



SAN FRANCISCO
*African American
Historical & Cultural Society*

PRESIDENT'S CORNER: AFRICAN AMERICANS, COVID 19, AND THE SOCIETY

Greetings, Society family and friends

First, we want to extend our concern for you, your family, and friends. Please follow public health directives and **stay at home** as much as possible during this public health emergency.

We can't help but think: where we will be in the next few months? Little did we know at the year's start that we would be in self-isolation, or struggling for breath, or mourning our loved ones in absentia. And, we don't need reminding that African Americans and other vulnerable people are at higher risk from the disease and its economic and social effects. (Go to the [Griot](#) to read about African Americans who have been taken by the virus.)

Small businesses and non-profit organizations are struggling to make ends meet and to be there after the shut-down ends. Toward those goals, the Society Board and key members are working at home, checking our incoming communications and preparing outgoing messages, improving our archives, writing grants, and planning for the Society's future. History has taught us that **hope** and **perseverance** are our watchwords.

As days go by we realize how much more important is our **VOTE**. This year's elections are crucial; the government's pandemic response and leadership or lack thereof, should be a litmus test. *We are counting on you to VOTE* this fall. Please step up for Society elections. "...Your voice, contributions, and involvement are critically important!" **Once we can hold public meetings** we will schedule an annual Society membership meeting. The Society will elect members to the Board of Directors. "Only **Life and**

PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER, Summer 2020

Continued, President's Corner:

current members will be eligible to vote and stand as candidates." Submit a brief resume and letter telling us why you want to be on the board, and what knowledge, expertise, and talents you can bring to the Board. Submit by mail or email to:

San Francisco African American Historical & Cultural Society

Attn: Nominating Committee

762 Fulton Street, 2nd Fl., San Francisco, CA 94102

info@sfaahcs.org

...

Al Williams, President

SOCIETY HONOR ROLL: DONNETER LANE



Many of us know Donnetter Lane as a community advocate, housing counselor, and Church "First Lady." She and her late husband, Rev. John Lane, were Society members; he serving as President of the Board from 1963-1965, and she as President from 1989-1993. Several years back Mrs. Lane moved to a care facility in Phoenix, AZ to be close to her daughter, Gwen Lane. Gwen wanted Society members and friends to know that Mrs. Lane is now in hospice at Gwen's home. Keep Donnetter Lane in your thoughts. More on page 3



PRAISESINGER NEWSLETTER, Spring 2020

BARACK OBAMA: AFRICAN AMERICANS & THE VOTE



The Society's current exhibit, **Barack Obama, A Legacy of Hope**, curated by Dr. William Hoskins, Executive Director, and Ms. Francee Covington, member, serves as a reminder of what can be done. As you enter the Society Gallery, the creative work of talented artist, **Courageous**, introduces the voting rights struggle.

Voting Rights, The Fight Is Not Over, Courageous



This year's Black History Month Theme, "**African Americans and the Vote**," speaks to the ongoing struggle by Black men and women for the right to vote. Despite guarantees in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments for Black disfranchised communities, voting rights for the greater majority of Blacks, especially in the South, did not become a reality until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Through voting rights campaigns and legal suits from the turn of the twentieth century to the mid-1960s, African Americans made their voices heard. The election of Barack Obama was a resounding attestation to these efforts.

Power Struggle, Courageous



In the main room, the exhibit follows President Barack Obama from childhood to his years in the White House. The Obama segment of the exhibit testifies to the **power of the vote**, and shares the story of an amazing community organizer who rose to be the leader of the free world, celebrating that for eight years, we had a compassionate gentleman and scholar as our president. The major segment of the exhibit was created from the personal collection of Ms.

Posters and photos featured in the exhibit



More on page 4



**SAN FRANCISCO AFRICAN AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY
"HERNDON SISTERS IN SAN FRANCISCO"**

Excerpts from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/23/76:



Sisters Letitia Herndon Channell, 96, and Larena Frances Herndon, 100, shared their rich memories.

Letitia Herndon Channell, age 96, and Larena Frances Herndon, age 100, were active members of the Society and Bethel AME Church. Daughter of a freed slave, **Larena** arrived in San Francisco via the Southern Pacific train from St. Louis on October 11, 1913. She recounted that Blacks worked in laundries, as domestics, ran rooming houses, and as students attended independent schools because they could not attend public schools. The Black community was centered around three churches: Bethel AME on Jackson Street, Third Baptist on Hyde Street and AME Zion on Geary Street, and lived around Jackson and Powell, on Union Street and in Daly City. Larena's first job, cleaning ladies' restrooms, was at the 1915 **Panama Pacific International Exposition**, celebrating the opening of the Panama Canal.

The Black population grew during WWII in 1940 from 4,846, in 1950 to 43,502 and by 1970 to 96,078. The Hunters' Point community grew to house the families of Black workers who came from the South to work in the shipyards and war industry. In July, 1945, sister, Mrs. Letitia Herndon Channell, retired to San Francisco after serving 28 years as a teacher in Louisiana. Letitia, born outside Shreveport, LA., on January 24, 1880 wrote poetry and studied at Hampton Institute in Hampton, VA., and Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, AL.; married

Rev. S. J. Channell in Louisiana, a presiding elder of the AME church, who died in the 1930s.

The sisters' mother, Martha Tolbert, moved to Louisiana by covered wagon from her birthplace in Missouri around the age of 12. Her family had been kept working as slaves after slavery ended until the plantation house workers overheard conversations about emancipation and passed the word on to other enslaved people. Their father, Edward Herndon, born "free," moved to Louisiana from his native West Virginia.



1974 Program at the African American Historical and Cultural Society. Pictured in front are sisters, Ms. Letitia Channell, Ms. Lorena Herndon (deceased), and Mr. Theodore Knowles.

"PROCRASTINATION" A Poem by Letitia H. Channell

*Procrastination, you thief of time,
You bid us wait a while,
Rest on our oars and drift along,
In easy going style.
You say to us there's plenty of time
To do your noble deeds.
Today have fun and live it up,
Tomorrow you can sow good seed.
But, ah, my friend, be not deceived,
Tomorrow you will never see
For the stream of time flows swiftly on,
To waters of eternity.
Then do it now, the task at hand,
With all your zeal and zest.
Now is the time to act, my friends.
At set of sun there's rest.*

...

Eldoris Cameron, editor

Continued, Donnetter Lane

You may contact Gwen at (415) 596-4138.



ARCHIVE UPDATE – PROGRESS!

USF – SOCIETY CLASSROOM PARTNERSHIP

Society members, Dr. Fannie Preston and Ginger Smyly, and USF Professor, Candace Harrison, arranged for her African American Studies students to work on the Society archives. Three enthusiastic students were trained and started archive inventory at the beginning of the March. Following the stay-in-place order, USF put all classes “online,” and the Society office was “locked down.” Work was halted.

We are happy to report that students have been working on two projects to advance archive revitalization. The first is to research and write brief biographies of selected persons from the "Sixty-Two Heroes and Pioneers of the Western Addition," a pamphlet developed by the Society for the (now defunct) San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. These biographies will constitute a website exhibit, a “baby” step toward virtual exhibits. The second project is to inventory and compare the availability of the late Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman’s lectures, meditations and sermons, and whether they are digitized. Society President, Al Williams, notes that The Society was among 5 sites that received the Thurman Meditations from the Thurman Educational Foundation (Boston, Emory and Morehouse Universities, the Church of the Fellowship of All Peoples, and the Society.)

MORE NOTES

- We expect to continue the archive inventory once we can safely re-enter the storage area.
- We have recently received items from Craig Nance, the son and grandson of Glenn Nance and Ethel Ray Nance, who are or were long time Society members. Read more about [Ethel Ray Nance](https://aaregistry.org/story/ethel-ray-nance-born/). (https://aaregistry.org/story/ethel-ray-nance-born/)

... Ginger Smyly, Board member

Continued, Barack Obama

Francee Covington. The overwhelming message in this exhibit is that ***we have in the past challenged each other to stand up for what is right and resist what is wrong.*** In 2020, African Americans will have a chance to tell a story of what being right and powerful, especially in the polling booth, will mean for everyone.

“Barack Obama” will be available through August 31, 2020, after our doors reopen.

... William Hoskins, Executive Director

Systematic Destruction, Courageous



I’m Awake Now, Courageous



Interested in a Society committee? Have a comment? Or want to contribute to the Society website or the *Praisesinger* newsletter? Contact a Board member for more information or email the Society at: info@sfaahcs.org. Volunteers are welcome!!!!



SOCIETY HONOR ROLL: SUE BAILEY THURMAN

Does the name, Sue Bailey, ring a bell? She was the long partner of the Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman. She made an impact on the Society’s mission during her sojourns in San Francisco. She was active in the Society and authored "Pioneers of Negro Origin in California," a pamphlet compiled, researched and written for local newspapers. She supported the efforts of the Society to inform the community about African American lives, culture and history – the mission of the Society. Many of her books, photos, and letters are on our shelves and in the archives. She likely was instrumental in soliciting archive donations relating to the Thurmans’ lives and work. “Pioneers” is available in the Society library.

Who would you nominate to the Society Honor Roll?

... Al Williams, President

WEBSITE NEWS

Soon after you receive a copy of this edition of the *Praisesinger*, the Society website will be updated to include new information, links, articles and the latest and archived editions of the *Praisesinger*. Check it out at sfaahcs.org.

PAPERLESS DELIVERY:
Do you have an email address? Please let us know; it saves postage and keep us safe.

San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society

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762 Fulton Street, 2nd fl., San Francisco, CA 94102
415-292-6172; info@sfaahcs.org; www.sfaahcs.org

Editors: Eldoris Cameron and Ginger Smyly
Photos: Eldoris Cameron, William Hoskins,
Courageous , Lane Friend
President: Al Williams
Executive Director: William Hoskins

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

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

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 | _____ | |

Contribution: \$ _____

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 |

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Date rec'd check/cash roster thank you

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STAY SAFE – STAY AT HOME -SEND AN EMAIL OR CALL A FRIEND