



SAN FRANCISCO

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SOCIETY

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HISTORICAL &
CULTURAL SOCIETY

762 Fulton St., 2nd fl., San
Francisco, CA 94102
415.292.7162, sfaahcs.org,
info@sfaahcs.org

Eldoris Cameron &
Ginger Smyly, Co-editors
Al Williams, President
William Hoskins, Executive
Director

Photos: Eldoris Cameron, Jon
Greenburg, Ginger Smyly,
James Walker, others

Black History Month 2025 Celebration
African Americans and Labor

Black History Month Kick-Off
Friday, February 7, 2025
12:00-1:00 pm

San Francisco City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

LABOR

For more information visit www.sfaahcs.org

2025 ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH KICK OFF

An excerpt from *Temple News*, Missionary Temple CME Church

On February 7, 2025, at City Hall Rotunda, the Society held the annual Black History Month Kickoff [VIEW](#) our signature event. While the Society started observing Black History Month (then Negro History Week) in 1957, the kick-off event has been held at City Hall in partnership with the current Mayor and other city officials for the last 25 years.

Al Williams, Society President, served as Master of Ceremonies. In her invocation, Reverend Portia Osbourne, Assistant Pastor of Third Baptist Church, spoke to the 2025 Black History Month theme, “African Americans and Labor,” by recalling ancestors of the Labor movement in San Francisco: The Big Five, including Mary Rogers, Espanola Jackson, Ella Hill Hutch, Leroy Continued next page

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE
PRAISESINGER

- ✓ Recap of 2025 Black History Month Kick-off
- ✓ Transitions and Honors: Rev Dorsey Blake and Dorothy Lathan
- ✓ Pro-Am Summer Basketball League: 45 Years of Free Entertainment
- ✓ May Book Club: Black Friday, by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah
- ✓ In the Archives: Dr. Derek Bell’s 1988 speech, Negro History Posters
- ✓ Photo Album

King, Amos Brown, and many others. Rev. Brown, Senior Pastor Emeritus of Third Baptist Church, was in attendance.

Mr. Kennan Foster, music teacher at Castlemont High School in Oakland and Minister of Music at Missionary Temple C.M.E. Church led the chorus and the audience in singing the Negro National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” Mr. Williams emphasized the powerful words of the song by James Weldon Johnson, particularly its call to action. A greeting from the Honorable Shamann Walton, District 10 Supervisor, followed. He acknowledged other Supervisors and City Leaders, department heads and members of the Leadership Team in the audience. Supervisor Walton called to the podium the new Mayor of San Francisco, the Honorable Daniel Lurie, who had been in office less than a month. He talked about San Francisco pioneers and the work they did in the local labor movement.... He reiterated his commitment to the African American community and announced specific initiatives that are on the immediate horizon, including a program for neighborhood stabilization grants.

- *Fannie Wiley Preston, PhD. with additional comments by co-editors*

The Castlemont chorus performed the rousing gospel song, “Lift Your Hands in the Sanctuary.” The keynote address was presented by historian John Templeton. Templeton is known for his in-depth knowledge of the history of African Americans in California. He spoke about “African Americans and Labor” from a national and local perspective. He remarked that Black History can be summed up by one word: WORK. There are now 20 million African Americans in the work force. He made the point that we have to work for our rights and freedoms. ... This collective courage requires determination and resilience. The audience departed reflecting on this challenge.



*l. Mayor Daniel Lurie, Al Williams
m. Castlemont Chorus
r. Williams, Rev. Amos Brown, Mayor Lurie, Rev. Portia Osburne, John Templeton*

2026 BLACK HISTORY MONTH THEME

ASALH’s (the Association for the Study of Afriracn American Life and History), Black History Month theme for 2026 is:

A Century of Black History Commemorations

DOROTHY LATHAN HONORED

Dorothy Lathan, Society Member, was honored during observances of 2025 Black History Month and Women’s History Month at the Board of Supervisors’ meeting on Tuesday, February 25, 2025. Joel P. Engardio, District 4 Supervisor, recognized the contributions of Dorothy Lathan in San Francisco: broke the racial barrier as the first Black homeowner in the Sunset District, resident there for over 50 years, educator, public school principal, civic leadership, and social justice advocate. She is a parent, and wife of the late Arthur Lathan. Mrs. Lathan was presented a Commendation at the Board of Supervisors’ meeting. A reception and group photo was taken with Supervisor Engardio and Lathan’s group of friends and supporters.

- Eldoris Cupp Cameron

Dorothy Lathan is a Society member and is still active at age 93 years. Go Dorothy!



Above - Supervisor Engardio and Dorothy Lathan
r. - Engardio, Lathan and friends



COMMUNITY EVENTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

“SOUTHEAST ART & SOUL EVENT,” Southeast Community Center, 1550 Evans Ave., Sunday, April 27th 1 - 7 pm: Art exhibits, food vendors, live music, community resources and more...

BUCHANAN STREET MALL RENOVATION PROJECT BEGINS

Groundbreaking occurred on March 27th for renovation of the **Buchanan Street Mall**, (Buchanan St. from Eddy to Grove.) The mall, built by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, opened in 1975; later transferred to the Recreation and Parks Department. The playground, gardens, benches, archways, and lighting will be redesigned. Society Board members, serve on the planning committee for the 1-block history walk. [For more info.](#)

CALLING ALL ARTISTS to participate in the History – Memory Walk. Submit an application to the RFQ by May 2nd. [For more information.](#)

GALLERY CORNER –
Waiting for your visit!



- *William Hoskins,*
Executive
Director/Curator

The current exhibit and additional art pieces encompass four entities, each with its own dynamic, trajectory and personal commitment to make a difference. The first, the Sargent Claude Johnson exhibit, is the story of a determined Black multi-talented artist, despite all odds, becoming an outstanding, celebrated mid-twentieth century artist in the Bay Area. The second is Montford Cardwell, an incredible renaissance artist who lived in San Francisco during the 1960's - 1970's* and who has not been recognized for his contributions to the art world. The third is Ms. Mary Ellen Pleasant, a civic leader, philanthropist and civil rights advocate who risked her life and wealth for what she believed. And the fourth is Carlos Martinez, whose incredible creation, "The Twentieth Century," speaks for itself. African art sculptures which have been a source of inspiration for Sargent Claude Johnson and many minority and non-minority artists, are present and generate their own energy in the gallery.

The exhibit is open: Wednesday through Saturday by appointment, and Wednesday - Friday from 1 pm to 5 pm

We are still in desperate need of volunteers to assist in keeping the doors of the Gallery and Society open. Please help and call (415) 292-6172

*There is evidence in the Society archives that Cardwell was working in San Francisco much earlier than the years cited here. See last page for views of some of his art

CALL TO SERVICE AND MEMBERSHIP

- *Fannie Wiley Preston,*
PhD., Excerpted from
Temple News

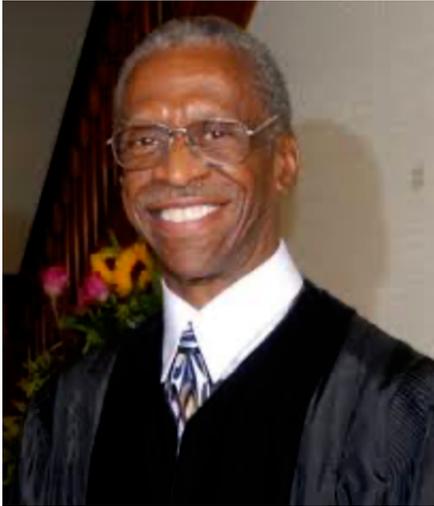
...Join the Society. It is more important now than ever; inclusion programs are being eliminated; teaching Black History is a felony in some states; and students are being taught that Rosa Parks was breaking the law and should have gone to the back of the bus. The current generation needs to know our history if they are going to meet the moment and stay in the fight for social justice. The Society is dedicated to fighting on our behalf. It is a membership organization open to people of all ethnicities that share the vision of the Society for a strong, democratic, multicultural San Francisco.

AFRICAN AMERICAN LEGACY BOOK CLUB:

The next Book Club meeting is Tuesday, May 13, via ZOOM, 6 pm.
[Register](#)

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 [Black Friday](#), by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah. [Black Friday](#) is a collection of short stories regarding Black identity and contemporary social issues. For more [information](#).

REVEREND DORSEY O. BLAKE TRANSITIONS



*Reverend Dr. Dorsey O. Blake
July 26, 1946 – March 2025*

A Memorial Service was held for Reverend Dr. Dorsey O. Blake, on Saturday, March 22, 2025, at **The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples** at 2041 Larkin Street and via streaming to an overwhelming congregation of friends and members. A student of Howard Thurman, Dr. Blake pastored for 31 years at the church co-founded by Thurman.

Reverend Blake was born in Liberty, Missouri, and was the fourth of nine children born to Rev. Dr. William Louis Blake and Hazel Teen (Roberson) Blake. He is survived by siblings Carl LeRoy Blake and Irene Lucrezia Blake. Other survivors include nephews, nieces, great nephews. Bryan Caston, Society member, served as Blake's primary caregiver and business partner.

He graduated as valedictorian from Lincoln High School in Kansas City and received the Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Brown University. Blake earned the Master of Arts and Master of Divinity degrees from Pacific School of Religion and the Doctor of Ministry from United Theological Seminary.

Rev. Blake served as Program Director of the Howard Thurman Educational Trust and Presiding Minister of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples. He also served as academic Faculty Associate at Pacific School of Religion, Dean of Faculty and Visiting Professor of Spirituality and Prophetic Justice at Starr King School for the Ministry, Vice President of University of Creation Spirituality, Campus Ministry at Ohio University, and Professor of Religion at University of Alabama (being one of the first African American faculty members.)

Blake was distinguished with many honors including: Distinguished Faculty Award, Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA,) 2023. He was affiliated with The National Council of Elders, the Samuel Proctor Institute of the Children's Defense Fund, and the Gus Newport Project. The *Friends of Negro Spirituals* organization gave tribute to Reverend Dr. Blake and the "Fellowship Church" as joint recipients of the **2008 Negro Spirituals Heritage Keepers Award** noting his long association with that organization and its mission.

Community and Society members alike will remember Rev. Dorsey Blake for his 31 years of service at the "Fellowship Church," and his understanding and interpretation of the late Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman's theology and spirituality. Rev. Howard Thurman left his tenured position at Howard University to co-found **The Church for**
Continued page 7

- *The Co-Editors*

**PRO-AM SUMMER
BASKETBALL LEAGUE:
45 YEARS OF FREE
ENTERTAINMENT**



Al Attles spent his entire 35-year basketball career with the Golden State Warriors as a player and coach. He also played for the Pro-Am League. Jon Greenburg photo



Steph Curry playing at Kezar Pavilion, summer 2011. Jon Greenburg photo

- Max Millard

On February 16, 2025, the NBA All-Star Game was played in San Francisco for the first time and superstar Steph Curry was crowned the Most Valuable Player. It was the climax of a basketball weekend including February 15th's HBCU Classic in the Oakland Arena showcasing HBCU talent on a national stage. The Tuskegee Golden Tigers beat the Morehouse Maroon Tigers, 68-55.

The Warriors' regular season ends on April 13th followed by the NBA finals in June. But the City is blessed with another league that offers two months of free entertainment by top college and semiprofessional players: the San Francisco Bay Area Pro-Am Summer Basketball League. Mid-June to mid-August, it features a game each Monday through Thursday at 8 p.m. at Kezar Pavilion, 755 Stanyan Street. The pavilion has a capacity of about 3,000, and was filled on the night in 2011 when Steph Curry took the court and scored 43 points. It was his only appearance there, but NBA greats Jason Kidd, Gary Payton, Sr., and Brian Shaw were regular team members who played throughout the season.

The Pro-Am league was founded in 1980 by Jon Greenburg, then a director at the Potrero Hill Recreation Center. He spent 43 years there before retiring. His specialty is officiating high school, college and pro basketball games, including the Warriors' practices. Today, at 84, he remains the league's director. "I realized that San Francisco did not have a quality adult league, and thought I could organize one," he said in a March interview. "I started it in the Potrero Hill Rec Center and ran it there for eight or nine years. It got too crowded, so I moved it to Kezar."

A tall, wiry, soft-spoken San Franciscan, he established the league with pro rules, and got approval from both the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the NBA to allow their players to compete. Each game has four 10-minute quarters. "In the pro game, there's a lot of pushing, shoving, elbowing, that they would call in college, and not necessarily in the pros," he explained. "They let a lot more go in the pros because you're paying 100 bucks a seat, you don't want to hear the whistle all night."

The league consists of eight teams of 10 to 15 players each, mainly top college athletes, many who have finished their campus eligibility. They bear names such as the Dream Team, Bay Raiders and Oakland Believers. Each team plays a game each week from mid-June to early August. The last week of the season, features a best-of-three championship series. But by then, some of the best players have returned to college or to Europe, where they play professionally.

So, the best time to see them is during the regular season.

A large majority of the players, coaches and referees are African American, and most live in the East Bay. Oakland has long been a crucible of basketball talent. Each year about half of the players return to their same Pro-Am team, and the coaches and referees rarely change from year to year. Everyone is a volunteer. The league is sponsored by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department and the San Francisco Police Officers Association.

Surprisingly, in view of the well-coordinated fast breaks and alley-oops, most of the teams never practice, even before their first game. "It's a fun thing during the summer for them," Jon explains. "They just want to keep in shape, and once a week they play a game."

One of the most amusing aspects of the games is that during every timeout, children swarm onto the court with their own basketballs to dribble and shoot, only to disappear instantly when the game resumes. This happened spontaneously long ago, and Jon let it continue. He said with a

smile: "So I decided: I don't need halftime entertainment. They're all waiting for halftime so they can go on the court and shoot around."

The league's website, sanfranciscoproam.com, includes photos of all the championship teams and past star players, and the league rules. The summer schedule is posted by early May, and later the roster for each team. The first game in 2025 will be played on June 16. By then, all the teams are put together, but new players may be added at any time.

Anyone who wants to join a team should email Jon at sfproam@aol.com, and list their experience and height. He will then forward the information to the coaches to decide. The league especially seeks tall players.

Jon describes his job as "to facilitate the league. Organize. Get the necessary schedules out, do the website, make sure people on the clock and the score book show up.

"It's at least two and a half to three months a year," he adds. "I've got a book that thick, and I just turn the page. After these many years, I've got it down pat. It's been kind of a big part of my life."

Cont. from page 5

the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco. It became (and remains) the first racially integrated - intercultural church in the United States. While active at the Church and in the community, the late Mrs. Sue Bailey Thurman was a devoted member of the Society. Chiefly due to Mrs. Thurman and the Howard Thurman Educational Trust led by Blake, the Society is one of four institutions that hold sermons and devotions prepared by Thurman as well as other mementos of the Church and the work of Mrs. Thurman. In 2023, 2041 Larkin Street was listed as a San Francisco designated landmark.

Reverend Dr. Dorsey O. Blake will be deeply missed by the San Francisco Community and the Society!

MEET LARRY BERRY, CAMPUS MANAGER

India Basin Waterfront Park,
Bayview - Hunters Point



*Larry Berry, Campus Manager
India Basin Waterfront Park*

After years of shoreline decay and neglect following World War II and the closure of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, **India Basin Waterfront Park** in **Bayview Hunters Point** was officially opened on October 19, 2024, with ribbon cutting and other festivities. Larry Berry was hired as the Indian Basin Campus Manager, a new position for the parks department to ensure that community representation and to oversee programs, partnerships, and community engagement at the park, located at 900 Innes Ave.

Berry, graduate of Urban Studies and Planning at San Francisco State University, was a persistent and strong leader in the development of **India Basin Waterfront Park**, and the **Southeast Community Center** at 1550 Evans Avenue. He served as Deputy Director of the Southeast Community facility when it opened in 2022 under the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. The San Francisco United Administrators Emeritus organization held its *Black History Month* luncheon on February 4, 2025 at Southeast Community Center where Mr. Berry was guest speaker.

The Recreation and Parks Department acquired 900 Innes Avenue in 2014; in partnership with the Trust for Public Land, San Francisco Parks Alliance, A. Philip Randolph Institute and the Bayview Hunters Point Community, **India Basin Waterfront Park** was developed and opened to the community. The park includes: walking trails and connections to other nearby shoreline parks, “Rocking the Boat,” a boat building program for 9-10th graders, boating, a food pavilion, and a Cottage Community Room in the restored shipwrights building, for meetings and educational programs. A large outdoor deck over the bay and swings on the Sargent Johnson Plaza round off the park’s amenities.

Dr. David Hardiman & his All Star Big Band held its 49th Anniversary at India Basin Waterfront Park on September 9, 2024, “*Sounds of the Street.*” Dr. David Hardiman has been a long time, popular musician and band leader in the San Francisco community for years.

Thanks to the dedicated leadership of **Larry Berry** and others, the Bayview Hunters Point community is being revitalized and opened for all to enjoy!

For more photos, see photo album

- *Eldoris Cupp Cameron*

FROM THE ARCHIVES:
 "THE FRAMERS OF THE
 CONSTITUTION: RACISTS OR
 PRUDENT POLITICIANS?"

- Dr. Derek A. Bell

Excerpted from his speech
 before the Commonwealth Club
 of California, Black History
 Month, 1988

*Food for thought as we enter
 the 2nd quarter of the 21st
 Century*

"The Constitutional Status of African-Americans into the 21st century"

When the Civil War ended, the North pushed through constitutional amendments to grant citizen rights to the former slaves and to protect its victory. But within a decade when another political crisis threatened a new civil war, black rights were again sacrificed in the Hays – Tilden Compromise of 1877. Later, working class whites challenged ruling class whites regarding their share in a society which they were far from advantaged. Their political differences were settled when white elites capitulated to the insistence of white masses who sought not equal opportunity for themselves but state sanctioned segregation laws. The laws were affirmed by the Supreme Court in the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case.

This year (1988) we celebrate the 33rd anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education, the Supreme Court's rejection of the separate, but equal doctrine. Yet the implementation of that decision was slowed by compromise between those who wished to enforce it forthwith and those reluctant to force whites to alter racial patterns that seriously subordinated not only the rights but also the lives of blacks. The compromise was the "all deliberate speed" decision in the second Brown case. That decision may never have been implemented were it not for the civil rights sit-ins this summer and other protest activity.

In short, racism has motivated political deals in compromises that force blacks into a subordinate place in society. It caused whites to settle for a status that made them work for a black man's wages.

Imagine that one of the fifty states becomes mainly black and that blacks dominate both economic and political spheres. Imagine further that representatives of the white minority bring a series of cases to the Supreme Court charging that whites convicted of killing blacks are four times more likely to receive the death penalty than blacks found guilty of murdering whites.

Imagine that whites charged with crime have little chance of attaining white jurors at their trials; in criminal trials white defendants receive much higher sentences for the same crimes than blacks and in civil suits whites receive much smaller damage awards than do blacks.

Despite a long history of discrimination by blacks, suppose the whites charge that courts in that state approve affirmative action

relief only when whites prove intentional discrimination, and not even then when identifiable blacks will be disadvantaged by such a relief. Do any of us have any doubt that the Supreme Court will quickly grant relief to whites in that hypothetical black state? And yet in recent years the Supreme Court has denied relief to blacks you brought similar charges of discrimination by white state officials.

The pattern of the framers (of the Constitution) decision making, well- illustrated from the perspective of two centuries, can serve as a guide to recognize and defend against policies. While less blatant and burdensome than slavery, these policies are intended to achieve that character of racial subordination that the slave owners effected with chains and continuing threats of physical violence."

At the time of this speech, Derek Bell was Professor of Law, Harvard University, and author, And We Are Not Saved. He passed away in 2011. Dr. Bell coined the term, "critical race theory," which relates to the practice of law and the criminal justice system.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

More than just a poster

- Ginger Smyly

These posters were used to promote the Society's 1967 Negro History Week program. The theme was "Negro Workers and Builders of America;" the guest speaker was civic leader, Percy Moore. Note the art and graphics which connect to the arts of the Harlem Renaissance, the location, the defunct Howard Presbyterian Church, as a site for many Society events, and, while not cited here, often these posters were printed by union shops. Finally, the Society included "42nd Annual Observance, Negro History Week," referring to the Society's relationship to ASALH, the organization that founded Negro History Week. What do you see in these 1967 artifacts?

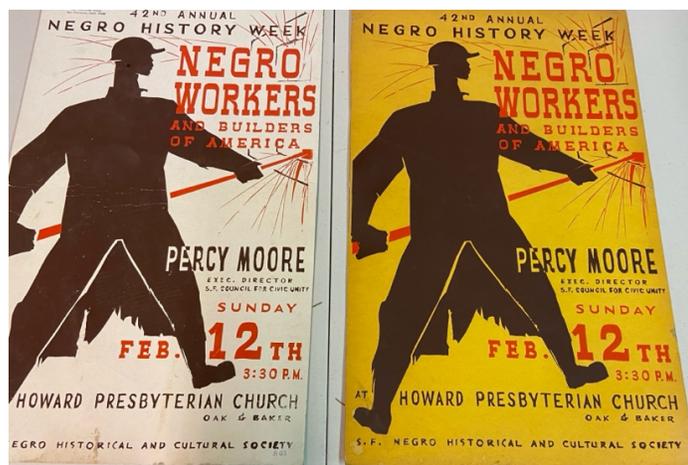


PHOTO ALBUM – PHOTO ALBUM -- PHOTO ALBUM – PHOTO ALBUM -- PHOTO ALBUM – PHOTO ALBUM



Rev. Portia Osborne



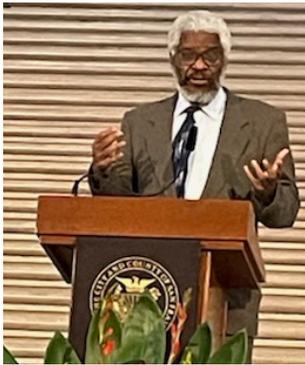
Sup. Shamman Walton



Castlemont Chorus



Osborne, Al Williams, Mayor Lurie



John Templeton



Williams, Rev Amos Brown, Mayor Lurie, Osborne, Templeton



Dorothy Lathan, Carl and Jayne Williams and friend



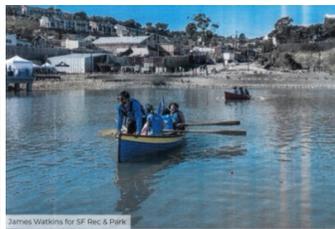
Kiwan Gore and Addie Watson; Eldoris Cameron and Templeton; Friend and Toye Moses



Shipwright's house



Above right and below: India Basin Grounds and Facilities



SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

- ✓ Southeast Art & Soul Event, Southeast Community Center, 1550 Evans Avenue, Sunday, April 27th, 1 - 7 pm: Art exhibits, food vendors, live music, community resources and more
- ✓ Society Book Club: Tuesday, May 13th, via ZOOM, 6 pm. [Register](#)

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

From the Society Collections: Montford Cardwell



"Jesse Owens," subject, Owens mid-stride, sculpture, wood, idiogram of artist's initials, left, "M," "T" or "I" "C" on left



"Dr. Charles Drew," sculpture, clay, signed, "M. Cardwell, 1974"

Cardwell was an "accomplished organist, pianist, photographer, painter, computer artist, sculptor and teacher, born on the east coast, but spent most of his life in San Francisco."

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

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

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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 | _____ 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 |

Links:

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