Miller emerged as a leader in the aforementioned groups and movements. However, Miller

Summarized from:
The Sun Reporter, October 16,
1971
"Praisesinger Annual," 1976,
SFAAHCS
"African American Citywide
Historic Context Statement,"
2020, CCSF

was best known for her role in founding the San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society. She spearheaded the formation of a local chapter of the Association for Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life,) securing a chapter in 1957 and serving as its first president. In 1956-57 the chapter merged with another group, principally made up of college and university students, led by James Herndon, to form the San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society (now San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society.) She served as board president for many years and was later named an honorary director. In that capacity she was a member of the Society's African Affairs Committee and the statewide Allensworth State Park Advisory Committee.

The Society established the Frances R. Miller Collection of Books in her name and in 1971 honored her with a concert and testimonial reception at the organization's headquarters at 680 McAllister Street. In 1977, she was inducted into the Society's "Blacks in the West Hall of Fame" along with noted scholar and religious leader Dr. Howard Thurman, physician, Dr. Arthur Coleman, civic leader, Julia Comer, political activist, Doris Thomas, artist, Dewey Crumpler, and others. Following her death, the 1979 Black History Week was dedicated to Frances Roston Miller, the theme being "Black Women: the Unsung Heroines." Miller is quoted, *"My only hope is that throughout the years, the Society will stand out as a beacon light for the generations coming on."*

James Herndon
Co-Founder
1925-2002

James Herndon, like Roston Miller, was a southern migrant to San Francisco. James Herndon, Esq., was born on May 14, 1925 in Troy, Alabama. He was the oldest in a family of eight children. Herndon learned printing skills at an early age to support his family and to put himself through school and Morehouse College where he was a classmate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and student president of the local NAACP. He earned his law degree at Howard University. At both Universities, inspired by Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Dubois and Paul Robeson, he participated in debating societies, honing his oratorial craft.

Discouraged by McCarthyism, he chose not to immediately pursue the Bar, and continued to be a printer in Washington, D.C. In the 1950s, upon the urging of a friend, Herndon moved to the Bay Area where he worked as a typesetter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. After completing additional law studies, he took and passed the bar and joined the National Lawyers Guild.

In the early 1960s, he threw himself into the civil rights movement, espousing the rights of Black workers. He became president of the local chapter of the Negro American Labor Council. He was the first

Summarized from:
"Praisesinger Annual," 1976,
SFAAHCS
SF GATE, Oct 18, 2002
People's World, October 31, 2002

- The Co-Editors

African American to become a partner in a major San Francisco law firm, Garry Dreyfus & McTernan, where he represented affordable housing groups, eg., Hunter's Point and Mission Tenants Union. He also served as lawyer to the United Farm Workers. He was instrumental in civil rights protests, rent strikes, sit-in demonstrations on Automobile Row, and other labor-related issues. He participated in a suit to eliminate defacto segregation in the San Francisco Public School System.

During the mid-1950s, Herndon established the W. E. B. DuBois Club which studied and promoted Negro culture and history. This club and the local ASNLH chapter, started by Roston-Miller, became the San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society. Since 1970, it has been known as the San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society.

In 1975, James Herndon founded the Paul Robeson Society which was dedicated to the struggle of human rights, social and economic justice. The organization sponsored numerous public discussions and raised funds for various progressive causes.

His family described him as a voracious reader, having many volumes in his home; likewise, the Society library contained many books from his library. The archives indicate that Herndon was a thespian, having acted with a Western Addition acting group at Hamilton Recreation Center and later promoting the Society's theatrical productions.

SOCIETY JUBILEE YEAR

2026 marks the 71st time that the Society has held its Black History Month "proclamation ceremony." The Society's 2026 Black History Month theme reflects our 70+ years of education, advocacy, literature and the arts in service of the Society's mission and for all San Franciscans. Join us in 2026, as the Society celebrates its Jubilee – recognizing its achievements, notable members and guests, and impact during these remarkable years, 1957 – 2026.

See you Wednesday, February 4, 2026, noon, at the Black History Month kick-off and later on Thursday, February 19, 2026 for an evening program: "Potpourri of Archive Treasures: Substance and Texture," wherein key treasures of the Society archive will be presented and discussed. To learn more, follow the Society via email, website or Facebook.

Jubilee! Celebrate! 70+ Years of Service to the Community.

**AFRICAN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE
(AAC)**

The AAC was organized in 1968. Mr. William Hoskins and Mrs. Willie Hoskins having lived and worked in Africa, were very active in establishing the African Affairs Committee along with a number of like-minded members. Mr. Hoskins served as chair from 1968-75. Mrs. Hoskins, serving on the board of the federally created International Hospitality Committee, ensured that the Society would have ongoing access and contact with dignitaries visiting the United States from Africa. However, by 1982, the Pan African focus of the country and local organizations was being replaced with a new emphasis on African American life and history and subsequent challenges.

The goals of the AAC were: to assist in recognition of the rich history of Africa, facilitating the elimination of negative stereotypical images of Africa its people and cultures; to facilitate the availability African history for the community; and to build a better understanding and appreciation between Africans, African Americans and others by encouraging and creating opportunities for direct contact in the form of academic and hospitality related events.

Additional activities included holding receptions for local, national and international personalities and dignitaries such as, Dr. James Gibbs, first Black Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Stanford University; Maya Angelou, author, actress, poet, singer; Claude Clark, Sr., artist; Lasidi Fakeye, Nigerian carver; Dr. Marzizi Kunene, South African poet and others. Receptions and co-sponsorships were held for Liberian President Tolbert and his spouse and other dignitaries of State including the Consulate-Generals of Nigeria and other countries.



The AAC activities included fund raising for the Society to provide free access to students to community programs and receptions. The Committee did studies focusing on the history, politics, people, food, arts and literature of Africa. The results of these efforts were shared through the various programs hosted by the AAC, fliers, and articles written for the Society's *Praisesinger* newsletter.

African and African American history have deep roots that are both aspirational and inspirational; an awareness of this is critical for one's own evaluation. Being proud and aware of one's history and the resulting self-confidence are critical for success as an individual and as a people.

- *William Hoskins,
Executive Director/
Curator, "legacy" Society
member, son of the
Hoskins*

African Affairs Committee Chairs:

William Hoskins	1968 – 1975	Carl Eagerton	1976
Bill Lawrie	1978	Charles Hampton	1977 - 1978
Eldoris Cameron	1979 – 1982	Verneta Hill	1982

**ICONIC ART:
EMORY DOUGLAS**

In the mid-1990s, I spent two years working at the *Sun-Reporter* newspaper alongside a layout designer in his early fifties named Emory Douglas. I knew Emory as an amiable, modest, soft-spoken colleague whose artwork seldom appeared in the paper.

It was some time before I learned that he had been the Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party, and that he was responsible for creating virtually all of the hundreds of iconic images that appeared in *The Black Panther* newspaper from 1967 until its demise in 1980. He was inspired by a panther logo made for a civil rights group in Alabama, and converted it into a far more powerful image.

He spent 21 years at the Reporter Publishing Company, retiring in 2005. It turned out to be just a long lull in a celebrated career that reached new heights in his later life. Today he is recognized as an iconic graphic artist who perfectly captured the essence of his times. Some of his works sell for thousands of dollars and have been shown in leading museums in the U.S., including the Metropolitan Museum of New York and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Emory was born in Grand Rapids, MI; at age 8 he moved with his family to San Francisco, where he still lives.

Thirteen of his visually arresting images, with their bold outlines and brilliant colors, are now on display in the ground-floor Sargent Johnson Gallery at the African American Art & Culture Complex (AAACC), 762 Fulton St. The current exhibition, Part 1, opened on December 5, 2025, featuring large digital archival prints of his more recent work. This type of print has become his favored new medium; its colors can remain vibrant for over 100 years.

Part 2 will open on the upper floors of the AAACC on February 19 at 5 p.m. It will be a retrospective of his work from the 1960s to the present, including politically charged Black Panther images and rarely seen original paintings. Both exhibitions will remain up through October 2026.

In a January 29 phone conversation, Emory said that he now uses Photoshop to update and reinterpret his work. For example, he renamed his "All Power to the People" graphic from 1969 as "Papergirl." It now shows a girl -- instead of a boy -- selling papers while holding a cell phone. The new image is much more colorful and sophisticated, and suggests the importance of social media in organizing for justice.



"I wanted to make it more relevant and contemporary," he noted. "It's a remix of an interpretation of a paperboy, but just done in the last couple of years." He makes sketches, paintings and pen-and-ink drawings, then scans them on a computer and edits them on the screen.

His artistic comeback began in 2007 with the publication of a large, glossy book from Rizzoli Press, Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas. The art world, educators and activists began to take notice. Before long, his works were in demand by collectors, museums and other institutions. He got numerous invitations to speak and display his work. He became an artist-in-residence in Brazil, Mexico, Columbia, Australia and New Zealand.

Today he continues to practice his art in San Francisco, and frequently speaks at colleges and universities around the country. Recently he has started working on the theme of immigration. Asked if he will depict ICE agents, he said, "I'm absorbing it, taking it in." His newest works can be seen on his Facebook page, @emory.douglas.

The AAACC building is open Monday through Saturday, call to check hours. The February 19 opening will feature a reception from 5 to 8 p.m. It's free and open to the public by making an advance reservation through Eventbrite.

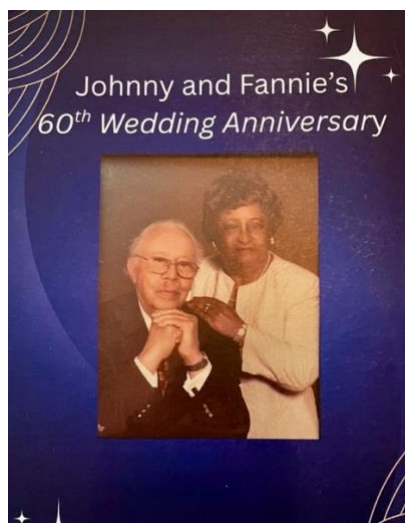
Website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/opening-reception-emory-douglas-in-our-lifetime-pt-2-tickets-1981633770953>

- Max Millard

60 YEARS OF WEDDED BLISS!

Surrounded by extended family and friends from all walks of life, "Johnnie" and "Fannie" celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary (December 12, 1965) on December 28, 2025 in their beloved San Leandro home. With the backdrop of the sunset over the Golden Gate Bridge, the program was MC'ed by son and daughter, Teresa Clincy and Carr Preston.

"We knew could do what we could with the knowledge that Mom and Dad would support us." Teresa and Carr learned from their parents about responsibility to each other, faith, being present in your child's life, passing down values, fun, laughter, education, and communicating unconditional love. Children were raised with their parents' teamwork, patience and



From invitation card



William Hoskins, Virginia Marshall and Ginger Smyly at the Prestons'

solidarity. The audience was reminded of the philosopher, Khahil Gibran's poem, "On Children." A slide show – video was played starting with a photo of the newly-wed couple, barely out of their teens! And, there many images of children at all ages and the annual family vacations, which are enjoyed even today.

Testimonials described the characters of both Johnnie Preston and Dr. Fannie Preston as kind, faithful, supportive, sage, patient and nurturing. Well wishes and thanks were offered by William Hoskins, Society Executive Director. Virginia Marshall and Ginger Smyly, Society members were also present.

In closing, Dr. Preston stated that, "Your legacy is in the people you touched." Johnnie Preston thanked his son and daughter and all for the celebration, and said, "Many moons and a lot of water under the bridge....our love is still here. The secret to our marriage: 'Yes, dear,' and a good shot of Scotch." All those gathered there lifted their glasses to salute the couple!

Dr. Preston has been a faithful Society member, having worked tirelessly on educational programs including Black History Month. She has been an advisor to the Society Board. She and Johnnie Preston have been generous to the Society, offering donations to be matched by others and requesting that in lieu of gifts, donations be made to the Society.

The Society thanks you and wishes you well.

LOOKING BACK: INFORMING THE PRESENT AND FUTURE



Flyer, "Come See and Hear Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.," 1961

How did you spend your MLK, Jr., Day Week-end? Replaying the "I Have A Dream Speech," volunteering in service, marching in solidarity and learning. At Yerba Buena Gardens, following the annual march, the San Francisco Interfaith Council and the Northern California MLK Foundation held their annual commemoration, with many of the faith leaders reading parts of the "Dream" speech. These remarks were given a new sense of urgency given the current situation across the nation.

In closing, both Nancy Pelosi, Speaker Emeritus, U. S. House of Representatives, and Reverend Amos Brown, Pastor Emeritus, Third Baptist Church, exhorted, yeah, deputized the crowd, to do the right thing; do as Dr. King would have done. Look and for and demand justice and compassion for all.

**AFRICAN AMERICAN LEGACY
BOOK CLUB**

Shawna Sherman

The African American Legacy Book Club is a joint program of the African American Center, San Francisco Public Library, and the Society. Join! Even if you haven't read the book, the discussion is enlightening. The next selection is [Sign My Name to Freedom](#) by the late Betty Reid Soskin, Tuesday March 10, 2026 at 6 pm via ZOOM. [REGISTER](#).

As mentioned in the above article on Johnnie and Dr. Fannie Preston's 60th Wedding Anniversary, the poem, "On Children," was recited. Here it is in full for your contemplation and reflection:

ON CHILDREN

By Khahil Gilbran

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, Speak to us of Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.

This poem is in the public domain

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Visit us at www.sfaahcs.org or Call 415-292-6172

- ✓ Black History Month 2026 Kick-off and reception, **Wednesday, February 4, 2026, noon**, City Hall Rotunda
- ✓ Exhibit: "Black Creativity," showing now at the Society gallery, Tuesday – Saturday, noon – 4 pm, 762 Fulton St., 2nd fl., San Francisco
- ✓ Society program: "Potpourri of Archive Treasures: Substance and Texture," wherein treasures of the Society archive will be presented. Thursday, February 19, 2026, 5:30 – 7 pm, Society gallery, 762 Fulton St., 2nd fl.
- ✓ Exhibit: "Emory Douglas: In Our Lifetime," part 1, contemporary works, open now, Sargent Johnson Gallery, and part 2, opening February 19 throughout the building, both exhibits closing end of October, AAACC, 762 Fulton St.
- ✓ Exhibit: "Unbound: Art, Blackness & the Universe," October 1, 2025 - August 16, 2026, MoAD, 685 Mission St.
- ✓ Society Book Club: Tuesday, March 10th, May 12th, June 14th, 6 pm, via ZOOM [REGISTER](#)
- ✓ Exhibit: "Hilda Robinson: Retrospective," St Mary's College Museum, February 11, 2026, St. Mary's College, Moraga

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 or call 415-292-6172

BREAKING NEWS:

The Society can now receive donations electronically. Please consider giving a year end gift and or sponsorship for the annual 2026 Black History Month programs and beyond. Go to our secure site [DONATE](#)

More news as Society goes "high tech!"

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, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
415.292.6172

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

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



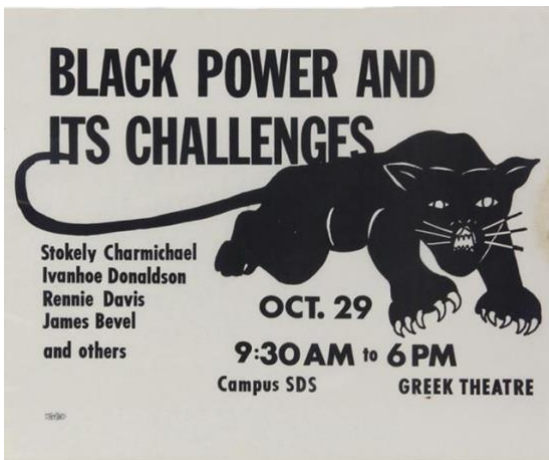
Mural at 680 McAllister



James Herndon, at left, as student with classmate, Martin Luther King, Jr., on right



Donneter Lane and Mayor Joseph Shelley, 1966



Emory Douglas, "Black Panther Party Poster"



Society Negro History Week Display at Emporium



Lateefah Simon, keynote speaker, 2019 Black History Month Kick-off



Emory Douglas, "Prison Industrial Complex"



Emory Douglas, The Black Panther