Changemakers: Biographies of African Americans in San Francisco Who Made a Difference

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CHANGEMAKERS

BIOGRAPHIES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SAN FRANCISCO WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

WRITTEN BY STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
CHANGEMAKERS

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SAN FRANCISCO WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

Biographies

inspired by San Francisco’s

Ella Hill Hutch Community Center murals

researched, written, and edited by

the University of San Francisco’s

Martín-Baró Scholars

and

Esther Madriz Diversity Scholars
CHANGEMAKERS:
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SAN FRANCISCO WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

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The front cover features a 1992 portrait of Ella Hill Hutch, painted by Eugene E. White

The Inspiration Murals were painted in 1999 by Josef Norris, curated by Leonard ‘Lefty’ Gordon and Wendy Nelder,
and supported by the San Francisco Arts Commission and the Mayor’s Office Neighborhood Beautification Project

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who made this book possible. Please see the back pages for more acknowledgments.

The opinions expressed herein represent the voices of students at the University of San Francisco
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CHANGEMAKERS

INTRODUCTION

IMAGES OF THE INSPIRATION MURALS

EDDIE ALLEY

VERNON ALLEY

JULE ANDERSON

DR. ERNEST A. BATES

REV. HAMILTON T. BOSWELL

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Murals by Josef Norris, photos by Joaquin Cabello

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Jazz Drummer
Board of Education
Neurologist
Jones United Methodist Church
Pastor, Bethel AME Church
Third Baptist Church, President, NAACP
Tax Collector
Mayor of San Francisco
Teacher, Administrator, SFUSD
Deputy Mayor, Labor Leader
Labor Leader, Longshoremen’s Union
Dentist, African American Chamber of Commerce
First African American Principal, SFUSD
First African American School Teacher, SFUSD
Interim Superintendent, SFUSD
Judge
Fire Chief, President, Black Firefighters Assoc.
Deputy Mayor
Police Officer
Journalist for The Sun–Reporter
H. WELTON FLYNN  44  Accountant
TERRY FRANCOIS  46  Attorney, SF Board of Supervisors
DR. WAYLAND FULLER  48  Pharmacist
ERNEST J. GAINES  50  Author
ROTEA GILFORD  52  SF Police Department, Officers for Justice
DANNY GLOVER  54  Actor and Activist
DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT  56  Physician, Writer, and Newspaper Publisher
DR. ZURETTI GOOSBY  58  Dentist and SFUSD School Board Member
LEONARD ‘LEFTY’ GORDON  60  Director, Ella Hill Hutch Community Center
REV. ROLAND GORDON  62  Pastor and Founder, Thad Brown Boys Academy
NAOMI GRAY  64  Community Activist
BISHOP DONALD GREEN  66  San Francisco Christian Center
BISHOP WILBUR HAMILTON  68  Bishop, SF Redevelopment Agency
DR. NATHAN HARE  70  Professor, Psychologist, Founder of Black Studies
CAPTAIN SYLVIA HARPER  72  First African American Female Captain, SFPD
BRENDA HARRIS  74  Educator and State Department of Education
LEOLA HAVARD  76  First Female African American Principal, SFUSD
REV. FREDERICK DOUGLASS HAYNES, SR.  78  Third Baptist Church
OLLIE AND WILLIE HECTOR  80  Successful Parents
AILEEN CLARKE HERNANDEZ  82  President, National Organization for Women
RICHARD HOLDER  84  First African American Deputy Chief, SFPD
ELLA HILL HUTCH  86  SF Board of Supervisors, Labor Leader
MATTIE JACKSON  88  Labor Leader
GERALDINE JOHNSON  90  Coalition of Black Trade Unions
REV. CALVIN JONES, JR.  92  Pastor, Providence Baptist Church
REV. CALVIN JONES, SR.  94  Pastor, Providence Baptist Church
LOUISE JONES  96  Principal, Deputy Superintendent of SFUSD
FRED JORDAN  98  Engineer and Philanthropist
SAM JORDAN  100  Entrepreneur
JOSEPH GAMBLE KENNEDY  102  Judge
WILLIE B. KENNEDY  104  BART and SF Board of Supervisors
LEROY KING  106  Union Leader, Commissioner SF Redevelopment
DR. WILLIS KIRK  108  President of San Francisco Community College
DONNETER LANE  110  Educator and Community Activist
ORELIA LANGSTON  112  Administrator and Community Activist
ORVILLE LUSTER  114  Executive Director, Youth for Service
RUTH MALOOF  116  Mother of Six, SFUSD Volunteer
DR. JOE MARSHALL  118  Founder of Omega Boys Club
LARRY MARTIN  120  Vice President of Transportation Workers Union
MARY S. MARTIN  122  Founder, S.R. Martin College Preparatory School
NATHANIEL MASON, JR.  124  Community Activist, NAACP
JOHNNY MATHIS  126  Entertainer
OLLIE MATSON  128  National Football League
ENOLA MAXWELL  130  Founder of Potrero Hill Neighborhood House
REV. JAMES MCCRAY  132  Jones Memorial United Methodist Church
LULANN MCGRIF  134  Community Leader, NAACP
ISIAH NELSON, III  136  First African American Commander, SFPD
EVA PATerson  138  Attorney and Founder of Equal Justice Society
LES PAYNE  140  California Youth Authority
DR. WILLIAM PIERCE  142  Clinical Psychologist
ALEX PITCHER  144  NAACP President, Community Leader
CECIL F. POOLE  146  Judge and US Attorney
WILL HENRY RENO
MARY HELEN ROGERS
PRENTICE E. SANDERS
THOMATRA SCOTT
JOSEPH 'BUNNY' SIMON
THELMA AND BENJAMIN SMITH
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Businessman and Community Activist
Community Advocate
Deputy Chief of Police, SFPD
Community Advocate
Entrepreneur
Parents of Nine
NBA (Golden State Warriors) and USF Dons
Hunters Point Boys and Girls Club
Probation Services
SF Board of Supervisors
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National Football League Official and Educator
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Assessor and SF Board of Supervisors
Community Advocate
Entrepreneur
Artist
Pastor, Glide Church
SF Police Department, Officers for Justice
Tuskegee Airman, US Air Force
INTRODUCTION

This book, written entirely by students at the University of San Francisco, seeks to inclusively celebrate black excellence and to honor the legacies of the 96 inspiring people whose images appear on the murals of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center in the heart of the Western Addition in San Francisco.

Commissioned in 1999 by Supervisors Leonard “Lefty” Gordon and Wendy Nelder in conjunction with the San Francisco Arts Commission, the Inspiration Murals, painted by Anthony Josef Norris, consist of five panels depicting San Francisco-based African Americans who made a difference. The people represented on the walls include educators, community activists, politicians, sports figures, pastors, doctors, entertainers, artists, parents, and more—highlighting the key roles African Americans from all walks of life have played in the development and betterment of life in San Francisco.

As students worked on these biographies, they rapidly realized that each and every person depicted on the murals absolutely deserves her or his own entire book. Students also realized that we can only hope to offer here a glimpse into the triumphs and struggles of people who helped make San Francisco a better, more inclusive place.

As Historian Gerald D. Nash wrote: “the story of black Americans . . . still needs to be told” (qtd. in Broussard). We could not agree more. Given the decreasing numbers of African Americans living in San Francisco and the increasing gentrification of historically African American communities, preserving this history has become increasingly important. It is our hope that this work will in some way spark interest not just in preserving the Inspiration Murals, but also in generating new murals that honor people who are currently working to make San Francisco a place where equality and social justice will thrive. To be clear, we tend to view social justice at the University of San Francisco as both a process and a goal.

Everyone who worked on this book has felt not just the importance of recognizing and celebrating the African American leaders of our city’s past, we also felt compelled to address “the fierce urgency of now,” as Dr. King famously declared in 1967. As we consider the tides and undercurrents at work in the United States in 2019, we are as heartened by certain positive changes in San Francisco as we are dismayed by certain national trends. But we who’ve worked on this project would like to hold up what we’ve learned as an example of the incredible spirit of progress in this city—particularly during difficult times. The incredible lives of the people in this book, by their example and accomplishments, speak volumes. We hope this one volume will be just the beginning of others.
Some Back Story About How This Book Was Created . . .

and Effusive Praise for Its Supporters

Conversations about this project began in 2015 when University of San Francisco alumna and educator Brenda Harris approached Karin Cotterman of the Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good and Engage San Francisco with a big idea—what if we could inspire USF students working in community-engaged classes to collect all the stories of those community members represented on the Inspiration murals? To achieve this goal, folks at USF, including Andrea Wise and Star Moore, began collaborating with long-time Western Addition community activists Althea Kennedy Carrie, Lynnette White, and Eugene E. White. Giving generously of their time on numerous occasions, these community leaders came into classrooms and met students in the Western Addition to inspire—and indeed inform—students about the troubled history of San Francisco.

In 2015–16, a living-learning community of students at USF, the Esther Madríz Diversity Scholars program, led by Sociology Professor Stephanie Sears, took up this research as part of their community-engaged learning project for the year. Over the course of the academic year, the students researched and worked on roughly a third of the biographies, also conducting many interviews with the folks you’ll find in this book. In 2016–17, a second cohort of the Esther Madríz Scholars contributed their biographies as well. (You’ll find all the names of these thirty-three students proudly displayed on our title pages.)

Also starting in 2016, a second living-learning community, the Martín-Baró Scholars joined the project. The Martín-Baró Scholars, led by Professor David Holler, continued to research and work on the layouts that make up this book through 2019. (All in all, fifty students in this program are also listed on our title pages.)

We also invited several research assistants to help work on this book as well: Samantha Young, who really got us started, Ya’qub Elmi, who also did excellent work in the classroom, and Marcelo Swofford, who did outstanding work in many regards. Finally, thanks to a generous grant from the College of Arts and Sciences Dean Marcelo Camperi and the guidance of Professor Rachel Brahinsky, we were able to invite three graduate students from our Masters in Urban and Public Affairs Program to help out: Matt Chiodo, Zachary James, and Elijah Williams, all bringing their alacrity, energy, and research skills to the project.

We also connected with the good people of the San Francisco Public Library, particularly City Archivist Susan Goldstein, who helped our classes find material that was not available online. Other librarians at the History Center aided us immensely as we searched through faded clippings, microfilm, and photographs. We are truly grateful for their help. We are particularly indebted to Tom Carey, Katherine Ets–Hokin, Andrea Grimes, Christina Moretta, Yael Schwartz, Tami Suzuki, Jeff Thomas, and others at SFPL.

We also owe profound thanks to Alfred W. Williams, President of the African American Historical and Cultural Society, for reviewing all of the biographies before we went to press. He offered valuable sugges-
tions which we will also take to heart as we prepare an online companion to this print volume.

As we neared completion of this book, we were grateful for the advice and counsel of Wendy Nelder, former President of the Board of Supervisors, and one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Inspiration Murals.

All told, it took 87 students and many semesters’ work to arrive at this book, but all of the contributors, editors, and supporters bear in mind that this effort pales in comparison to the monumental achievements of the people featured in the murals and in these pages.

We are more than grateful for the logistical support of Karin Cotterman of Engage San Francisco, as well as Leslie Lombre, David Donahue, Andrea Wise, Nolizwe Nondabula, Star Moore, and Fernando Enciso-Márquez of the Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good for their generous support in innumerable ways. This project simply would not exist without their guidance. In addition to the many ways they supported this project, these folks also very kindly connected us with the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, without whose generosity, this book could not have been printed, and the events associated with this work could not have the public reach we aimed for. To the Walter and Elise Haas Fund in particular we are enormously grateful.

We are also extremely grateful for the professional pro bono copyediting provided by veteran journalist Jeannine Yeomans, who took on a capacious binder full of biographies in spring 2019 to edit with her eagle eyes. Also, as part of our efforts to preserve the images of the murals on the following pages, we are indebted to artist Josef Norris, whose original works remain the inspiration for this book.

The book cover, you surely noticed, features a simply stunning portrait of Ella Hill Hutch, painted by Eugene E. White in 1992. We could not be more grateful to Eugene and Lynnette White for granting us permission to use this image to grace our cover. Very sadly to all who were involved in this project, we lost Mr. Eugene E. White just months before the release of this book. We humbly dedicate our work to him, to his life partner and huge supporter of this project Mrs. Lynnette White, to Mrs. Altheda Carrie who lent so many hours of counsel to our students, and to Dr. Brenda Harris, who helped start so many people on this amazing journey. We know, too, there are many tough journeys yet ahead, but we hope you will find some hope and examples of courage, fortitude, and triumph over tough odds in the pages that follow.

—David Holler and Stephanie Sears, University of San Francisco, 2019

Works Cited


The Inspiration Murals were painted in 1999 by Josef Norris. His work, featured on five exterior walls of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center, was part of the Neighborhood Beautification Project. Leonard ‘Lefty’ Gordon and Wendy Nelder selected the many individuals featured on the murals and secured a grant from the San Francisco Arts Commission to complete the work. Photos by Joaquin Cabello.
Changemakers is dedicated to
Altheda Kennedy Carrie,
Lynnette White, Eugene E. White,
and Brenda Harris,
community activists who helped usher this book
into existence in innumerable ways.

We offer a special dedication to
Leonard “Lefty” Gordon
whose work inspired the Western Addition
community, and whose idea inspired the murals

Leonard “Lefty” Gordon
CHANGEMAKERS
E DWARD HENRY ALLEY, JR., known as Eddie Alley, was one of the Fillmore’s leading big band drummers for decades. Alongside his brother, Vernon Alley, who was an equally celebrated bassist, Eddie Alley’s musical prowess helped break barriers between white and black audiences. Alley is one of the many changemakers on the walls of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center because of his great impact on the Fillmore community in San Francisco.

Named after his father, Eddie Alley, Jr., was born on December 19, 1910, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. During his childhood, he was forced to move multiple times as his father searched for a well-paying job to sustain their family. They first moved from Minnesota to Illinois, then to Nevada, and finally, when Eddie was 13, they settled in San Francisco. Upon their arrival, the Alleys first lived in the Potrero Hill District before moving to the Fillmore.

The schools in the Fillmore were drastically different from the ones that Eddie attended back east, which were predominantly white. After graduating high school in December of 1929, Alley had planned to attend college but was unable to go because the separation of his parents caused him to have to work to help his family during the Great Depression.

From a young age, Alley had been fascinated by the drums. At Daniel Webster Elementary, he entered a competition for hopeful young drummers to win free lessons on how to properly play the drums. Despite never having formal experience, Alley won. Unfortunately, as Alley got older, he had to forgo his lessons to work to help support his family.

Alley has often credited his love for music to the times he saw musicians like Duke Ellington at the Prince and Orpheum Theaters. When Alley graduated from high school, he started working at Topsy’s Roost, where he played his drums to accompany phonograph records until the main band would play. Once onstage, he would cater to the needs of each of the bands he played with and sometimes they would even invite him to sing with them on stage. Eddie’s first goal as a musician was to play at Topsy’s Roost. In order to do this,
he needed to join the musicians’ union, which required him to take an exam. He passed the exam and started playing at Club Alabam on Post Street and also began to play at independently contracted parties. When he played at the club, he would be compensated with three dollars and a hot meal. Alley later formed his own band, Eddie Alley and his Gentlemen of Rhythm and they began playing at clubs all over San Francisco.

At the famous Bop City jazz club, Alley played alongside Johnny Mathis, who also grew up in the Fillmore District before becoming an international star singer. Alley was proud of the progress Mathis had made and reminisced about the days when they sang together: “We were poor, so any one who lived behind us was really poor! . . . But when he was first getting started, he sang with me a few times.” Later, he was given the opportunity to work for Billie Holiday and perform for President John F. Kennedy. When it came to Alley’s music, the barrier of race did not deter him; he played in both white and black clubs and was the first black performer to go on the stage of the Fillmore Auditorium.

In the middle of his musical career, Alley realized that working as a musician was not a practical job for maintaining a steady income. He had a family and four kids to take care of and a home to pay for so Alley seized an opportunity to work for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife). During the 1940s, the insurance company would only hire blacks if they worked in the kitchen or as an elevator operator. Alley was given an elevator operator uniform and was told that he would never be promoted. In 1947, he was the first black person to be promoted clerk at the company after he went straight to the vice president of the company and insisted upon being promoted. Alley went on to rise through the ranks of the insurance company for decades.

Alley also continued to play gigs on weekends for decades and even became a promoter of numerous big name entertainers. He retired from Met Life in the 1970s, but played his last musical show when he was 90 years old.

Alley died on November 3, 2005, due to respiratory and liver failure but his legacy continues to live on. He broke down racial barriers in the world of music and was a trailblazer for those who followed him. Eddie Alley was a man who overcame adversity to carve out a place for himself among the great musicians of the Fillmore. It was impossible to deny his talent, charisma, and dedication. Eddie Alley’s work as a drummer is only a small part of his expansive legacy.

—Rosy Patel, Evita Martinez, and Jesse Cortes

Works Cited

THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, when compared to places like New York or Los Angeles, offered limited musical opportunities for African American big-band bassists during the 1950s. However, Vernon Alley wouldn’t have wanted to play anywhere else. “Where else is there?” Alley asserted. Although he was born in Winnemucca, Nevada, on May 26, 1915, Alley felt like San Francisco was his home, expressing, “All I remember is San Francisco. I’ve lived here all my life.”

Vernon Alley and his brother Eddie, a distinguished drummer in the San Francisco music scene, came from humble beginnings, both bussing tables at Topsy’s Roost. Alley soon became a star high school football player. In his senior year, he was recruited by numerous prestigious colleges and universities, but chose instead to attend Sacramento Junior College, spending his time there as a music major playing the clarinet, double bass, and football. After training at Camp Robert Smalls, Alley enlisted in the Navy in 1942 and was assigned as a musician to St. Mary’s Preflight School during World War II.

Upon his discharge Alley found an opportunity to pursue his passion for playing bass by joining Wes Peoples’ Band. The band had been known to fight color standards in the city by playing in areas where black people were not welcomed at the time. Early in his career, Alley played with Saunders King, the Lionel Hampton band, and Count Basie, to name a few. During his time with the Lionel Hampton band in 1940, Alley explored the electric bass, an extraordinary sound not yet familiar to many. Having come from a musical family, it was only natural for him to start a band of his own, The Alley Trio was composed of Jerome “Jerry” Richardson, who played clarinet, alto saxophone, and flute, Bob Skinner, who played piano, and Alley on bass. As his career advanced, Alley performed with well-known vocalists like Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday. He also played with and was inspired by other stars such as Duke Ellington, Erroll Garner, Nat King Cole, Dizzy Gillespie, and Charlie Parker. A star in his own right, Vernon Alley had his own show, “Down Vernon’s Alley,” and also appeared on “Nipper’s Song Shop” and The Merv Griffin Show. He was also the musical director of the Blackhawk jazz club. Alley appeared in “Reveille with Beverly” in 1943 alongside other great musicians of the time. In the latter
part of his career, he joined the Musicians Local 6 union as a board member and became one of the first black members of the Bohemian Club, which was reserved for influential journalists, artists, musicians, and politicians.

In 1993, Vernon Alley was voted into the San Francisco Prep Hall of Fame. In 2002, he received the presidential medal from San Francisco State University, where he graduated in 1940 and continued to perform at alumni events. Vernon continued to be a devout public servant, joining the San Francisco Arts Commission. The city of San Francisco commemorated his influence by naming an alley between two buildings on Brannan Street “Vernon Alley.” Alley’s musical prowess was acknowledged by the Human Rights Commission, who recruited him not only to be a member, but to also serve as Musical Director for “Evolution of Blues.” As a member of the Human Rights Commission, Alley passionately fought for civil liberties and advocated against police discrimination.

Despite being an icon of success, Alley had to fight discrimination all his life. In an interview with Blake Green, Alley remarked, “People think that since I’m from San Francisco and a musician, I didn’t see any discrimination.” Nevertheless, Alley succeeded in spite of the racism and discrimination that he faced. His musical finesse is attributed to his persistence and determination, traits that cannot be undermined by his pure talent alone. Alley’s musical legacy is that of an inventor and revolutionary. He pioneered the melodic, rather than rhythmic style of bass playing and he brought what’s often considered a background instrument front and center. Vernon Alley’s music exemplifies his journey, a background man who earned his own spot at the forefront of the music industry.

The San Francisco Jazz Festival honored his success by creating a well-attended tribute called “The Legacy of Vernon Alley.” Indeed, Alley’s dedication to San Francisco as a musician and activist exemplifies what a Changemaker is. Alley combated racism with persistence and commitment to art as a prevailing vehicle for change. Beyond his love for the city of San Francisco, his love for the people of San Francisco always triumphed. Alley recalled, “Oh, if I had really wanted to be a big man, I guess I would have gone to New York or Los Angeles. But I was never inspired to do that. I’ve always liked to be able to go down the street and say hello to people.”

—Kimberly McAllister, Zoe Foster, and Jesse Cortes

Works Cited

Pepin, Elizabeth and Lewis Watts. Harlem of the West.
Education is a formidable force for reformation and change, and Ms. Jule Anderson, a board member of the San Francisco Unified School District from 1978–1982, represented that ideal. She fought to make San Francisco schools more inclusive and equitable. Her leadership and strength during an era of heightened racial tensions continues to serve as a model for educators today.

Jule Anderson brought a lifetime of civic activism to the SFUSD during a time of incredible change. Anderson was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, at the height of Jim Crow. As a young woman she ventured west, enrolling in and graduating from San Francisco State University with a bachelor of arts degree in Economics. She later received her masters of public administration degree from Golden Gate University. Before her appointment to the SFUSD, she worked as the Director of Special Programs for Disabled Students and Women at the Contra Costa Community College in San Pablo. Her passion for special education programs emerged, in part, because she had a special needs child with her husband.

Anderson was involved with San Francisco educational politics during an era of increased tumult. During the 1950s and 1960s, schools in the United States had been a hotbed for racial tension. The 1970s were an era of continued racial struggle and the SFUSD was the subject of two important legal decisions.

First, in the 1971 case *Johnson v. San Francisco Unified School District*, the Ninth District Federal Circuit Court found that school district officials were still using school attendance boundary lines to segregate not only black students but those of Chinese ancestry and other minorities as well. The practice was already found to be discriminatory and unconstitutional in 1954 in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case. The Court decreed that the school district was required to institute a busing system to address racial disparities within the city.

Second, in the 1974 case *Lau v. Nichols*, the United States Supreme Court approved the issue of a consent decree against San Francisco Unified School District. The court found SFUSD wasn’t offering adequate supplemental language instruction.
to students with limited English proficiency, which was a legal violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The consent decree mandated the creation of English language learning programs along with bilingual courses for public school students.

San Francisco Unified School District had still been procedurally obligated to fulfill both the 1971 busing decree and the 1974 bilingual language consent decree during Anderson’s appointment to the board by Mayor George Moscone in 1978. She sat on the community relations and integration committee, the curriculum and instructional support committee, and the personnel and evaluation committee. The first two committees were tasked with creating the framework for legal compliance. As a result, SFUSD published the Educational Redesign and Implementation Plan later that year.

Mrs. Anderson would reaffirm her commitment to ensuring positive learning outcomes to black students. She sponsored a resolution for student athletes to maintain a C grade average in order to participate in athletics. When she was interviewed by Dan Borush for The Progress newspaper, she cited “exploitation in permitting youngsters to spend an excessive amount of time in practice or playing a varsity sport and little time doing anything academically” as the reason for her support.

Jule Anderson’s activist approach towards special needs programs was key in addressing the changes SFUSD needed to implement. The Educational Redesign and Implementation Plan identified three significant shifts in school policy. First, a policy of integration, mandating “each regular school shall have no more than 45 percent of a single racial or ethnic group in pupil population.” The school district would pay for the busing of students into new schools to meet the integration requirements, particularly within the Bayview, along with new courses designed for integrating bilingual speaking students into school curriculum. Programs were also created to cater to the unique challenges of special needs students. Anderson lent her experience and expertise to the redesign, with particular sensitivity towards special-needs students.

Anderson dutifully served the SFUSD until 1981, when she decided not to run for reelection. Instead, Anderson went on to sit on the Board of the California Alliance of Black School Educators, Aid to Retarded Children (as it was then known), and the San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society. Although Jule Anderson has left San Francisco for Atlanta, where she now resides, she left a positive legacy for students of the SFUSD and indeed for all citizens of San Francisco.

—Chiweta Uzoka, Jesse Cortes, Meghan Grant, Zoe Foster, and Marcelo Swofford

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Dr. Ernest A. Bates is a neurosurgeon, veteran, philanthropist, father, and role model. Now in his 80s, he currently resides in San Francisco, and continues to practice as a neurosurgeon. Best known for his involvement in the health field, he is also the CEO, founder, and chairman of American Shared Hospital Services. His other executive roles include acting as chairman of GK Financing, LLC, and founder of the winery Black Coyote Chateau, LLC.

Dr. Ernest Bates grew up in Mount Pleasant, New York. While living there, he separated himself from the crowd early on with his education. Fighting continuous discrimination, he obtained a bachelor’s degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1958, which made him the first African American to graduate from the Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences. Shortly thereafter, in 1962, Bates received his second degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, one of the top 40 medical schools in the United States. With two degrees under his belt, Bates completed a transitional year-long internship at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx Municipal Hospital Center in New York.

In addition to his rigorous training in the medical field, he served three years in the United States Air Force, fighting in the Vietnam War. Concluding his education in 1971, Dr. Bates completed his neurosurgery residency at the University of California, San Francisco Medical Center, thus making him one of the first of three African American board-certified neurosurgeons. Dr. Bates has been an outstanding leadership role model because of his commitment to his country and to education.

Throughout his career, Dr. Bates has been a member of various professional organizations and has held many leadership positions on the corporate boards of directors. In 1983 his career continued to flourish after founding the American Shared Hospital Services, a public healthcare LLC that provides cutting-edge medical equipment and innovative technology to South America, North
Dr. Ernest A. Bates is a neurosurgeon, a veteran, a philanthropist, and an entrepreneur.

America, and parts of Eastern Europe. He has served on the University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing Board of Overseers as well as the Board of Governors for the California Community Colleges. Dr. Bates has also earned numerous distinctions and honors and also serves on the boards for many prestigious organizations. In 2003, Dr. Bates was honored with the Heritage Award, granting him trustee emeritus status at Johns Hopkins University. In 2005, he was elected to the California Commission for Jobs and Economic Growth. As an active leader, he spent two decades as a trustee for the University of Rochester. He is also a cabinet member of The Meliora Challenge: The Campaign of the University of Rochester. He is a School of Medicine and Dentistry National Council member, and also the Capital Campaign Chairman and board member of the Museum of African Diaspora in San Francisco. He also serves as a board member of the Center for FasterCures–Milken Institute, as a member of the Brookings Institution, as a San Francisco Bay Regional Cabinet member, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Salzburg Global Seminar. Not to mention his service on the board of Copia, the American Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts. Dr. Bates became one of the first African American vintners by founding The Black Coyote, a winery in Napa Valley.

As a philanthropist, he has created the Ernest Bates Foundation, a family owned organization providing grants and scholarships to other nonprofits whose main focus is on healthcare and increasing African American and Latino education. In addition to founding the private nonprofit, he is a Charter Member of the George Eastman Circle, an annual giving society.

Dr. Bates has been a pioneer and visionary in neurosurgery, higher learning, and the wine industry, paving the way for others to follow in his footsteps. He has fought to obtain higher education as a young adult, has fought for his country, and has offered himself tirelessly to his community. Dr. Bates stands as an excellent role model for people of all backgrounds, proving that achievement comes through grit and consistency.

—Alec Taylor Pierce and Althea Pyle

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Reverend Hamilton T. Boswell's involvement in social activism, government, and the church sparked change in the Fillmore District of San Francisco. His efforts in founding several pivotal organizations were crucial for the growth and progress of his community, earning him a tribute on the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center mural.

In 1914, Hamilton Boswell was born in Dallas, Texas. His parents were Warren Boswell, an educator and violinist, and Grace Boswell, a social worker and concert pianist. In 1920, his family moved to Los Angeles, where he completed high school. Boswell then attended Wiley College in Texas where he pledged the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, dedicated to developing leaders and promoting advocacy for communities. (This fraternity later honored him with the Award of Merit for his 72 years of service to the organization.)

In 1939 Boswell married Eleanor Gragg, and they remained together for 68 years. After World War II, Boswell’s family relocated from Texas to San Francisco. Upon earning his undergraduate degree from Wiley College, he moved to Los Angeles to earn his master’s and doctoral degrees in theology at the University of Southern California.

After he received his doctorate, he began serving at St. John’s Methodist Church and Bowen Memorial Methodist Church in New York City. He then moved to San Francisco, where he began to serve at Jones Memorial United Methodist Church for the next three decades.

When Boswell moved to the Fillmore District, he became interested in the Fillmore’s oppressive and illegal redlining practices, where realtors would outline in red pen designated areas in which people of color were allowed to live. In order to combat this issue, he founded the Jones Methodist Credit Union. This allowed for African Americans to borrow money in order to purchase homes in redlined communities. This credit union now has assets valued at over hundreds of thousands of dollars and is able to give back to the low-income
Rev. Hamilton T. Boswell fought for more equitable housing in San Francisco.

Reverend Boswell also created the Jones Memorial Homes, which allows senior citizens to have homes that enable healthy lifestyle choices and active participation in their communities. The Jones Memorial Homes Project, with 186 units, was the first federally financed senior citizen housing program in San Francisco.

Though Reverend Boswell was significantly involved in the church, he was also active in local government. It was through the church that Reverend Boswell met future San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown and became one of his mentors. Reverend Boswell happened to hire Brown to work for the church doing janitorial duties when he was a teenager. Boswell’s influence was clearly seen throughout Willie Brown’s life, both politically and spiritually.

In 1963, Boswell served on the city’s Juvenile Justice Commission where he ensured that incarcerated minors were given their lawful rights and humane treatment. Soon afterwards, he became the Chairman of the Housing Authority Commission from 1964–1974, whose mission was “to deliver safe and decent housing for low-income households and integrate economic opportunity for residents” (Housing Authority Commission).

After deciding to go into retirement, Willie Brown selected Rev. Boswell to serve as Chaplain of the California State Assembly, a position that he held for a decade. Boswell was also chairman of the San Francisco Conference of Religion and Race and the co-chair of the Church Labor Conference, which rallied city support for Martin Luther King, Jr., and his efforts in the civil rights movement. Reverend Boswell was awarded the Freedom Award by the NAACP in both 1972 and 1974. He was also awarded the Civic Award of the Silver Spur by the non-profit organization SPUR (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association) for his social activism in housing.

Having been raised in a household that valued education and social work, Reverend Boswell was able to create connections with his church members on a personal level. His mentorship played an essential role in his helping to build a stronger community. By using his motivation, ministry, and passion to serve those in need, Boswell inspired African American members of the Fillmore to follow suit and reach great heights. Boswell died at the age of 92 in Pinole, California, but his legacy lives on.

—Kristen Williams and Lupita Garcia

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Pastor J. Edgar Boyd has committed his life to serving two purposes: his community and God. Pastor Boyd was born on December 7, 1947, in the state of Florida. His parents, H. Waymon and Alice M. Swails Boyd, had eight children, including Edgar. Growing up, his family and friends called him Jerry. The name stuck enough for him to add the initial “J” to his name in recognition of his upbringing.

Before dedicating himself to a life of spiritual devotion, J. Edgar enlisted in the US Army during the Vietnam War. He was honorably discharged in 1970 following his dedicated service to the country. Upon his return from Vietnam, Boyd decided to commit himself to his faith. Starting in 1971, Boyd began working within his local ministry. He found his niche as he preached within the network of African Methodist Episcopal churches (AME). His first pastoral assignment was at St. John’s AME Church in Pueblo, Colorado. He would inspire his congregation in Pueblo for two years, before venturing to Casper, Wyoming, where he led the Grace AME Church as pastor.

Boyd’s curiosity became a driving force in the development of his faith, eventually becoming interested in the intersection between faith and community. He moved from Casper to Seattle in the Pacific Northwest. While working at Walker Chapel AME Church, he enrolled at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, where he graduated with a degree in Community Development in 1979. He would go on to earn his Masters in Divinity degree from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

Pastor Boyd made the move to California in 1982 where he was appointed the pastor of Brookins AME Church in Oakland. His sermons roused members of the congregation both young and old. His talents as an orator and organizer were among his strongest assets. These talents didn’t go unnoticed as they caught the attention of the Bethel AME Church in Los Angeles. He took his talents to Los Angeles, becoming pastor in 1986.

He moved to Los Angeles during an era of racial tensions and emotional volatility, exemplified by the shooting of Latasha Harlins in 1991. Rev. Boyd, along with the President of Brotherhood Crusade, Danny Bakewell, held a town-hall meeting immediately following the shooting. Pastor Boyd advocated for social change through the election of more black
political leaders, and the continued development of economic opportunities for black communities.

Pastor Boyd was involved in similar organizational efforts after the beating of Rodney King by LA police officers. When interviewed by the Los Angeles Times following the Watts riots, Boyd criticized the lack of resources being devoted to black communities in Los Angeles. In the interview the good pastor stated “economic deprivations in some neighborhoods was just a powder keg ready to blow.”

Following the turmoil of 1992 in Los Angeles, Pastor Boyd moved back to the Bay Area where he began preaching at the historic Bethel AME Church in San Francisco. Pastor Boyd quickly became a valued member of the community, combining his prolific sermons with focused fundraising efforts and community development initiatives.

When Pastor Boyd first started working at Bethel AME San Francisco, he started fundraising with specific projects in mind, particularly increasing digital literacy among seniors, the Bethel Community Technology Center. By the end of his tenure in 2012, Pastor Boyd increased the assets from $12 million to $85 million.

Pastor Boyd will be remembered most for his successful efforts to build units of affordable housing in the Western Addition. Starting in 2001, Boyd along with other notable members of the San Francisco black community began working on the newly incorporated Tabernacle Community Development Corporation (TCDC). The stated mission of the TCDC was “to stimulate growth in the community by developing and participating in the development of residential, commercial and industrial projects that contribute to the economic stimulation and vitality within underserved communities.”

The TCDC had strong support from then Mayor Willie Brown, who appointed Boyd to the San Francisco Housing Authority as an attempt to streamline new housing development. Their efforts resulted in the construction of 250 units of affordable housing.

In 2012, Pastor Boyd decided to move back down to Los Angeles to serve as the senior pastor for the First African Methodist Episcopal Church. While in Los Angeles, the Pastor has become an outspoken critic of President Donald Trump. He continues to fight against injustice and advocate for community development. He is happily married Oakland native Florence Miles–Boyd.

—Matthew Chiodo, Jesse Cortes, and Ethan Tan

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REV. DR. AMOS C. BROWN

Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown in 2016.

Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown is a man dedicated to social justice and the teachings of Jesus. Throughout his life, his work embodied the fight for human rights and upheld the morals of the church. Through his ministry, service, activism, and community involvement, he has created a long-lasting impact that will be engraved in the fight for justice.

Amos C. Brown was born in Jackson, Mississippi, on February 20, 1941. He was raised in an environment of hardship and constant struggle. Brown attributes his strength to his upbringing in his hometown. He explains that Jackson had a strong sense of community where both middle-class and lower-income African Americans came together to form family-like relationships. When he was fifteen, the death of Emmett Till strongly impacted Brown. In response, he created the first NAACP Youth Council in Jackson. Shortly after, he was invited to San Francisco to attend an NAACP national convention. There he met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks, who had just succeeded in the Montgomery Bus Boycott—and this milestone galvanized a lifetime of work aimed at gaining justice.

After finishing high school, Brown obtained his bachelor’s degree in sociology from Morehouse College in 1964. He later went on to earn his Master of Divinity degree from Crozer Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary. He began his service as a pastor at Saint Paul’s Baptist Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and later worked at Pilgrim Baptist Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1976, he was called upon to be the pastor at San Francisco’s Third Baptist Church, where he implemented his “priestly prophetic model of ministry.” This model aims to call people to truth, justice, and to strive for world peace. He continues to speak about his service as “two-winged”—you need individual effort and a ministry dedicated to social justice. Brown actively works to promote social justice and also strives to help others with personal problems.

This philosophy has guided his many widespread contributions. He helped start a successful summer school program and after-school academic enrich-
ment program as well as a music academy free for all to express themselves. Brown also directed efforts to donate $68,000 for the Somalian relief effort in 1984, and $300,000 for the Ethiopian crisis.

He has held positions as a member of the governing board of San Francisco Community College, and as National Chairman of the National Baptist Commission on Civil Rights and Human services. He has also served as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Chairman of the Bay Area Ecumenical Pastors Conference, first Vice President of the California State Baptist Convention, President of the NAACP branch in San Francisco, and as a member of the governing board of the National Council of Churches of Christ.

Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown’s work has pushed for equality on both the national and international stage. As an active leader, he has worked on the 2001 United Nations Conference on Race and Intolerance, served as a national faith leader after 9/11 and met with Rev. Jesse Jackson, Jr., and South African President Nelson Mandela to speak about pressing issues regarding African development and US foreign policy. His church has accepted more African refugees than any other church in America. He has also worked with NAACP president Kweisi Mfume to provide scholarships to students pursuing higher education. Throughout all of his efforts, Brown has continuously stressed the importance of education. Partnering the church with San Francisco State University and San Francisco Community College, he acknowledges education as a way to liberate people from their physical, mental, psychological, and emotional bondage.

Most recently, Brown has been serving as an activist fighting the San Francisco housing and gentrification crisis. Dr. Rev. Brown seeks to ensure that the African American community in San Francisco, specifically the Fillmore District, is able to stay and prosper despite the changing landscape of the city.

As a testament to his hard work, Brown has received the Martin Luther King, Jr., Ministerial Award, was inducted into the International Hall of Fame at the King International Chapel at Morehouse College, was invited to Christmas dinner with President Obama, and he has been frequently honored in his hometown of Jackson. A recent celebration held at Third Baptist Church honoring 40 years of Rev. Dr. Brown’s service brought numerous national and international luminaries to town to recognize his leadership.

Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown is the true embodiment of passion, hard work, determination, and dedication to social justice. As the NAACP website rightly proclaims: “Dr. Amos C. Brown is a legend in his own time.”

—Carlos Calles, Kimberly McAllister, and Zachary James

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THADDEUS
‘THAD’
BROWN

THADDEUS ‘THAD’ Brown was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1927. Before becoming San Francisco Head Tax Auditor, father of seven children, and constructor of groundbreaking social progress, he came from humble beginnings. Brown was drafted into the military, serving as a Tuskegee Airman, and was not able to continue his education until the late 1940s. After serving in one of San Francisco’s military branches, Brown decided to stay and pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees from San Francisco State College and Golden Gate College. This was where he was first introduced to the field of public administration, where his true talents were discovered. By 1969, he had attained the “highest civil service post reached by a black employee in the city’s history,” with many labeling him a genius and history changer as he became the head tax collector.

Though this was an amazing achievement, Brown was also subject to public racial scrutiny. Being the highest-ranking African American administrator in the San Francisco government, Brown achieved a powerful public status that was accompanied by massive public pressure. Brown was in the process of becoming one of the most influential black figures in the city’s history. Both he and Willie Brown were often understood and analyzed with the same kind of appreciation. In his first years of public office during the early 1970s, he instituted the city’s first payroll/income tax and raised business taxes, which increased the San Francisco’s revenues and annual income. Even with this contribution, he continued to face racial discrimination. Media outlets and local government employees often argued against him getting pay increases even though he had been getting paid less than the majority of other public service officials.

Brown’s increased tax rates caused some businesses to flee in order to avoid these taxes. Yet, because of the rapidly growing financial state of San Francisco as a whole, a net gain in income and new businesses neutralized any effect from select businesses choosing to operate elsewhere.

Things were playing out splendidly in Brown’s
Thaddeus Brown worked with tireless ambition throughout his career. During his last years as head tax collector, he instituted stiffer penalties and looser deadlines regarding the payment of taxes, especially for small businesses. This resulted in minimized tax fraud and an increase in small business revenue. After serving as tax collector for almost 25 years, he retired in 1994 and lived out his last months focusing his energy and time on his personal life and supporting his wife, Rosalie, and his seven children. Brown passed away at the age of 67 on December 16, 1994, suffering a heart attack while driving (Moore). His legacy will be forever cemented within the history of San Francisco and he will be forever remembered as a Changemaker.

—Marcelo Sisofford and Zoe Foster

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Mayor Willie L. Brown was a born fighter. The first African American mayor of San Francisco grew up in Mineola, Texas, approximately two thousand miles away from the Bay Area. At the time of Brown’s birth in 1934, Texas was a deeply segregated state. In Mineola, a single railroad track divided black communities from white communities. Violent white mobs would prevent African Americans from voting, a direct act of racial oppression. The Great Depression and entrenched racial discrimination made obtaining employment difficult for Willie’s father, Lewis Brown. Lewis found work as a railroad porter and was absent for much of Willie’s childhood. Mayor Brown’s mother and grandmother, Millie Collins Boyd and Anne Lee Collins respectively, raised Willie and his four siblings. Brown credits his grandmother for shaping his strong work ethic, civic engagement, and sense of greater responsibility.

From a young age, Willie Brown had the strength to challenge racial discrimination. Like many American families during the Great Depression, the Brown family struggled to put food on the table. Brown worked as a field hand, janitor, and fry cook. To make extra money, he helped manage a small betting and drinking hall with his family. This was short-lived, however, as the local police raided the Brown’s family business, searching the premises for illegal moonshine. Willie stood up to the police officers and demanded they come back with a warrant. It was an early illustration of the resolve and composure that would define his political career.

Willie decided to move to San Francisco in 1951 with his uncle. He sought to further his education and applied to Stanford University. Willie didn’t have the necessary scholastic qualifications required for admission, but Brown impressed his admission advisor with his ambition and charisma and he ended up helping the young man to enroll at San Francisco State University.

Brown worked as a doorman, a janitor, and a shoe salesman to pay for his tuition. He was initially motivated to graduate with a teaching creden-
tial and work as a math teacher. That all changed, however, when Willie joined the Young Democrats organization on campus. The organization connected him with John Burton, a future political ally in the California legislature. Willie decided to pursue a degree in political science and volunteer at the NAACP’s San Francisco branch. After receiving his bachelor’s degree from San Francisco State, Brown earned a law degree from UC Hastings Law School.

Drawn to political fights over racial segregation and discrimination, Brown battled against a city housing developer who refused to sell homes in Forest Knolls, an area west of Twin Peaks, to African Americans. Brown’s thorough political involvement inspired him to run for the State Assembly in 1962. He lost his first race, but returned in 1964 with more experience and won. Brown was only one of four African American members of the 1964 State Assembly.

Willie Brown served in the California State Assembly from 1964–1995, where he proved himself to be a prolific and pragmatic lawmaker in Sacramento. By 1969, only five years since he first got elected, he was elevated to the role of Democratic Party whip of the state assembly. In 1975, Willie wrote, lobbied, and passed the Consenting Adult Sex Bill, legalizing homosexuality in California. The bill cemented his legacy as a civil rights leader in the LGBTQ community. By 1981, Brown became the first African American Speaker of the Assembly, and was considered one of the most formidable and powerful state legislators in the country. He served as Assembly leader until his 1995 San Francisco mayoral run.

Brown was twice elected mayor of San Francisco with massive support from the city’s African American and LGBTQ communities. His commitment to civil rights and pragmatic governing style resonated with many San Francisco voters. During his tenure, the Brown administration spent millions of dollars addressing the city’s key long-term issue: homelessness. He created new shelters, supportive housing, and addiction treatment centers for the homeless. Brown, like many mayors before and after him, saw the need for much more federal assistance in addressing homelessness. Among his many other lasting contributions, Brown’s leadership ushered in a new phase of building in San Francisco that helped shape its current skyline.

After his eight years in the mayoral office, Brown co-hosted a morning radio show with Will Durst on San Francisco Air America Radio, and still serves as a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. He also established The Willie L. Brown, Jr. Institute on Politics and Public Service at San Francisco State University. In 2013, the western span of the Bay Bridge was named in his honor. Mayor L. Willie Brown’s legacy has inspired new generations of progressive leadership. His fighting spirit continues to shape the character of San Francisco.

—Julio Ceja, Ashley Cruz, Matt Chiola, and Madison Owens

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ALTHEDA KENNEDY CARRIE

ALTHEDA KENNEDY CARRIE dedicated her life to fighting for racial equality in San Francisco public schools. She was born to Blyden Kennedy and Nellie Gray in Charleston, West Virginia. Her father was a teacher and coal miner and her mother was a seamstress. An excellent student, Carrie was elected class president and graduated from Garnet High School third in her class. Her scholastic achievements earned her a scholarship to Wilberforce University, an all black university in Ohio. After a year at Wilberforce, a professor offered Carrie an opportunity to work in California. She accepted, and moved to San Francisco in the late 1940s.

She enrolled at San Francisco State University where she received both a Bachelor of Arts degree and Master of Arts degree in Psychology, earning her the qualifications to serve as a guidance counselor. Ever civicly minded, Carrie knew she wanted to work in education, so she studied for, and earned, her teaching credential.

Ms. Carrie entered the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) during a pivotal time in the fight for racial equality, which posed many challenges for young black teachers. Prejudice and discrimination against people of color was prominent within the SFUSD. The school district at the time typically hired white educators over equally qualified black educators. Describing SFUSD’s hiring practices, Altheda stated, “It wasn’t said, but race was implied.” Supervisors told her that there were no available positions, yet they would continue to hire white teachers.

Determined to begin her career in education, she asked if she could become a substitute teacher instead. Her remarkable persistence and outstanding work ethic eventually led to a meeting with the SFUSD Board of Education. She confronted the Board about its claim of not having any openings for teachers because she noticed that during her first day, there was a permanent opening. When the Board gave her freedom to choose where she would like to teach, she chose Bayview–Hunters Point Elementary.
As she taught, another teacher recommended her to her husband, who was the principal of Rosa Parks Elementary. Carrie decided to follow through with the recommendation. Not long after, the principal of Benjamin Franklin Junior High School offered Carrie a teaching position. Carrie accepted and was promoted to Dean of Students. Carrie said that although it was an honor having a higher position as assistant principal, she did not like being away from the kids.

The demand for Altheda Carrie’s knowledge and expertise continued. A professor visited Benjamin Franklin Junior High School and offered her the chance to take a leave from the district to work with a program called the South Toledo Education Project at San Francisco State University. The purpose of the program was to gather experienced teachers who could assist professors at SFSU to teach graduate students as they earned their teaching credentials.

After a total of 28 years in many educational positions, Carrie’s teaching career concluded at Marina Middle School. Even after she retired, she still wanted to work with students, so she followed her passion by volunteering in the Fillmore at the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center.

Her membership and participation within the greater community involves being a lifetime member of Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA), the NAACP, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Bay Area Association of Black Psychologists, Bethel AME Church, National Coalition of 100 Black Women, and the National Council of Negro Women.

Carrie’s passions focused on education and social activism, especially within youth and families. Aside from her work, she also enjoys traveling, reading, and performing. Following her academic and work careers, Carrie took the time to travel extensively.

Prior to pursuing her master’s degree, Carrie met her future husband, Roosevelt Carrie. From this marriage, Altheda Kennedy became Mrs. Altheda Kennedy Carrie. She and her husband lived in San Francisco and had two children, a son Al and a daughter Ava.

Today she still engages with communities, especially in the Fillmore. She supports local businesses and workers, stays connected to friends of the past, meets new people, and gives students opportunities to make use of their free time by offering volunteer opportunities or connections to the community. She also assisted greatly in the creation of this book by meeting frequently with students at the University of San Francisco.

In many regards, Mrs. Altheda Kennedy Carrie symbolizes change through action and is known as a community changemaker.

—Jazlynn Pastor and Hannah Shepherd

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REVELS
CAYTON

Revels Hiram Cayton was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1907, to a family of activists. His parents Susie Cayton and Horace Cayton, Sr., were influential middle-class African American leaders in Seattle. Horace, Sr., was born a slave in Mississippi. His life experiences drove him to create the Seattle Republican, a weekly newspaper he hoped would encourage activism within the black community. Revels’ mother Susie also grew up in Mississippi and was the daughter of the first African American U.S. senator, Hiram Revels. His accomplishment was always an inspiration to Revels Cayton and his siblings. Cayton was one of five children. His entire family was committed to furthering justice and racial equality. According to Horace, Jr., Cayton’s brother and an influential sociologist, “our goals were dictated by our past; we were obligated by our family history to [strive for] achievement in our fight for individual and racial equality.”

Revels was originally raised in one of the wealthiest parts of Seattle, but a string of bad luck led to financial hardship for his family. At the age of 15, Revels got a job as a telephone operator on various passenger ships. This is where he was first introduced to the lifestyles of maritime and other blue-collar workers. He worked as a waiter and was subjected to 16-hour work days. It wasn’t long before Cayton began his involvement with labor rights groups, namely the Colored Marine Employment Benevolent Association or CMEBA. This was an important stepping stone in him becoming an activist.

The Cayton family name was well known in the city of Seattle, especially in the political realm. In 1934, a group of Seattle communists, including Revels, stormed a local city council meeting demanding that discrimination based on race be made illegal. This act had such a strong impact on the council members that they decided to hold a larger meeting to discuss the conditions facing minorities in Seattle. Cayton also fought against a proposed anti-miscegenation law in Seattle, helping to keep Washington one of the only states in the country to allow interracial marriages. Revels undoubtedly left
Revels Cayton was a civil rights leader and a prominent labor organizer who held many important official positions for the city of San Francisco.

his mark on the city of Seattle, but his activism did not stop there.

Cayton moved to San Francisco, where he quickly became involved in maritime labor rights in the Bay Area. He became a prominent leader in the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union in San Francisco and the Vice President of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific in July of 1937. In 1941, Revels moved to Los Angeles where he became the director of the State Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) Minorities Commission and Vice President of the California State CIO Council.

In the following years, he once again became involved with the communist party. Cayton became the Executive Secretary of the Communist National Negro Congress (NNC) based in New York City. His move to New York had major impacts on his personal life. The move brought an end to his first marriage with Ethel Horowitz. He then met Lee Davidson who would become his second wife and mother to his son Michael Revels Cayton.

Revels Cayton returned to San Francisco in the early 1950s, and in the 60s he became heavily involved with the civil rights movement that was now in full swing. Cayton was appointed the Deputy Director of the San Francisco Housing Authority by John F. Shelley as well as the San Francisco Human Rights Commissioner and Deputy Mayor for Social Programs under the Joseph Alioto administration. He officially stopped working for the city in 1972, but his advocacy for minorities and minority workers did not stop then. Cayton continued his work in public service but retired in 1988; he was actively involved in the San Francisco’s civic and political sphere until his death on Saturday, November 4, 1995. He died in San Francisco at the age of 88.

Revels Cayton was a dynamic activist, his advocacy for people of color coalesced with his work as a prominent water-front labor organizer. Cayton is often remembered for the tenacity he demonstrated throughout his lifetime. In one instance, he had sent President Truman a telegram, notifying him of the demand for full freedom and absolute equality for people of color in the United States.

Cayton’s distinguished career as an activist deeply shaped the cities of Seattle and San Francisco for the better.

—Delaney Miller and Isabel Tayag

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“Revels Cayton Obituary.” SFGate, 6 Nov. 1995.

On the day of his funeral, William “Bill” Chester laid still in a small church brimming with the people he had inspired during his lifetime. Jim Herman, the President of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), spoke fondly of Chester: “Thousands of members of the ILWU have enjoyed a better life because of Bill’s work over the years. He was a pioneer in the fight for racial equality, within the unions and in the community at large. His many civic and community activities were a credit to all of his labor. He will be very sorely missed.”

Chester was born on January 6, 1914, in Shreveport, Louisiana, and later moved to Kansas City, Missouri, when he was just one year old. Chester’s father, a railroad worker, died when he was 11 years old. After high school, Chester pursued higher education at Western College in Kansas. He attended school there for two years before he decided to put his education on hold due to the Great Depression. Soon after, he enlisted in the Army and served with the 25th Infantry Regiment, an all-black unit, for three years at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. While serving in the Army, Chester noticed the lack of black line officers. This prompted him to think deeply about civil rights and social injustices in America.

When Chester was discharged in the late 1930s, he traveled to San Francisco, where he quickly found a job as a longshoreman. When Chester first started working at the longshore local, there were only 75 African Americans working alongside him. He continued to work in the maritime industry of San Francisco from 1938 until the early 1940s when he was called back into service for the Army. He served for the entirety of the war and was reinstated to the ILWU upon returning to San Francisco.

As progressive as the ILWU was for its time, that didn’t exempt it from discriminatory behavior (despite the union’s international constitution forbidding it). Chester helped to organize a “black caucus,” or as he called it, “getting the boys together to talk over a problem.” They hoped to create constructive policies and eliminate the destructive ones.

Chester was put into one of his first positions of leadership when he was elected to be chairman of the union’s investigating committee. He also became chairman of the publicity committee for the 1948 longshore strike. It was around this time that he became more well known, even garnering enough support to be elected onto a majority white committee. He later served on the Longshore Union membership committee as chairman, and had a significant
role in approving all new members. In 1951 Chester was appointed as the Northern California Regional Director by Harry Bridges, the ILWU President. He remained in that role for 18 years before he was elected ILWU Vice President. Chester was the first person of color to hold this high position in the union, allowing him to bring more people of color into higher level jobs. Shortly after ILWU’s integration, exclusively white unions like MFOW (Marine Firemen, Oilers, Water tenders) and SUP (Sailors Union of the Pacific) also broke down their discriminatory policies.

Chester believed that “the union was the community” and with this philosophy, he worked hard to fight for black and brown equity. It was through this movement that San Francisco became one of the most unionized cities in the country.

Many black members of the union were also leaders in other religious and civic organizations, so the union formed alliances with these organizations in order to elevate the community as a whole. Chester was invited to the meetings held by local ministers where he advocated for unity between clergy, community, and trade unions. He managed to get involved in every aspect of the community’s life. He encouraged black members to deposit savings and get loans from black bankers. Chester and other union leaders met with Edgar Kaiser asked that Kaiser Hospital hire black interns and doctors. Similarly, the union demanded that black supervisors in City Hall. Their efforts were successful—in 1964 Terry Francois was appointed to the Board of Supervisors by Mayor John Shelley and became the first African American to serve on the board. Chester’s crowning achievement was organizing the largest demonstration of civil rights activism the Bay Area had ever seen. On May 26, 1963, 20,000 people of different walks of life marched on Market Street in a display of solidarity. The march was followed up by a 30,000 person rally. In the same year, Chester inducted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., into the Local No. 10 branch of the ILWU as an honorary member. Dr. King visited Local 10’s hall in 1967 to praise the ILWU’s efforts in civil rights and social justice.

In 1970, Chester was appointed to the BART Board of Directors by Mayor Joseph Alioto. He helped guide the system through its most vulnerable and volatile beginnings. Through the board’s success, he became president, and was the first person to ride an official train under the San Francisco Bay.

William H. Chester passed away on November 3, 1985. At his funeral, ILWU President Harry Bridges spoke of Chester with great admiration. Chester had an “enormous compassion for the oppressed, his hatred for racism and all forms of injustice, his defense of the right of people to be advocates, to enjoy full liberty in this system.”

—Jesse Cortes and Mei Lin

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Dr. Caesar Alfred Churchwell is a long-time advocate for minority businesses in San Francisco. When he’s not managing his dental practice in the outer Mission District, he is serving on the board of San Francisco’s African American Chamber of Commerce (SFAACC). Currently Vice Chairman of the Board, Dr. Churchwell has previously held positions as California State Commissioner, residential developer, and parking management operator. His work with SFAACC has impacted numerous black businesses by giving them a voice in the development of the city. Working with late Mayor Ed Lee, he’s helped to create new business opportunities and halt the migration of black businesses struggling with “out-migration” (Carla).

In 2014 Dr. Churchwell helped organize a travel boycott with African American business leaders. The boycott nearly cost the city $32 million in annual revenue from tourism. Overseeing the tourism department, Dr. Churchwell realized the image that the city was trying to present to tourists was not inclusive of black neighborhoods. Ads catered to white audiences: and tours and attractions were being centered in more gentrified neighborhoods. Most employees in the tourism industry excluded African American and Latinx voices and perspectives.

According to the San Francisco Travel Bayview newspaper, 2012 was the most successful year of tourism. However much of the profit did not come from black businesses. With so few opportunities to benefit from San Francisco’s bountiful tourism industry, the SFAACC saw that the exclusion of minority businesses was unfair.

Five years prior to the movement for better representation SFAACC leaders had already recognized the disempowering effects that little representation had. In an interview with the San Francisco Bayview newspaper, Dr. Churchwell voiced his grievances and motivation for the travel boycott: “Residents of Bayview-Hunters Point have a life expectancy that is 14 years less than residents of Pacific Heights, and just 50 percent of our children are graduating from San Francisco high schools. The mayor’s office and the Board of Supervisors need to take action and pay more than lip service to these issues. When it comes to being progressive, talk is cheap” (Jackson). He resented the unequal distribution of wealth and resources in San Francis-
27

co and sought to make change in the city. Churchwell’s boycott commanded attention from city leaders by way of monetary force. “The San Francisco African American Chamber called the boycott,” Churchwell said, “and only the Chamber can call it off. We have a responsibility to our members and our community to ensure that they have access to the same opportunities as other businesses in San Francisco” (Jackson).

In conjunction with the San Francisco African American Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Churchwell met with former Mayor Ed Lee. During this summit the SFAACC explained to Lee that the reason for the large African American emigration occurring was the lack of job opportunities and affordable housing due to gentrification. In response to these allegations, Lee became an advocate for racially inclusive city contracts and business opportunities.

Along with advocating for black businesses in the tourism sector, Churchwell has also called out “backroom deals.” On June 22, 2015, Churchwell wrote to the commissioner of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Ann Moller Caen, to voice his disapproval of a $7 million contract awarded to Jacobs Engineering. At first glance the grant was beneficial to the community (it would fund and execute a public project called the Central Bayside Improvement Project improving storm-water management and ensuring compliance with current and future regulations for earthquake safety). Churchwell disagreed with the final decision, however, when he realized that the Public Utilities Commission allowed just one vendor, Montgomery Watson, to cut a deal with Jacobs Engineering. Churchwell said this was in direct opposition to the protocols the city has in place to indicate the hiring of private contractors. Churchwell saw this corruption in the city’s business dealings and warned that there would only be more “backroom deals” to follow. Additionally, he shared frustration with the lack of local businesses considered for the job, pointing out more blind spots in San Francisco lawmakers’ perspectives. Lastly, he asked for the contract with Jacobs Engineering to be canceled and for the Public Utilities Commission to begin looking for a local company to ensure that taxpayers will receive the highest quality work at a best rate (Churchwell).

Dr. Caesar Alfred Churchwell’s tireless efforts to ensure the survival of black-owned businesses in the Bay Area is a noble enterprise and an excellent use of his social standing in the African American community of San Francisco. Coupled with his years of work as a dentist running his own practice, Churchwell has proven himself as a pillar in his community, and a valuable voice of progress for San Francisco.

—Sage Stefanick, Lupita Garcia, and Cassey Cassamajor

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Education is a right that should be given to all, not a privilege only for a select few. This was the ideal that Dr. William L. Cobb upheld throughout his career in education. From being one of the first African American teachers in San Francisco to the first African American principal and assistant superintendent of human relations, Cobb was a pillar for educational evolution through his tireless work to desegregate San Francisco’s Unified School District.

In 1910, William L. Cobb was born in Jonesboro, Arkansas, to LeAnn and Harold Cobb. After moving around for a few years, Cobb attained his high school degree and attended Texas College, earning a bachelor’s degree in Social Studies in 1935. In 1940, fewer than 10 percent of 25 year old people of color had completed a four-year high school education, so for Cobb to not only have completed high school, but attained a bachelor’s degree in Social Studies from Texas College was an outstanding accomplishment. Additionally, he was one of the first black men to earn a master’s degree in education and an Ed.D. in educational administration at the University of California. Upon entering his twenties, Cobb immediately began working to change the imbalanced and segregated educational system as a teaching principal at North Chapel High School from 1935–41 and Hawkins High School from 1941–43 in Texas.

After making strides in education as a teaching principal, Cobb served in the US Navy from 1943 to 1946. After the war, he moved to San Francisco and became the first African American principal in the San Francisco Unified School District. Cobb served at Emerson elementary school from 1947–1963 until he was appointed as the assistant superintendent of human relations.

When asked to describe his emotions upon receiving this position, which allowed him to create more avenues for racial integration, he explained that he “doesn’t believe in miracles.” As a man of action and initiative, he knew “that intolerances can be broken through education.”

Upon entering this position, the community, fellow educators, and prospective students all welcomed Cobb with open arms. Dr. William McKinley Thomas, a highly regarded member of the San Francisco Housing Authority, said that “the best way for a community to help itself is to practice the
Dr. William Cobb was the first African American teacher and principal in the San Francisco Unified School District.

democratic ideals wherein rewards are waiting for those willing to work for them through self-improvement. This is another step in the advancement of the Negro community.”

In the late 1960s, however, the community grew impatient with integration initiatives. Claims had been made against Cobb and the Board of Education stating that they have held an evasive attitude towards specific initiatives in integrating the schools. In April 1964, a picketing of the School Board hosted by the NAACP and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), roused the community to seek answers for unanswered questions. Reginald Major of the NAACP claimed, “the board has been evasive on several issues concerning race, and we are convinced that problems are being created faster than they are being solved.” Cobb emphasized that “none of the proposed redistricting involves transporting students by bus solely for the purpose of bettering racial balances.”

In the article “Top Secret Plans on School Busing,” published in 1969 by the San Francisco Examiner, Cobb and the rest of the Board of Education concocted a “secret and confidential” plan that would utilize the bus system to integrate 20 elementary schools holding tens of thousands of students (Wood). Once the plan was set in motion and approved in January of 1969, Cobb insisted that no publicity be given on this report. After passing this initiative, Cobb promoted the passing of more bills to continuously aid the full and equal integration of K–12 institutions.

In addition to becoming the first African American principal and assistant superintendent chair, Cobb was also a pillar of the community and a celebrated social activist. Cobb held a Board of Director position in the Family Children’s Agency and served on the Board of Governors of the YMCA, both of which promoted the pursuit of education and equality within African American communities.

Cobb died in November of 1976 at the age of 66. He was survived by his wife Irma, a fellow educator in the San Francisco Unified School District and Oakland School District, and his son Dr. William Cobb Jr., and his three grandchildren. Because of Cobb’s hard work throughout the years, Emerson Elementary School changed its name to William Cobb Elementary School to honor his legacy.

—Ya’qub Elmi and Chaniece Jefferson

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ducation plays a vital role in society, and that is exactly what Josephine Cole believed while working for the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). According to a 1948 San Francisco Chronicle article, she was the first African American elementary school teacher in the San Francisco Unified School District and the first to be employed in a San Francisco high school (“Another First”). Cole worked hard to implement new ways of teaching to further motivate children to learn and succeed. She strongly believed that every child wanted to learn, but just had a different means of being engaged.

Josephine Cole was born on January 18, 1913, in San Francisco to Joseph and Elizabeth Cole. She grew up on Buchanan Street in a small cottage, with her grandparents living next door. Education was always held in high regard at the Cole household and her parents always made sure that their children studied. In an interview for the African American Oral History project conducted on behalf of the San Francisco Public Library led by Jesse J. Warr, Cole was asked what her dreams were when she was younger, to which she replied, “to be a teacher, I always wanted to be a teacher.” Cole worked hard to gain knowledge and was always willing to teach anyone: “I love teaching. I love school and I like kids. I guess at heart, I’ll always be a teacher.”

Cole looked up to both of her parents, although they were both very different from one another. Her mother was extremely intellectual and strong-willed. Cole described her as being strict and having high ambitions for her daughters. She would tell them: “Girls, you’re both girls and you’re colored, so you’re going to have to do twice as much to get half of what the whites have,” according to the interview conducted by Warr. Both her parents saw education as a vital part of their success in the future and were harshly criticized by others for going to great extents to educate their daughters: “My girls are my wealth and they’re going to get everything that I can place before them. They won’t have to work in anybody’s kitchen. They won’t have to kowtow.” Cole would respond.

Cole graduated from the University of California in 1936 and began teaching that year at St. Vincent, a parochial school. She began teaching in public schools and was appointed as a regular teacher in 1941 according to a 1948 San Francisco Chronicle article. It was also noted that she was the first African American to earn a regular appointment as a
teacher in the city school system at Raphael Weill School in 1943, and became the first to be employed in a San Francisco high school. Cole was not the only one who achieved a recognition for being first to do something—her husband, Audley Cole was the first African American driver hired by the San Francisco Municipal Railway.

During her first years of teaching at Balboa High School, Cole came across a student’s input on learning that prompted her implementation of new teaching styles. In an article written by Ronald Moskowitz from the San Francisco Chronicle, Cole articulates where her motivation for an alternative learning style was derived. She had an English class who “didn’t like English.” So she let students have a say in what was taught. Many were in favor of Cole’s approach as they saw many necessary skills being built. Her approach appealed to the US Department of State and the Principal of Balboa High School. Ralph Kauer spoke very highly of the program, as did William Cobb, the new human relations officer for the school, who also praised the program. The President of the Teachers Association of San Francisco, Katharine Keeley, stated she “did not quite see the purpose of the program,” yet, according to Moskowitz, others believed in its progress and that “when you let children organize into committees and choose their own curriculum then I think it is a real triumph for progressive education.”

Cole became a prominent figure in the SFUSD and worked to become involved in various organizations. In 1971, four junior students and Josephine Cole, the Student Relations Director for the SFUSD, were selected by Mayor Alioto to represent the city on a goodwill mission to Osaka, Japan. While working as the educational counselor of the Youth Opportunities center at Hunters Point, directed by Herman Gallegos, Cole noticed something was lacking in the students. Creating a workshop aimed at training kids for jobs, her workshop had astonishing results. According to James Benet of the San Francisco Chronicle, of her first six-week workshop consisting of twenty students, eighteen were either in job-training or on jobs, or back in a regular school, and the other two were still working to meet academic requirements for one of the best job-training courses. Cole implemented many programs, and her hard work did not go unnoticed. In 1982, she won the Sojourner Truth Award from the Negro Business and Professional Women. That same year Cole was U.S. Toastmistress clubs’ representative in international competition (Hamilton).

Raised on the belief that education is one of the most important facets of life, Cole strove to improve education for all of her students by addressing what was being overlooked in the SFUSD. She worked on new ways to engage students to push themselves to achieve higher education or enter the workforce and ultimately become successful.

—Kendra Bean and Madison Owens

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LINDA DAVIS

LINDA DAVIS is known throughout the San Francisco Unified School District as the woman who led the “district through this time of change” after several months of uncertainty in 1978 (Phillips and Wynns). Davis was a natural leader and influenced others to break down racial stereotypes. As the first woman to lead schools in the San Francisco Unified School District and the first African American superintendent, she worked to improve learning for all children, regardless of race.

Prior to her work in the San Francisco school district, Davis served in a variety of educational roles in Pasadena, California. She served as a teacher, administrator, and assistant superintendent, and was a key advocate for education on many statewide commissions. An SFGate article commended Davis’ nearly four decades of experience (Asimov). Through her influential work in classrooms and administrative positions, Davis’ efforts didn’t go unnoticed.

Linda Davis’ first role in the San Francisco Unified School District came when she was chosen for deputy superintendent in 1986 by the San Francisco superintendent at the time, Ramon Cortines. Cortines was formerly the superintendent of Pasadena Unified School District, where Davis was his colleague (“Schools’ Chief Makes Staff Chang-
students from other students contradicts traditional educational philosophies” (Salter). Her attitude is that students who are struggling need to be among well-rounded students to learn from example.

As a prominent leader within the San Francisco Unified School District, Davis was extremely involved in all aspects of education and wanted to create a more equitable system. “In the SFUSD,” she said, “some schools have had more resources than others. That is going to change” (Borsuk). Davis prioritized spending her time among students and on site at schools, rather than at the school district offices. She explained that “you cannot evaluate curriculum effectiveness by sitting behind a desk” (Borsuk).

In 1999, then superintendent, Dr. Waldemar Rojas, announced his surprise relocation to Dallas. Because of Davis’ thirteen years of experience as deputy superintendent, the SFUSD knew she was the only qualified person for the job of interim superintendent. Several board members granted support for Davis, claiming that she possesses the personal and professional integrity that the district needed (Asimov). In another article written by SFGate, the SFUSD described her as someone who is “intimately familiar with the needs of the district and all of the players in our diverse education community” (Phillips and Wynns). Throughout Davis’ years in the district she held a profound passion for education and educational reform.

Because of her outstanding work as interim superintendent, many staff and others in the educational community urged her to accept the permanent position as the first woman on the school board. A staff writer for SFGate noted that she was also pushed to accept this job because of her widely admired educational expertise, her calm manner and her ability to communicate with parents and teachers alike (Asimov).

Davis’s positive influence in education policy continues to live on as a reminder of her social activism. Linda Davis was, and continues to be, a changemaker in the San Francisco community.

—Althea Pyle and Zoe Foster

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Born on March 28, 1931 in Eddy, Texas, former Superior Court Judge John Dearman became widely known for being humble in the court, once even advising a fellow judge to “keep one’s ego in check” and to never refer to oneself as “Judge” (Cahill). His history as a social worker helped shape him into a polite, patient, and respectful judge who would keep an open mind and listen to whomever took the stand, regardless of the alleged crime. Known as a kind-hearted and resilient individual, Dearman earned the respect of many throughout his career. He received a B.A. from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, in May of 1954 and continued his schooling at Wayne State University Law School in pursuit of becoming a lawyer. While preparing for the bar exam after graduating from Wayne State, Dearman also worked as a social worker in Michigan. He began his career as a lawyer in 1959 when he left Detroit due to the fact that “no law firms in Detroit would hire a black attorney” (Egelko). After undergoing extreme prejudice in this community which he cared so much for, Dearman decided to move to San Francisco. It wasn’t long before he and Willie Brown started up Brown, Dearman & Smith, a law practice that continued for twelve years after its inception. This firm worked for years from the heart of the Fillmore.

While Dearman began settling into West Coast life, a war was brewing in the Western Addition. Homes were being torn down in the name of urban renewal and hundreds of people were being displaced as a result. This was a direct outcome of Justin Herman being appointed in 1959 as head of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA). Under Herman’s supervision, the SFRA A-1 Redevelopment Project began its work on turning the then two-lane Geary Street into the current four-lane Geary Boulevard. This project turned Geary into a “financial dividing line” between minorities and the wealthy and landlords began refusing to rent or sell homes to African Americans (PBS). San Francisco’s racial prejudice had become so prominent that many living in the community began to take a stand in order to protect their homes. The NAACP and other organizations coordinated sit-ins. On one occasion, Willie Brown and John Dearman sat against developments in Forest Knolls, a protest that would catapult them into headlines of
local newspapers and label them as public figures. The community’s civil disobedience was, in many ways, effective and helped result in the Fair Housing Ordinance of 1968. This led to the creation of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. This act did not permit discrimination in the selling, renting, or financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, and sex. This was a tremendous victory within the community and reflected Dearman’s love for his neighborhood and its well-being.

Before being appointed by Governor Jerry Brown to the San Francisco Municipal Court in 1977, Dearman cultivated a close friendship with Willie Brown. They connected over their struggles, their tenacity, and their love for the community. Brown and Dearman later decided to pursue a professional partnership because “the legislators [then part-time] were making only $500 a month, and Willie had three children” (Egelko). Dearman and Brown worked on many notable cases, representing athletes such as former Warriors players Nate Thurmond and Rick Barry (Brown). As the years moved forward, so did the pair’s friendship. Following Dearman and Brown’s partnership of twelve years, Dearman accepted his appointment to the Municipal Court Bench on March 28, 1977. A couple of years later, he moved up to the San Francisco Superior Court and began acting as Presiding Judge from 1990 to 1991. Dearman retired on March 28, 2009, as one of the longest-serving judges with 32 years of service on the San Francisco bench. He went on to participate in the Assigned Judge Program, an opportunity for “active or retired judges and justices to cover judicial vacancies” (Park-Li). Despite taking leave as a permanent presider on the bench, Dearman could not bring himself to leave his role in the courts entirely.

Dearman represented the heart of the Western Addition as someone who promoted social change in San Francisco during a tumultuous time. His involvement in local community organizations and his dedication to grassroots action cemented Dearman’s place in San Francisco history. Dearman embodied the determined, hardworking, and kind-hearted spirit of African American San Franciscans, diligently making progress even when facing numerous roadblocks along the way. He is known as an understanding judge, a local leader, and a kind face among the crowds. John Dearman’s portrait upon the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center mural is well deserved because he contributed so much to the San Francisco community.

—Anya Kishen and Rachael Sandoval

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Robert ‘Bob’ Demmons was born in Dallas, Texas, in 1940 and moved to San Francisco in 1942. Fire Chief Demmons ushered in an era of equitable governance to the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD). His commitment to achieving racial and gender equality remains an outstanding example of city leadership.

Demmons graduated from the City College of San Francisco and began his career as a firefighter in 1974. The SFFD, which was historically dominated by white men, staffed approximately 1,800 firefighters and only four of them were black. The NAACP started filing legal suits against the department for racially discriminatory hiring practices. Internally, black firefighters led by Demmons banded together to form the San Francisco Black Firefighters Association (SFBFA) in 1972.

Demmons didn’t seek to become a civil rights revolutionary. In an interview with George Cothran from SF Weekly, Demmons stated his activism “wasn’t something I did willingly.” He was inspired to fight on behalf of black firefighters after taking his lieutenant exam in 1978. To his dismay, he found that hiring decisions were motivated by race rather than merit. Filled with determination, Demmons set out to address racial disparities within the SFFD. His journey would solidify his legacy as an effective revolutionary.

Initially, the SFBFA was housed under the umbrella of the Local 798 Fire Union. Due to racial hostilities within the traditional union, however, Demmons and other members of the Black Firefighters Association decided to form an independent union. Demmons, elected to the presidency of the union by his fellow peers, started documenting incidents of racial harassment. They organized picket lines and started publicizing the problematic culture of the SFFD. Notably, Demmons spoke of Station 3 on Polk Street, referring to it as “Johannesburg West.” White firefighters proudly hung a Confederate Flag in the station. Along with this, two minority firefighters found a swastika in their
office in 1988, a public act of discrimination which Demmons labeled as a “go to hell” message toward people of color.

Demmons continued to push toward justice within the BFA, inciting a ripple effect within the judicial system by applying severe scrutiny to the SFFD’s exams and claiming that the exams were discriminatory against women and minority groups. In 1987, 9th Federal District Court Judge Marilyn Hall Patel found the SFFD in violation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and issued a consent decree mandating the hiring of more women and minority firefighters. Even with this case victory, however, Demmons still faced racial strife and hardship because of his role in obtaining the consent decree. In 1991, under Chief Fred Postel, Demmons was appointed as the Assistant Chief of Management Services and was later named Chief of the SFFD in 1996 by Mayor Willie Brown. Chief Demmons was tasked with revolutionizing the department once again.

Throughout his tenure, the fire department staff shifted to become forty percent minority and ten percent women. He was capable of implementing such a rapid demographic shift within the department by reforming the fire department’s hiring practices, namely the H-2 Cadet Program and the Officer Candidate Program. The H-2 Cadet training program eliminated the one-day exam, replacing it with a job training program. The program allowed for the inclusion of racial minorities within the training program, and eliminated the subjective and often racially biased test. The Officer Candidate Program created a promotional examination process for lieutenants and battalion chiefs specifically designed to ensure equal opportunity for advancement for all employees.

Chief Demmons made a series of high-profile and groundbreaking hires during his tenure. He appointed the first African American Fire Marshal, first African American woman Chief Officer, and first Hispanic Assistant Deputy Chief. In January of 1999, the Consent Decree was terminated, in large part because of Chief Demmons’ influence. Chief Bob Demmons’ commitment to civil rights allowed to help reform the San Francisco Fire Department.

—Matt Chiodo and Marcelo Swofford

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CLAUDE T. EVERHART

Claude T. Everhart was born in San Francisco in 1952, graduating from Lowell High School in 1970. During his high school years, Everhart joined the Black Panther Party, where he was active in a variety of political demonstrations, the San Francisco State College strike, and the Panthers’ Free Breakfast Program.

As a teen, Everhart headed the Oceanview–Merced–Ingleside Community Organization, providing summer jobs for youth and organizing on behalf of community issues. He volunteered as Chair of the San Francisco Senators, a youth development program, and opened a residential group home as an alternative to juvenile incarceration. In 1974, Mr. Everhart founded the Young Community Developers, a “war on poverty” model cities youth program that survives to this day. Everhart also served as chairman of the Candlestick Point Citizens’ Advisory Committee when Candlestick State Park was originally constructed in the Bayview–Hunters Point. He continued his community activism in 1976 when he was hired as a part-time aide to newly elected Assemblyman Art Agnos.

At the height of Everhart’s political career, he served as San Francisco’s Executive Deputy Mayor and Chief of Staff to Mayor Art Agnos. Prior to his position as Deputy Mayor, he served as the Chief of Staff of then-Assemblyman Art Agnos’s office and as Chief Consultant to the Legislative Audit Committee. During his term, he represented the San Francisco mayor’s office in Washington, D.C. and Sacramento, engaging with politicians and governmental organizations. Everhart was also Mayor Agnos’s advisor and often spoke for him to the press. During Agnos’s term, in addition to managing the city’s enormous recovery efforts from the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the administration helped San Francisco’s unhoused population by creating “Beyond Shelter,” a nationally recognized program that provided MultiService Centers for the homeless.

With Everhart at his side, Mayor Agnos was forced to make unpopular decisions in order to help San Francisco’s marginalized residents. For example, when the USS Missouri battleship was going to be resurrected in Bayview–Hunters Point, both Agnos and Everhart vehemently protested. Even though...
Claude T. Everhart served as Deputy Mayor during the Art Agnos administration.

the resurrection was projected to increase employment in the area and increase revenues by about $2.2 million annually, the duo joined the community in expressing concerns about gentrification. They also demanded that the Hunters Point shipyard be thoroughly cleaned of toxics and other health hazards at the site. They wanted to look at the investment more scrupulously to understand its impact on the community of Bayview–Hunters Point.

In addition, during Everhart’s term, controversy arose in both the San Francisco Police Department and the San Francisco Fire Department, with claims of racial harassment and discrimination. Everhart and Agnos both took the allegations seriously and launched extensive investigations. In concluding the investigation, Everhart demanded that both departments pay for the physical, emotional, and mental abuse suffered by people of color in both departments. As Agnos’s term came to an end, Everhart ended his career in governmental public service, but noted that he was “most proud of his role in cleaning up the drug-plagued Oceanview playground, initiating the Mayor’s office of Youth and Children’s Services, passing legislation that divested San Francisco’s retirement system from investments in South Africa, building a supermarket in Hunters Point, increasing the number of minority firms doing business with the City, and stopping the basing of the battleship Missouri, which he said would have gentrified the primarily black neighborhood” (Herscher).

Everhart went on to become a Vice President at Waste Management of Alameda County and a political consultant, helping former Oakland Mayor Elihu Harris and San Francisco City Assessor Doris Ward. His consultancy continues to this day.

Everhart’s legacy also continues in the form of Jelani House, a San Francisco-based rehabilitation center originally meant for mothers who struggle with cocaine addiction. Mayor Agnos’s wife founded the program, naming it after Everhart’s late son, Jelani. Jelani House is internationally recognized, and was even visited by Mother Teresa. Now known as Jelani Inc., the program offers a wide range of counseling and education for single fathers, mothers, and families.

Everhart’s image remains on the walls of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center to honor all he has done for San Franciscans.

—Sophia Tarantino and Sawyer Wolf

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RICHARD FINIS

Richard Finis became San Francisco’s first African American full-time police officer in 1947. In the 1940s, black police officers in San Francisco were often temporarily employed to fulfill the shortage of officers who had gone overseas to fight in War World II or serve in the military after the war (Rojas). When Finis got sworn into duty, he found that his white colleagues harbored racial prejudice against all black people in the department. Richard Finis’s 16-year career as an officer sparked the organization of black officers who demanded respect and fairness for black police officers in San Francisco.

During the post-war era, black officers were looked down upon by their white colleagues and were subjected “to the worst details,” while rarely being promoted within the division (Dulaney).

Finis’s brother-in-law, Levi Harper, explained that “When Finis came on, he caught hell. . . . None of the white officers would work with him. It just got to be too much pressure, so he quit.” According to author W. Marvin Dulaney in his book *Black Police in America*, another reason for his resigning was that Finis’ assignments were unfair and biased. Unfortunately, the racial taunting and discrimination within the institution was a trend that many African American officers faced.

Richard Hongisto, a San Francisco police officer from 1960–1970, stated that it was not uncommon for white officers to refer to their black coworkers using racial slurs (Dulaney). Richard Finis eventually became fed up with his discriminatory peers and quit the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) in 1963. Finis’s assignments were unfair and he especially disliked being ordered to exclusively patrol the Hunter’s Point area, San Francisco’s majority black district. Richard felt that the SFPD was trying to hide him from the public because of his status as the first African American police officer in the city (Dulaney).

After Finis quit, black officers reflected on Finis’s treatment and created an association within the SFPD to address racism and harassment of black people in the workplace. Led by Officer Hen-
In 1947, Richard Finis served as San Francisco’s first African American Police Officer. He worked for SFPD for 16 years before moving to the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office.

Since its inception, the OFJ has taken political action against certain issues. For example, the organization sent a letter to Mayor Ed Lee stating their disapproval of increasing the use of tasers in the department. The OFJ believed that the tasers would be disproportionately “used on certain classes of people like drug abusers, mentally disabled, and minorities” (ABC7).

Before moving to the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office in the early 1960s, Richard Finis endured harassment and discrimination from his colleagues and the San Francisco Police Department. However, without his sacrifice, the advancement of equality and fairness for African American people in the SFPD might not have been started. Richard Finis’s commitment to San Francisco and will be remembered for generations to come.

—Elijah Williams and Olivia Walker

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THOMAS
FLEMING

Thomas Fleming will be remembered as an individual who devoted his life to combating racism through use of a free and fair press. Fleming was able to educate the people of San Francisco and the nation on black history and black community events and also demonstrated the importance of including black voices in the press. Throughout his career, Fleming would meet with important leaders of the civil rights movement, including Martin Luther King, Jr., W.E.B. Du Bois, Justice Thurgood Marshall, Malcolm X, and Carlton B. Goodlett.

Growing up, Thomas lived with his grandfather in Jacksonville, Florida, and later with his uncle in New York City. Then, at the age of 11, Fleming's family sent him to Chico, California, to live with his mother.

Fleming moved to San Francisco after graduating high school in 1926 and worked as a bellhop, waiter, and cook. In a 2004 interview with the Chronicle, Fleming said, “I thought I’d be a cook my whole life.” However, mass layoffs at the dawn of the Great Depression pushed Fleming into the realm of the press—something atypical for a member of the African American community in the 1930s.

Fleming began his career in the media as an unpaid writer for The Spokesman. He was put into the position of writing for a newspaper that was supportive of the General Strike of 1934, which was the result of dissatisfaction in worker's conditions. Fleming later began running an independent radio show, Negroes in the News, and writing the “Activities Among Negroes” column of the Oakland Tribune. This column ran for five years and contained an 86-part, comprehensive series on black history. Fleming then landed an interview with Frank Logan, a local businessman who was releasing a brand new newspaper called The Reporter and was searching for an editor. After the interview, Logan knew that Fleming was his man and helped launch Fleming on a path of professional, paid journalism.

Fleming worked for years at The Reporter and gained local fame for his 1944 post-WWII press conference with Mayor Roger D. Lapham. In a breach of protocol, Lapham asked Fleming a loaded question: “Mr. Fleming, how long do you think these colored people are going to be here?” Mr. Fleming, be-
Thomas Fleming, legendary journalist for The Sun-Reporter, penned more than 7,600 articles during his lifetime.

ing the professional that he was, responded in a cool and collected manner stating, “Mr. Mayor, do you know how permanent the Golden Gate is? Well, the black population is just as permanent.” Fleming’s activism continued through the 60s as a result of the conflict in Vietnam. Through his articles, Fleming made the point that the black community was deemed skillful enough to drive tanks and fight for the country, but not skillful enough to work on all the ports of San Francisco. The Jim Crow-esque hiring practices present in San Francisco enraged Fleming.

Fleming also had a personal friendship with Carlton B. Goodlett which resulted in the creation of The Sun–Reporter. Goodlett moved to San Francisco, at Fleming’s request, and invested in The Reporter. In a heated poker match against the wealthy white owner of the newspaper, The Sun, Goodlett won all rights to the paper. He then decided to merge The Sun and The Reporter, creating the well-known Sun–Reporter. In fact, he effectively used this paper as a platform for his civil rights struggles. Fleming wrote and edited for the Sun–Reporter until his retirement in 1997.

Fleming remained an active voice in San Francisco until his passing in 2006. As he himself put it in a 2004 SF Gate interview, “I’m too damn old to tell lies.” As an informed, respected community member of the Western Addition, Fleming keenly criticized the inadequacies of the government of the early 2000s. He was most vocal about his disdain for Condoleezza Rice, former President George W. Bush, and former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Even after retiring, Fleming never stopped being vocal in his struggle against prejudice, injustice, and racism.

Although Thomas Fleming was a bachelor his whole life and never had children of his own, the community of the Western Addition proved to be his family. He was an incredibly sociable, beloved man who was adopted by countless families. In his life-long effort to combat racism through the press, Fleming covered nine political conventions and penned more than 7,600 articles. In terms of the impact of his legacy, Fleming said it best: “I felt that blacks had to have an editorial voice. And I think that’s why black papers are in existence all over the country. If the white papers covered all the different facets of black society the way they do white society, there wouldn’t be a black paper in existence.”

—Ian Duke and Kendra Wharton

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H. WELTON FLYNN

H. WELTON FLYNN may not have been a San Francisco native, but he was extremely influential in shaping the city’s legacy. Originally from South Carolina, Flynn moved to San Francisco after returning from World War II. He attended Golden Gate College and graduated with a degree in Accounting. He then proceeded to open his own firm in 1949, H. Welton Flynn Accountants and Auditors, now headed by his son, Welton C. Flynn.

Once considered the “New Moscone” by the San Francisco Chronicle, H. Welton Flynn first entered San Francisco’s political scene in the 1960s when he served on San Francisco’s Civil Grand Jury, as well as the San Francisco Committee on Crime. In 1970, Mayor Joseph Alioto appointed Flynn as the first African American commissioner to serve on the Public Utilities Commission. The PUC oversees the distribution and handling of water, wastewater, and electric power supplies of San Francisco, Alameda, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties. At the time, the PUC also oversaw other public services such as San Francisco’s Municipal Railway (Muni). An advocate of affirmative action, in 1971 Flynn secured funding need to create a pilot program for minority contracting, the first Minority and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise. Nurturing its development, it would become the gold standard for minority contracting. Flynn served on the PUC until 1991 when San Franciscans voted to establish a separate public agency for matters related to Muni. This was the birth of the San Francisco Municipal Transit Authority. H. Welton Flynn was subsequently called upon to lead the SFMTA’s board as its first president. He was also voted in as the first African American chairman for the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Flynn was committed to humanely handling the challenges that faced Muni. For example, when the PUC called for armed Muni cops because of teenage violence on Muni, Flynn sought a different approach. He insisted on spending $2 million on helping disadvantaged teenagers find employment rather than funding a “beefed-up police security force.” Following his proposal, Mayor Moscone announced that $1.6 million would fund crime-fighting programs. Flynn’s advocacy for affirmative action never faded as Muni appointed Curtis E. Green in 1974 as the first African American general manager of a major US transit system.

Flynn was also involved in the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. The agency had reserved
H. Welton Flynn served on the Public Utilities Commission and for the San Francisco Municipal Transit Authority.

two blocks specifically for Flynn and a small coalition of prominent African American investors who operated under the banner of his construction company, Pyramid Development Company. Residents and merchants would be able to buy shares of the new development project, which would become the Fillmore Center shopping complex. This project would impact small business owners in the black neighborhoods. The Western Addition Project Area Committee (WAPAC) led by Arnold Townsend, rose to oppose the new construction, claiming it wouldn’t help the community.

In 1981 San Francisco had a 45 percent minority population. As president of the Black Leadership Forum, Flynn focused on initiating more minority-operated businesses at the airport. It was important to him as Public Utilities Commissioner to have diversity among the contractors and concessionaires at the airport. In his efforts to support minority projects, he approved a proposal submitted by Central City Developers Inc., a minority owned company, to build an eight-story senior citizen apartment complex.

Flynn received many awards during his time in office, though none as special as the dedication of a $26 million, six-acre Muni bus garage located in the Mission District of San Francisco. In 1989 Flynn greeted ceremony attendees and thanked them for having come to witness the grand unveiling of the parking garage, which had been set to open in September of that year.

Flynn was commended for his devotion to public issues and his advocacy for marginalized ethnic and racial groups, specifically in reference to increasing the number of minority hires. H. Welton Flynn passed away on March 21, 2016, and left a legacy that helped craft San Francisco life today.

— Juliet Baires and Vivian Talamantes

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TERRY FRANCOIS

Terry A. Francois was a civil rights lawyer who made history as chapter president for the NAACP and as the first African American man to be appointed to San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors in 1964.

Although Francois earned a prominent place in the history of the Fillmore, he was originally from New Orleans. Francois was born in 1921 to Leona Keller and Terry Arthur Francois (Ancestry.com). Francois attended Xavier University of Louisiana to earn a bachelor’s degree in 1940. He then attended Atlanta University, graduating with a master’s degree in business administration before serving as a Platoon Sergeant for the United States Marine Corps during the Second World War (Schiller). Upon his return, he moved to Oakland where he married Marion Le Blanc. They went on to raise four sons and one daughter. One of their children, Gary Anthony Francois, grew up to be an influential San Francisco architect who worked on the Mayor’s quarters in City Hall and the international terminal in the San Francisco International Airport.

In 1949 Terry Francois moved to San Francisco and received a law degree from the University of California Hastings College of the Law (African American History in the West). After completing his studies, he established himself as a prestigious attorney and became a prominent defender of civil rights in the Western Addition. On September 15, 1963, he was arrested along with 10 others for participating in a sit-in protest against a local real estate agency for racial discrimination (Los Angeles Times). His dedication to the progression of civil rights and racial equality eventually would land him the position of president of the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP. Prior to inheriting this role, Francois was a valuable lawyer for the NAACP working alongside then-president Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett.

While acting as a lawyer for the NAACP, Francois filed lawsuits to combat discrimination against African Americans in housing, jobs, and education. He also advocated for the appointment of more
Terry Francois was a successful lawyer for the NAACP, a leader in San Francisco civil rights, and the first African American member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

black San Franciscans to public office positions (Los Angeles Times). In 1952, when Francois only had two years of legal experience, he sued the San Francisco Housing Authority over claims of racial bias in the application process for a new housing project in the case Banks v. Housing Authority of San Francisco.

Discrimination in the job market was an issue important to Francois. In frustration, he once remarked, “In San Francisco a Negro can eat almost anywhere, but will have trouble finding a job to enable him to pay for his meal” (Los Angeles Times). This dissatisfaction with the prejudice existing in the job market energized him to use his power as part of the NAACP legal team to create a fair employment practices ordinance for San Francisco in 1957 (Los Angeles Times).

One of Francois’ more celebrated achievements was his appointment by Mayor John Shelley as the very first black member of San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors (Los Angeles Times). Francois served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for 14 years, from 1964 to 1978, when he resigned to return to his private law practice (SFGate).

Following a five-year struggle with cancer Francois passed away on June 9, 1989, in his San Francisco home (Halstuk). At the time he was survived by his wife of 42 years, Marion Le Blanc, as well as his five children and six grandchildren (Los Angeles Times). His legacy of living “a life of work for civil rights,” as stated in his obituary in the June 10, 1989, edition of the San Francisco Chronicle, continues to live on today. A one mile stretch of our shoreline, just south of AT&T Park (now Oracle Park) and McCovey Cove, was named Terry A. Francois Boulevard to memorialize this important community leader.

—Sage Stefanick

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Wayland C. Fuller was a son, father, pharmacist, and community leader. Fuller committed his adult life to helping underprivileged communities and spent many years assisting the people of Bayview–Hunters Point. He lived a quiet and philosophical life and his legacy lives on in the communities that he assisted.

Fuller was born in Texas on March 10, 1916. From a young age, a sense of kindness and the general need to help others was instilled in him. Fuller also realized that he would have to work harder because he was an African American man working in a white man’s world. Throughout his adolescent educational experience, he was known as the hardest working student in his classes and was the first in his family to go to college. He graduated from Bishop College in 1938 in his home state of Texas and received master’s degrees from the University of Iowa in organic chemistry and pharmacy. He later moved to Michigan to become a high school chemistry teacher and soon after met his wife, Hayzel Fuller.

After visiting his mother-in-law in San Francisco, he fell in love with the city and decided to move there with his wife and two daughters. Given the prevalence of racism in the United States, Fuller faced much difficulty in establishing his practice. Fuller’s daughter, Wayzel, remembers that “he could not find a job as a pharmacist in San Francisco because he was black.” She went on to say, “when he tried to find work, they wouldn’t hire him or told him he’d have to drive the truck first” (SF Gate). However, Fuller would not let racism come in between him and his love for medicine and he would later attain a position as the first African American pharmacist at the Shumate’s pharmacy in San Francisco on the corner of Fillmore and Jackson streets.

Fuller always strived to benefit the community with every ounce of energy that he had. “He was always a community activist,” said George Davis, executive director of the Bayview–Hunters
Award-winning pharmacist Wayland Fuller served the Bayview–Hunters Point neighborhood for more than 50 years.

Point Multipurpose Senior Center. Davis added: “Health care, housing, anything that involved the betterment of Bayview–Hunters Point, he was involved in. This was his heart. He slept somewhere else, but he lived in Bayview–Hunters Point” (SF Gate). Fuller was a member of the Bayview Rotary Club and Bayview Democratic Club. He was also a campaigner for the battleship USS Missouri at Hunters Point, protested the closure of Wells Fargo’s Bayview branch and fought for independent pharmacies in San Francisco.

Fuller was a respected voice in the business community in the Bayview–Hunters Point neighborhood and would sometimes voice his opinion regarding political representatives. Fuller said of the election of San Francisco’s first African American Mayor Willie Brown: “He’s going to use all the tools at his command and probably create some tools that will help businesses, not just give lip service to employment, but find ways to implement some jobs” (SF Gate).

Throughout his time in San Francisco, Fuller was a voice for many people. According to his daughter Wayzel, “he would take prescriptions to seniors’ houses who were disabled. He would deliver them himself” (SF Gate).

Fuller later opened his own pharmacy called Fuller Pharmacy. He was able to create a strong connection with the community and was able to run the business without the burdens of hierarchical control. Fuller also taught as an assistant professor at UCSF’s School of Pharmacy.

Fuller died in his home in February of 2002. He is remembered for his hard work and service to his community. Though professionally known as a pharmacist, businessman, and teacher, he will also be remembered as a kind and generous civil servant who worked to change the Bayview–Hunters Point and the city of San Francisco. Fuller was also a respected family man and was loved by his wife and children. Wayzel Fuller said of her parents’ relationship, “I never heard them have one argument. He was a perfect gentleman. He was one of a kind” (SF Gate).

Winnifried Noble said of Wayland Fuller, “His license was active until the end. He would say, ‘I will never let it expire. I worked too hard as an African American man.’ ” Fuller’s legacy survives through the example that he set for others in his community and through the barriers that he broke, allowing more people the opportunity to succeed.

—Ya’qub Elmi

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Ernest J. Gaines was born on January 15, 1933. His childhood in the South inspired many of his well-known novels including *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971) and *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993). His distinguished career as a novelist has earned him various accolades: the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1972, the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 1993, and the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction in 1999. Moreover, throughout his career, Gaines has been an active philanthropist, recognizing aspirational writings from young black prodigy authors and awarding them with financial scholarship.

Gaines spent his childhood on his family’s River Lake Plantation in Oscar, Louisiana. He and his twelve siblings were raised mostly by his aunt. As a boy, Gaines would spend half the year working in the fields, and the other half going to school. During this time, he formed an appreciation for the tough women who lived in his community.

In 1948 fifteen-year-old Gaines moved to Vallejo, California, to live with his mother and stepfather. At St. Augustine’s High School, he developed a passion for learning and reading. Because of the lack of African American representation in the books he read, he was never able to truly “see himself” in the predominantly white narratives. His time as a teenager during the civil rights movement inspired his writing and motivated him to write stories inspired by the black culture which he grew up in.

After graduating high school in 1951, Gaines attended Vallejo Junior College in 1953 and was drafted into the army upon graduation. After serving two years, he earned a bachelor’s degree in literature at San Francisco State University. He published “The Turtles,” a short story in SFSU’s magazine, *Transfer*. This narrative later earned him his first substantial writing recognition: Stanford’s Wallace Stegner Creative Writing Fellowship in 1957.

After spending many years in Stanford’s classrooms, Gaines was finally rewarded with the success one of his most famous novels, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. This novel, known for narrating nearly one-hundred years of a black woman’s experiences, was drawn from the strong women who ran his community.

Steadily increasing in his reputation as a young novelist, Gaines flew back and forth between the Bay Area and Louisiana. While he was influenced by San Francisco’s bohemian era and his time abroad as a soldier, ultimately he found that his best
writing came from reflecting on his time and the history of the south. In an interview, Gaines once confessed: “I can’t write about San Francisco! But I can write about that little postage stamp of land in Louisiana” (“Reader Resources”). Nevertheless, his experience as an African American man living in San Francisco during the Black Power movement gave him a different perspective in his writing.

After having received the Guggenheim Foundation fellowship in 1972 for In My Father’s House (1978) and A Gathering of Old Men (1983), Gaines, like fellow literary master James Baldwin, was condemned for not being much of an activist or a radical. The Black Panther Party even criticized him for not showing enough black pride in his works, but in Gaines’s eyes, he extended the message of the black community through his books. In Conversations with Ernest Gaines he was quoted saying that “When Bull Connor turned the hoses on the marchers, I just said to myself, ‘write a better paragraph.’ ” This is not to say that he was uncaring about the rights of his community—not in the least—it was just that for Gaines, his power to shape a movement lay in the power of his pen.

From the 1970s to the 1990s Gaines would continue to fly back and forth between the Bay Area and Louisiana, until he met his wife, Dianne Saulney in 1993. After deciding to settle down, Gaines began teaching at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, in 1983 and was a Writer-in-Residence at the University from 1981 to 2004. Living and teaching in Louisiana, Gaines wrote his most successful book was A Lesson Before Dying, which has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in fiction and won the National Book Critics Circle Award.

Today he and his wife live on a six-acre estate in the same town where he grew up. He has restored his old schoolhouse, chapel, and his family cemetery of five generations. In 2000, Gaines was named a Chevalier of France’s Order of Arts and Letters and in 2013 Gaines was awarded the National Medal of Arts.

In 2007, Gaines and his wife, Diane, established, with generous donations from the Baton Rouge Foundation, the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence to inspire, recognize, and honor young African American authors in fiction. Gaines additionally donates, with the help of the donors to Baton Rouge Foundation, to various schools in and around Baton Rouge County. In his latest work The Tragedy of Brady Sims, he writes of “the painful story of a man who tries to keep the peace in a racially divided town by enforcing his own brand of justice.” Gaines continues to write from a thought-provoking perspective and remains a highly influential author.

—Licette Renteria, Meghan Grant, and Phia Rau Halleen

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ROTEA GILFORD

ROTEA GILFORD was born in 1927 in Willis, Texas. When he was a child, his family relocated to the Fillmore District in San Francisco where he would live the rest of his life. Gilford’s main objective throughout his career was connecting with the black community and making sure that unity was being created. Thus, Gilford grew up to be a San Francisco police officer and presented himself as a great example for the African American youth in his community.

Before joining the police department, Gilford attended San Francisco Polytechnic High School and also graduated from San Francisco City College. Gilford was also very athletic and played for the San Francisco City College championship basketball team in 1948. Following his education, he worked as a bridge toll taker and later a Muni bus driver.

Throughout his career as a police officer, Gilford made numerous friends, including politicians Willie Brown and Dianne Feinstein, both of whom would later serve as mayor. Gilford was also deemed executive director of the Mayor’s Council on Criminal Justice by Mayor George Moscone. Gilford worked to support four San Francisco mayoral administrations.

In 1968, Gilford made a ground-breaking discovery and solved a particularly difficult case involving a Muni bus driver that was shot and killed during the uprisings in San Francisco following the Martin Luther King, Jr., assassination. Gilford was also widely recognized for solving a case in which a serial killer was targeting only homosexual men in San Francisco in 1973. Gilford showed that he respected the rights of all people. Through his investigative work, he showed how deeply he cared about the liberties of the LGBTQ community, the youth, and the African American community.

He was well known for his role as a leader of the team of investigators who solved the “Zebra” killings in 1974, alongside Prentice Sanders. The “Zebra” killings were a series of racially motivated murders in which a total of 14 people lost their lives. This caused tension in the area and allowed the racial profiling of African American
Rotea Gilford, who served both the San Francisco Police Department and as Deputy Mayor was a “forceful advocate of black youth.”

men to increase within the community. When Gilford and his team declared Dwight Stallings as a murder suspect, Gilford was confident in his belief that Stallings was guilty. Gilford said, “I know he bought ammunition [used in the shootings]; I don’t know if he ever pulled the trigger, but I know he was involved” (Zamora). Gilford’s contribution to the investigation helped solve the case.

According to records in the San Francisco Public Library, he was one of only two black police officers running for the position of sheriff in 1978.

Gilford was known as a “forceful advocate of black youth” (Sward). He recognized that there was a significant increase in the amount of inmates living in overcrowded jails and other correctional facilities. Gilford was the leader of a delegation of youth advocates and notably “urged the court to release 30 youths from the lockup within the next two months and place them in the care of volunteer counselors under court supervision” (DelVecchio). Gilford also investigated the SF Youth Guidance Center, located at 375 Woodside Avenue, as the center had allegations of abuse, violence, and overcrowding.

Gilford was also selected by Mayor Willie Brown to serve on the Recreation and Parks Commission. According to Mayor Brown, Gilford loved recreational activities and sports his whole life.

Gilford even reportedly taught Mayor Diane Feinstein about football in particular, and they ended up attending numerous 49ers games together, including Super Bowls.

Gilford coached even after he retired, choosing to help youth by offering them healthy alternatives.

Rotea James Gilford passed away on March 14th, 1998. Gilford believed in the youth of the community and wanted to do all that he could to encourage them in a positive direction. He believed that incarcerated youths deserved to be provided with proper counseling and knew that they could become productive citizens if given the chance. Gilford’s impact on black police officers in the city was monumental. According to homicide detective Napoleon Hendrix, Gilford “was the lightning rod for black investigators. He set the standard that we follow.” Hendrix continued to explain, “He gave his all. He will be sorely missed. He affected a lot of people in this city” (Magagnini).

—Kristen Williams, Cezjay Garcia, and Zachary James

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DANIEL LEBERN GLOVER was born on July 22, 1946, in San Francisco. While Glover is primarily known as an actor, he has also earned numerous accolades working as an activist. In addition to his role in *Lethal Weapon* (1987–88) and *The Color Purple* (1985), he’s played dozens characters in both television shows and movies throughout his career. Some of his more recent achievements include the NAACP Image Awards in 2014 and the Black Entertainment Television (BET) Humanitarian Award in 2004 (IMDb). For his work social activism, he received the NAACP President’s Award in 2018 and the NAACP Chairman Award in 2003. He was appointed as a goodwill ambassador for the UN Development Programme in 1988 and an ambassador for the UNICEF division in 2004. Glover has also worked in places like Africa, the Caribbean, and South America (UN). His advocacy has been recognized all over the world, but his efforts initially began in San Francisco.

Raised in the Haight–Ashbury neighborhood, Glover attended George Washington High School in the Richmond District and graduated in 1965. He went on to study economics at SFSU (Cleary). At SFSU, he became interested in the community issues that faced the Western Addition, specifically those regarding urban renewal and gentrification.

In 1968, Glover participated in the historic five-month strike that resulted in the establishment of the College of Ethnic Studies at SFSU. On the 46th anniversary of the student-led strike, Glover gave a speech at SFSU and stated that “We were especially observant that societal relationships were reflections of history, and we were writing our own history of institutional transformation, but inside and outside of this institution, we understood that education had the power to recalibrate our experiences and to engage us in a process of struggle.” In 2016, he also supported SFSU students on a hunger strike demanding more resources for the College of Ethnic Studies (Kai-Hwa).

Glover was awarded an honorary degree and also the Presidential Medal of SFSU for his “lifelong involvement in programs promoting education” (Polidora). He also received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of San Francisco in 2014.

Before becoming a well-known activist, Glover
began his career as a Model Cities Program Manager for San Francisco’s Office of Community Development from 1972 to 1977 (HistoryMakers). He also became involved with the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO) and counseled renters who were about to be displaced (Hill). In the 70s, Glover was a part of the Black Panther Breakfast for Children program which was later adapted as a government program (Hill).

By age 28, Glover had started taking acting classes at Shelton Actors Lab (Cleary). After realizing this as his second passion, Glover began training at the Black Actors Workshop of the American Conservatory Theatre. His Broadway debut was in Athol Fugard’s Master Harold . . . and the Boys, which brought him national fame. He was later cast in Places in the Heart which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1985. In 2005, he combined his love for acting and film making with activism and co-founded Louverture Films in New York City. The production company is dedicated to producing independent films of historical relevance, social purpose, commercial value and artistic integrity (Louverture Films). Since its inception, the company has put out about 26 films on topics such as Hurricane Katrina, post-conflict Nepal, and a movie about Afghanistan.

Glover has also gotten the chance to make a first-hand impact in several countries around the world. After being appointed as a Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador, Glover traveled to Haiti, Mali, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa to help fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and disease. Since becoming a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in 2004, Glover visited Colombia on behalf of UNICEF’s call for private enterprises to support the welfare of the country’s children. He also gave a presentation in Jamaica to share ideas on Caribbean philanthropy and meet with members of non-governmental organizations to discuss the issue of HIV/AIDS and the impacts it has on children. Additionally, he chaired the board of the Africa Unite Symposium in 2005 and visited Ethiopia to participate in a benefit concert for Africa Unite.

In 2013, he earned the 2013 Audrey Hepburn Humanitarian Award (UN). Glover, however, does not do what he does for recognition—his passions supercede any awards or accolades he has earned, and his real life actions demonstrate his true character.

―Meghan Grant and Nell Bayliss

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CARLTON B. GOODLETT was considered one of the most influential black men in San Francisco for nearly forty years. He was born in Chipley, Florida, in 1914. Goodlett was a man of many talents: He was a doctor, publisher, political power broker, and a successful businessman. By the young age of 23, he practiced as a pediatrician in the Fillmore District of San Francisco. Goodlett was also the personal physician for actor and activist Paul Robeson and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, both towering figures in the black community.

Goodlett attended Howard University where he earned both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in child psychology (SF Gate). As an undergraduate student at Howard, Goodlett was highly involved in campus activities and was student body president and editor of the school paper (BlackPast.org). He later moved to the Bay Area to attend the University of California, Berkeley, to receive a doctorate in child psychology (American Psychological Association). After earning this degree from UC Berkeley, Goodlett began teaching at West Virginia State College and then received a degree in pediatrics from Meharry Medical College (American Psychological Association).

Goodlett was an excellent physician, but also wanted to be civically involved and decided to pursue a second career in journalism. By 1948, he was a publisher for the Reporter Publishing Company which was in control of a number of black weekly newspapers. Goodlett, in partnership with Thomas Fleming, also co-founded The Sun–Reporter. Goodlett served as a publisher and editor for the highly influential paper. The Sun–Reporter gave him a platform to promote social and economic change within the African American community. The newspaper was known for the following motto: “That no good cause shall lack a champion, evil shall not thrive unopposed.”

Goodlett was also a leader in organizations like the NAACP (serving as president in 1946), as well as World Peace Council, the National Black United Fund, and the International Longshoremen’s and the Warehouseman’s Union, Together with Phillip
Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett was a tireless physician, activist, and publisher.

Burton, he also established the San Francisco Young Democrats. Goodlett did everything he could to put an end to discrimination against black workers in San Francisco’s municipal railway. His activism eventually led to the appointment of the two first African American directors of the agency.

His political struggles inspired him to run for the California governorship in 1966. One of the main themes of his campaign was pushing society towards racial equality. His opponent among left-leaning voters was incumbent Democrat Edmund G. “Pat” Brown. Goodlett criticized Brown as being insufficiently progressive, especially regarding civil rights. Unfortunately, Goodlett wasn’t able to secure the nomination in the primary.

Although Goodlett did not win, his campaign earned him much notoriety. In the years to come, Dr. Goodlett became a major power broker in the local and national Democratic party. Nationally, Goodlett was close with the Kennedy political machine. Locally, he was instrumental in the political rise of Mayor Willie Brown. He supported Willie L. Brown’s campaign for California Assembly in 1962, donating $7,500, and naming Mr. Brown The Sun–Reporter Man of the Year. Although he lost his first Assembly race, Brown would end up winning in 1964 with the support of the black community that Dr. Goodlett helped galvanize.

Although many people thought highly of Goodlett, some were critical of him and his news outlet. In fact, Goodlett said, “A lot of people call the Sun–Reporter an irritant and me an ass. . . . But I never let them forget that democracy is a state of becoming. . . . I do what I see needs doing in my own way. If this makes me a gadfly, I can’t help it.” Goodlett was unaffected by his critics. He didn’t care what other people thought or had to say. He knew that what he was doing was not only right, but necessary.

Dr. Goodlett was married to Willette Kilpatrick, and although they divorced in 1968, she continued to serve as half owner of the Sun–Reporter. Willette passed away in 1982 and Goodlett died some years later in 1997, during the first term of Willie Brown’s mayorship. Mayor Brown, at the time of Dr. Goodlett’s loss, stated: “It may be the single biggest loss that the black community and the progressive community has ever suffered in San Francisco. Dr. Goodlett was the pioneer on equal rights, equal opportunity, political action, entrepreneurship, and economic independence. He was truly a renaissance person.”

Although Goodlett is no longer with us, his legacy will live on. In honor of his activism, writing, publishing, his role as physical, and role model, the address of San Francisco City Hall now bears his name: 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place.

—Teresa Fishman, Kimberly McAllister, Ian Duke, and Matt Chiodo

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Sixty-two Heroes and Pioneers of the Western Addition.
Awarded the title of Man of the Year by *The Sun-Reporter* in 1970, Dr. Zuretti Lee Goosby dedicated his life to being a community activist in the Bay Area. Goosby was born October 19, 1922, in Oakland. He received his B.A. at the University of California, Berkeley, and D.D.S. at University of California, San Francisco. He worked as a dentist for about 30 years through his private practice. He also served as Army Lieutenant in World War II and a military dentist during the Vietnam War. He later found a passion for the public school system and joined the San Francisco Board of Education. Dr. Goosby dedicated much of his time and effort on the board maintaining an avenue for communication between the residents of the city and the board. Goosby’s mission was to create a better, more inclusive environment for the people of San Francisco.

Getting into a position to facilitate change was a battle on its own for Goosby. In 1967, the mayor at that time, John Shelley, replaced James E. Stratton with Dr. Zuretti L. Goosby on the San Francisco School Board which created backlash. According to writer Alan Cline, Dr. Goosby stated that his goal was to address “the [community’s] need for spending more money on education and to find money from sources other than property tax.” Dr. Goosby entered the political scene in San Francisco during a key moment in history. He was the first black member of San Francisco’s Board of Education.

Dr. Zuretti Goosby served on the Board of Education for 12 years while supporting other groups like the San Francisco Airport Commission, the Airport Museum Board, the Human Rights Commission, the Exploratorium board, and the War Memorial Board, where he “served with great distinction,” according to Mayor Willie Brown.

Dr. Zuretti Goosby saw an unfair system where people of color were not taken seriously as candidates when applying for jobs that they were qualified for. *San Francisco Examiner* writer Dick Alexander mentioned that during Dr. Goosby’s first year on the Board of Education, he proved himself to be a strong advocate for the promotion of qualified black people in their relative fields. For exam-
Dr. Zurretti Goosby, dentist and activist, is remembered for his work in civil rights and San Francisco’s education system.

When Dr. Wilson Riles applied to be the San Francisco school superintendent, Dr. Goosby made a brave statement in front of the entire board advocating for him. Endorsing Riles was controversial and even put Goosby’s own job position in danger, but Goosby believed that “[Riles] certainly would be one of the top candidates and would bring a lot of experience to the job.”

Goosby was later promoted to serve as the Board’s President. He played a key role in San Francisco’s difficult transition out of segregation in the 70s. As one of the strongest advocates for desegregation, he strived to ensure that it was achieved as seamlessly and as logically as possible.

In addition to his plans for integration, Goosby also wanted to implement an intensive education plan in the community to supplement it. The plan was an imitation of a program that already existed in the Richmond district. He believed that this program would be vital for the success of desegregation. The plan “suggested that the schools [the following] year follow a policy of open enrollment, allowing any transfer which would improve racial balance.” The other board members supported Goosby’s aspiration for city-wide and school-wide integration. Dr. Goosby was highly successful given the context of the conservative social climate of the times.

Dr. Goosby not only cared about future generations, but also the people who were suffering in the present. In the early 80s, he headed the Gay Subcommittee of the Intergroup Clearinghouse. Another one of Goosby’s major objectives was to provide education regarding tenant rights and to address the need for low-income housing. This was focused on the LGBTQ+ community who had been displaced from their homes and neighborhood businesses. Goosby also highlighted the importance of the need for faster police response to reports of violence against members of this community.

Dr. Zurretti Goosby passed away on January 30, 2000, at the age of 77. His legacy remains ingrained into the fabric of the Bay Area. Goosby is remembered as a husband to Jackeline, a brother to Lula Reed, a father to his three sons, and as a grandfather to his four grandchildren. He is painted upon the wall of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center in order to honor his legacy.

—DeJanelle Bovell and Zoe Foster

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MANY PEOPLE of the Western Addition are indebted to the kindness and grace of Leonard “Lefty” Gordon. Gordon was a friend, coach, mentor, and leader in his community. Until his untimely passing in 2000 at the age of 61, Gordon mentored hundreds of kids as the executive director of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center.

The Mississippi native moved to San Francisco when he was three years old. Lefty grew up to be a prominent high school track athlete and a star baseball player. His friends called him “Lefty” from the start (he was, after all, a left-handed pitcher in baseball). Although he had incredible athletic talent, Lefty was never interested in pursuing professional sports. His childhood friend, Errol Hall, said that despite Gordon’s athletic talent, “It just wasn’t in him, it wasn’t a dream of his to be a professional athlete.” Lefty enrolled at City College of San Francisco, eventually transferring to San Francisco State, majoring in education. Gordon’s career choice would be a decision that would benefit the people of the Western Addition and speaks to his commitment to helping others.

After attending San Francisco State University, Lefty attended and received a master’s degree in Sociology from the University of California at Berkeley. Gordon worked as a social worker at the Booker T. Washington Community Center for twenty years. He ingrained the value of education and hard work into everyone he taught. His willingness to go the extra mile led to him being hired as Executive Director of the Ella Hutch Community Center in 1983.

Gregory Lewis and Venise Wagner point out that “within a few years he had turned it into a significant political force in the African American community and at City Hall.” As director, Gordon worked to make the community center a haven for the young people of the Western Addition. In an interview with Amelia Ashley-Ward, publisher of the Sun-Reporter, Gordon discussed that one of his life goals was “to save young black men and bring them into manhood.” As director, he ran and financed programs such as the Midnight Basketball League with games running from 10pm–2am. Alongside Wendy Nelder, he commissioned the murals of prominent African American figures who contributed to San Francisco public life. The
Mayor Willie L. Brown said that Lefty Gordon was “one of the most respected African American voices of our great city.”

Murals are still displayed on the walls of the Ella Hutch Community Center.

Gordon went above and beyond to help the people of the Western Addition. One story, chronicled by 48 Hills journalist G.W. Schulz, detailed Lefty’s reading program for young athletes. Lefty discovered a high school football star was going to be named San Francisco’s player of the year in the newspaper. There was only one problem, the athlete couldn’t read. Gordon, in response, started a reading program aimed at young athletes.

Mr. Gordon, expanding on the success of his reading program, started expanding the scope of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center. Always focused on the importance of education, he started after school tutoring sessions to help Western Addition students succeed. Gordon also established job training programs for adults in the community.

Gordon understood the importance of constant, civic engagement. He ran community events, dubbed “kitchen cabinet meetings.” The gatherings connected members of the SFPD with youth in the neighborhood. The goal of these meetings, according to G.W. Schulz was to create “a repository of complaints about what was happening in the neighborhood.” The increased dialogue helped foster a holistic understanding of the issues, tribulations, and successes of the Western Addition and was a testament to Lefty’s dedication to solving and responding to problems in the neighborhood.

Gordon gave everything to the Center. In an interview done by G.W. Schulz, Greg Gordon, Lefty’s son, observed that “he allowed his own health to deteriorate.” He always devoted his time to helping his community. A psychologist and co-worker, Julia Hare, remembered asking Gordon why he never considered leaving the Western Addition in favor of taking a higher paying job in the private sector. Mr. Gordon laughed and said, “I don’t want to work on a high-tech plantation.” The neighborhood meant everything to him and he dutifully served the Western Addition until his death on May 3, 2000. Due to the work of this well-respected social worker and political activist, many lives of young people and seniors continue to be lifted and supported through the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center today.

—Alvin Tran, Matthew Chiodo, and Meisy Tunay

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Born on February 13, 1944, in Greenwood, Mississippi, Roland Gordon was raised in Gary, Indiana, where he was the star player and captain of Gary Roosevelt High School basketball team. In 1967 he went on to Baldwin Wallace College where he obtained a bachelor’s degree in education with a minor in business. Moving to Los Angeles in 1972, Gordon visited a friend who was a local producer. He complimented Gordon on his poetry leading to their collaboration for two musicals: *The Winds of Change* and *Revelations from the Hip Bible*. He also published a book called *A Message To The World*. Inspired by his friend in the production world, Gordon attended an acting school teaching him the importance of composure. Soon after, he opened a creative gift shop called Roland Gordon’s Creation. Here he sold original greeting cards, posters, and crafts all made by hand from various different artists that he knew in the area. Sadly, one day someone robbed him of everything he had. Looking to the Lord for answers and aid, he began reading scripture.

In 1978, Gordon began his career pastoring at Ingleside Presbyterian Church, and he enrolled in the San Francisco Theological Seminary. In the beginning, the church had only four members, but Reverend Gordon saw potential in the building and felt as though a higher power was calling him to the church. At the church, he organized a basketball program for the boys in the community—the Ingleside Church Basketball League. The league was a way for boys to develop in a positive and healthy environment that promoted an importance on education and prayer at the same time.

Gordon said: “I pretty much opened the doors of that gymnasium and the children came to me. This is part of my strategy. And all races, too. Predominantly black, but all races would come and play. The kids want to play. That’s the bottom line. So I would form teams, and some of the kids from the community would be the coaches.”

The Ingleside Community Center separately expanded in service to the youths. Reverend Gordon completed his Master of Divinity Degree and was ordained as a full-time pastor on July 31, 1983. The church held many major community events and exposed talented individuals to the community. Rev. Gordon also got together a cooperative of non-profit organizations which presented *Othello*, a
movie starring Ted Lange at the Kabuki Theater. Reverend Gordon was the executive producer of *Enter Frederick Douglass* and a narrator for the musical *The Modern Mass*.

On the board of the former San Francisco Council of Churches, Reverend Gordon served as Chair of the Children’s Services Committee and as two-term president of the Board of Directors. He served on the Board of Directors of the Bay Area Black United Fund and was the Founder/President of both the Thad Brown Boys Academy and Board of the Ingleside Community Center. He received the 2004 Alumni Merit Award from Baldwin Wallace College, the 2003 Distinguished Alumni Award from San Francisco Theological Seminary, and was a recipient of the Koshland Award in 1995 for outstanding community service. Later, Reverend Gordon led another project that remodeled a damaged Phelan Loop bus station which was slated to be demolished. The building was leased to the Ingleside Community Center for a business training program for young people.

By creating a mural called “The Great Cloud of Witnesses,” a collage of primarily newspaper and magazine clippings, painted murals, posters, framed prints, and objects depicting prominent African American people in history, Gordon wanted to show that the African American community was able to accomplish great things. He hoped that “people of all races (especially African American youths) will be blessed by learning the truth about the rich contributions the sons and daughters of African descent have made to civilization and most especially to our country.” Both the Ingleside Church and the mural were added to San Francisco’s Article 10 list of historic properties on December 10, 2016. They are both designated as historic landmarks.

Reverend Gordon’s concerns also revolve around gentrification in the area. Community members have decreased from 500 to 75 in 2014. As churches in the area see reductions in membership, home prices keep rising and the African American population continues to fall.

Rev. Gordon believes, however, that the people living in San Francisco can work together and get along. Roland hopes to accomplish this vision where people, especially children, repeat this affirmation called the San Francisco World Peace Affirmation, which he believes can be an effective way of keeping a peaceful mind in times of violence. Come what may, Reverend Gordon will continue to spread his message of peace.

—Emmit Parabrub and Althea Pyle

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NAOMI GRAY

NAOMI JEAN THOMAS GRAY was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on May 18, 1922. She was raised in Indiana alongside her four other siblings. In 1945 she earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Hampton University and went on to earn graduate degrees from Hampton University and Indiana University. Upon graduation, she was hired as a caseworker for a foster care agency in Indianapolis (Historymakers). Soon after, she worked for 20 years for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, earning the position of the first black female vice president (Knight). After a divorce, Gray decided to move to San Francisco, where she was appointed to serve on the board of the San Francisco Public Health Committee in 1985. She made strides towards “stronger affirmative action programs” in the city’s Public Health Department for eight years (Knight). From traveling the world to teach family planning and how to stop the spread of AIDS, to being an outspoken leader in her local community, Gray’s advocacy inspired hard work and integrity.

When Gray first moved to San Francisco in the 1980s, she rented a home close to her sister Doris Gray. She got a job in social work, and then took the opportunity to teach at San Francisco State University (Knight). A passionate follower of local, national, and international current events, and a frequent letter writer to The Chronicle, Gray quickly came to know seemingly everybody in city government. She became close friends with several prominent San Francisco leaders such as Superior Court Judge Don Mitchell and Mayor Dianne Feinstein, but she was never afraid to tell them what she really thought (Knight).

In 1985 Mayor Dianne Feinstein appointed Gray to the city’s first-ever Health Commission and nominated her for “the Who’s Who of strong black women” (Knight). She served as a chair member on several committees, always speaking up, specifically on controversial topics such as the AIDS crisis, which had risen to the number one killer of men ages 25 to 42 in 1992 (Cisneros). Fighting adamantly against the needle exchange programs in which drug addicts could trade in their used syringes for...
clean ones with the hope of stopping the spread of AIDS, Gray said, “A lot of us in the minority community feel this only reinforces drug abuse among black, Hispanic and poor people,” and went on to say, “It’s like saying the way to deal with welfare mothers is to have them sterilized” (Knight). By 1986, Gray proposed an initiative to local black leaders, to research the impacts of AIDS in their communities. Receiving great feedback, she helped jump start the Black Coalition On AIDS. One of the founding members said this of Gray:

“[Commissioner Gray] had seen spiraling funding for AIDS education and activities directed toward the Black population. Her invitation was a challenge to the Black community to define and advocate for our own needs. Out of that challenge we have created a broadly based organization including over 200 individuals and agencies committed to the education and service needs of our community” (McBride 167).

In 1993, Gray co-founded the Twenty-First Century Academy in Bayview-Hunters Point (Saunders). The new public middle school was created “to improve learning among underserved African Americans” (Saunders). In opposition to San Francisco’s Unified School District’s “desegregation,” she hoped the school would support the marginalized neighborhood it was in, rather than having minority students bus to schools in white neighborhoods (Knight).

From ensuring Black foster children were placed with Black families to creating stronger affirmative action programs in the Public Health Department, Gray seemed to have had a hand in numerous projects throughout her career. Anthony Wagner, former director of Laguna Honda Hospital once said “the reason she had such and eclectic group of interests is because she saw so many needs” (Knight). Gray also helped create the Black Leadership Forum, the African American Education Leadership Group, and the Sojourner Truth Foster Family Service Agency (Gray). She also served on Mayor Willie Brown’s task force on Children, Youth and their families from 1990 to 1993 and was a member of Mayor Gavin Newsom’s transition team after the 2003 election (Knight). Given all the teams, foundations and task forces Gray was a part of, it’s no wonder that she is remembered as a selfless giver to her community.

Gray understood the benefits of building a strong community by taking on the role as the middle-man between residents and politicians. Until her final months, she would insist on “bringing her wheelchair to meetings.” At the age of 84 Gray passed away on December 29, 2006 in San Francisco at Laguna Honda Hospital.

—Evita Martinez, Kalin Venable, and Meghan Grant

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BISHOP DONALD GREEN

Bishop Donald Green was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, before moving to San Francisco at the age of four. During his adolescence, Green often saw his classes and the social pressures around him as increasing burdens. It was not until 1959 that Donald Green found his love for God and began his early stages of preaching the ways of Evangelical Christianity. According to the San Francisco Christian Center (SFCC), Green began preaching on the streets of the Western Addition and would often venture all the way to Market Street. He became known as a “street preacher.” Although he had found a certain passion in the ways of urban street preaching, Green quickly became a teacher for other members of church, and according to Project Impact he was a “pastor’s pastor . . . understanding the requisites and challenges of ministry.” Here, he would become quite empathetic toward the struggle of teaching religion during a period of massive social change.

In 1964, Green was ordained as the Assistant Pastor of San Francisco Revival Center, after having been a Sunday School teacher and youth leader there. He was then granted an honorary Doctorate of Theology degree from the Southern California School of Ministry for his devotion, wisdom, and most importantly, hard work. His passion for Christian teachings and his affinity for aiding “lost souls” carried him through his profession with the fervor of a man on a mission.

Donald Green was exalted as a pastor of the San Francisco Christian Center in 1966 due to his achievement in and devotion to his faith. By April 1999, he had been consecrated to the title of Bishop. Largely under his direction, the San Francisco Christian Center has become one of the largest and most prominent pentecostal churches in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2001, Bishop Donald Green and the Board of Directors of Tabernacle Community Development Corporation (TCDC) started a housing project which aimed “to stimulate growth in the community by developing and participating in the development of residential, commercial and industrial projects that contribute
to the economic stimulation and vitality within underserved communities” (McCray). Donald Green is now the retired president of the organization. He had a variety of accomplishments during his career, including helping to establish the Young African American Achievers Program and receiving a $1.2 million grant from former California Governor Gray Davis. The money went towards forming JUMP Academy in collaboration with the San Francisco School Board, and allowed them to host their first fundraiser gala, raising over $100,000 for their social service programs.

Green’s attentiveness and care for others did not wane and he helped other pastors in sustaining their own churches, all in the pursuit of spreading the Christian faith. His love for humanity was exemplified when he ran the Christian Couples Conference of 1971, during which he demonstrated his belief that many marriages should be saved or reconciled in the name of God. Many other ministries were created in order to help people from all walks of life, such as establishing new ministry leadership roles, creating prison ministries, and senior ministries.

In an SF Examiner article written by Laura Paul–Borja on May 23, 1986, Green commented that “46 percent of inmates in federal and state prisons are black men, and that 90 percent of homicides of black men are committed by blacks.” This staggering statistic of the late 80s shows Green’s understanding of his environment, and his role as a mediator and mentor in socially troubling times.

As the former president of the TCDC, Bishop Donald Green sought to help those struggling through societal discrimination, and in doing so he demonstrated his tireless faith towards helping anyone, regardless of color, shape, or class. He still preaches at the San Francisco Christian Center and consistently delivers powerful sermons regarding trust in God during challenging times. In one of his sermons delivered in 2015, Green impressed upon his audience the importance of realizing that hardships purpose themselves as inevitable storms that we must weather; no one can leave a storm unscathed, but our faith in God can suffice like the calm in the eye of the storm. Green related his own experiences with job loss, faithlessness, and daily adversities with his audience and eloquently used these experiences to offer a powerful sermon about facing pain. Sermons such as these show Bishop Green’s immense wisdom regarding the power that faith can have in times of fear and oppression. He continually fights for the less fortunate who have lost so much in a city that has been pushing them out. Bishop Green’s faith is a constant force that can be felt by anyone who hears his compelling sermons on the power of spirituality.

—Chase Nakayama, Evita Martinez, and Marcelo Swofford

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BISHOP
WILBUR
HAMILTON

Wilbur Wyatt Hamilton was born on January 28, 1931, in San Antonio, Texas to E. E. Hamilton and Bessie Fields. Growing up, both of his parents played active roles for the Church of God in Christ, which was the primary factor in moving them to Hearne, Texas, so that his parents could work for the Church’s first school. After a few years they settled in San Francisco.

Upon their arrival, Wilbur’s father bought a church that had been vacated by the Japanese community during World War II in the Western Addition. His father held gospel readings and mass there for the people in the community.

Wilbur Wyatt Hamilton, better known as Bishop Hamilton, received an A.A. degree from San Francisco City College before obtaining a bachelor’s degree in Social Science from Simpson College and then an M.B.A. degree from Golden Gate University and a Doctor of Divinity degree from Simpson College in San Francisco.

Hamilton remembers growing up in the Western Addition as a young child and recalls that many of his best friends were Japanese. He looks back on the time of World War II and Japanese internment as a time of sadness and confusion, explaining in an interview that he still remembers “the awful feeling when they disappeared and not being able to understand fully what was going on” (Harlem of the West).

As an adult, Hamilton was recruited by Justin Herman during the A2 phase of the urban renewal project to help lead the program and ensure that the African American community had a say in the renewal process (KQED Fillmore). Because of the controversy surrounding the first round of renewal that blighted the Western Addition community, Herman called a meeting filled with African Americans from the Western Addition to try to resolve some of these differences. Herman proposed his plan and angered many members of the community. Among them was Wilbur Hamilton, who quick-
ly opposed Herman. Herman then stood up in his chair and shouted at Hamilton in the meeting, “If you’re so damned dissatisfied with what’s going on, why don’t you come out to the Western Addition and run the program?” Hamilton then said, “You’ve got a deal.” Like that, Hamilton became the director of A2.

As a part of the renewal projects, Herman wanted to tear down many of the older buildings in the neighborhood to make room for new construction. Among these buildings was Wilbur Hamilton’s father’s church which was also torn down as a part of this second phase of renewal. This was a controversial act, especially given Hamilton’s role in the program. The church, along with many other buildings in the neighborhood, was torn down. Many of the buildings were not actually constructed on the abandoned properties for years and only a small part of the original community remains.

After being part of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, Hamilton dedicated himself to religion. He was the founding Bishop of California Northwest Jurisdiction, Church of God In Christ. Hamilton also served as founding Pastor of the Hamilton Memorial Church of God in Christ in San Francisco and has held a succession of state and national appointments in the Church of God in Christ, culminating with his Consecration in 1987 as Bishop and Prelate of the California Northwest Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction.

In 1980 Bishop Hamilton was appointed to serve as Pastor of the Victory Temple Church of God in Christ in Seaside, California. In November 1990 he was elected General Secretary of the Church of God in Christ, Inc. He was then re-elected in 1992 and 1996. In November 2000 Hamilton was elected General Board Member and was appointed by Presiding Bishop G.E. Patterson to the position of General Board Secretary. In 2004 he was re-elected to the General Board and re-appointed to the position of General Board Secretary.

Because of the influence that Bishop Wilbur Hamilton held in the Western Addition, he is painted onto the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center mural. Though to some he is seen as a controversial figure, the impact that he had upon the community cannot be denied, and his good intentions are not in question. The legacies of urban renewal are still visible in the Fillmore District today. Bishop Wilbur Hamilton played an instrumental role throughout the A2 phase and, through thick and thin, was a leader and representative for the Western Addition.

—Eduardo Alguera and Zachary James

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NATHAN HARE, widely regarded as the father of Black Studies, was born in Slick, Oklahoma, on April 9, 1933. He was one of five siblings. As a child, he spent some years with his aunt in Oklahoma City before returning to his family farm where he worked as a sharecropper and tenant farmer. At the age of 11, Hare migrated with his family to San Diego, California, for the war effort during the Great Migration. In order to provide for the family, Hare’s mother got a civilian janitorial job at the Naval Air Station. After World War II, Hare’s mother lost her job and moved the family back to Oklahoma.

In Oklahoma, Hare attended L’Ouverture Elementary and High School, segregated public schools named after Haitian revolutionist and general, Toussaint L’Ouverture. Hare’s life took a positive turn when he was able to represent his class at the “Interscholastic Meet” of black students at Oklahoma Langston University after scoring high on standardized tests. Hare won the first of his many prizes at this event. His educational success led him to gain the support of his principal, who arranged for Hare to attend Langston University and work in the university dining hall in order to pay tuition. At the time, Langston University was the only college that admitted black students in Oklahoma.

After Hare graduated from Langston University with a B.A. in Sociology in 1954, he was granted a Danforth Fellowship which allowed him to continue his career in higher education. He attended graduate school at the University of Chicago where he received his M.A. and PhD in Sociology in 1957. Around this time, he married Julia Reed, a psychologist and sociologist who also attended Langston University. They are still together today and recently celebrated their 62nd anniversary in December of 2018.

In 1961, Hare was hired by Howard University, a historically black college in Washington, D.C. Hare became increasingly involved in the Black Power movement while at Howard (One of his students was Stokely Carmichael). Hare was fired from the university in 1967 for writing a letter to the school’s newspaper which addressed the lack of black stu-
Dr. Nathan Hare, psychologist and scholar, is widely regarded as the father of Black Studies.

In the letter, he spoke out against Howard University’s president, James Nabrit, who wanted to increase white enrollment. Dr. Hare’s increasingly vocal support to reform Howard led to his dismissal.

However in 1968, Hare was hired at San Francisco State College (now known as San Francisco State University) where he became the first program coordinator of the school’s Black Studies program. It was the first program of its kind in the United States. Hare was responsible for the creation of the term “ethnic studies,” which replaced the term “minority studies.” Hare’s refusal to help college president S.I. Hayakawa break a five-month strike by a campus-wide multiracial coalition consisting of thousands of students and faculty led to Hare losing his job a year later in 1969.

Dr. Hare went on to found a scholarly periodical called The Black Scholar: A Journal of Black Studies and Research, with Robert Chrisman, another former San Francisco State faculty member. Around this time, Hare returned to school to earn his doctorate in clinical psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology in 1975. In the same year, he decided to leave the journal to work as a clinical psychologist in community health programs, hospitals, and private practices. He then went on to publish books about the indiscretions against black people. Hare’s publications include The Black Anglo Saxons and Bringing the Black Boy to Manhood: The Passage.

Hare has worked closely with his wife, Julia Reed. Together they co-founded the Black Think Tank, meant to address the problems and concerns that confront the African American community. They also published The Endangered Black Family, The Miseducation of the Black Child, and Crisis in Black Sexual Politics together.

Dr. Hare has won many awards for his work, such as the Joseph Hines Award for Distinguished Scholarship from the National Association of Black Sociologists, Scholar of the Year Award from the Association of African Historians, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame. Hare was also awarded the National Council for Black Studies Award for his distinguished scholarly contributions to Black Studies. He currently works as a psychologist based out of San Francisco.

—Julio Ceja, Eduardo Alguera, Juliet Baires, Grace Jackson, and Sawyer Wolf

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“Nathan Hare.” The HistoryMakers. 2019.

“IF THE MOUNTAIN can’t come to you,” Sylvia Harper said, “you go to the mountain.” Sylvia Harper’s go-get-em attitude is exemplified by the mountainous challenges she overcame throughout her life. Not only did she break down racial barriers, but she also became a symbol for strong females in the workplace. Although she is only 5-foot-3, she stood tall at the intersection of racial and gender inequality and her valor secured her a place among the other men and women on the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center mural.

Harper’s career in the San Francisco Police Department began in 1979, when, while on maternity leave, she expressed interest in the police department. Before she began her career as an officer, she was a student, athlete, wife, mother, and community member. Harper is a native to San Francisco, and grew up in Silver Terrace. She attended Saint Mary’s Cathedral High School and St. Mary’s College of California. She liked the college’s location in Moraga because it was far enough from San Francisco to feel like an escape, but still within a comfortable proximity to the city. As a college student, Harper excelled and had a busy social calendar. Not only was she a cheerleader, but she also played intramural football and was crowned the Homecoming Queen. She was also known as the “donut queen” because she would dedicate the wee hours of the morning to working with the campus baker. On top of all of this, she was also a blossoming pre-med student, but after encountering difficulty in her math classes, she switched to a biology and psychology major. Sylvia Harper went on to graduate from St. Mary’s in 1975 and then married her boyfriend, Maurice Harper, Jr. She had a daughter, Cherisse, in 1977 and two years later, had a son, Maurice Leejon. After her pregnancy with Maurice, she joined the San Francisco Police Department. Harper encountered numerous obstacles and challenges in her early career. She explained that “the women had to be tough because they were held to a higher standard. I always tried to retain my femininity. One [partner] told me ‘you drive like you have two kids in the back seat,’ and
I told him that’s because I do drive with two kids in the back seat.”

In 1996, the SFPD began to utilize the diversity in their departments to make changes in the community. The women placed in authority positions were strategically promoted to serve communities that were respective to their minority. For example, according to Police Chief Fred Lau, “We’ll have an Asian American woman in Chinatown, a Spanish speaking Latino man in the Mission and an African American woman at Potrero.” One of these women was Sylvia Harper, who was appointed to Potrero Hill. She was able to succeed in her duties and her multidisciplinary background helped her excel in interpersonal relations. On Christmas morning of 1996, Harper assuaged a frenzied, worried community after a shooting and a stabbing occurred, promising that “your concerns will be my concerns” and assured that the safety of the community was a priority among the officers. In 1988 in the San Francisco Chronicle, there was a section entitled “Highest Rank Ever For Female Cops.” This summarizes the two women, one of which was Harper, that reached the highest rank ever attained by women officers, temporary lieutenants. Harper’s attitude is a unique factor in her success. She believes that “in order to embrace life, you have to do everything” and that your direction should always be forward. “No matter where you go in life,” Harper stated, “you only go that way once, so go all the way.”

In March of 2006, Sylvia Harper was promoted to head of department administration. Assistant Chief Heather Fong was in charge of promoting a handful of officers as her command staff. “I don’t believe that we’re going to miss a beat here,” Fong said about her new cohort, “everyone’s in place.” With Harper on her side, the department began to look optimistic.

As for her personal life, Harper remains busy as an officer and caretaker for her mother. Regardless of what the future may bring, Captain Harper has already made many positive contributions to the city of San Francisco.

—Olivia Walker

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“SFPD in Crisis / Acting Head Cop Speaks out / Fong Expresses Optimism — Names Command Staff to Run Department.” SF Gate, 6 Mar. 2003.
Brenda Harris was born in Montgomery, Alabama. Growing up she looked up to her parents as role models, both of whom were active participants in the civil rights movement and had participated in the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the mid-1950s. Harris would listen to her parents discuss the inhumanity of racism, injustice, and discrimination and quickly learned about the importance of doing her part in social movements. Harris recalls that her mother instilled an understanding that underprivileged populations have similar struggles, no matter their race. Coming from a household marked by rural poverty, she had learned this all too well. Harris also recalls her father serving in the segregated Air Force and remembers that learning of his experiences fur- thered her own understanding of systemic injustices. These circumstances helped to make Harris into the socially conscious and politically aware woman that she is today.

When Harris was in high school, her family moved from Montgomery to Marysville, California, about fifty miles north of Sacramento. Harris graduated high school in 1969. She attended Gonzaga University before transferring to the University of San Francisco in 1971. Brenda was drawn to the city because of her positive experiences there and the established family ties she had. She was also motivated to get a Catholic education because it was a more familiar learning style that she enjoyed. The school was significantly smaller than it is today and there was a larger population of black students. The religious aspects of the Jesuit institution also had a strong presence and social justice was emphasized across the campus.

From 1972 to 1975, Brenda worked in USF’s Drama Department and Financial Aid office while studying communications and sociology. She found that the school’s black community was deeply in- volved in multiple non-profits in the Western Addition, Bayview-Hunters Point, and Haight-Ashbury districts. Harris tutored at Benjamin Franklin Middle School on Geary Blvd., and worked with a Jewish women’s organization in an effort to unite different groups. She also volunteered at the Free Clinic in the upper Haight.

She later partnered with the Junior League, which offered counseling to students of color who
were interested in learning about scholarships and who strived to secure equal education and desegregate schools within the San Francisco Unified School District. After graduating from USF, she went on to earn her elementary and secondary school teaching credentials and a master’s degree in administration.

Harris spent most of her time working in the Western Addition because of its close proximity to USF. This was the first time she was able to fully immerse herself in a black community. For her, the Western Addition was a place full of cultural richness. She witnessed the slow gentrification of the Fillmore District and participated in the Western Addition Project Area Committee (WAPAC) meetings that were meant to protect the neighborhood’s dwindling culture.

Her engagement with the Fillmore lasted until she left the city. She did her student teaching in the Fillmore and worked as a volunteer in the College and Career Counseling department in the neighborhood.

Harris was also involved with the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center. Dr. Shirley Thornton, Deputy Superintendent of Specialized Programs at the State Department of Education, USF alumni, and San Francisco native who Harris described in an interview as “competent, bold, and courageous,” asked Harris to be her political appointee at the State Department of Education in 1990. Dr. Thornton requested that Harris represent her at the weekly meetings hosted by Lefty Gordon at Ella Hill Hutch Community Center. During these “kitchen cabinet meetings,” local organizers and citizens came together to discuss issues surrounding the black community of San Francisco.

Harris was well-qualified, having taught elementary, middle, and high school students, in addition to serving as a school counselor and administrator. Harris also taught as an adjunct professor at California State University Sacramento from 1996 to 2006. The culmination of her experiences built the foundation for her impactful role within the Department of Education. She credits her success to her Jesuit education. Harris feels that the most important thing that she accomplished while working for the Department of Education was providing technical assistance and guidance to school districts, nonprofits, and their partners. Harris still attends Jesuit philosophy and theology classes while working for the Education Department near her current home in Sacramento.

Brenda Harris is passionate about improving education in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. She is currently a member of USF’s Board of Trustees and has spent countless hours supporting USF’s mission of social justice. Recently, her work with the Ester Madriz Scholars and Martín-Baró Scholars Programs has earned her the 2018 Engage San Francisco Community Partner Award for Western Addition Changemakers. Her support has helped create this book, a book that strives to honor the lives of prominent African American leaders in San Francisco like her.

—Jack Weinrieb and Meghan Grant

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Interview with Brenda Harris by Jack Weinrieb. March 8, 2016.
LEOLA HAVARD

Leola Havard was born on April 3, 1920, in Ethel, Louisiana (Obituary). Leola moved to California after graduating from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She followed after her father and brother and moved to San Francisco where she would spend her life and raise her family. In a personal interview with Havard’s son Jerome, he recalls that Leola’s father and brother worked at a shipyard during the war while she worked at the treasury department. Jerome also mentioned that Leola wanted to be a teacher ever since she was a child. Her intention was to get a teaching credential at San Francisco State University.

At this time San Francisco State was hesitant to recognize Southern University’s credentials, so they refused to accept Leola’s degree. They wanted her to retake remedial courses in an attempt to prevent her from attending the university. This didn’t stop her, however.

Jerome remembers the story of his mother and aunt taking the bus to Sacramento to lobby the governor on Havard’s behalf. The governor proceeded to make a few calls and write a letter to San Francisco State University to ensure that Leola could pursue graduate work at the institution. At San Francisco State, Havard was a charter member of the Beta Nu chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, the teachers’ fraternity.

In 1949, after earning her teaching credentials, Leola began working for San Francisco Unified School District. She taught at Patrick Henry, Geary, and McKinley Schools. After many years of dedication, she was promoted to the position of vice-principal. She served at Marshall Annex and Starr King Elementary as the first female African American administrator in the San Francisco Unified School District. She finished off her career as principal at John Muir Elementary School, where she would retire in 1979.

According to her son Jerome, even in retirement Leola remained an active community member. She was an invested member in her church and actually became the first female chair of the board of trustees for the Third Baptist Church in San Francisco. She was also a lifelong member
Leola Havard was the first African American woman to serve as a Principal in the San Francisco Unified School District.

of the NAACP as well as the National Council of Negro Women. Additionally, she was involved with the Madam CJ Walker Home for Young Women, an organization that took in African American women new to the city at a time when they were excluded from places like hotels.

In 2011, Leola Havard was officially recognized for her work in education by the renaming of the Burnett Child Development Center. Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown discovered disturbing information about former California governor Peter Burnett. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, Rev. Brown discovered that Peter Burnett was a driving force for the exclusion of black communities and the eradication of Native Americans. Through efforts from Rev. Brown and the NAACP, the school was renamed in Havard’s honor.

The Leola M. Havard Early Education School remains as a lasting legacy for a woman who was dedicated to her community and who was a pioneer for education. San Francisco Unified School District Board member said of the name change: “We want [students] to know and be proud of who their school is named after.” Leola Havard fought the odds by becoming the first female African American principal in the San Francisco Unified School District. Rachel Norton, parent on the Board of Education, described the renaming ceremony as a “community celebration.” The San Francisco Bayview wrote that “Community members attended the meeting in full force to show their support.” The community came to the event dressed in red to celebrate Havard’s favorite color and to express her important role as an educator in San Francisco.

Leola Havard passed away on May 22, 2018. She is still remembered as a woman who was able to break barriers and who worked to change the status quo. Her legacy lives on through the many students that she helped throughout the duration of her career. Havard’s refusal to take no for an answer has paved the way for many others. Her commitment and dedication to education helped to shape the values of the San Francisco school system.

—Madison Owens and Ben Hamblin

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Rev. Frederick Douglass Haynes

Reverend Frederick Douglass Haynes was born in 1899 in Talcott, West Virginia. At four years old he was orphaned and then raised by his sister in Pennsylvania where he began working at age 10 at a bakery, which allowed him to support himself through high school.

In the early 1920s Haynes moved to Los Angeles to attend the Biola Institute and Baptist Bible College. He became licensed as a preacher by the time he was 17 and organized the first junior church in California while serving as an assistant pastor. After he was ordained in 1928, Haynes gained the pulpit of the Second Baptist Church in Fresno, California, and then four years later moved to San Francisco to serve as the pastor of the Third Baptist Church, a position Haynes would keep till his death in 1971.

When he first arrived at the church it has a congregation of 150 and an annual budget of $1,500, but by the end of Haynes’ work the congregation had grown to 3,000 members with a budget of $150,000. Founded in August 1852, the Third Baptist Church was the first African American Baptist congregation established west of the Rocky Mountains and it was both Haynes’ leadership as well as the demographic changes set off by World War II that initiated such a dramatic growth for the church (Social Networks and Archival Context).

Pastor of the largest African American congregation in Northern California, Haynes served as the president of the California State Baptist Convention from 1960–69. Rev. Haynes has also received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by Bishop College in Dallas.

Beyond church affairs, Haynes was also a strong proponent of the civil rights movement and social justice. His grandson, Rev. Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes, III, said, “As a matter of fact, he named himself after the silver-tongued leader of the abolitionists, Frederick Douglass” (San Francisco Bay View). Haynes was an important public figure in the community, serving as one of the neighborhood’s principal liaisons with San Francisco’s white power structure and by sitting on multi-racial committees and panels. In 1943

Reverend Frederick Douglass Haynes, Sr., served the Third Baptist Church from 1932–1971.
Rev. Frederick Douglass Haynes served as the Pastor of the Third Baptist Church, the largest African American congregation in Northern California, from 1932–1971.

He marched with striking longshoremen and was a key factor in Pacific Telephone’s decision to end racially biased hiring practices.

Haynes was also an active member of the Black Ministerial Alliance, a civil rights organization dedicated to gaining equal access for African Americans to jobs, housing and health care (Tim Kelley Consulting).

Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois were among some of the notable figures who sought Haynes’ counsel and support. In 1945 he became the first African American to run for Supervisor in San Francisco; he ran again in 1947 and 1951, but was unsuccessful each time. However, in 1956 Haynes achieved political success when Mayor Christopher appointed him to the San Francisco Public Library Commission.

Haynes married Charlie Mae Lomax, in 1945. Together they raised their three children, Harvey, Douglas and Sharon, along with Frederick Douglass Haynes, Jr., Haynes’ son from his first marriage. After his death in 1971 Frederick Douglass Haynes, Jr., succeeded him as pastor of the Third Baptist Church (Social Networks and Archival Context).

After Haynes’ death in 1971 following a long illness Congressman Phillip Burton issued the following statement in Washington, D.C.: “[Haynes] championed the oppressed and pioneered the fight for social justice in our community. He was known and respected not only by the citizens of San Francisco, but by the governors of our state and the presidents of our nation. Dr. Haynes was a man of Christian gentleness and personal integrity whose memory I will long treasure and whose goods works will be a lasting benefit to our community.”

It is clear to all who visit the Third Baptist Church today that Rev. Haynes’ legacy is still very much alive.

—Hannah Shepherd

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Willie Hector was a phenomenal football player, but more importantly he was a role model. He and his wife, Ollie Hector, would serve as pillars of the Western Addition community and represented strength and commitment within the neighborhood. Willie was born in New Iberia, Louisiana on December 23, 1939, but later immigrated with his parents to Mill Valley in Northern California. His prolific athletic abilities were noticed at an early age. He enrolled in Tamalpais High School where he became a standout football player and track and field athlete. Willie was recruited to play at the University of Pacific in Stockton where he played football and ran in track and field. His talent shined at the University of Pacific, specifically as a football player. The Los Angeles Rams drafted him in 1961 as a guard. His superior athletic ability helped him excel in the highest levels of the game, even though he was significantly undersized. In Proverb G. Jacobs book Autobiography of an Unknown Football Player, he described Willie as “an undersized guard on the Rams team who couldn’t block me” (p. 333). He played several seasons for the Rams, Broncos, and the Calgary Stampede in Canada.

Although he took his professional career seriously, Willie always imagined a life after football. During the off season, he would attend university classes. While he was playing, he earned a master’s degree in physical education. After his professional football career ended, Willie decided to become a football coach. He started his coaching career at Tamalpais High School in 1966. He coached at the high school level for two years, where he set state and national records. He then decided to move into the city, becoming an assistant coach for the City College of San Francisco’s football and track and field teams. After eight years of assistant coaching, Willie got the opportunity to replace CCSF head football coach Arthur Elston. He was interviewed along with assistant coach George Rush. An article published in The Sun–Reporter detailed the inside story of city college’s football coach hiring competition.

In a voting process to elect the next football coach, there was a voting board that consisted of past head coach Arthur Elston, two of his loyal assistant coaches, the CCSF athletic director, and the president of the college, Dr. Washington. The votes
were allegedly kept secret, however, somehow they were leaked to the public. The voting board had decided to award the position to George Rush, former player under coach Arthur Elston. The Sun-Reporter claimed the board’s hiring decision was racially motivated and wasn’t reflective of the actual merits needed to be a successful football coach. However, President Washington decided to nullify the results of the voting board and appointed Willie as the head football coach.

The decision caused an immediate uproar. Washington decided to publicize the decision by sending his athletic director to San Francisco newspapers. However, the athletic director decided to publicly ask President Washington to reconsider his decision. The hiring debacle heightened racial tensions within the university and in the city. Finally, after much deliberation, CCSF chose to default to their original decision, George Rush.

Although the decision caused great upheaval, it didn’t affect Willie’s resolve. His enthusiasm for athletics translated into a team-player mindset in his academic career. He dedicated himself to mentoring young athletes and guiding them to both athletic and academic success. In a 1977 Sun-Reporter article, Willie said: “The first year out of high school is tough on a youngster, especially if the athlete is from the ghetto and doesn’t have the background to study at the level of the other students who have been preparing for college for years” (Ness). Willie put it upon himself to mentor athletes as if they were his students. He was an influential voice within the Western Addition because he was an all-star student, talented football player, and a devoted community member. His personal experiences generated his ability to be both humble and informative. Willie’s concern regarding the success of students’ careers foreshadowed his shining attitude as a parent.

Willie used his positive disposition to raise three outstanding boys along with his wife, Ollie. In an SFGate article, “Faces of Black Success,” Carol Ness points out the significance of Willie and Ollie’s productive parenting style. Famed Western Addition community leader Lefty Gordon explained the significance of the Hectors and their contribution to the neighborhood by stating, “Oftentimes here, African Americans, come from dysfunctional families. The Hectors instilled in their three sons a hell of a work ethic. They all went to college and found a skill. They all built their own homes.” One son, Robert Hector, went on to create an inclusive support system for the youth in the Western Addition. He was one of the first employees at the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center in San Francisco, where he worked for nearly three decades. His longevity and commitment at the center is a reflection of his parents’ extensive support and love.

The example that the Hectors have set has been important for generations of Western Addition children and families. Their example awarded them honorary status on the murals of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center.

—Matt Chiodo and Olivia Walker

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I was always told when I was growing up that I had choices—even when I really didn’t have a whole lot of them at the time—it was what I [would do] that would make a difference in my life.” Born on May 23, 1926, in Brooklyn, New York, Aileen Clarke Hernandez was raised in a family that inspired and encouraged change. Both of her parents immigrated from Jamaica and became American citizens. Her father, Charles Clarke, worked in the art supply business, and her mother, Ethel Clarke, was a costume maker and seamstress for the New York Theater District. Growing up, Hernandez and her brothers learned how to both cook and sew “because her parents believed that no gender distinction should be made.” Her parents stood for equality—whether it be race, gender, or class. All of this impacted and shaped her education.

In 1943, as a valedictorian and emerging scholar, Hernandez attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. There she served as editor and writer for the campus paper, The Hilltop, and even wrote a column for the Washington Tribune. In 1946, she joined the Kappa Mu Honor Society. A year later, Hernandez graduated from Howard, magna cum laude, with a bachelor’s degree in political science and sociology (League of Women Voters of San Francisco). Both of these degrees would aid her in her future endeavors with community. In 1959, she received a master’s degree in government from Los Angeles State College, summa cum laude (League of Women Voters). Hernandez also studied at New York University and the University of Southern California. She also received an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Southern Vermont College in 1979 (League of Women Voters). Hernandez’s first involvement with social movements started in 1951, when she joined the West Coast division of the International Ladies Garment Worker Union in California.

Standing alongside renowned feminist Betty Friedan, Hernandez and others came together to form the National Organization for Women (NOW). As a co-founder, Hernandez and the members worked on behalf of women in the workplace (Napikoski, Thought Co). In 1970, Hernandez succeeded Friedan and became the second president of NOW (Makers). Five decades after the 19th amendment was passed, NOW took action to show the presence and power of second-wave feminism with the Strike for Equality March (Cohen). This movement boosted NOW’s base by 50% (Cohen) and was described as “easily the largest women’s rights rally since the suffrage protests” (Cohen). Some accomplishments that
Aileen Clarke Hernandez was co-founder and president of NOW (National Organization for Women)

were gained after the march include pushing for gender equality in work spaces and in education through the passing of Title IX in 1972, the legalization of abortion in all fifty states in 1973 with the Roe v. Wade case, and the advancement of childcare through the passing of the Comprehensive Child Development Act in 1971 (Cohen).

In addition to her work in NOW, Hernandez enforced the Anti-Discrimination Law in 1959. Three years later, she became the assistant chief of the California Division of Fair Employment Practices. Because of her dedication, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Hernandez as the Commissioner for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (Makers). She was the first woman commissioner and second person of color to hold the position (Makers). With her role, she focused on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which “outlawed discrimination based on sex, race, color, national origin, and religion” (Gould). Disappointed with the EEOC’s inability to enforce this law, Hernandez resigned as commissioner. During an interview with KQED, she shared: “We did not have power to make any changes in those days.”

Nevertheless, her work continued. Her passion in intersectional feminism led her to co-found the group Black Women Stirring the Waters in 1984 (Makers). The group consisted of black women who engaged in discussion about their own views and personal stories of dealing with and overcoming difficult situations in their lives (Makers). Their stories eventually were published and can be bought online or found in the Oakland Public Library. She is currently one of the chairs of California Women’s Agenda (CAWA) (Makers). In 2005, she “was one of 1,000 women from 150 nations who were collectively nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize” (Napikoski). Her contributions have relieved many communities in San Francisco that face similar intersectional dilemmas. She is more than outspoken about these issues and encourages outreach to all corners of a community. Her dedication to education and her humble upbringing helped to catapult her to where she is now. Her generous efforts through charity and activism continue to inspire many.

—Jazlynn Pastor, Alice Alvarez, and Olivia Walker

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RICHARD HOLDER a San Francisco native and Vietnam War veteran, will be remembered as a civil servant to the city, valiantly serving in the San Francisco Police Department for 28 years. Holder protected his community and never compromised on what he perceived as best for San Francisco. He began serving in the SFPD in 1972 and climbed the ranks until his departure in June 2000. Holder was appointed as SFPD Sergeant in 1980, Lieutenant in 1984, Captain in 1991, and San Francisco’s first African American Deputy Chief in 1998.

As a police officer, Holder consistently demonstrated bravery and courage in the face of danger. On December 17, 1976, Officer Holder and his partner, Officer Greg Winters, were shot at through their windshield while on patrol. On September 16, 1983, Holder’s name appeared in the San Francisco Examiner, as he embarked on a high-speed police chase to catch a man in a stolen car.

Holder additionally voiced his opinion in 1988 concerning spikes in criminal activity at the hands of transients in the community. When interviewed by the San Francisco Examiner, then Acting Captain Holder defended San Francisco’s homeless community, stating, “We’ve got several distinct groups here and the homeless people are not causing the problems.” As an officer of SFPD, Holder consistently made sure his opinions were known, and acted upon them. This was most apparent in his sudden resignation in 2000.

Holder’s voluntary removal from the force proved to be the result of a conflict between himself and the Director of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Ronnie Davis, and Mayor Willie Brown. As Deputy Chief, Holder felt that under Davis’ supervision, San Francisco’s Housing Authority was not doing enough to enforce the new “one strike, you’re out” policy for
Richard Holder served as the city’s first African American Deputy Chief of Police. He served in numerous capacities for SFPD for 28 years.

This program was a directive from President Bill Clinton that was adopted by San Francisco’s Housing and Urban Development office (HUD) in 1991. As stated by Clinton, the policy served as “a clear signal to drug dealers and to gangs: If you break the law, you no longer have a home in public housing . . . One strike and you’re out.” It served as a gear in Clinton’s larger war on crime but was overturned by an appeals court on January 25, 2001.

Nevertheless, Holder served as an enforcer of the law in 2000, when the “one strike, you’re out” policy was still legally enforced. During this time, the SFPD’s narcotics unit sent a list of 233 individuals identified as violators of this new policy to the San Francisco Housing Authority. Tension rose when the Housing Authority didn’t evict the majority of the offenders, countering that only “16 of the addresses were on the agency’s property.” This conflict resulted in rising tension between Director Davis, an ally of Mayor Brown, and Deputy Chief Holder. Holder however, chose to resign, ending his career on the force at 53 (Mattier and Ross).

Holder’s legacy is undeniably one filled with controversy. However, citizens can never forget his undying dedication to the law of the land as San Francisco’s first African American Deputy Chief. As a dedicated civil servant, Holder consistently used his position to protect San Francisco as he saw best fit.

— Ian Duke

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ELLA HILL Hutch

Ella Hill Hutch committed her life to the struggle for civil rights and racial equality, serving as the first female African American Supervisor for the city of San Francisco. Hutch was born in 1924, the seventh of twelve children. She came to San Francisco from Florida after World War II, hoping to find a diverse, equitable metropolis. She moved to the historic Fillmore District. At the time, the Fillmore was a culturally vibrant neighborhood full of local businesses, jazz clubs, restaurants serving the African American community. It did not take long for Hutch to recognize the oppression and racism the black community faced within the Fillmore.

After the end of World War II, white workers began displacing African American workers. The unemployment rate within the black community rose dramatically in the post-war period, as the military-industrial complex had employed many members of the black community. African Americans were restricted to working as postal workers, longshoreman, and domestics. Most union work was out of reach for African Americans, with the sole exception of the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU). Hutch worked at the ILWU as a secretary and switchboard operator. Through her work at the ILWU, Hutch met Bob Slattery, a strong civil rights and union activist. Together they formed the San Francisco branch of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1960. CORE fought against housing discrimination and launched equal opportunity employment campaigns within the city.

Hutch became widely regarded as the mother of the San Francisco civil rights movement. She was seriously involved in local Democratic politics and elections. In 1966, she served on the Democratic County Central Committee. At the time, the committee was considered the governing body of the state party apparatus. Through hard work and determination, her influence within the party grew. In 1974, Hutch was elected as the first female director of Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). By 1976, she was elected as Vice President for the
Supervisor Hutch’s legacy is now embodied in the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center located in the Western Addition, dedicated by Mayor Diane Feinstein on June 11, 1981.

In her time on the BART Board, she advocated for lower fares and more access to public transportation for minority communities.

In 1978, Hutch decided to run for San Francisco City Supervisor. She ran in District Four, encompassing the area from Civic Center to the Western Addition. Hutch was elected, becoming the first African American female city supervisor. She was a pragmatic, moderate Democratic voice, but maintained her commitment to civil rights. During her tenure she advocated for affordable housing, especially for poor and elderly residents and extended employment opportunities to at-risk teens.

Although Hutch died at the young age of 57 in her Western Addition apartment, her commitment to civil rights and strengthening her community continue to influence new generations. Her legacy as a great leader in San Francisco is firmly cemented on the cherished grounds of the Western Addition.

When Mayor Feinstein heard of Hutch’s passing, she ordered the flags at all city offices to be flown at half mast for a month (“Ella H. Hutch”). On March 1, 1981, more than 1,000 mourners gathered at City Hall for a memorial service in Hutch’s honor (Perkins).

Supervisor Hutch’s legacy is celebrated at the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center, located in the Western Addition. It was dedicated by Mayor Diane Feinstein on June 11, 1981. The community center was opened with the goal of providing a safe place where community members, particularly teenagers, could go after school. The center has offered tutoring, life skills and professional development classes, and organized sports and recreational events. The Ella Hill Hutch Community Center has also created a computer lab where people can learn valuable skills. Senior bridge clubs, parents groups, culinary classes, and professional development seminars are also hosted within the center. The center also features a gymnasium refurbished by the Golden State Warriors, a playground, community gardens, classroom spaces, a computer lab, and four tennis courts. Kids from the Western Addition participate at the Magic Zone, where Hutch’s image, along with nearly 100 other changemakers, grace the walls by the playground. She would surely be proud to see all of the positive activities that take place at the community center.

—Kiana Martinez, Matthew Chiodo, and Sophia Tarantino

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MATTIE JACKSON

MATTIE JACKSON was born on October 3, 1921, in Blanchard, Texas. She grew up during the Great Depression and was the second youngest of seven siblings. Encouraged by her father to continue her education, she worked to develop important leadership and organization skills at Johnson’s Business College. After moving to San Francisco, she opened several small businesses and became an advocate for workers’ rights.

During the Great Depression, very few families were able to send children to school, and it was nearly unheard of to attend college. However, Jackson and all of her siblings received higher education. She graduated from Phyllis Wheatley High School, described by the Houston Chronicle to be “the finest Negro high school in the South.” Her next step in education was going to Johnson’s Business College. In an interview with UC Berkeley’s Regional Oral History Office, Jackson explained that she had “always wanted to be in business.” Her goal didn’t change when she followed her husband, John P. Jackson to San Francisco in search of jobs.

In 1945, she arrived in the city a few months after John had found work. She continued earning her business degree at Heald Business College in 1950, after which she opened her first business, Groove Records on O’Farrell Street. The culture in San Francisco was much different from what Jackson had experienced in Texas. In comparison, it was easy to find work as a black woman: “In Texas, I never would have applied, and if I had, I wouldn’t have gotten the job. This fair kind of treatment is one of the reasons I’m sold on San Francisco” (Miller). Jackson later became the owner of the Portrero Coffee Shop and opened a bigger record store on Post Street.

Although Jackson never decided to pursue advocacy, her leadership, organizational skills, and character naturally made her a good fit and drew her to the part. She participated in her first organized protest in 1947 after she accepted a job at the big name textile factory, Koret of California. She’d been hired as a “blind stitch,” one who does maintenance work on broken sewing machines. Although she had worked with Ben Davis, another textile corporation, her boss commented that she

didn’t have what it took. He said that she wasn’t “going to stay here long.” In response to this comment, she conducted her own research as to why the factory production seemed to be lagging. She discovered that many Koret employees were being underpaid, yet management had denied any responsibility. The factory had already been unionized, but Jackson and other underpaid Koret workers decided that the best way to mobilize would be to organize their own strike. After back-and-forth negotiations, the management eventually agreed to pay for the missing wages. The strike lead to a grand victory.

In 1974, Jackson caught the attention of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (IL-GWU) and joined the Pacific Northwest District Council (PNDC) which was a part of the ILGWU. During her time there she worked closely with San Francisco Mayors Moscone, Feinstein, and Agnos. Jackson’s involvement in the political realm not only focused on the commercial side of her business, but on the fundamental ethics between workers and managers. Appointed Vice President of the Commission on the Status of Women, commissioner for the Human Rights Commission, and President of the Board of Permit Appeals, Jackson pressed for more fair treatment for all.

From textile worker to full-time advocate, Jackson had chosen a career that vastly changed her life. By January of 1976, Jackson was appointed to the Board of Permits and Appeals, serving under the three mayorships of Moscone, Feinstein, and Agnos. She continued to remain politically active, particularly in regards to protecting the interests of her union, and remained in touch with her fellow union members well after retirement. She returned to school and took classes related to her union work and economics at the University of San Francisco. Jackson received many awards from churches, politicians, and communities for her union activities. Her last business was a secondhand store, En Vogue Collectibles, on Hayes and Ashbury.

On February 7, 2009, Mattie Jackson passed away. She is survived by her daughter and grandchildren. From her humble beginnings in rural Texas, Jackson’s uncompromising and assertive personality led to her become one of the most remarkable labor activists and entrepreneurs in San Francisco. Due to her vocal dissatisfaction with unjust labor standards, it comes as no surprise that Jackson earned a place within the high ranks of city politics. San Francisco is honored to have such a strong and innovative woman as a part of its vibrant history.

—Daaniyal Mulyadi

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GERALDINE JOHNSON was born in New Orleans in 1933. At 29, she and her family left the city due to an economic downturn that left her father unemployed. They moved to San Francisco, where Johnson quickly became a prominent activist in the city’s labor movement. By the 1980s, Johnson had not only become a member of the San Francisco Labor Council, but she had also started her own chapter of the Coalition for Black Trade Unionists, which was dedicated to the rights of African American laborers. The recession of the 1970s hit hard, however, and many people lost their jobs or businesses. The African American population, especially those living in the Western Addition, were disproportionately hurt due to the redevelopment plans of Justin Herman and the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. Johnson’s work with groups like the Coalition for Black Trade Unionists helped to boost black workers’ wages and consequently improve the economy in San Francisco.

During his first term, President Ronald Reagan announced that “subsidies for the working class, in regard to homes would be cut, and continue to be cut,” which worried many Fillmore residents who relied on those subsidies. Sensing a need in the community, Johnson decided to start the San Francisco Housing Development Corp., which today also works with the BRIDGE organization. These organizations provide affordable and subsidized housing for working class people. Overall, they have developed over 400 affordable homes in San Francisco and are developing hundreds more.

Johnson believed that there were underlying factors that interfered with the African American population’s ability to seek out housing resources, saying, “African Americans have been . . . so caught up in the day-to-day issues, the day-to-day struggles, that questions of planning could never supplant the immediacy of those needs” (McGovern). Instead of being discouraged by the lack of involvement in her cause, Johnson decided to work harder. She wanted community input because she saw that people were having to move out of San Francisco due to the increase in the cost of living.
Stephen McGovern remembered Johnson’s house calls fondly, saying, “Johnson would talk with residents about planning issues and build on their growing skepticism about urban development by getting them to ask ‘What’s in it for my community?’” (154). After the A1 and A2 redevelopment plans—which included very little community input and were widely considered to be ineffective—Johnson made it her priority to ensure that voices from the community were heard.

In addition to her labor rights and affordable housing efforts, Johnson played a significant role in the creation of the African American Arts and Culture Complex, located in the Fillmore district. It was important to her to create a community space for African American people in San Francisco. The AAACC is now a highly regarded non-profit and the only city-owned arts and cultural center dedicated to African American culture, traditions, and values.

In 1983 Johnson organized a West Coast march and rally which brought more than 70,000 people together to honor the 20th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. Committed to honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Johnson later founded the San Francisco Martin Luther King, Jr., Civic Committee which changed the name of South Drive (located in Golden Gate Park) to Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive. On the committee, she also established an MLK birthday celebration and founded the MLK scholarship, which sponsors high school students on educational exchange trips.

Geraldine Johnson died at the age of 64 on November 12, 1997. She was widely respected in her community and given over 20 awards throughout her lifetime for her outstanding work. She was admired by many for her tenacity and dedication to improving her community.

In remembrance of her life, BRIDGE Housing renamed one of their facilities “Geraldine Johnson Manor.” Cheryl Towns, who worked with Johnson, reflected, “She was so driven, she’d drive you” (Wagner). The January after her passing, Johnson was honored at the very Martin Luther King, Jr., birthday celebration that she had established, and an award in her name was given to former Mayor Art Agnos, whom she had worked with during the last segment of Western Addition redevelopment to ensure that African Americans had majority participation and control.

Geraldine Johnson was a fearless community advocate who is remembered fondly by all who know her story.

—Delaney Miller

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A native of San Francisco, Calvin Jones, Jr., is known for his passionate work as a minister and philanthropist to families and youth involved or affected by crime and poverty. Son of the famous trombone musician Calvin Jones, Sr., and Julia Jones, Calvin Jr. graduated from Balboa high school in 1969 where he played football and led the team to consecutive Thanksgiving Day titles in 1967 and 1968. He scored 42 touchdowns in 21 varsity games and continued to play football as the defensive back for the Denver Broncos until 1976. Calvin, Jr., was introduced into the University of Washington’s Football Hall of Fame and was chosen as the Associated Press First Team All-American Defensive Back. Calvin Jr.’s teammate Kevin Hicks describes Calvin as “a juking and dancing runner, who would leave defenders tackling air.”

Calvin, Jr., earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Welfare from the University of Washington in 1975 and a Master of Divinity Degree from Harvard University in 1983. He then went on to lead one of the largest church congregations in San Francisco as pastor of Providence Baptist Church on McKinnon Avenue in Ingleside. In 1997 Calvin, Jr., kickstarted his humanitarian endeavors by forming the Providence Foundation of San Francisco: a collaborative foundation with the church to provide services that include a nutrition program, a homeless shelter, a summer day-camp, an after-school tutorial program, and the Providence Opportunities Program. Providence Baptist Church’s website describes their pastor as a man who “ministers with an open mind. He sees a need and creates the solution to fill the void.” As a shining example of faith-based community outreach, in 2004 Rev. Jones created a youth outreach program in the San Francisco Juvenile Hall where he ministered to children and their families to create better communication and life-altering skills. In an article written by the San Francisco Chronicle, Calvin, Jr., is dubbed as the “funeral preacher” for his dedication to serving those families grief stricken in the wake of San Francisco violence.
Rev. Jones continued his service to the vulnerable community of San Francisco with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, the Mayor’s Office of Housing, San Francisco Housing Development Corporation and others in providing seniors in the Bayview–Hunters Point community with affordable housing. Completed in 2008, the multi-use facility includes community and commercial rental space, a parking facility, a Providence Foundation Administration Office and a communal rooftop garden. A firm believer in community involvement, Rev. Jones’ engagement is outstanding: he was a Board Member of the Tabernacle Community Development Corporation, Commissioner of National Baptist Convention USA Prison Ministry, founding Board Member of the San Francisco Housing Development Corporation, founding Executive Director of the Family School of San Francisco, and a member of the Mayor of San Francisco Citizens Advisory Committee for the Hunters Point naval shipyard. The Family School, located on Fillmore between Fell and Oak, provides education and childcare for women on welfare; women from the projects, with chemical dependency (although they must remain clean to stay at the Family School), and with histories of domestic violence can all find help here. While the women study for their GED upstairs, children are taken care of below among friendly people and optimistic decorations. Rev. Jones, Jr., founder and director of the school said to the San Francisco Chronicle: “$3,400 keeps a woman enrolled here for a year. It costs $30,000 to take that same women and lock her up for using crack. One guess where the money’s going.”

Jones, Jr., has also worked to preserve his father’s, Rev. Calvin Jones, Sr.’s, musical legacy by cataloging all of his father’s music “to put out there so the world can hear him.” In 1977, Calvin, Jr., was invited by President Gerald R. Ford to be the Keynote Speaker at the Prayer Breakfast at the White House. Rev. Jones has also received numerous awards and recognitions of his changemaking work: CityFlight’s “10 Most Influential African Americans in the Bay Area”; Distinguished Clergy of the Year, Alliance of Black School Educators of SF, and has been Honored by the San Francisco Chapter of the NAACP. Calvin, Jr., has also spoken on numerous national platforms.

After 26 years of service, Calvin, Jr., retired as minister at the Providence Baptist Church. However, his faith based passion for serving his community is far from over. Most recently in 2016, Jones, Jr., as the Vice President of the Tabernacle Community Development Corporation, a California nonprofit corporation, entered into a $47 million contract to rehabilitate and convert Westside Courts from public housing to a HUD rental assistance contract. Westside Courts was particularly hard-hit by redevelopment in the 1960s and has a controversial past; this project is aimed at challenging the consequences of this history and is one of the most recent achievements of Jones Jr.’s impressive body of work.

—Hannah Shepherd

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REV.

CALVIN

JONES, SR.

Rev. Calvin Jones, Sr. was born to Eddie and Josephine Jones on March 28, 1920 in Louisiana. His family moved to Arkansas, where Calvin attended school in Magnolia. At the age of thirteen, Jones joined the Home Near Baptists Church after he was baptised.

Calvin Jones later joined the United States Army and was honorably discharged in 1946. Afterward, he was employed by United Airlines for almost two decades. Within that same year, Jones married his first wife, Corine Johnson, on January 6th. They were married for forty-four years where they had three children until her death. He eventually married his second wife, Horsea Matin, on August 8, 1992.

A pious and religious man, Reverend Calvin Jones dedicated his life to service and preaching at various churches. In 1947, Jones was active in his community by serving as vice president of the Senior Usher Board, president of the Male Chorus, president of the Brotherhood, and treasurer of the Trustee Board. He was officially ordained as a deacon in 1960, and was elected as pastor for the Providence Baptist Church on July 28, 1962. Devoted to this parish and its community, he was involved in the construction of the recreational and education center and the establishment of the community outreach program.

A leader during extraordinarily painful times, Rev. Jones delivered the eulogy for Alvert Joe Linthcome, who was killed by a police officer after stealing a car. This eulogy was delivered to a crowd including Linthcome’s loved ones and members of the Black Panther Party. In his sermon, he called for reflection from the congregation, stating, “We are here today for something that could have been avoided . . . Who is actually responsible for this young man’s death? We could name a few including the young man himself.” He reminded the community to reconsider what is truly important in life: a car or the precious life of a loved one. He invited those present to reflect on this tragic
Rev. Calvin Jones, Sr., made a mark both on his community and congregation. He served as Pastor for 28 years at Providence Baptist Church.

situation and led the community in mourning the premature loss of Alvert Linthcome (“Panther at Rite for Slain Youth”).

Rev. Calvin Jones was a pastor for 28 years before he retired on December 31, 1991, and received the title “Pastor Emeritus,” honoring his service to the community. Rev. Jones’ ministry of service did not end after his retirement, however, as he continued on to serve as the Moderator for Home and Foreign Mission District Association. He was also vice president of the California State Baptist Convention Congress of Christian Education and worked with the San Francisco Baptist Minister’s Council. Although Rev. Calvin Jones kept busy through service to his community, he returned to a life of ministry as an interim pastor for the Saint John Baptist Church of Richmond, California on February 1st, 1991. He was later chosen to be their official pastor on May 28, 1993. He formally retired on June 1st, 1994.

Rev. Calvin Jones’ ministry lasted for more than 30 years before he passed away June 8, 1994 at Veteran’s Administration Hospital, San Francisco. Reverend Calvin Jones forged a notable legacy in his community in San Francisco.

His achievements as a reverend and activist left indelible marks in the hearts of the people he touched with his powerful sermons and the community he left behind.

His son, Rev. Calvin Jones, Jr., continues on his legacy as the senior pastor at the same Providence Baptist Church.

—Kimberly McAllister and Madison Owens

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Louise Jones was born on October 1, 1927, in Thibodaux, Louisiana, during times of intense racial segregation (SF Gate). Growing up in a heavily segregated school in the south, Jones recalled that her school textbooks were always second-hand and “tattered and torn” (SF Gate). However, this did not stop her from receiving a quality education. Jones noted that her teachers growing up, “instilled something in me that I didn’t realize was being instilled—just to believe in every child, and make sure they got the very best” (SF Gate). The morals and values, ingrained in Jones by her teachers, would greatly influence her motivation to help students in her future career.

After graduating from high school, honored with being the school’s valedictorian, Louise Jones would go on to receive a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in education from San Francisco State University (SF Gate). Once she earned her degrees, she began teaching in schools around San Francisco and would eventually work her way up through the school system to become the district’s assistant superintendent for elementary instruction. Before assuming this role, Jones would become principal at Washington Carver Elementary School in Bayview–Hunters Point. When the school first opened in 1974, it was one of the most segregated schools in San Francisco. While serving as principal, she managed to transform the school and help alleviate many of the problems it faced.

Jones was able to relate to her students in a way that many other teachers could not. Raised by her aunt and older cousin, Louise did not grow up in a wealthy household, but the value of education was instilled in her from a young age. She explained to SF Gate that despite the circumstances, “there was the expectation that I was going to college.” Because of Jones’ background, she was able to understand what many of her students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were experiencing.

One of Jones’ major accomplishments during her career was taking the lead on the “Special Plan for Bayview-Hunters Point Schools,” which improved the funding for Carver and other schools in the area. As SF Gate notes, the “initiative provided millions of dollars every year for the schools in
the neighborhood." The improved funding resulted in smaller class sizes for students, more training for teachers, teaching aids in the classroom, and better technology for the schools (SF Gate). Another aspect of the Special Plan allowed Jones to hire all the teachers who worked at Washington Carver Elementary School. The primary focus of this plan was to turn the school into a model institution.

The plan had a significant effect upon the children’s test scores as well. The report notes: “Third graders scored 10 percentage points higher in reading than they had at the start of the Special Plan in 1983 . . . In math, they scored 4 percentage points higher” (SF Gate). Jones’ instrumental role in the program fostered an atmosphere where the students could remain dedicated to their studies. Washington Carver Elementary School graduate Ja’Bar Gibson explained, “She didn’t allow fighting. She made me feel that anyone could learn, and that we were all smart. She believed in all of us” (SF Gate).

Jones also implemented various programs at Washington Carver Elementary School, including programs to build self-esteem, establish language facility, and develop a model for cooperative learning. Jones also emphasized the importance of parental involvement in their children’s education.

Jones earned numerous awards and accolades throughout her 43-year career in education, including: Educator of the Year (Milken Foundation), Distinguished School Award (four times), Outstanding Leadership Award, Educational Achievement Award (Phi Delta Kappa), and Excellence in Education Award (State of California Senate).

Louise Jones was influential for generations of young students in San Francisco, and continues to make an impact in the community through the generations. In May 2018 Louise Cooks Jones passed away. She is remembered by the community as an individual dedicated to the improvement of education for marginalized students. Her work as a teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent was focused on improving the education in San Francisco in schools that have large populations of low-income students. Her legacy lives on in the students who she came into contact with during her career.

—Licette Renteria and Zachary James

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FRED JORDAN

FREDERICK E. JORDAN, also known as Fred Jordan, is a civil engineer, businessman, activist, veteran, and author. He also serves on various boards and business networks, like the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

Jordan received his bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from Howard University. After serving in the Vietnam War, Jordan attended Northeastern University in Boston to earn his Master’s degree in engineering. During his first year at Northeastern, Bechtel Corporation, a global engineering company, approached him with a job offer in California. He took it, also transferring to Stanford University to complete his Master’s degree.

In 1969, after receiving his engineering license, he and three other engineers formed the company Jordan, Johns, Mathis, & Pierce. They did many redevelopment projects in predominantly black communities that other white engineers weren’t comfortable working in. These projects took place all across the country—in San Francisco, East St. Louis, on the south side of Chicago, and in Seattle. In 1974, Jordan founded his own company, F.E. Jordan Associates, Inc., in San Francisco. The company, which is currently active, specializes in engineering, environmental sciences, and construction management. In 35 years, the company has completed more than 1,000 projects in the United States, Africa, and Central America. Notable projects include construction of the renovated San Francisco International Airport, the expansion of the Oakland International Airport, and the Charles P. Howard Container Terminal Wharf design, which is ranked the best container facility in the world and has inspired many other engineering projects worldwide.

In September 1998, Jordan published a book titled The Lynching of the American Dream. In his book, Jordan advocated for affirmative action for all minority groups to counteract bias in education. He wrote this book in response to legislative actions trying to end affirmative action. Jordan was not going to sit back and watch others suffer,

so he took the initiative to spread awareness with his writing. In 2008, it was reported that he was working on a second book. In addition to his writing and engineering accomplishments, Jordan has also fought discrimination against black business owners. In 2004, Jordan worked with John William Templeton, president and executive editor of eAccess Corporation, to cooperate in having the month of August recognized as National Black Business Month. The overall goal of the month is to encourage people to make a purchase from any business owned by a black person so that people become more supportive and aware of these businesses and help black communities thrive economically. Although recognition has not yet been consistent, there has been increasing support for the idea since it was first declared.

Today Jordan continues to advocate for the rights of others. He founded the California Business Council for Equal Opportunity and has been on the board of directors of the San Francisco Black Chamber of Commerce, the National Black Chamber of Commerce, Bay Area Urban League, Inc., and Greenlining Institute.

Jordan’s engineering company is still working on major projects, including the California High-Speed Rail project, the first high-speed rail line in the country, currently designated to stretch from Merced to Bakersfield.

Because of his immense dedication toward helping others and his impact on the black community Fred Jordan is known as one of the many changemakers on the walls of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center.

—Rosie Patel, Madison Owens, and Sayeh Jafari

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SAM JORDAN exemplified diversity in his many accomplishments and his openness to others. Born and raised in Dallas, Texas, Jordan moved to San Francisco in 1948 to pursue his boxing career. His charismatic nature quickly sparked a following and a nickname “Singing Sam” because he would often sing to the crowd after he won a match. His drive and talent was easily noticeable, seeing as he won the Golden Gloves light heavyweight championship within his first year in San Francisco (Nevius). Unfortunately, his boxing career came to an early end when his vision started deteriorating due to cataracts (Tlumak). Though one career ended, Sam Jordan allocated his drive and passion to other areas. Including his work on the board of directors of the Hunters Point Co-Op, and specifically his interest in finding solutions to the large drug problem that occurred in Hunters Point (Tlumak). Being a part of the Hunters Point Co-Op was the impetus of his career as a community leader.

A few years later in 1959, Sam Jordan opened his historic bar and restaurant “Sam Jordan’s Tavern” (Bowcock). This bar and restaurant housed many famous singers such as, Big Mama Thornton and Sugar Pie De-Santo (Nevius). At the tavern, the community came together to sing, dance, eat and to simply have a good time. We can also see Sam Jordan had a big heart and genuine care for all of his community members (Nevius). Whenever someone couldn’t afford to pay for food, Jordan would set up a small table at the front of the bar and personally serve them himself (Nevius).

In 1963 at 38 years old Sam Jordan became the first black man to run for mayor of San Francisco. He ran as a statement against racial discrimination, to fight for better police protection, and to address San Francisco’s civil rights problems (SF Examiner). While campaigning he said, “All over America the Negro is waking up. There may be more bloodshed, and it could happen in San Francisco—but not if we have a Mayor who honestly believes that all people are equal and should have the same opportunities” (SF Examiner). His plan for San Francisco also involved improvement of education and housing progress (SF Examiner). Jordan was also planning on appointing people from all nationalities into government positions (SF Examiner). His plans and ideas mainly appealed to progressive ideologies that uplifted minority groups, and his campaign was revolutionary for his time.
Sam Jordan’s restaurant was designated a historical landmark by Mayor Ed Lee in 2013.

Unfortunately he lost the election and placed in fourth out of eight candidates. Even though Jordan lost he was still able to be a voice for minority communities and a voice for social justice. Jordan did not let his loss dull his continued drive and passion.

It was later discovered, in 1976, that the FBI tried to sabotage Jordan’s mayoral campaign by trying to associate him with Socialist Workers Party, SWP (Irving). In 1978 there was an article written in the *San Francisco Chronicle* by Warren Hinckle that revealed the discovery of memos written for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) office in San Francisco leading to J. Edgar Hoover—the first director of the FBI—trying to find ways to derail Jordan’s campaign and image. Hoover’s idea was to write an anonymous letter to Jordan from a longshoreman that would “warn Jordan about the Commies in his midst in a way that would turn his campaign into a black-Trot battleground” (Hinckle). However, this idea proved ineffective because Jordan simply threw away the letter after it was found (Hinckle). Other things that happened during Jordan’s campaign, perhaps because of the FBI interference, was the harassment by the Alcoholic Beverage Control organization that claimed they were getting calls from black women stating that Jordan was serving alcohol to minors (Hinckle). Also, some of Jordan’s military friends told him that Sam Jordan’s Tavern was considered “off limits,” which was not true (Hinckle). Additionally, that same year in 1963 all of Jordan’s campaign records disappeared (Hinckle). When asked about why the FBI saw Jordan as a threat he stated, “I still can’t see where the FBI considered me any sort of political threat. If you ask me, doing all that to me was racist, pure and simple” (Hinke). Though Jordan had the FBI against him, he was able to come in fourth place in the mayoral election, which is a huge accomplishment for a black man during a time of much discrimination.

Sadly in 2003 Sam Jordan passed away. His restaurant, however, has managed to stay open and is currently run by his son Sam, and in 2013 his restaurant was designated as a historical landmark by Mayor Ed Lee. Sam Jordan will forever be remembered as an influential man who gave back to his community. From his boxing days to his short political career, he was able to shed light on important social justice issues within San Francisco. His ability to keep moving forward and to fight for a more equal and just society for minorities will go down in history.

—Anthony Norman, Juliet Baires, Ashley Cruz, and Kendra Wharton

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Judge Joseph Gamble Kennedy was born in Tennessee and earned his B.A. in his home state. His career first started as a teacher and then served as a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force during World War II. After the war, Kennedy moved to San Francisco and enrolled at Hastings College of Law. He earned his law degree in 1949 and quickly entered into private practice in the Bay Area. He was active in the NAACP, Democratic politics, and Methodist church groups when he first entered the political arena. He soon became the Assistant Public Defender of San Francisco and held the position for nine years before being named to the State Industrial Accidents Commission by Governor Pat Brown—the first African American to hold that position. He was later appointed as Municipal Court Judge from 1969 until his election to the Superior Court Bench in 1972. Judge Kennedy usually dealt with cases in areas such as the Tenderloin. Judge Joseph Kennedy’s passion for justice in many aspects helped him gain popularity and respect. Although he was not the first African American presiding judge of the Municipal Court (the first being John W. Bussey in 1960), he won many awards and was recognized for the work he did for his community. On December 3, 1971, Kennedy was honored by the federal government for exceptional service in community action as the chairman of San Francisco’s Economic Opportunity Council (EOC).

He also served as the President of the San Francisco Council of Churches, the President of the EOC, Chairman of the War on Poverty Agency, and he was involved with the NAACP. Judge Kennedy was a civil rights advocate, a civil leader, and a grand jurist who provided efficient and purposeful programs to the city to help low-income residents of color.

Safety and protection for San Franciscans was his priority. The San Francisco EOC’s purpose was to combat poverty by creating programs that help the poor and focus on moving to eliminate the causes, conditions, and impact of systemic poverty. The EOC program helped branch out the War on Poverty program in San Francisco, which Judge Kennedy and Attorney Gardiner Johnson helped run. Judge Kennedy was the chairman of the War on Poverty program while
Attorney Gardiner Johnson served as the president. Kennedy made sure that disadvantaged communities received fair treatment and representation, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Judge Kennedy told the council's executive committee he also planned to reorganize two Economic Opportunity Council departments.

Kennedy wanted a budget of $4.6 million but he knew it was unrealistic. The EOC had asked for $750,000 in federal funds to provide summer jobs and had received only $508,000. Judge Kennedy worked with what the EOC had received.

Kennedy also wanted to focus on the youth of San Francisco through the EOC and opened a recreational center, the Girl's Club. Kennedy accepted $875,000 in federal funds to launch all-year Head Start programs for 600 children. Kennedy was also granted $825,000 to provide summer work programs for about 1,500 high schoolers.

Although Judge Kennedy had great intentions when taking on these projects, the heavy stress took its toll. Kennedy tried to help every citizen in San Francisco but due to low-budget federal grants, he could not reach as many community members as he wished. Kennedy quit the EOC during a stormy session when a crowd of Bayview–Hunter Point youth disrupted an EOC executive meeting (Johanesen).

Shortly after, many members of the EOC helped successfully convinced Kennedy to come back, however. While the EOC ultimately lasted about six years, it brought many significant positive changes.

The Alumni Association of UC Hastings Law College presented its 1972–73 Award of the Year to Judge Kennedy in recognition of “his outstanding service to the legal profession and his unending contributions to the cause of humanitarianism.” At the awards ceremony, Judge Kennedy remarked: “I believe I can contribute [most] on the bench. The bench must be completely representative if it is to offer justice to all our citizens. There must be true representation of the community in which we live—not to slant the law but to offer a different dimension to it.” Kennedy was also recognized for his significant contributions to the Hunters Point Girls Club, the Zoological Society, the Friends of Park and Recreation, the Council of Churches, the Friends of Langley Porter, and the NAACP.

Kennedy died in April 1979 at the age of 62 from emphysema. Thanks to the many things he accomplished during his life, the Judge G. Kennedy Foundation was created. The objective of the foundation is to provide a scholarship fund which recognizes student achievements—especially those who are less advantaged in the Bay Area. His legacy lives on both in his foundation, his remarkable changes to the EOC, and as a changemaker featured on the Inspiration murals.

—Ashley Cruz, Cejay Garcia, Madison Owens, and Sophia Tarantino

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WILLIE B. KENNEDY

Willie B. Kennedy is remembered throughout San Francisco for her effervescence and determination. She spent “60 years as a political and social activist,” serving as a member and trusted advisor to several boards, organizations, and commissions in San Francisco. Her efforts provided support and hope to low-income communities of color (Congressional Report).

Kennedy was born on November 5, 1923, in Terrell, Texas. She and her family lived in a farmhouse complete with a water well and a wood-burning stove, a truly “rustic existence” (Coté). Willie’s humble upbringing fostered her interest in pursuing a career in advocacy. She attended high school in Dallas and became an exceptional student. One year after graduating high school, she married Paul L. Hooey, with whom she raised a daughter named Paulette M. Hooey. Willie eventually settled in San Francisco with her young daughter after the couple’s divorce (Coté).

After arriving in San Francisco, Willie met and fell in love with a young, handsome civil rights attorney named Joseph G. Kennedy, who would later serve as a federal judge. They were both passionate political figures in the social scene of San Francisco’s Western Addition neighborhood. Willie and Joseph married in 1955 (Metcalfé).

During this time in San Francisco’s history, there was a lack of willingness to offer rental occupancies to African Americans in certain neighborhoods. This forced a majority of the black community into the Western Addition. After World War II, news of San Franciscan “slums” became sensationalized. Newspaper campaigns depicted communal deterioration and specifically reported extreme cases of hardship. This representation of “blight” seemed to initiate a self-fulfilling prophecy among the residents and business owners of the Fillmore. Demolition loomed, and external pressures made it difficult to remain in the Fillmore. Those who attempted to stay were met by development stalls at every turn, forcing them out regardless. A harrowing combination of racism, neglect, and systematic decline would lead the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency to fully take control in 1949 (Brahinksy).

In 1953, the first house was demolished in an expansive urban renewal plan that would begin with the Western Addition. The public pushback was
loud and immediate, but the government continued to spearhead its oppressive authority. In 1959, Justin Herman initiated the widening of Geary Street to an expressway, creating a clear and tangible division of race and class. The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency assigned several influential African Americans to the board of commissions. Willie B. Kennedy, alongside other pillars of the Fillmore community, fought hard to ensure that urban renewal would bring about positive change for communities of color and for the city as a whole. However, the only concession made as a response to one of the biggest pushouts in modern American history would be ghettoized, low-income public housing facilities, which many black residents of the Fillmore still occupy today (Brahinsky).

After the death of fellow Western Addition activist, Ella Hill Hutch in 1981, Kennedy was recommended to take her place on San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors as the third African American woman ever elected. During her 15 years on the board, she co-wrote a law that allocated certain city contracts for minority- and women-owned businesses. Kennedy also passed legislation that forbade San Francisco from conducting business with South Africa in response to the apartheid era (Coté).

After resigning from the city’s board in 1996, she was appointed to the BART board of directors. She became vice president in 2000, and formal president in 2001. One of her greatest initiatives during this time was the introduction of flash passes for community organizations in order to get to and from the Martin Luther King, Jr., parades (Congressional Report). Kennedy left BART in 2003, but never concluded her advocacy work. She served on several boards before the end of her life including the Bayview–Hunters Point Multipurpose Senior Services, Inc. Kennedy tried feverishly to actualize the dream of the late Dr. George Davis, original executive director, to build a new senior citizen center in the Fillmore (Bayview). Toward the latter end of her life she was also president of the Southeast Community Facility Commission, which continues to provide aid in employment opportunities, tax preparation, and voter registration services (Southeast).

Willie B. Kennedy’s final gesture would also be steeped in advocacy. Two days before her death, Willie and many community members finally broke ground on the Hunters Point shipyard redevelopment project, which is presided over by her company, W.B. Kennedy and Associates Consulting Co. She passed away at the age of 90 on June 28, 2013, from a heart attack (Metcalfe). Willie B. Kennedy’s legacy extends far beyond tireless dedication and work—caring so deeply for her community, Kennedy fought for change until her last days.

—Taylor Hazley, Meisy Tung, and Savannah Miranda

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LeRoy King was a devoted public servant whose only goal was to improve the lives of those who he served, considered “a tireless advocate for our communities and a champion for our residents” by Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi. LeRoy King was a pillar in San Francisco—especially in the Fillmore. He fought for the civil rights of both Asian Americans and African Americans, as he strove to improve workers’ rights and advocate for affordable housing.

Born September 9, 1923, in Fresno, California, King describes Fresno as being comparable to the deep south in terms of segregation and racism. It’s important to note that instead of becoming a sour person, he used the injustices acted out against him as inspiration for his activism later in his life. At age 17, King moved to the city of San Francisco to live with his sister while he attended City College. Before his life of advocacy, he was drafted at the age of 19 into the US Army 101st Airborne Division as the U.S. was drawn into World War II. He fought in the European theater for the majority of the war, and was a part of one of the most important battles of the war, the Battle of the Bulge. He fought alongside other African American soldiers, having been assigned to an all-black unit where he remembers not being allowed to carry weapons during the end of the Battle of the Bulge, unlike the all-white unit. At the conclusion of the war, King moved back to San Francisco to work as a warehouseman, where his life of advocacy would begin. It was difficult for him to hold a home in the city because his beloved wife, Judy Paton, was white. It is because of their interracial marriage, that King family was forced to move—on nine different occasions in their first year of being married—displaying both their commitment and their fortitude.

King joined the International Longshoremen’s and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in 1946, quickly becoming a “distinguished labor and civil rights leader whose passion for justice and commitment to equality improved the lives of working women and men in San Francisco and throughout the country.” King was joining a union that became a beacon of leadership in the city during the civil rights movement, with advocates such as Harry Bridges and Bill Chester among their ranks, King

LeRoy King was a distinguished labor and civil rights leader.
would join them in reshaping labor practices in San Francisco. Even with this star-studded cast, King made an impact in the ILWU: “He helped overcome [discrimination in the union] by forming a coalition of Local 6 members that included Curtis McClain, who helped pass reforms that made it possible for black members to win elections and appointments in their union.”

From a young age King understood that his actions would improve the lives of others. To him being selfless was more important than individual recognition. In 1947 when Paul Robeson was banned from performing in the San Francisco Opera House for his leftist views, King provided venues for him at local black churches, a testament to his selflessness. In 1963 King helped to establish the St. Francis Square Cooperative Housing Development, which was funded by the ILWU. It was one of the earliest funding sources dedicated to low income housing in the United States. It would later become the basis for similar projects nationwide. King truly believed in its potential, and resided there until his death, along with four generations of his family.

Starting ILWU’s Local 6, King quickly rose through the ranks, becoming the secretary-treasurer of the local, and he would eventually take up the mantle of the Regional Director for Northern California, a position he’d occupy until his retirement from the union in 1993. King held many responsibilities as Regional Director of the ILWU. In 1980 he was appointed to the San Francisco Redevelopment Commission by then-mayor Dianne Feinstein. Reappointed by five different mayors, he served until the agency’s dissolution in 2011, encompassing 30 years of service.

King received many awards. In 2009 The National Education Association honored him with its Human and Civil Rights Award for his lifetime of social justice work. And finally in 2014, the 108 year-old carousel in the Yerba Buena gardens was renamed to the “LeRoy King Carousel” in observance of his remarkable work to preserve African American and Japanese American heritage.

A personality consisting of honesty and direction, King was able to appeal to many high level politicians as a colleague, allowing him to be more effective in the legislative sector. LeRoy played a key role in the development and furtherance of minorities in the San Francisco area. It is safe to say that advocates like LeRoy are the reason the city is in the progressive position it is in today. LeRoy King will be remembered as an influencer for social justice and equality for all.

—Jesse Cortes

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Dr. Willis F. Kirk, Jr.

Dr. Willis F. Kirk, Jr. was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1928. Kirk began playing the drums as early as the fourth grade. At the time, racial oppression embodied the aura of his hometown. His high school, Crispus Attucks High School, was built solely for the purpose of segregating black and white students. Kirk said, however, that “they [Ku Klux Klan] did us a favor because we ended up having the best arts programs” (Parish). Indianapolis birthed a load of renowned musicians from the era, including Wes Montgomery, Charlie Parker, and many more—all influencing Kirk’s interest in jazz. It was his high school music teacher Russell Brown, though, who was his greatest influence, helping him land his first paid gig while still in high school.

Kirk would have never imagined his future in education when he chose to pursue a career in music rather than attend college. He originally had plans on joining the Army when the local school system said they needed him to fill in for a teaching position, which he would accept and end up teaching in Indianapolis for 12 years. In the meantime, he had been playing music with friends from high school and touring with the likes of Wes Montgomer-
a clarinet, and a trumpet” (Parish). He centered his focus on community outreach, travelling from house to house asking for spare equipment and donations. He even began the Early Bird Program, where students could come to school early any day of the week to play music before attending class.

Kirk soon after began a counseling job at the City College of San Francisco. He worked with the college for 23 years, starting in 1969, while in the meantime playing gigs of his own, mainly for the San Francisco All-Star Big Band.

Kirk took a significant step in his career when he was named Assistant President of City College in 1985, where he was in charge of the evening sector of the college. President Carlos B. Ramirez in 1988, however, left to take a position at the University of New Mexico, which led to the history-shaping event of Kirk’s appointment as the President of City College. As that institution’s first African American President, he served from 1988–1991. He retired from his career in music education at the end of his term as President Emeritus.

Willis Kirk boasts an extensive record of accomplishments within his music career. He played with countless music legends such as Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, Tony Bennett, as well as his close friend, the ground-breaking guitarist Wes Montgomery. One of Kirk’s proudest moments was when he sat in on drums for Max Roach, playing a two-hour set with “Bird”—the legendary saxophonist Charlie Parker in 1949.

He aided his musical protégé David Hardiman, Sr., in founding the David Hardiman All-Star Big Band, which still performs today. He served on the Board of Directors for the African American Jazz Caucus Dance Band, later with their help recording his masterful religious jazz album Rejoice! Rejoice! He would receive the Jazz Masters and AAJC Meade Legacy Griot awards. Directly encompassing his legacy in music education is the Dr. Willis Kirk Scholarship Fund that was founded in order to aid students pursuing careers in music. A student of his once remarked, “He showed us that anything is possible and any dream is achievable with hard work, passion, and determination” (Scholarship Fund).

Dr. Willis F. Kirk, Jr., received an Honorary Doctorate Arts Degree from his alma mater Butler University in 2009. His unfortunate passing occurred not long after, in 2016. He was buried in Indianapolis.

Kirk devoted much of his life toward music and education, with the end goal that “the inner city shall have music, too” (Scholarship Fund). He was a vital influence to many of the current generation of musicians in San Francisco, solidifying his place as a progressive changemaker for all on the Inspirations Mural.

—Marcelo Swofford

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DONNETER LANE

DONNETER LANE, wife of Rev. John Lane of Grace Baptist Church in Hunters Point, started her activism by interweaving her own spirituality and her hopes for an educational desegregation for San Francisco students (“Church Council”). In the 1960s, Donneter Lane helped create a desegregation plan for the San Francisco Unified School District, which allowed black students access to all schools. Her focus on school desegregation transcended into working with communities in San Francisco that were adversely affected by the War on Drugs that had just begun in places like Bayview–Hunters Point and the Western Addition. Lane, along with other famous changemakers, believed in the power of a unified community, engaged youth, and an intersectional perspective.

Throughout the 1970s, Lane focused on the uplifting of disadvantaged communities in order to foster youth engagement. She became the associate director of the Oceanside Merced Ingleside Community Educational Planning Program and led community workshops focusing on engaging minority teenagers within the home about education, success, and career opportunities. In addition, the Lanes also hosted workshops for black mothers in working with their sons and daughters on issues of public safety, black culture, and equal education (“Self-Examination Urged on Mothers”). Her initial goal of desegregating San Francisco’s public schools finally came to fruition in 1972, when she was invited to become a part of the San Francisco Unified School District’s Emergency School Assistance Program Multi-Racial Advisory Committee, focusing on youth engagement, educational opportunities for youth of color, and, of course, desegregating public schools (“San Francisco Unified School District”). The Emergency Task Force was, in part, due to the recalcitrant resistance of urban centers to adapt to reform efforts spurred by Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 and 1955. In combination with her community activism, Lane also served as the President of San Francisco Council of Churches for two consecutive terms, inspiring change within San Francisco congregations, which ultimately spurred successful partnership between

Donneter Lane coordinated the interfaith response to the shocking deaths at Jonestown.
Donneter Lane served as the head of the African American Historical and Cultural Society

disadvantaged communities in San Francisco later in her championing of social justice (“Church Council”).

In 1979, as Executive Director of the San Francisco Council of Churches, she acted as one of the principal organizers of the Guyana Emergency Relief Committee, formed on November 28, 1978, to coordinate an interfaith response to the shocking and deaths at Jonestown, which sadly included many members of the Western Addition.

By 1986, Donneter Lane had formed the Bayview-Hunters Point Crime Abatement Committee, modeled after a similar community task force in Oakland. The point of the task force was to advocate for the Bayview–Hunters Point community to rally for crime prevention. Their biggest protest occurred on December 7, 1986, in which 1,000 residents of Bayview chanted “We Shall Overcome” as a result of community aggravation over the drug dealing and public safety crisis that was occurring in their neighborhood. During the rally Donneter Lane famously said, “People from those areas are here today to help us and we’ll do everything we can to help them. It’s everyone’s problem” (O’Connor). This obviously caught the attention of former Mayor Art Agnos, who in 1988 appointed Donneter Lane to be one of seventeen members of a city-wide task force concerning the scheduled demolition of public sites in relation to redevelopment and urban planning (“Agnos Names”). Lane understood that achieving educational equity in San Francisco also meant tackling issues like public safety and public housing.

After her long history of advocating for the black minority in San Francisco, Donneter became the head of the African American Historical and Cultural Society, located in the Western Addition. The society focuses on the preservation and cultivation of African American history and culture. Even now, it stands as a purposeful landmark in the Western Addition of resilient culture and strength. In 2001, Donneter retired from her social justice advocacy in San Francisco and moved back to Arizona to spend her last years with her family (Chen). Throughout her career as a voice to the voiceless her belief that “blacks didn’t just come in here. They’ve been here . . . and they’ve made significant contributions to the city” is a true expression of her incredible devotion and community activism in San Francisco.

—Sophia Tarantino

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ORELIA LANGSTON

ORELIA LANGSTON, best known as director of the Western Addition Youth (WAY) Club, was a determined and selfless individual committed to unifying the lost youth in a district that was changing before their eyes. She offered them tools and guidance to assure their success in society, and thus prevent their victimization at the hands of an unjust system. In addition, she was adamant about not only banding the youth of the Fillmore together but also mobilizing the adults of the Fillmore in cooperation with the youth. As a result, she imagined a stronger and more substantial community which was once a reality before redevelopment plans threatened the cohesion of the community.

Before she was an advocate in the Fillmore district, Langston was far from the city of San Francisco. According to her obituary from the San Francisco Chronicle, Orelia Langston was born in 1933 and raised in Amarillo, Texas. She was the third of eleven children. In 1957 she moved from Texas to San Francisco in order to pursue her bachelor’s degree in advertising from the San Francisco Art Institute (SF Gate). Immediately following graduation, Langston was determined to be actively involved in the community.

In 1966, while Langston was working as a representative with the Economic Opportunity Council, a group of local young people approached her to discuss the issues of misguided youth within the community. This conversation was the catalyst for Langston’s movement. In response, a compassionate Langston rallied other adults and formed the Western Addition Youth (WAY) club for the youth in the community. Then, in 1969, Langston and her team bought the Scottish Rite Temple, located on Geary Blvd. Langston commented to the Chronicle what she truly believed the WAY club was: “It’s really not a recreation center. It’s more of a skills and education center. We focus on training young people from the ghetto to become employable” (Koch). The club gained popularity and in the early 1970s, their membership totaling 1,100.

Langston was so committed to servicing the entire Western Addition that she did not let financial barriers prohibit any member of the community from participating. In fact, members only had to pay 25 cents a week for a full membership.
Langston was committed to teaching the Fillmore youth their value in society and how they can actively contribute. Young members even completed bookkeeping, secretarial work, their own printing jobs and printing jobs for other groups in the community. Also, in response to meeting the needs of full-time hard working mothers, Langston created a program within WAY where high school students of the Fillmore tutored the younger children in academic subjects. This not only fostered an educationally productive atmosphere for the youth, it also lent a helping hand to the busy parents. Additionally, there was a collective crafting activity on Wednesday nights where the youth and adults would gather to work on a huge mosaic for their tutorial room.

In 1969 The Sun–Reporter deemed Langston runner-up for Woman of the Year for her bold work in the WAY Club. In response Langston stated: “I feel even more determined now . . . and that factor alone gives me the strength enough to continue standing for . . . the goals of many black young people . . . I strongly believe that my friends outnumber my foes.” And she was right—her community acknowledged and cherished her contributions through numerous recognitions. She received awards from institutions including San Francisco State University, San Francisco Police Department, the Alcohol Advisory Board of San Francisco, and the Community College Board. Additionally, she was president of the Fillmore Democratic Club, vice president of Western Addition Concerned Citizen Organization, the executive director of the Income Rights Project, and a member of the Black Leadership forum.

While Langston was praised by the community, not everyone wanted to help maintain her club. As the community was still being redeveloped, many preyed on Langston’s property as a business opportunity. In response to many people wanting to buy the building and reconstruct it, Langston commented: “To a lot of people this building is a white elephant. But to us it’s a community base, a symbol of achievement, of hope and love” (Koch). In fact, Langston often worked 13–15 hours daily because she was devoted to seeing the community’s goals come to fruition. This, however, did not prevent financial troubles from plaguing the establishment. Despite the multiple donations to the club by the mid 1970s membership had declined and it closed soon thereafter.

On December 1, 1996, Orelia Langston passed away in her sleep at the age of 63. Despite her early death, she did not pass away without leaving a lasting impact on the people of the Fillmore district. Many organizations similar to WAY perpetuate the goals that Langston initiated, and, in the wake of her efforts, programs for the youth of the Fillmore capitalize on the importance of education and cohesion of families.

—Olivia Walker and Sormeh Naderi

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Orville Luster had a presence—that he was everybody’s father whether you were black, brown, blue, red or yellow,” said Percy Pinkney, a former Youth for Service intern (Bulwa). Orville B. Luster, standing 6’2” and nearly always seen with a cigar between his lips, stood at the forefront of advocacy for reforming gang members in San Francisco’s Hunters Point, Tenderloin, and Mission neighborhoods, as well as the Western Addition (Stevens). He dedicated his life to fighting the cycle of gentrification and violence that plagued these neighborhoods. Having been a San Francisco social worker and human rights commissioner, he worked hard to encourage gang members to return to school, often filling their days with community work ranging from painting and rebuilding homes to restoring playgrounds (Bulwa).

Born in Oklahoma City on May 20, 1925, Luster was the second of seven children. After graduating as the president of his senior class at Frederick Douglass High School, he served in the army in both Asia and Europe during World War II and was later discharged as a Master Sergeant (Bulwa). After serving, Luster moved to San Francisco in 1946, attending San Francisco State College. Upon graduating, he cleaned oil tankers in the San Francisco shipyards while also working in auto sales and as a Safeway clerk. In 1956, he served as the first African American counselor and supervisor at San Francisco’s Log Cabin Ranch, a juvenile rehabilitation center (Bulwa). There began Luster’s true calling: social work and youth services. This led to him joining Youth for Service in 1959, a local project, that he would eventually become executive director of (Bulwa). Throughout the fifteen years he served as executive director, Luster worked hard to support the kids who were caught up in the neighborhood gangs.

One of the greatest accomplishments of his career was working with James Baldwin, famed author and activist, to create a KQED film that toured the impoverished African American neighborhoods of San Francisco, focusing on the Western Addition. The intent of this film was to discover “the real situation of Negroes in the city, as opposed to the image that San Francisco would like to present” (“Take This Hammer”). He was very proud of his efforts towards getting the youth engaged in the communi-
ty, with projects such as the Double Y Project which added to the YWCA property ("15 Juveniles").

One of Luster’s main personal goals was to supply youth with sustainable jobs. With this in mind, he managed to receive a grant of $483,400 in July 1966 for Youth for Service, igniting enthusiasm from the wider community, as this money went towards providing local youths with jobs ("Another Grant"). He also received a $16,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to redirect gang activities from their usual “hangouts” towards a path of education (Stevens). He stressed the need for permanent jobs rather than seasonal ones (Draper). In the same article, his Youth for Service team was lauded as “probably the most effective and unique staff of . . . social workers in the nation” (Draper).

Luster emphasized the importance of teaching teenagers how to act around authority, softening the tension in their interactions, often by using what he called the ABCs (Always Be Cool) to urge the youth to be polite and respectful when questioned (Schneider). He hoped to provoke a change of attitude towards police, as Luster “believed that every young person had some goodness in them, and he worked to spark that” (Bulwa).

He was the fifth person to win the Liberty Bell Award, receiving it on May 2, 1968, from the Bar Association of San Francisco, with its President, Richard C. Dinkelspiel, speaking highly of Orville, saying that “Luster’s life and work best exemplifies the desire to strengthen and safeguard the blessings of liberty as conceived and protected by our form of government” ("Lawyers Honor"). By 1973, Luster left Youth for Service to pursue independent counseling, only to later return in the 1990s.

He has been acknowledged by very prominent associations in San Francisco and received many accolades for his service. Orville Luster was committed to pushing people toward completing their education, doing anything possible to help them achieve this. Of the hundreds of youths who came through Youth for Service in the 1960s and early 1970s, many of them became doctors, lawyers, teachers and business leaders.

Luster died of a heart attack at Kaiser Permanente San Francisco on June 27, 2005 (Bulwa). Changing and potentially saving the lives of hundreds of youth in the Bay Area, Luster epitomizes selflessness and the change that one person can elicit among many.

—Marcelo Swofford and Kendra Bean

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RUTH MALOOF

Ruth Maloof, originally Ruth Ella McRae, was born on February 5, 1933, in the small town of Waldo, Arkansas, to General McRae and Maggie Smith McRae. She was raised primarily in Arkansas until her family decided to move to Detroit for her to attend a better high school. There she graduated cum laude in 1951 from Northeastern High School.

Maloof found her way to San Francisco to attend San Francisco State University. She majored in education and she developed her lifelong interest in motivating the lives of young people, particularly in impoverished communities. Her embodiment as a teacher and mother would define her professional life. She graduated from SFSU in 1955.

One of Maloof’s first goals during the outset of college was to start a family and begin helping children within her community. Ruth began to raise her own family while also creating an at-home daycare. She continued this work for many years until her efforts were noticed by the city of San Francisco. She was hired to become a youth director for San Francisco Unified School District.

She also continued aiding other youth education organizations in the city. She worked in schools such as Raoul Wallenberg High School (RWHS), where she was the President of the Parent Teacher Association and would help foster change by addressing the overcrowding of schools. By 1983, RWHS had only been open two years previous and it now had over 500 students in attendance. Teachers did not even have classrooms and the school’s infrastructure was poor. She said of the situation: “We won’t have a graduating class until next year. Even then, we have no place to put them. Right now we have two teachers without classrooms. They have to go from room to room, wherever one is not in use.” This was just a prime example of the hands-on activist approach that allowed her to garner such a profound reputation as a loving mother and teacher.

By the early 1990s, Mayor Frank Jordan would name an official “Ruth Maloof Day” in San Francisco in recognition of her 21 years of volunteering and leadership.
Throughout her later career, from 1970 onward, Ruth was married to Dr. George Maloof. They would end up having six children together: Quijuan, Kwixuan, Zurvohn, Vyhan, Xatrohn, and Yhunuan. Thankfully, she had many grandchildren who she loved, which is part of the reason why she never got tired of being a mother figure. Her entire personal and professional lives had been dedicated to children and family, focusing on educational opportunities for all. She was a devout Christian woman, largely choosing to worship at St. Cyprian’s Episcopal Church in San Francisco.

Later on in age, after retirement, she would move to Las Vegas to her dream house, The Castle. She spent her final years being with family and tending to her meditation garden at her home. She had a stroke in Las Vegas in 2009, with the next two years consisting of constant hospital care in San Francisco. Ruth sadly passed on August 9, 2011 in San Francisco at the age of 78.

Ruth Maloof’s character was embodied by how loving, personable, and dedicated she was to caring for others and supplying educational opportunities to all. Not only was she active in taking care of her family and friends, but would go on to help take care of entire schools and communities in San Francisco—she was just an enjoyable, loving spirit. Ruth Maloof’s legacy will live on forever, not solely through the metaphysical but also through her presence on the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center Mural with the caption “Mother of All,” truly encompassing her efforts to create a better community for everyone, regardless of way, shape, or form.

—Marcelo Swofford and Zachary James

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Dr. Joseph Marshall is known and celebrated for his dedication to community organization. He is an author, lecturer, radio talk show host, and community activist. He became interested in activism while attending the University of San Francisco. Dr. Marshall was a self-described radical on campus and founded the first chapter of Black Student Union (BSU) at the University of San Francisco (USF). He not only established this organization for black students on campus, but also fought for a black studies curriculum at the university and advocated for more ethnic diversity on campus (“The Joe Marshall Plan”). Dr. Marshall is a firm believer in education. He earned a B.A. in political science and sociology from the University of San Francisco, an M.A. in education from San Francisco State University, a PhD in psychology from the Wright Institute in Berkeley, as well as two Honorary Doctorates on Humane Letters from Morehouse College and the University of San Francisco. After getting his teaching credentials, Marshall began to teach high school and middle school math. He was a tough teacher but only because he wanted the best for his students. However, Marshall also understood that many of his students had very difficult home lives.

When his middle school students began to move on to high school, he noticed a change in some of their behaviors. “I’d find those kids on drugs, selling drugs, getting pregnant,” he said, “Worst of all, I found myself going to their funerals… My students were getting As in math, but Fs in life” (“The Joe Marshall Plan”). Seeing his students in these circumstances didn’t sit well with Marshall. By the 1980s, he felt obligated to provide alternatives options for inner-city youth (“Dr. Joseph Marshall, Jr.—Advocate”). After 25 years of working in the San Francisco educational system, he shifted gears and began to focus his attention on youth violence and started the Omega Boys Club with the Alive and Free program. The organization serves at least 200 youth each year, ranging from 14 to 24 years old. At the academy, they develop academic skills like math, literacy, and critical thinking so that they can successfully graduate from high school or get a GED (“The Joe Marshall Plan”). For students who
aspired to go to college, the academy provided resources such as college prep programs, financial literacy programs, and assistance with the college application process. Even while away at college, they still could seek support and comfort from Alive and Free (“The Joe Marshall Plan”). The academy also provided a space for young people to talk about the hardships of living in neighborhoods affected by violence. Dr. Marshall’s work wasn’t confined only to the realm of community activism, he also started a nationwide organization called Street Soldiers National Consortium which is committed to eradicating violence (Wildermuth). Dr. Marshall wanted to engage the youth on a personal level, to allow them to speak about real issues in their life. He was the “Dr. Phil of the hood,” as he liked to put it. He made it clear to the students that “if you stick with the program, you pick the college and I’ll find a way to get you there.” Although he didn’t have a lot of money, he believed “that if you do good things, good things will happen” (“The Joe Marshall Plan”). The organization has supported as many as 200 college graduates, and at least 50 out of those 200 have received graduate degrees.

Marshall also started a radio talk-show primarily for youth where they can call in and talk about what’s happening in their environment and to try and find resolutions to the issues present in their neighborhoods. From gang violence to teenage pregnancy, the radio show is there to discuss important issues (“Street Soldier: Dr. Joe Marshall”). The show has been praised by the New Yorker as a “model for how the entertainment industry can come to terms with violence” (“Street Soldier: Dr. Joe Marshall”). In addition to his talk-show, Marshall also wrote a bestselling book called Street Soldier, One Man’s Struggle to Save a Generation, One Life at a Time, published in 1996. There is also a documentary called Street Soldiers about the Omega Boys Club and Marshall which discusses the topic of violence prevention that aired on television in 1997 (“Street Soldier: Dr. Joe Marshall”).

Dr. Joseph Marshall served on the Board of Trustees at USF for six years and was the Vice President of the San Francisco Police Commission. Dr. Marshall has received a plethora of awards including the California Prize in 2017, the Human Rights Leadership Award from the Harvard University Alumni in San Francisco in 2003, the Essence Award honoring outstanding contributions by African American men in 1994, and the White House salute for success in fighting drugs and crime in the community in 1990. He also received the Leadership Award from the Children’s Defense Fund in 1994 in addition to others (Wildermuth). Dr. Marshall has made tremendous contributions toward the success of many young people and in the eradication of violence in underprivileged communities. He continues to help his community to this day.

—Chaniece Jefferson and Kallee Graham

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LARRY MARTIN was truly a leader of the people. He used his position in the Transportation Workers Union (TWU) and his work in San Francisco City Hall to connect the workers to the community and advocated to improve working conditions and the overall operations of Muni. He worked tirelessly for over four decades with seven different San Francisco mayors. Muni superintendents would often say that general managers come and go, mayors come and go, but Larry Martin is always there. Bold and uncompromising, Martin’s strong sense of duty has earned him a deserving place in San Francisco labor history.

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Larry Martin grew up working with his family. At five years old, he would help his mother at her grocery store and by thirteen he was driving for his stepfather’s storage company. It was here he learned about hard work and found a strong penchant for driving. After graduating high school, Martin and his family moved to Oakland, California. Martin’s love for driving became even more apparent when he became a Muni Transit Operator and a member of the TWU’s San Francisco branch, Local 250A, in 1966. His passion for what he did served him well as he had to deal with ten-hour work days while also handling the near impossible task of collecting fares while resolving scheduling issues.

Martin’s career in labor union activism started in 1966 when he was elected the Presidio Division Union Chairman. After serving two terms, he was elected president of TWU Local 250A. He served again for two terms and then continued his support as a TWU international representative. Always striving for success, he enrolled in classes at the University of San Francisco, University of California, Berkeley, and Merritt College. He chose to study labor history and management, building upon his skills and knowledge to become an effective labor leader. His hard work and desire to uplift and support workers was apparent and he quickly moved up the ranks to become the International
Vice President of the union while simultaneously working for organizations like the NAACP, Coalition of Black Unionists, Coalition of Labor Union Women, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, and Pride at Work.

During his time within the TWU, Larry Martin was essential in many important developments in the union. He helped start a program for local children to take school field trips to their neighborhood operating division to learn more about the Municipal Railway and possible future careers. He also championed the creation of the Joint Labor Management Program, which is still a necessity today. This created stronger collaboration between labor and management which improved working conditions and overall Muni operations.

In the 1990s, Martin worked as a liaison to settle disputes between the city and union. He fought against the push for privatization of the Municipal Railway and collided with mayoral candidate Frank Jordan over his accusations of the TWU being an inefficient drain on the city. He opposed attempts to make Muni liable to California’s Department of Motor Vehicles and was in favor of having more local legal processes for such activities. Martin also criticized mayors and city leaders who had tried to cut funding from Muni.

Larry Martin retired from his position in the TWU in 2004, but continued to be a leader and pillar for the San Francisco community. He served on the Human Rights Commission for over twelve years and on the Planning Commission for over eight. He was appointed to the Recreation and Park Commission in 2000 and started serving as President to the Commission in 2007.

Larry Martin passed away October 16, 2017—leaving a strong legacy and decades of impactful work. His legacy will be remembered through the commemoration of his work with the release of Car No. 2006, in November of 2017, the first of the new Muni trains to be implemented to replace older versions. As former Board of Supervisors President and current Mayor London Breed said in a statement after his passing, “Whether it was shaping policies for our city agencies, advocating on behalf of his fellow union members or fighting for civil rights in the City’s African American community, he always sought to uphold the values of our city. The impact of his endeavors will be experienced by San Franciscans for generations to come.”

—Daaniyal Mulyadi and Kendra Wharton

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MARY S. MARTIN

MARY S. MARTIN, founder and executive director of S.R. Martin Preparatory School, was highly regarded as a leading figure in education in San Francisco. She was born on March 23, 1939, in New Orleans, and attended segregated public schools throughout most of her adolescence. These schools lacked funding due to the government’s dearth of attention and resources, which formed an ineffective educational system for minority children. Moving forward, Martin attended a high school that would forever change her outlook on education because of the drastic change in environment. She saw the presence of African American teachers and staff allowed for a more compassionate environment, enabling students to seek higher education beyond high school. This new atmosphere inspired Martin to graduate at the top of her class and attend college at Xavier University in New Orleans.

In 1959, Martin took a trip to California to visit her sister, a decision which would ultimately lead her to attend San Francisco State University. Within a year she received her teaching credentials. Martin continued her education at San Francisco State University, where she met her husband and obtained her masters in counseling and administration credentials (SFGate). Based on her own experience with the education system, Martin understood the importance of nurturing students of color. She understood the unjust disadvantages that affected these students and after her husband, Shedrick R. Martin, passed away her dedication and drive to open the school only grew stronger. Although his passing greatly affected her (causing her to take a short break from teaching) she later began teaching at several different schools. While she was teaching at Raoul Wallenberg High and Balboa High School, she noted “the students at Wallenberg were in a college prep program and that Balboa students were not on the college track” (SFGate). From her work with “difficult minority students” at Wallenberg, she noticed that many of the Samoan students on scholarship did not feel comfortable at the school. Because of this, they were placed at an unfair disadvantage in reaching higher education beyond high school. This discriminative cycle has been perpetuated by the educational system’s lack of care and knowledge of minority issues. This revelation sparked Martin’s idea of opening up a private institution solely for students of color.
Martin had always felt driven to change the way the education system treated African American youth who were not obtaining the same opportunities that non-minority students were receiving at other schools. After seeing the youth of Hunter’s point and Bayview struggle to attend (and even prepare) for college, Martin decided to start a school that would cater to these students needs and hopefully be successful in setting them up for levels of education beyond the school. In 1990, she started S.R. Martin Prep School with the help of seven faculty members who, according to an article found in *The Guardsmen*, shaped the lives of thirty-five students. The school offered courses from 6th grade through 12th grade, with the majority of students in attendance being high schoolers. The curriculum was intended to be rigorous in order to prepare students for the common college workload and challenged students to excel in multiple subjects.

Mary Martin wanted her students to excel in all aspects of their lives. She maintained close relationships with them while also providing a strict but nurturing environment to ensure that they would stay on task. Martin genuinely cared about the well-being of each and every student who attended her school. All of her hard work was funneled into this institution so that the African American youth could have advanced opportunities. She wanted them to succeed as adults, not just as students. Her students recognized this and felt that “public schools [don’t] give you much attention. Some teachers don’t care. Here, they make you do your work so you have a higher expectation of what you’re doing” (Wagner). Though she achieved these goals, it came at a price. In order to attend, students were required to pay $3,500, though the true cost was estimated to be around $4,000. Martin cared for her students greatly and continued to make sacrifices so that they could attend. Unfortunately, she struggled to obtain grants to financially support the school.

After retiring in 2007, Martin continued to look for financial resources to keep the school open. Once the 2008 economic crisis hit however, it became impossible for S.R. Martin Prep School to remain open. The school eventually merged with Bridgemont High School, which eventually closed down. Despite not being able to maintain the school, there were approximately a hundred students who graduated from S.R. Martin Prep. Many of these students were awarded scholarships to attend college and overall many of their lives were changed for the better. The amount of dedication, love, and hard work Martin put into her community continues to be inspirational and demonstrates why she is seen as a prominent advocate for equality within the educational system of San Francisco.

—Rachael Sandoval and Heidi De La Cruz Velázquez

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NATHANIEL
MASON

NATHANIEL MASON, JR., used his many interests in different fields to positively affect his local community in the Western Addition of San Francisco. Although he lived much of his life in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he made a home for himself in San Francisco. Mason served in many positions in San Francisco spanning from San Francisco Unified School District to the San Francisco Police Department to the NAACP, a civil rights organization known worldwide.

Mason was raised, the oldest of his siblings, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, by his parents, Nathaniel Mason Sr. and Ida Spooner Mason. His father was a laborer who worked for the Standard Oil Company. During his undergraduate education, Mason pledged to Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, showing involvement in his local community even as a college student. He said in an interview that while he learned so much from his parents growing up in Louisiana, the biggest thing that stuck with him that he learned growing up was to “have respect for your elders and get your education because that’s the only way you will get ahead in life” (SF Bayview). Mason certainly followed through on this advice from his parents. He would later influence his community by serving as a school teacher, a Head Start director for the City of San Francisco, and later a vice chair for the San Francisco Unified School District Affirmative Action Committee.

Mason had a clear influence on the community through his work in local departments. During his career he was also served, at various points, as a postman, a sheriff, and then a police officer for the City and County of San Francisco. He also participated in several organizations that promote the advancement of specifically the African American communities of San Francisco. Mason was also at one point chairman of the board of the Martin Luther King, Jr., and Marcus Garvey Square Cooperative, Inc., a housing program aiding members of the community who were low-income, usually African American, who purchased

Nathaniel Mason served in many capacities, including for the San Francisco Unified School District.
Nathaniel Mason served in many capacities, including Head Start director, director of the Economic Opportunity Council, on the Voter Education Committee, and on the Political Action Committee of the San Francisco Black Leadership Forum.

and rented apartments. He was also a member of the California Affirmative Action Council, in charge of promoting diversity within the state of California.

Later on he served as the chair of the Labor and Industry Committee of the NAACP, while also serving as a member of the NAACP’s Publicity Committee. The many accomplishments and positions he held in organizations designed to improve the lives of African Americans all over California showed that he was very involved—he was indeed a perfect example of what community engagement truly means.

Mason also held many other positions that strived to benefit the Fillmore, San Francisco, and the State of California. He was also a member of the Client Council of the San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation, a non-profit corporation that did what they could to help all members of the community in having proper access to legal services and justice. The organization was established by Congress in 1974. Mason was also a member of the Voter Education Committee and the Political Action Committee of the San Francisco Black Leadership Forum, influencing local politics and government as well.

Lastly, Mason also held the position as director of the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco. Mason accomplished many things while having held all of these positions in his community and was known for his dedication in influencing the community in any way that he could.

Nathaniel Mason passed away in Oakland on September 21, 2016, at the age of 87. His influence on the community through his many contributions to different organizations will surely live on. Mason was described as having a strong personality and having “lived his life to the fullest,” as reported by the San Francisco Bay View. Mason was known for doing things his way and striving to influence others no matter what role he played in his many lifetime accomplishments.

—Kristen Williams

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JOHNNY
MATHIS

John ‘Johnny’ Mathis was born in Gilmer, Texas, on September 30, 1935. When he was still a small child, he moved to Post Street with his family in the Fillmore neighborhood of San Francisco. Widely regarded as the Harlem of the West, the Fillmore influenced Mathis as his interest in music grew. His father’s influence was crucial, too, in getting Johnny involved in music at a young age, even teaching him his first song, “My Blue Heaven.”

In 1943, his father saved 25 dollars to buy him his first piano, a considerable sum at the time. Mathis began by singing in church choirs, school events, community events and wherever else he could, even entertaining relatives at large family gatherings. When he was thirteen, Mathis met Connie Cox, a prominent Bay Area vocal coach who would mentor him throughout high school until he began college. He attended George Washington High School, where he garnered a prominent name for himself through his outstanding musical and athletic talent. He was a star player on his basketball team and an outstanding track and field runner.

During college, Mathis went to play at the famous Black Hawk Nightclub in the Tenderloin with one of his friends for San Francisco State University, who had performed there regularly in a sextet. One of the owners of the club, Helen Noga, saw a bright future in Johnny’s talents when she first heard him sing at that club. At just 19 years old in 1955, Noga booked him to perform at Ann Dee’s 440 Club, where he would be noticed by a scout from Columbia records. After hearing him sing, he sent back a letter to Columbia that read: “Have found phenomenal 19 year old boy who could go all the way. Send blank contracts.” When offered a chance to partake in the trials for the 1956 Summer Olympics on behalf of Team USA and an opportunity to record at Columbia Studios in New York, he, along with the guidance of his father, decided to wholly pursue his career in music.

His first album Johnny Mathis: A New Sound in Popular Song included two of his most popular songs: “Wonderful, Wonderful” and “It’s Not For Me To Say.” These garnered not only critical success, but
also solidified his surge toward mainstream popularity. He began receiving offers to make music for films and much more. Riding this momentum, his single “Chances Are” became his first Billboard #1 hit, cementing his highly esteemed rank as a vocalist. During the era, it was a high honor to appear on the Ed Sullivan Show, and Johnny’s appearance in 1957 after having released an album with multiple famous singles would transition him from an icon among musicians to a popular household name. He kept making music with Columbia Records for years, ranging his styles of music from jazz to Broadway soundtracks to romantic songs and more.

Mathis has received a multitude of awards and recognitions throughout his career. Columbia records released Johnny’s Greatest Hits in 1958, the first greatest hits album released, a suit many artists now follow. Along with this, the album spent an entire 490 weeks in the top Billboard Album charts, a record unbroken until the late 1970s. His music has a long-lasting effect on the music industry. He is one of only five artists to have had a Top-40 Billboard Single in all four of their first decades, as he released music through 2014, including his single “Sending you a Little Christmas” with Jim Brickman. Mathis has earned a total of five Grammy nominations throughout his career, spanning from the 1960’s hit “Misty” to 2014’s Sending You a Little Christmas. He was also inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. Mathis received an abundance of praise for his work through many awards and celebrations, highlighted by his winning of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences in 2003.

It is not only the awards, however, that highlight the man that was Johnny Mathis, it was the passion that drove him to succeed that has shaped the man who so many people love today. He has often expressed his love and appreciation for the city in which he was raised. It was a source of motivation in his life. Mathis once said “I never ever want to lose my link with San Francisco” (Ryan). The city has reflected this love back to him with the proclamation of Johnny Mathis Day on December 18th by Mayor George Christopher in 1957. His alma mater, San Francisco State University, also handed him a degree in Liberal Arts in 2017.

All in all, Johnny Mathis is one of the most famed musicians from San Francisco and does not plan on stopping anytime soon, proclaiming “I think about how I can keep singing for the rest of my life. I just have to pace myself.”

—Marcelo Swofford

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“Figures do not show his true value,” Ray Richards, Chicago Cardinals’ coach from 1955 to 1957, said of Ollie Matson. “When he is in the lineup, somehow the whole team is inspired.” In addition to motivating and inspiring his teammates, Matson also inspired people of rich, poor, white, and black families to follow their dreams and to fight for what is right.

Ollie Genoa Matson, II, was born in Trinity, Texas, on May 1, 1930. He moved to San Francisco with his mother, Gertrude, when he was a teenager. In the city, Matson became known as an iconic All-American football player. While attending Washington High School, Matson displayed his impressive talent as a football player and track athlete. In 1947, San Francisco Chronicle reporter Don Selby said that “[Matson] gives every indication of being the hottest thing San Francisco high school football fans have seen in quite a spell.”

Matson’s performances also caught the attention of university scouts. He broke the world interscholastic 440-yard dash record with a time of 47.8 seconds; the old mark was 48.2 seconds. Standing 6 feet, 2 inches and weighing 220 pounds, many people wondered how Matson had the ability to run so fast. When asked, he explained: “Speed and quickness, that’s what you need to return kicks. I was big, but I was swift for that size. I could either run past you, over you, or through you. I didn’t do a lot of hard cutting like Gale Sayers did. But we both had the peripheral vision to know where guys were going to be, and we had that speed to get there.”

Matson would later play for San Francisco City College, where he scored 19 touchdowns in one season. As a junior, he transferred to the University of San Francisco.

He originally enrolled to play basketball, but was soon drawn back to the gridiron. Matson was a star of the legendary undefeated and untied 1951 University of San Francisco football team. He called this team “the greatest of all time” because of their dominant 9-0 record. Matson led the nation that year with 1,566 yards rushing and 21 touchdowns. The Dons were able to outscore ope-
ponents by an average of 31–8 because of Matson’s leadership. They beat College of the Pacific 47–14 in a game that was supposed to send the winner to the Orange Bowl. However, Coach Joe Kuharich was told that the invitation would be issued only if the team’s white players played. The team’s defensive star Gino Marchetti stated, “No, we ain’t going to go without Burl [Toler] and Ollie,” and in the end, the team decided to forfeit the Orange Bowl.

Although Ollie Matson was not able to play in the Orange Bowl, the next year he won a silver medal in the 1,500-meter relay and a bronze medal in the 400-meter race in the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki. Matson said that he cherished his Olympic medals the most because “In the Olympics you’re competing against the best there are. It isn’t the Iowa State Fair. It’s the world championship.” Once he was back from representing the United States, Matson was ready for an outstanding NFL rookie year. During his first season, Matson became the co-winner of the year honors in 1952.

Matson held the record for the most total yards gained in a season: 924 yards. He also held the record for most rushing yards in a game—163 yards. In his fourteen years of playing pro football, Matson had the ability to break down barriers to become one of the best. Throughout his career, he gained 12,844 yards on rushing, receptions, and returns.

Performances like these allowed Matson to be elected to six Pro Bowl teams and six All-Pro first or second teams. In 1972, Matson was elected to the NFL Pro Football Hall of Fame. He was inducted in the National Football Foundation’s College Hall of Fame in 1976. Matson retired in 1966 and began teaching physical education and coaching football at Los Angeles High School. He also coached running backs at San Diego State and scouted for the Philadelphia Eagles and was the special-events supervisor for 11 years at the Los Angeles Coliseum.

Matson had two daughters, Lisa Lewis and Barbara King, and two sons, Ollie III and Bruce. Family was important for Matson. He was proud of his medals, but he was most proud of his 50-plus years of marriage to his wife Mary L. Paige. He said, “It’s all about marriage. That’s the key right there. That’s what makes everything else feel so nice.”

Art Thompson, Matson’s nephew, released a statement from the family explaining that Matson suffered from a dementia-related condition late in his life. Before doctors were able to treat him, Matson died in his home in Los Angeles at the age of 80 in 2011. He had a full and exciting life. His desire to do what is right and his ability to do it with grace was awe-inspiring. He was and still is one of the best football players who ever played the game.

—Betsy Jacobo and Grace Jackson

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Enola D. Maxwell was born on August 30, 1919, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to Clemus and Lena Maxwell. After her mother’s move to San Francisco, Maxwell followed in 1949 with her children, Barbara and Ronnie. Racial discrimination shrouding the atmosphere of the south motivated her to move to the west. However, she noticed segregation was still prevalent in San Francisco, just more subtle.

Because of her race, Maxwell was prevented from becoming an insurance agent, a job she held in Baton Rouge. Due to financial hardships, they moved around the city in pursuit of affordable housing. The family lived in the Haight-Ashbury District briefly, then moved to the Carolina Projects in Potrero Hill where her third child, Sophie, was born. Maxwell worked with her mother at the Little Red Door, a popular community thrift shop, in addition to working multiple other jobs. She also worked as an employee for the U.S. Postal Service to provide financial stability for her family. Maxwell hadn’t initially expected a life in social activism, yet her involvement in the communities of San Francisco increased her engagement. Her assertive personality was perfectly suited for activism. She enjoyed her first experience serving in the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council in the 1950s. Maxwell, along with close friend Ruth Passen, helped stop a motion to build a freeway through Golden Gate Park. This proposed action would have changed not just Golden Gate Park, but the entire city. The two friends would continue to aid discriminated African Americans, fighting the “worst kinds of white supremacists” (Moan). From 1968 to 1971, Maxwell was the first woman and first African American to work as a minister at the Potrero Hill Olivet Presbyterian Church. She connected the church with the community as much as possible, developing a program titled Street Ministries where she would run a coffee shop in the basement of the church. Music and provocative discussion could be had at the coffee shop without the fear of judgment.

Maxwell established herself as an esteemed community activist in San Francisco and was ap-
appointed as the Executive Director of the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House (PHNH). In 1971, she not only became the first black director, but also the first African American to be appointed to any position in the PHNH. In 1977 under her leadership, the PHNH was designated as California Historical Landmark No. 86. One of her priorities in office was to hire Ruth Passen as secretary of the community center. Passen had much to say about the way Maxwell revolutionized the structure of the PHNH. “Enola was the one who had the vision to make it happen,” Passen said. “Her vision was all living together. This is a house. She encouraged black seniors to come. White seniors were already having lunch. This is not a white program or a black program. This is a lunch program. . . . Now we have this place people are not afraid to come to day or night . . . because it’s known as a safe place” (Weiss). Though justice and equality were her vocation at the community center, politics identified her lifestyle as a whole.

Aside from her work at PHNH, Maxwell was extremely involved in everyday politics, not only just in Potrero Hill, but in all of San Francisco. She was often the sole black woman working for programs that were mainly white. Collective justice was her goal at the PHNH and she once asserted that “fear and hate are the most dangerous things because they take away your freedom” (Pelosi). She was one of the founding members of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Celebration Committee, which still runs events that extend King’s legacy and promote social and political activism citywide.

Maxwell’s passionate activism has led to a lifetime full of achievements. She received a Congressional Award in 2003 from Congressman Phillip Burton. Nancy Pelosi also appointed her to the Senior Internship Program in Washington, D.C., that is run through the San Francisco city government. In 2001, San Francisco Board of Education Commissioner Mark Sanchez officially renamed the Potrero Hill Middle School to be the Enola D. Maxwell Middle School for the Arts. She had often worked with school executives and teachers to advance local education outreach. Though the school has now been discontinued, the 655 De Haro Street San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) facility is now named after her. Longtime Mayor Willie Brown, who she had worked with during her time at the PHNH, has called her “a giant in the community, the quintessential neighborhood activist” (Hoge).

Enola D. Maxwell passed away at the age of 83 on June 24, 2003, in San Francisco. She lived a long life working hard to establish a sphere of freedom and justice in which people of the city could live peacefully, regardless of race, ethnicity, or age.

— Marcelo Swofford

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REV.
JAMES McCRAY, JR.

Rev. James McCray, Jr.

Rev. James McCray served as a senior minister at Jones Memorial United Methodist Church from 1982 until 2002 and was an integral figure in the construction of the new Jones Memorial Church in the Western Addition. While the project cost upwards of six million dollars, Rev. McCray viewed it as an investment in the future of African American life in San Francisco, saying, “Opening this church is about hope. It gives hope that all African American folks don’t have to leave San Francisco. Not only can they stay but we can stay and participate in making this city better” (Garofoli).

San Francisco has seen its African American population drop dramatically due to the combination of botched Western Addition redevelopment plans and increasing racial gentrification. The neighborhood has a rich religious history, with three churches that are more than 150 years old. In recent years, however, attendance at Sunday services has declined. While Rev. McCray acknowledged that constructing a new church would not bring back the African American population by itself, he saw the church as an opportunity to restore the sense of community he felt left the Western Addition.

McCray strived to create low-income housing options in San Francisco to combat the gentrification that has rapidly changed the city. Along with four San Francisco ministers, McCray founded the Tabernacle Community Development Corporation (TCDC). The organization seeks to preserve cultural diversity in San Francisco by providing social service programs and opportunities to try and halt the mass departure of minorities and impoverished people from San Francisco. It strives to cultivate communities through the development of livable, affordable housing. Located in Bayview-Hunters Point, the TCDC has invested millions of dollars into housing projects. The five collective parishes own and sponsor over 1,000 units of housing for low income citizens throughout San Francisco. They seek to sponsor rental properties for African
Rev. James McCray has supported countless community projects, working to improve numerous San Francisco neighborhoods. American families to buy, in order to increase African American ownership in San Francisco. This was a step toward connecting ministers and community members from across the country to create similar organizations in their respective communities.

Aside from working for improved housing options for low-income and senior citizens, the TCDC has founded and assisted several other community improvement projects throughout its three decades of existence. In the 1990s, it established the Young African American Achievers program, an after school program focused on tutoring elementary school children who fall below the 50th percentile on standardized tests.

In 1995, the TCDC was given a grant by former California Governor Gray Davis and used the funds to start the Ujimaa program. This prompted their work with the State of California’s Employment Development Department to serve more than 400 clients and families with the transition from jail to work, combating chronic unemployment, and offering skills training. This led to the formation of the No Violence Alliance (NOVA) Project which organizes to support ex-offenders in the Western Addition, Mission District, and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods, addressing issues of recidivism.

James McCray’s work in the Western Addition and San Francisco as a whole has helped prevent the mass flight of African Americans and other minority groups from the city. Rev. McCray has worked to preserve community identity and diversity in the Western Addition and helped reestablish Jones Memorial United Methodist Church as a community center. He is currently serving as vice president of the San Francisco Human Services Commission, where he plans to administer federal, state, and local programs designed to meet basic human needs and ensure protection for some of San Francisco’s most vulnerable citizens. Along with the TCDC and the support of other faith leaders in the Western Addition and Bayview–Hunters Point neighborhoods, Rev. James McCray has participated in and supported countless community projects, working tirelessly to improve San Francisco for all who live here.

—Marcelo Swofford and Anthony Norman

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Born on January 14, 1943, Lulann Sapp McGriff would become known as one of the most prominent civil rights leaders in San Francisco, as well as a defender of educational rights and equality. Despite being from Los Angeles, McGriff grew up in the Ingleside neighborhood of San Francisco which allowed her to fully understand the issues of her community. Because of her background, McGriff developed a passion for educational equality, motivating her to earn a master’s degree in social work from San Francisco State University. She later found herself working as a counselor and then as the counseling department chair for the City College of San Francisco. Throughout her life, McGriff had been exposed to inequality, which allowed her to perceive injustice as a tool to create change. Her experience helped her become a prominent civil rights activist and educator, serving four terms as the president of the NAACP of San Francisco (NAACP).

McGriff’s introduction to civil rights primarily centered around her family. Her grandmother and parent’s influence stuck with her throughout her adulthood. She recalls, “My grandmother would drag me around everywhere she went. She was very active in the churches, and she was very active in the African American lodges . . . My mother was one of the first African American women toll takers on the Bay Bridge. My dad worked his way up from warehouseman to become a salesman for air filters. He was always very direct with us about who we were, and standing up for what you believe in” (Asimov).

McGriff also served on the Mayor’s Office of Children Youth and their Families Planning Committee, the Allocations Committee, and as president of the San Francisco Economic Opportunity Council Board (Dougan). These positions provided her a platform to address the needs of her community. She and her colleagues at the Community College of San Francisco (CCSF) worked to create a series of African American retention programs, which were implemented across the San Francisco Unified School District, including a mentoring program at Edison Elementary School. McGriff demonstrated the power of her influence by advo-
Lulann McGriff has served as a prominent civil rights and educational rights leader in San Francisco. She served four terms as president of the NAACP.

cating for desegregated public schools on the west coast.

Lulann McGriff grew up when the civil rights movement was in full swing, a time when skin color determined how successful someone could be. As a result, McGriff saw an opportunity to create change and stop the cycle of segregation within her community. She was motivated to participate in the local chapter of the NAACP, where she would become the only president to serve four consecutive two-year terms. The NAACP worked to ensure political, educational, social, and economic equality for all persons by holding acts of injustice and inequality accountable (NAACP). McGriff’s success demonstrated that she was a strong civil rights advocate and she played a key role in monitoring an integration consent decree that was signed by the San Francisco Unified School District in 1983.

McGriff’s legacy continues to be seen and implemented throughout the district through a system known as “consent decree,” which disperses students among different schools based on a child’s ethnicity, a school’s ethnic balance, where the siblings go to school, and even the family ZIP code.

She implemented this program as a response to segregation occurring within city schools. Lulann McGriff explained, “Well, African Americans were in substandard schools. They were segregated because they couldn’t get into a lot of the other schools. They were sent the worst teachers—particularly at Bayview–Hunters Point. And that was the unfairness” (Asimov). By noting the inequality in her community, McGriff was able to work locally to create change and leave an impactful legacy on the San Francisco community.

What set Lulann McGriff apart from others was her ability to take action against unfair and unequal systems in place within schools. For her extraordinary work, care, and resilience Lulann McGriff has earned a place on the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center Inspirations mural.

—Mary Cruz, Annelise Suleiman, and Rachael Sandowal

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Isiah “Ike” Nelson III is remembered as an amazing police officer and a hero. Born and raised in San Francisco, Nelson attended City College and received a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in public administration from Golden Gate University (Maatz). He and his wife, Dorian Nelson, had two sons, Gabriel and Anthony.

Nelson started working at the San Francisco Police Department in 1970. He worked for several departments including patrol, narcotics, and intelligence. According to Larry Maatz, a writer for the SF Examiner, Nelson was also named head of the burglary detail. Nelson beat the odds in 1986, becoming the youngest commander, as well as the first African American commander on the force. This sparked controversy within the department; some claimed that Nelson did not have enough experience to fill the new position. However, the SF Examiner wrote about how he defied the odds and was thought of as “one of the rising stars in the next generation of police administrators.”

One of Nelson’s most heroic moments was in October 17, 1989, during the Loma Prieta earthquake. In the aftermath of the earthquake, Nelson oversaw the evacuation of Candlestick Park. It was a packed stadium with 60,000 people in attendance of game three of the Giants vs. A’s World Series. Nelson successfully helped evacuate the whole stadium, helping mitigate the amount of injuries. The Commissioner of Major League Baseball at the time, Fay Vincent, remembers Nelson’s effort as being “perfect” (Brown). Nelson helped Vincent remain calm and set the tone for the evacuation. He was able to alert the spectators and help them evacuate effectively and safely. Nelson’s partner Jorge Costa described his methodical and professional process as a breathing practice for Nelson: he would “inhale the fast and furious information and details and mood swings based on the latest reports and exhale a plan of action for the officers, the crowd, and the commissioner” (Brown).

Even though his wife and sons were amidst the chaos, Nelson made sure that the other civilians were a priority and that they were safe before send-
Isiah Nelson was a hero during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, safely evacuating thousands of spectators from Candlestick Park.

Once his family was reunited, Nelson escorted people who had been injured to the hospital. According to an interview with his wife Dorian Nelson in 2014, she said her husband “gave the baby a kiss, and turned right around and drove back to San Francisco. . . . It was 4 in the morning” (Brown). It was his priority to make San Francisco a better and safer place, in whatever way he could—no effort was too small for him.

Tragically, Nelson was killed in a motorcycle accident on Interstate 280 while returning from a security detail on April 14, 1990—less than a year after his heroism at Candlestick Park. He was only 36 years old at the time of his death, leaving behind his wife and two sons. The Hanging Gardens on Interstate 280 are named in memory of Isaiah Nelson. His amazing career was short-lived but he dedicated a strong 19 years to the force, where he worked himself up from rookie to Commander. He had to overcome the scrutiny of being an African American and the pressure of being so young.

Nelson’s fellow officers will never forget the memory he left behind. The San Francisco Police Department website has an Officer Down Memorial Page where friends of fallen heroes can write reflections for their loved ones. Nelson has a myriad of heartfelt messages written in his name. Many have written that he will never be forgotten. Vivian A. Bruce, a retired Sergeant, wrote: “Some have tried to imitate you, but you remain unique. It saddens me still that you left us so soon having given so much with the guarantee of even greater deeds to come . . . Rather, it was a vast shadow that you bore. I am forever grateful he was cast my way.” This reflection was left on December 26, 2013, over 23 years after his death. Not only was Nelson an amazing officer, but he also impacted the lives of many outside of his police work. His memory will always live on among those who he touched and those who benefited from his work.

—Megan Woods and Evita Martinez

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Throughout her years of dedication and hard work, Eva Paterson has become an outstanding leader who actively works for change in her community. Paterson’s years of persistence, along with her courage, grit, and fortitude have helped her break down many racial barriers. She has received numerous awards and has acted as a catalyst for many social movements.

Born into a military family, Paterson was constantly on the move which gave her the opportunity to live in places like Illinois, France, and England. However, her upbringing was anything but structured. Many times she was forced to watch her father abuse her mother. She explained, “I really tried to protect my mother from my father . . . I think some sense of being a warrior was being instilled at that point” (Shetterly). From a young age Paterson knew that it was not right for her father to physically abuse her mother. She possessed an innate sense of protection, but felt frustrated because she was unable to solve the problem. If it weren’t for these experiences, she wouldn’t have found one of her life’s passions in working with women who experience sexual and physical abuse. Paterson’s urge to change the world for the better led her to Northwestern University where she would become the first African American female student body president. She quickly found a love for politics working in this role. In 1970 at the age of 20, Paterson captured America’s attention by winning a debate on national television. In her debate against Vice President Spiro Agnew, she spoke passionately about the 1970 Kent University shooting of student demonstrators. Her outstanding accomplishments led her to be admitted into UC Berkeley’s Boalt Hall School of Law.

Paterson began her career as a “baby lawyer” at the Legal Aid Society in Alameda County where she co-founded “A Safe Place”—a haven for women who are victims of physical abuse. For the next 23 years, she would work at the Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights and of those 23, she spent 16 years as the Executive Director. Paterson also took on many other issues like fighting against racial and gender discrimination in the San Francisco Fire Department. In 2003, Paterson was at the helm of
Eva Paterson has served as the co-founder and president of the Equal Justice Society, a national non-profit organization aimed at transforming the nation’s consciousness on race through law, social science, and the arts.

the creation of the Equal Justice Society (EJS), becoming its co-founder and president. In recent years, she has served as an adjunct professor at both UC Hastings and the University of San Francisco School of Law and has given many addresses at universities across the nation.

Paterson has received more than fifty titles and awards over the span of her career. From the recognition that she had gained from her debate in 1970, she was named one of Mademoiselle magazine’s “Ten Young Women of the Year.” She was later featured on the covers of Ebony and Jet magazine. Of her many awards, her most notable include: The Woman of the Year from the Black Forum, the Earl Warren Civil Liberties Award, The Alumni Award of Merit from Northwestern University, the Fay Stender Award from the California Women Lawyers, and the Spirit of Excellence Award from the San Francisco Bar Association. Additionally, she has written many articles promoting nonviolence and equal rights. Among these are “Can’t We Get Along” and “The Future of Affirmative Action.” However, one of her most compelling accomplishments was the work that she did in support of equal educational opportunities in the landmark Supreme Court case, Grutter v. Bollinger. Paterson’s effort helped the Supreme Court uphold the affirmative action admissions policy.

For the last eighteen years, Paterson has been the co-founder and president of the Equal Justice Society, a national non-profit organization that aims to create coalitions to transform the minds of citizens across America through the use of law, the judicial system, and through studying the social sciences and the arts. Paterson was also a vocal spokesperson against Proposition 54 which, if passed, would have “prohibited the collection of racial and ethnic data by any state agency, thus making it impossible to track any racial discrimination or bring civil rights suits to court” (Cal Civil Rights).

Eva Paterson continues to be an active member of the San Francisco community. Throughout the years, she has demonstrated her strength as a leader and has displayed patience and perseverance in the face of inequality and discrimination. She has had a drive to make positive changes in the world from a young age. What her next contribution to her community will be, only time will tell.

—Candice Matlock, Althea Pyle, and Zachary James

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LES PAYNE

Leslie Burton Payne, commonly known as Les Payne, established himself as a noteworthy Changemaker through his rehabilitory work with incarcerated youth. This was primarily as a dedicated officer of the California Youth Authority, and his active membership in both the Lions’ Club and the Commonwealth Club. In addition to being a valuable member of all three of these organizations, Payne was also the first African American to serve each institution, respectively. His impressive achievements were recognized in 2001 when former Mayor Willie Brown honored Payne with the Lifetime Distinction Award for his career working with the youth in his communities.

Payne was also recognized for his integral role in ending the riots of the Bayview–Hunters Point uprising in 1966. Supervisor Terry Francois and Mayor John Shelley understood that Payne was a respected voice in Hunters Point and was essential to calming down the situation.

As stated in the commendation presented to him by former Mayor Brown, Payne was an exceptional officer for the California Youth Authority, and described as being “instrumental in assisting many young people on the road to success while enforcing state youth authority guidelines of parole” (San Francisco Board of Supervisors). Now known as the California Division of Juvenile Justice, this branch of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation provides constructive services to California’s most serious youth offenders up to age 25. Minors in this treatment program have the most serious criminal backgrounds and require the most intensive rehabilitative treatments. Programs provided by the California Division of Juvenile Justice include: academic and vocational education, medical care, mental health services, substance abuse rehabilitation, and treatment programs that address violent and sex offender behavior. These treatments are supervised by the Alameda Superior Court, as a result of the 2003 lawsuit Farrell v. Harper (Fagan).
Les Payne was honored by Mayor Willie Brown and the Board of Supervisors in 2001 for his lifetime dedication to improving conditions for San Francisco’s youth.

During Payne’s tenure he worked tirelessly with troubled youth in dire need of firm and compassionate guidance to minimize their chances of reoffending and letting themselves fall back into criminal behavior and subsequent incarceration. Payne’s dedication to rehabilitating wayward youth inspired his several years of service on the board of the Delinquency Prevention Council (San Francisco Board of Supervisors).

Payne also served “Young Men of Action” and “Youth for Service”—both successful programs that ameliorated life for young people who felt there were few options.

In his retirement, Payne became an active participant in the S.R. Martin Academy, run by Mary S. Martin for years.

—Sage Stefanick

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DR. WILLIAM PIERCE

Dr. William Pierce, a psychologist and researcher associated with the Westside Community Mental Health Center, was one of the first researchers to attempt to dispel the racist notion of inherent white superiority in relation to intelligence. In addition to his nominal with the West Side Community Mental Health Center, Pierce has used his professional standing to advocate for the fair treatment of African Americans.

Born in 1940 in Youngstown, Ohio, Pierce enrolled as a student at the University of Pittsburgh in 1962. Pierce joined the Alpha Phi Alpha, the first African-American Greek-lettered fraternity during his collegiate career. He became a clinical psychologist in 1967. In 1968 Pierce accepted an internship at Napa State Hospital and he moved to California. After the completion of his internship, he took up directorship of the West Side Community Mental Health Center. It was here where Pierce’s career genuinely took off, finding great success in a leadership role.

In the 1970s a conference of nearly 10,000 psychologists held by the National Association of Black Psychologists created a study model that involved “switching from traditional psychology to one that deals with the ‘oppressive, victimizing’ American environment” (Melnick). Among these psychologists was Dr. Pierce, whose research and advocacy were focused on suspending the administration of biased IQ tests that were created in favor of failing black students and forcing them into special needs classes. An NAACP study found “that although black children constitute 25 percent of the general school population, they make up 53 percent of the mentally handicapped classes” (Wood “Blacks Tell S.F Schools: ‘Stop Biased I.Q Tests’”).

Pierce achieved a victory when Martin Dean, then Assistant Superintendent of Schools, admitted that the “present tests were unsatisfactory” and proclaimed “all children in special education classes currently are being retested” (Wood “Stop Biased I.Q. Tests”). Eventually, thanks to Pierce’s efforts the school district took steps to suspend IQ testing until it could assemble “a committee including black psychologists to study the moratori-
Psychologist Dr. William Pierce used his expertise to challenge the racially biased IQ testing methods that were administered in San Francisco schools. His suggested reforms changed the way IQ testing is now conducted throughout the nation.

Pierce continued to make the case at the 1974 conference that the National Association of Black Psychologists called for in San Francisco. He pointed out that the tests were meant to be administered to middle-class white children instead of lower-class black children, resulting in a test that would not “reflect the differing value systems of whites and blacks” (Wood “The IQ Bias Battle”). The results of the conference and the study eventually led to a reform of IQ tests that would more accurately serve black students.

Pierce would go on to lead protests against the San Francisco Police Department’s actions during the 1974 Zebra murders. As a string of racially motivated murders against whites gripped the community, Pierce protested “the issuing of identification cards” (Wood “Zebra Hunt Protests”), calling them insensitive and complaining alongside his colleagues, Dr. Aubrey Dent that the SFPD “seems to be acting out of frustration and a sense of helplessness” (Wood “Zebra Hunt Protests”).

Dr. Pierce’s “interest in the community was consistent with the tenor of the time” (Dent), and he spent his life and career ensuring that black residents of San Francisco would receive fair treatment from officials of their home city until his passing in 2015. Though racism has woven its way into society via educational limitations directed toward black students, it is only through proactive and conscientious behavior exhibited by changemakers such as Dr. William Pierce that will help create a just and equal social climate.

—Alvin Tran, Loven Florencio, and Sage Stefanick

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ALEX PITCHER was an African American lawyer and civil rights activist whose legacy will forever be remembered. He has made contributions to African American rights, specifically within education, that still hold great importance to this day. Born in the 1920s, Pitcher was raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he became one of the first African American lawyers in the state. There he led a movement to fight for the admission of black students into Louisiana State University. In 1950, Pitcher escorted the first black student to class, paving the way for Pitcher’s lifetime career desegregating public education and promoting equality.

After advocating for racial desegregation at Louisiana State University, Pitcher began working closely with the NAACP’s head attorney, Thurgood Marshall. In 1954, he and Marshall worked together on one of the biggest civil rights cases the U.S. Supreme Court had ever seen: Brown v. Board of Education. This case was a pivotal moment in history that dismantled the “separate but equal” doctrine found in the 1897 case of Plessy v. Ferguson in a fight against segregation laws. Brown v. Board of Education was comprised of a coordinated group of five different cases against the school districts of Kansas, South Carolina, Delaware, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Marshall, Pitcher, and other prominent lawyers recruited to work on the case argued that not only were the quality of separated schools unequal, but having this segregation made black students feel inferior to white students. They used studies and research administered by top professionals from all over the country to prove the negative effects of segregation. Pitcher and his colleagues assisted Marshall in proving that segregation was an attempt to keep “the people who were formerly in slavery as near to that stage as is possible” (NAACP). After years of persistent struggles, Marshall and Pitcher convinced the Supreme Court to side in their favor. Segregation laws were ruled unconstitutional, forcing schools to desegregate.

In 1963, Pitcher and his wife, Rosalie Thierry, moved from Louisiana to San Francisco. They set-
Alex Pitcher worked with Thurgood Marshall on the *Brown v. Board of Education* case.

Tied together in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood, which had a high population of African Americans, Pitcher picked up his career in law where he had left off. He acquired prominent roles in the running of local economic advancement and low-income home-buying programs. According to Kevin Fagan of *SFGate*, “he became executive director of the Bayview Hunters Point Housing Development Corp., and in 1976 Pitcher served as a community consultant to the city Department of Public Works’ Clean Water Program.” His involvement didn’t stop there, however, as he worked as a deacon at a local Providence Baptist Church, member of the African American Democratic Club, the Black Leadership Forum, and member of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. Always active, Pitcher was an important figure in providing a voice for African American communities in San Francisco politics.

Alex Pitcher remained close to the city government of San Francisco throughout his activism and community engagement. In 1971, Pitcher collaborated with Mayor Aliotto to secure funds for a Bayview–Hunters Point Health Clinic. In the good graces of Mayor Aliotto and his constituents, Alex Pitcher left his seat on the Bayview–Hunters Point Model Neighborhood Agency, to be promoted to serve as the Executive Director of the Model Cities Housing Development Agency in 1972.

Later in life, Pitcher became the president of the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP. His term lasted from 1994 up until his death in 2000 at the age of 75. While serving as president, he “led attempts to promote school integration, to ease racial tensions with police, and to help rebuild neighborhood programs and commerce” (Fagan).

Comer Marshall, a leader at the NAACP who worked closely with Pitcher, said, “[Pitcher] was an icon of the community. He was godfather to the community and an individual who had an understanding of all of the political ramifications. He still took a stand for justice.”

Alex Pitcher’s legacy has been vital to the rights of people of color, directly in San Francisco and resonating throughout the nation. He broke down barriers in Louisiana by becoming a lawyer. His work on the *Brown v. Board of Education* case is essential to civil rights and tackling segregation, even now. The contributions he made in the local politics of San Francisco have helped shape a community. His accomplishments are plentiful and Pitcher will be remembered as a true leader.

—Carlos Calles; additional research by Annelise Suleiman and Sophia Tarantino

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Judge Cecil F. Poole was the first African American US Attorney in the United States in 1961.

Cecil Poole was born in Birmingham, Alabama, on July 25, 1914 and was the youngest of three siblings. He was four years old when his family moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he would spend the rest of his childhood. Poole was involved in the black empowerment movement throughout his life, beginning with his membership in the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity at the University of Michigan, the first African American Greek lettered fraternity, and the founding of the Gamma Chi Lambda graduate chapter in San Francisco. Poole earned a bachelor’s degree and law degree from the University of Michigan in the late 1930s. He then earned his JD degree at Harvard Law School in 1939. By 1940, he joined the Pennsylvania bar and was then drafted into the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1942.

Even in the military, Cecil Poole’s drive was apparent and he quickly moved from being assigned to an all-black segregated unit, used mostly for manual labor, to a First Lieutenant in the Judge Advocate General’s office, where he served adjudicated courts-martial. After serving for nearly four years, he received an honorable discharge in 1946. Soon after, he moved to San Francisco to work as a research attorney for the West Coast Office of the Price Administration. In 1949, he worked as the Assistant District Attorney in the Office of former San Francisco District Attorney Pat Brown. Pat Brown appointed Poole as the Extradition and Clemency Secretary after Brown was elected Governor of California.

In 1961, Cecil Poole was appointed U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California by President John F. Kennedy. This appointment was momentous. Poole became the first African American U.S. Attorney in the continental United States—the first of many remarkable positions he would hold throughout his career. In the midst of the civil rights movement, there was backlash throughout the country against the Vietnam War and segregation. As U.S. Attorney, Poole faced a great deal of criticism, but he stayed true to his ideals and refused to prosecute hundreds of people who evaded
the draft. He also denounced a plan to prosecute David Hilliard, a prominent Black Panther leader for an implied threat to kill President Richard Nixon. These decisions underscored Poole’s devotion to justice for his people and his willingness to support equality even when the government that employed him was actively trying to take down one of the most prominent groups fighting for equality for black people. The implications of racism and prejudice inherent in many cases were certainly obvious to an attorney who in 1958 had a cross burned on his lawn.

In the late 1960s, Poole was appointed to the bench of the Federal District Court of Northern California twice by President Lyndon B. Johnson, but both appointments were not confirmed by the politically conservative Senate. He returned to private practice in 1970 and focused on entertainment law. He represented groups like the Doobie Brothers, Janis Joplin, and Jefferson Airplane. Alongside his work in entertainment law, Poole also served as Director of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund as well as teaching as a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

In 1976, Poole was again appointed to the bench of the Federal District Court by President Gerald Ford. His confirmation led to the peak of his extremely successful career. He became the first black Federal Judge in Northern California. In three years he was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, making him the first black man to serve on the court and only the second to serve on any Federal Circuit Court of Appeals. His understanding and support for other marginalized groups was obvious and Poole was extremely influential in ruling in favor of Native American–Alaskan groups who were seeking sovereignty over their lands.

Judge Poole served on the court for 25 years and earned Senior Judge status in 1996. Throughout his career he was known for hiring minority law clerks as well as encouraging young black lawyers to not let obstacles stop them from advancing themselves in their careers. Poole was also inducted into the Charles Houston Bar Association Hall of Fame in 1996 in recognition for his dedication to his profession.

Cecil Poole passed away in November 1997 from pneumonia-related complications. His contributions survive to this day through his important work and the legacy that he left behind.

—Anthony Norman and Kendra Wharton

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WILLIAM
HENRY RENO

William Henry Reno was a proud member of the Western Addition who valued his relationships within the community and connecting with its members. In the Fillmore community, Reno was a beloved businessman, and he strove to incorporate the sense of community he felt into his business. He strove to maintain a sense of community even as community in the Fillmore was being diminished by outside figures.

William was born on June 17, 1936, in Earlington, Kentucky. He moved to San Francisco with his parents, George and Minnie Reno, and his sister, Georgia Burke. It was in San Francisco that Reno established his business, The Community Barber Shop. The barbershop was a safe haven for community discussion and provided a safe space for the men of the community to connect. This legendary, neighborhood-minded, community-focused, store affirmed the Fillmore districts culture as an African American community. The barbershop also provided reliable jobs to its workers and acted as a host site for political fundraising, support, and conversation. The barbershop allowed for a diverse group of people to connect; whether they were musicians, artists, or business owners who needed a simple clean up, the barbershop was home.

However, the barbershop wasn’t William Henry Reno’s only contribution to the Western Addition. In his later years, he was president and co-founder of the San Francisco Ocean/Ingleside Lions Club, a worldwide charitable society devoted to social and international service, taking its membership primarily from business and professional groups. Reno also established the Southwestern Neighborhood improvement group, which valued beautification in respect to the people’s culture.

On May 7, 2007, at the age of seventy-one, William Henry Reno died. His legacy continues through the streets of the Fillmore and his family continues to embrace his work as a significant piece of history that changed the ways of the Fillmore district.

Like many others whose faces inhabit the wall,
William Henry Reno was known as the proprietor of the Community Barber Shop in the Fillmore District.

William Henry Reno is a constant reminder that regardless of where you begin your journey of life, anyone can be a leader and have a profound influence. It is those like William Henry Reno who get little recognition, yet had the greatest impact on creating such a connected community like the Fillmore. As an article written by Carol Ness for SF Gate best explains, it is about “instilling pride in the people of the neighborhood” and “it’s about the community.” Everyone has some connection to the mural and it reminds the people of the Western Addition of its founders and stands as a beacon of hope to continue the mission of preserving the community, a mission and vision that defined William Henry Reno.

—Janelle Nunez, Delaney Miller, and Elijah Williams

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MARY
HELEN
ROGERS

Small in stature yet resilient in spirit and tenacious in style, Mary Helen Rogers became known as the mother of the Western Addition and fought for its preservation as an African American business and cultural hub. Born and raised in Texas, Mary married in 1945, and moved to the San Francisco in 1965 with her husband and their twelve children. Her long life of community activism was sparked when she was denied housing in the Sunset District based on her race. She told KQED in a 2001 documentary: “When they found out I was black, all of a sudden it was rented.” At the time, she was 40 years old and the Fillmore was in the middle of an urban renewal plan that was sweeping the “ghettos” of the nation and throwing communities into upheaval.

The renewal was a housing redevelopment project that followed most of the United States after World War II as a plan to boost the economy, but Rogers understood that the renewal was a separation of cultures. As the government tore down blocks of the Western Addition, the former “Harlem of the West” that had drawn Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington, Rogers went to protest to the city’s redevelopment agency. With just a ninth grade education Mary became an expert in housing law, a neighborhood legend who baked delicious dinner rolls out of scratch and a “true matriarch of community activism in San Francisco.” Rogers was a fearless woman and would lay down in front of bulldozers to protect homes.

Rogers helped to start the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO), a community organization that fought for social justice in redevelopment. WACO was largely focused around the social justice wing of the Catholic church and faced fierce opposition from the SF Redevelopment Agency (RDA). Dynamic RDA head Justin Herman called this group a “passing flurry of proletarianism.” However, in 1967, WACO demanded community participation in planning, financial assistance for the displaced, and replacement housing from the San Francisco redevelopment agency. In 1975, WACO’s legal actions against redevelopment resulted in the Federal Uniform Relocation Act,
Mary Helen Rogers was a tenacious and effective advocate for housing rights in San Francisco.

which spread all throughout the United States and stated that if federal money is used to displace a person, federal money must be used to relocate them. Rogers said: “We saw that kids got back in school, that mothers got their welfare grants on time, and cleaned up the streets with brooms and shovels.”

On becoming an activist, Rogers says that it was the housing situation in the Fillmore that inspired her: “[I] really got angry when I found out that nobody wanted to rent to black families.” She saw urban renewal in the Fillmore for what it was, the bottom line was to move out the black community, build luxury high rises, and give the properties to incoming suburbanites. Those affected were given a set amount of $2,000 for moving costs and were left helpless to do anything about it. Rogers, however retaliated: “My position was, I refused to accept that I couldn’t stay where I wanted to stay. I refused to go somewhere else because I was black. I decided I wasn’t going to move. I wasn’t going anywhere until I got good and ready.”

Rogers went on and served as a San Francisco Housing Authority community relations manager. She founded the Western Addition Citizens Advisory Committee, which provided broad-based community input to publicly funded development initiatives. Rogers then served as a secretary/treasurer of the National Tenants Association. She also served as a founding board member of Westside Mental Health Clinic, a board member of Agape Outreach Center, chair of the San Francisco Juneteenth Committee, and a parent volunteer at the Raphael Weill Elementary School, later known as Rosa Parks Elementary School.

Rogers died on March 3, 2006, after a long battle with cancer. However, her fight for fair and equitable treatment of school-aged children, African American families, welfare recipients, community churches, and minority businesses will not be forgotten. A senior community center has been named in honor of Rogers in the Western Addition and, in cooperation with the Department of Public Health’s Direct Access to Housing Program, now houses low-income and formerly homeless seniors. Mayor Gavin Newsom fondly described Rogers as someone “blessed with a nurturing and ever-generous spirit, she unflinchingly came to the defense of those in need of a voice and a hand.” Rogers fought tirelessly until her last days for justice in the Fillmore and, spurred by her passion for community activism, left a legacy of female black excellence.

—Hannah Shepherd

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FORMER San Francisco Police Chief Prentice Earl Sanders was a prominent influencer in the San Francisco Police Department’s homicide department for decades before being named chief by Mayor Willie L. Brown in 2002. Numerous accomplishments, including his role in promoting the civil rights work for San Francisco’s Officers for Justice, earned Sanders a place on the Inspiration murals at the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center in the Western Addition.

Sanders was born in Nacogdoches, Texas, in 1937. (His birth certificate read “Prettiest Earl Sanders,” which he changed to “Prentice” when he started elementary school.) When he was five, his mother moved to Houston, marrying William Lacy. Sanders attended segregated schools in Houston before his family moved, under tense circumstances, to Los Angeles, where Sanders’s mother thought schools would likely be better. Earl’s upbringing in Los Angeles, however, was also challenging, and after his mother died when he was 14, Sanders ran away to San Francisco to escape his step-father, and to make his own way. Sanders enrolled at Washington High School, living for a time at a nearby boarding house, earning high grades, even as he worked in the evenings. He was a member of the Washington High School Eagle Society. Before graduating high school he moved into an apartment in the Fillmore district, at the invitation of the family of Kelly Waterfield, with whom he remained lifelong friends.

After graduating high school Sanders attended City College of San Francisco, where he earned his associate’s degree. In the late 1950s, after his stipend from the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity had run out, he joined the Army National Guard. Before he turned 21, he has already joined the US Army Officers Candidate School (OCS) in Fort Benning, Georgia, where he would go on to graduate first in his OCS class. The virulent racism of the time meant he could not regularly leave the base, so he studied, eventually returning to California as a Second Lieutenant. Sanders remained in the California National Guard into the 1970s, ultimately retiring at the rank of Captain.

Sanders’s drive for education was lifelong. In the 1970s, even while rising through the ranks in the police department, he attended Golden Gate University, ultimately earning his undergraduate degree and his masters degree in public administra-
Long before he was appointed Chief in 2002, Earl Sanders was a respected detective in the San Francisco Police Department.

...summa cum laude. Later still, Sanders’ quest for education earned him a place as a Coro Foundation Fellow, and he received an executive certificate in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School.

In 1964, Sanders joined the police department after being honorably discharged from the Army, and serving for a time in the Social Security Administration. He faced many hurdles as an African American in the police department (particularly galling was the temporary thwarting of his career through medical tests intended to deny him a place in the SFPD, which Sanders fought and won). In response to an unwelcoming environment, he joined the Officers for Justice, which was a cohort of officers who worked to address the prejudicial nature of promotions within the police system. (Sanders later served as president of Officers for Justice.) This group filed a class action discrimination suit against the SFPD in 1973, and Sanders was among the first to testify about the indignities he braved at the department. After significant legal battles, the use of unfair testing was finally officially overturned, and Sanders and his team helped to cement the consent decree that “became a model for every police department across the nation, forever changing the face of policing in America” (Sanders and Cohen 266).

Over the course of the next few years, Sanders was promoted to inspector, specializing in homicides. Sanders worked on some of San Francisco’s best known cases alongside his partner Rotea Gilford. Most notable was their role in solving of “Zebra murders,” where more than a dozen white San Franciscans were killed. Sanders co-authored a very compelling book entitled *The Zebra Murders: A Season of Killing, Racial Madness and Civil Rights*, detailing the very stressful conditions he faced. The department expected Sanders, Gilford, and others to use their “black status” as advantages in the investigation, but clarified that there would be no backup from white officers. As one book overview put it, “In those impossible conditions—the oppressive white power structure on one hand, the violent black radicals on the other—Sanders and Gilford” faced tremendous challenges, which they handled with strength and equanimity, as they eventually brought the murderers to justice.

Sanders continued to rise through the ranks at SFPD. In 1995 Mayor Willie L. Brown appointed him as second in command at SFPD. Eventually Sanders was appointed Chief, on July 4, 2002. Sanders is now enjoying his retirement with his family, with his place in San Francisco Police Department history more than assured.

—Olivia Walker and members of the Martín-Baró Scholars Program

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THOMATRA SCOTT

Thomatra Scott, a youth program coordinator for the Economic Opportunity Council’s (EOC) Multiservice Center, broke the status quo to elicit a change within his community. He was an advocate for kids in education, health, housing, employment, human rights, prison reform and cultural/ethnic issues.

Thomatra Scott was unable to pursue his education after high school and became a taxi driver while beginning his work in the Western Addition. In 1969, at the height of the Black Power era, Scott joined the Pan–African People’s Organization (PAPO) where he promoted Kwanza and the seven principles of the holiday to black neighborhoods. Rapid expansion of community activities were administered through the NAACP and the Council for Civic Unity, which led to the growth of youth affiliated activities to promote safe and healthy living. Scott began organizing a drum and bugle corps through the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) which brought students together from all backgrounds to create music on their own terms without outside hindrance.

Scott was a husband and father to one daughter and was also the honorary parent to hundreds in the Western Addition. His focus was centered on the San Francisco Postal Street Academy, also known as Polytechnic High School. According to Susan Almazol of the San Francisco Chronicle, students attending this school were dropouts, arrested juveniles, and tended to have “delinquent tendencies.” Scott’s dedication and enthusiasm for education manifested into a tough, non-compromising attitude towards both his students and government agencies. He felt that the youth should be involved in the decisions being made about their education. Scott’s deep sincerity and commitment to the well-being of the Western Addition youth was evident in his work leading the State Legislative Symposium on Children and Youth Services, while also participating as an active board member in the Westside Community Mental Health Center. Scott recognized that the growing number of adolescent
teenagers in the street was a direct result of the poor educational services provided by the city. In response to this growing issue, he fought against the government’s closure of the San Francisco Postal Street Academy by counseling and encouraging boys being released from detention centers to “spell out the hard truths of the results of their neglect from their ghetto childhood” (Hamilton and Dungan). The introduction of remedial reading courses was created for the youth reentering society in an effort to prove the program’s legitimacy to the government.

Thomatra Scott frequently told his students, “Getting out with a degree to make a buck isn’t enough. You have a commitment to the youngsters you left behind who aren’t in school” (Hamilton and Dungan). Scott emphasized the importance of giving back to the community and fostered the personal growth of its members.

In 1977, two years after his fight with the government, Scott was honored as a longtime youth worker. He received a grant to go toward “creating youth foundations in their names, assisting in developing youth projects and awarding scholarships to deserving disadvantaged young people” (Hamilton and Dungan). The grant contributed towards Scott’s efforts in growing Young Adults, Inc., and expanding their mission to reach youth beyond the San Francisco area.

In 1983, Scott became the first Western Addition candidate to win an award from the San Francisco Foundation. Activists were honored for work in education and youth development. Scott was labeled as a “m motivator and activist” for children, according to the San Francisco Examiner. The attitude of aggression towards Thomatra Scott and his compatriots began to dissipate as societal norms shifted on a global scale and racial prejudice became less accepted. Acknowledging his city-wide efforts validates the previously underrepresented youth.

Until his death in 2000, Thomatra Scott was a prominent figure in the Western Addition because of his extensive work in promoting the importance of education and for his efforts in keeping adolescent teens out of correctional facilities. Scott’s legacy will live on through Young Adults, Inc., and the dynamic tutoring, counseling, and drug prevention that became a model on a national level.

—Annelise Suleiman and Zoe Foster

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JOSEPH
‘BUNNY’
SIMON

Joséph Floyd ‘Bunny’ Simon, a man of humble beginnings, born on November 24, 1928, into a family of 16 in Lake Charles, Louisiana, became an ambitious entrepreneur who opened multiple jazz clubs across the city of San Francisco. Long before he earned the moniker “Bunny,” his parents Elizabeth and Alcide Simon had nicknamed him “Bonne,” a Creole term of endearment. At the young age of 15, Simon joined the Navy, where he served as a Seaman. After sustaining a serious injury at Port Chicago, he recovered, and was honorably discharged in 1946. He then settled in San Francisco, to continue his amazing journey, enrolling at city college.

In 2010, Simon sat down with JJ Parson, the general manager of the Fillmore’s community radio station KPOO, to discuss how he brought a wide variety of famous musicians to the Fillmore. Not unlike many young ambitious entrepreneurs, Simon joined the workforce at a young age and started working multiple jobs in the hopes of eventually opening his own business. It became clear that music was his passion once he picked up a part time job at the Fillmore’s Melrose Record Shop.

Joseph ‘Bunny’ Simon.

they would both achieve fame. He went on to own and run the Grand Bayou catering business, even as he earned a place as the first African American Supervisor for the US Post Office in North Beach. Simon claimed that both professions helped him establish his management skills. In 1961, Simon opened his first club on Divisadero and McAllister Streets, a place that would later be known as the Playpen. The club instantly became a hot spot.

In a neighborhood that had been so thoroughly divided due to the city’s poorly executed redevelopment plan, the Playpen was a place where all members of the Fillmore could gather, regardless of socioeconomic status. Before live entertainment, community members would line up around the block to have drinks with fellow neighbors and dance to the music of the nearest jukebox. Simon was determined to bring the neighborhood together in any way possible. It got to the point where even teenagers were allowed to attend the club on Sunday afternoons (with adult chaperones).

Simon recalled a time in the early 1960s when
young politician Willie L. Brown, Jr., opened his campaign headquarters across the street from The Playpen. Willie was so convinced that The Playpen was an attractive spot that it was a part of the reason he lost in the 18th District election. He claimed that all the men, including himself, who were supposed to be working on his campaign spent their days at the club instead.

As Simon’s club became increasingly popular, famous artists and comedians flocked from cross-country to perform at the venue. Artists like Redd Foxx, Miles Davis, Wes Montgomery, Sly and the Family Stone, Ike and Tina Turner, and numerous others took the stage in the upper room at The Playpen. Etta James would also frequently perform at another one of Simon’s clubs called The Full Moon Saloon. Venues like these helped retain the Fillmore’s cultural presence, helping to garner it the title “Harlem of the West.” Simon went on to open up seven more clubs throughout the city, including The Rambler’s House and the Blue Thistle.

On November 21, 1969, Simon married Anna Simien, whom he had known for seven years. Soon thereafter Simon was asked to take on the great responsibility of directing international recruitment for the Peace Corps in the mid-1970s. After returning to San Francisco, the Simons opened a new club in 1976, the Anxious Asp, on Haight Street.

The Simons moved to Sausalito in 1978, running their business from Marin County. They soon expanded the club, which attracted talent such as Pete Escovedo, Billy Preston, and Al Jarreau, among others. In 1990 the couple sold the business to the Red Vic. All told, the couple employed more than 1000 individuals, many of whom were minorities introduced into the hospitality industry. The Simons would eventually retire and move to Marin County to care for his garden and spend time writing about his experiences.

Simon remained connected to the youth, even in his retirement: he donated a pair of 49ers season tickets to a youth education program in the Fillmore, and he awarded 50-yard line tickets to community groups for many years to reward students who had shown improvements in both their grades and personal conduct.

In recognition of his many contributions to community, Simon received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the San Francisco Branch of the NAACP in 2016.

Simon had five children with his late wife, Bettie Opal Simon Johnson. Three of the five children are still alive today to remember his story. Simon’s eldest daughter, Dhameera Carlotta Ahmad, recently passed away in 2017. Dhameera was a proud activist within the Black Panther Party.

Sadly, Joseph Simon passed away on July 20, 2019, but as Anna Simon his wife and all who knew him can attest, Simon clearly left a lasting legacy.

—Marcelo Swofford, Sormeh Naderi, and Meisy Tunay

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“Successful Entrepreneur and Civil Rights Advocate Joseph Floyd ‘Bunny’ Simon.” [Obituary]
Thelma and Benjamin Smith earned their place on the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center Inspiration Murals for their extraordinary influence as parents in the community (Ness).

Benjamin Smith, Sr., known by his friends as “BJ,” was a community leader in the Western Addition neighborhood and was a mentor for many young people who lived there. His dedication to family values resonated throughout the neighborhood and made him a role model to the many people who knew him. Born on September 16, 1926, to Albert Berlin Smith, Sr., and Sallie Louis Smith in Leesville, Louisiana, Benjamin and his family would move to Tulsa, Oklahoma, then Merced, California, before finally settling in San Francisco (Obituary). Upon graduating from San Francisco’s Commerce High School during the height of the Second World War, Smith joined the segregated U.S. Army and was stationed in Alaska until he was honorably discharged in 1947.

After the war, Smith met his wife Thelma Payne and the two moved to San Francisco to raise their family of nine children. Smith had to work a multitude of jobs in order to support such a large family, sometimes working “two or three simultaneously” (Obituary). Benjamin worked as a cab driver, a janitor, at a meat market, and eventually as a transit operator and line trainer for the San Francisco Municipal Transit Authority (SFMTA). Smith passed down his dedication and passion for his work to his children. An SFMTA article notes that Benjamin Smith “was a Muni operator for nearly 20 years, and seven of the nine Smith children continued his legacy, working at Munii” (“A Muni Family Remembers Their Warriors Superstar”). Smith’s commitment to his job is reflected in the legacy that he left behind in the SFMTA community, a legacy that is continually upheld by his children.

Benjamin and Thelma worked hard to provide for their family. They made a focused effort to set a positive example for both their children and the community as a whole. The Smiths deeply valued the role of education and instilled these beliefs in their children from a young age. SFMTA reporter Victoria Botts noted, “It was [Benjamin and Thelma’s] mission to see their children succeed and overcome the obstacles presented here in the neigh-
Thelma and Benjamin Smith instilled the value of education in all nine of their children.

borhood” (“A Muni Family Remembers Their Warriors Superstar”). The task of raising such a large family in the Western Addition neighborhood was not always easy, but Thelma and Benjamin saw education as a way to combat the negative forces they observed. Alexis Hubbard, volunteer at the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center, explained, “They were outspoken as to the importance of education and did everything in their power to ensure their children succeeded academically” (“A Muni Family Remembers Their Warriors Superstar”). Although Benjamin Smith had a strong appreciation for sports, education was an aspect that he made a priority for his children. This emphasis on using education as a tool to better one’s own circumstances is one of the Smith family’s cornerstone principles.

In addition to being a loving husband and father, Benjamin Smith was a role model and mentor to many young people growing up in the Western Addition neighborhood. As his obituary notes, “BJ not only taught youth about sports, but gave them life lessons and spiritual advice.” In addition to his community support, it was also well known that Benjamin would always find a way to make time for his family amidst his busy schedule of numerous jobs. His obituary points out that, “Even after working two or three jobs he still made time to raise and coach all his children to be outstanding individuals.”

Throughout his life, Benjamin enjoyed playing and watching sports, especially basketball, and was fond of his role in assisting the USF Athletic Program with recruitment of athletes.

One of Benjamin and Thelma’s sons, Phillip, would even go on to become an NBA player and win an NBA championship with the Golden State Warriors in 1975. Phil was known for being a caring and humble individual in addition to being an elite basketball player. His excellence on and off the basketball court is, in many ways, a testament to Benjamin and Thelma’s dedication to raising a family with strong moral, social, and educational values.

An SFMTA employee explains that the Smith home was “awash with memories and photos of virtually each and every one of Benjamin and Thelma Smith’s nine children, their grandchildren and their great grandchildren” (“A Muni Family Remembers Their Warriors Superstar”).

Adored grandmother of 25, and great-grandmother of four, Thelma Smith passed away on July 3, 2005. She was survived by Benjamin Smith, Sr., who passed away on June 23, 2018, at the age of 91. The Smith family legacy lives on through their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren whom they dearly loved.

—Zachary James

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PHIL SMITH

PHILLIP ARNOLD SMITH was an inspirational basketball player and remarkable man. He was born on April 22, 1952, in San Francisco to Benjamin and Thelma Smith. Smith was the second youngest of nine children. Growing up, his love for basketball was immense. According to his brother, Stephen Smith, basketball was “probably the biggest thing on the planet.” He attended Washington High School where he played both football and basketball. He went on to attend the University of San Francisco. In his four years at USF, from 1971–1974, he led the Dons to multiple NCAA tournament appearances, going as far as the second round. He averaged 21 points his senior year to go along with All-American honors. Despite his achievements at the collegiate level, it wasn’t enough to garner a first round selection in the NBA draft.

Still relatively unknown, he was drafted by the San Francisco Warriors in the second round. The Warriors didn’t know yet but they had just drafted an instrumental piece for their 1975 championship run. Smith led a comeback in Game 1 of the 1974–1975 NBA Finals against the Washington Bullets which set the tone for the rest of the series. The Warriors ended up winning in a 4-0 sweep. Smith’s teammate and Hall of Famer Rick Barry had high praise for the young shooting guard from USF: “For a rookie to come into the league and to have this big an impact in the team’s success was a rarity.” Smith went on to have two NBA All-Star appearances in 1976 and 1977, All-NBA 2nd Team selection in the 1975–1976 season, and All-Defensive 2nd Team honors the same season. He’s one of the best players to ever put on a Warriors uniform and if it wasn’t for an Achilles tendon injury, his coaches believe, he would have been remembered as one of the greatest of all time. His career concluded with two-year stints with the San Diego Clippers and the Seattle Supersonics.

In 1975, Phil married his college sweetheart Angela and, according to his former USF coach Bob Gaillard, he fainted during his vows. Phil and Angela settled down in Escondido, Califor-
Phil Smith played an instrumental role on the Golden State Warriors championship team in 1975, but he was also an inspiration off the court.

In California where they had five children and remained married for 27 years. Alicia, his eldest daughter, said that her father was a family man who always stressed the importance of education before athletics. The Smith’s family values have been commemorated with a portrait of Thelma and Benjamin Smith on the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center mural. Even in fame, Phil was a dedicated family man, choosing to spend time at home with his brothers rather than with his teammates in the spotlight. After an interview with Smith’s younger brother, Matthew, Mark De Andre wrote, “It was basketball that kept Matthew Smith and his brothers on the straight and narrow. Basketball, and parents determined to see their children succeed despite the pitfalls that ruled the inner-city streets of the Fillmore District in the 1970s.”

Phillip Smith inspired new generations of people to play basketball. His story was that of success and it echoed throughout the neighborhood. Bill Cartwright, a former NBA player and USF alumni, said, “When Phillip made it to the pros, guys who had never picked up basketballs in their life—robbers, muggers, thieves—began to pick up basketballs. You saw a revolution in the neighborhood because this one dude from the neighborhood had made it.”

After four long years battling bone marrow cancer, Phillip Arnold Smith passed away on July 29, 2002, in his home in Escondido, California, at the age of 50. He remains an inspiration to those in the Fillmore and is still widely recognized by the basketball community. In 2017, in honor of Black History Month, NBA.com posted a video commemorating his story featuring Rick Barry, Bill Cartwright, and members of his family, all telling stories of the late great Phil Smith. Although basketball was his first love, nothing would surpass his love for his family. His former coach, Al Attles, once said, “As great as he was as a basketball player, he was a much better person,” and that is how his legacy is remembered.

—Jesse Cortes

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ON THE WALLS of the Fillmore’s Ella Hill Hutch Community Center, stands a mural of one of the neighborhood’s foremost youth advocates, Reuben “Smitty” Smith. Smith was born in 1933 and was raised on the Upper West Side of New York City. After graduating from Saint Augustine’s College in North Carolina in 1957, Smith served in the U.S. Army. In 1963, he moved from Harlem to the Bay Area because he “wanted to see what was happening on this side of the world” (Millard).

After moving across the country, Smith recognized that America was a country of great inequity. He began his career working to influence the lives of children, stating that he wanted “to improve the quality of people’s lives. These young people are citizens of tomorrow, and that’s all we have. They’re going to run the city and run the country, and a lot of people don’t realize that” (Millard). He became an agent of change when he was positioned as the Executive Director of the Hunters Point Boys and Girls Club in 1970. Hunters Point carried a reputation for being heavily impoverished. Unemployment played an impactful role in the socioeconomic makeup of the neighborhood. After arriving in Hunters Point, Smith connected with the community, took it as his own, and never gave up on the children he mentored.

In an interview with the San Francisco Examiner, Smith elucidates his dedication to uplifting the next generation of Hunters Point: “In my mind, most of these kids, when they become adults, they should be better than me, with all the opportunities they have” (Millard). He encouraged the idea of “actions not words.” Though he was a man of few words, when he spoke he spoke profoundly when he served as a mentor and big brother figure to many (Yollin).

Smith established connections with all his members and often played pool and ping-pong with them. He took the children to the library, Golden Gate Park, Mt. Diablo State Park, and many other places that were worth the excursion. During the time spent with the boys, Smith had become a big brother, mentor, and even father figure to many.

Robert Duty, a 62 year-old El Cerrito real es-
Reuben Smith was Director of the Hunters Point Boys and Girls Club for 38 years.

tate broker, was 14 when he met Mr. Smith. Duty remembers Smith as “a big kid himself” (Yollin). Duty also saw Smith as a father figure: “He was very personable. He was not pretentious and he was a real down-to-earth person. Kids really identified with him. He was not like all the other adults. He started a bodybuilding program. A lot of older gang members came to lift weights with him. Everyone related to him” (Yollin).

Smith was more than just a fun mentor, he was also an effective disciplinarian who used constructive methods to correct the children’s misbehavior. In one incident, a boy was misbehaving and Smith corrected him by saying “Why don’t you go into the men’s room and take a look in the mirror?” He would allow the boys to take a moment to reflect upon themselves and recognize their worth and value as growing gentlemen. He would then say, “Did you like what you saw? Well, you don’t have to act up then” (Yollin). His simple yet empowering ways of discipline made Smith a parental figure to many.


Even in retirement, Smith was strongly committed to keeping the doors of the Hunters Point Boys and Girls Club open. On January 26, 2006, Smith helped steer a project with the city alongside Rob Connolly, President of the San Francisco Boys and Girls Club, to grant $1 million in funding to Hunters Point Boys Club.

For the remainder of his life, Smith danced to jazz and continued to reveal the potential of his community (Brown). He died from cardiovascular disease on December 25, 2008, at the age of 74 at the Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley. Five hundred mourners, including generations of youth who he inspired, gathered together at his memorial. Reuben “Smitty” Smith is remembered as an inspiration who encouraged youth to believe that they could be successful.

— Juliet Baires

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Rudy Smith, from legendary American Football running back at San Francisco State University to Chief Probation Officer of Juvenile Services in San Francisco, has long cemented his legacy as a changemaker. Smith’s perseverance, hard work, and passion, allowed him to make significant impact in San Francisco.

Smith was often written about in local newspapers during his collegiate playing career, with a majority of those writings being in praise of abilities. For instance, in 1950 the San Francisco Chronicle wrote that “star running-back (Right Half) Rudy Smith for SF State was deemed ‘Gator star of the evening’ after a 58-yard run from scrimmage was the longest run of the night to score their second touchdown.” In his first dominant years at San Francisco State University, he was renowned for going on scoring streaks throughout the season. Rudy was inducted into the SFSU gridiron Hall of Fame in 1992 as a result of his achievements.

Before finding his way into juvenile services, Smith entered the Air Force after graduating from SF State in 1955. As a second lieutenant he was trained as a pilot at Luke Air Force Base, near Phoenix, Arizona. His close friend Rotea Gilford was quoted as saying that Rudy’s landing of a jet was more like a “controlled crash.” Rudy’s military service spanned three years of active duty and several years in the reserves, culminating in his promotion to the rank of Major.

Upon returning to San Francisco with a young family, Rudy held several jobs, including acting as a cable car gripman, until he found his calling with San Francisco Juvenile Probation, serving at the Youth Guidance Center. In this role, Smith fostered relationships with the community leading him to work throughout the 1960s with city leaders such as Lefty Gordon and many others who are memorialized on the Inspiration Murals.

In 1970 Smith was recruited to work for a special new probation unit called Watoto in East Palo Alto (“watoto” means “children” in Swahili). He accepted the challenge of this experiment, utilizing community street workers in an attempt to stem the tide of crime in this community.

After serving for many years in San Mateo
Recruited by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Rudy Smith served as Chief Probation Officer for San Francisco’s Probation Services, advocating for youth and restorative justice.

County, through opportune timing and impressive experience, Smith became the second in command at San Francisco’s embattled juvenile probation department, having been recruited by Mayor Willie L. Brown to take over in 1996. He had previously served as San Mateo County’s juvenile intake/traffic director, a position of equal importance in juvenile and probation services. He said of the opportunity to serve in San Francisco: “I’m excited. It’s quite a challenge,” at the limber age of 63 years old. Smith was granted the position of interim chief probation officer that same year after Ed Flowers had resigned from the position. Here, Smith led discussions for plans to reorganize the department’s budget and to correct the actions of accounting director Ace Tago, after embezzlement troubles of up to $100,000 had been discovered. Smith made every effort to reform Juvenile Services in San Francisco before his retirement.

Rudy Smith led a varied career in the fields of juvenile/probation services, and much more. It was his demeanor and purpose in every position he would go on to tackle that set him apart as a changemaker. Although he has been retired for many years, the communities he has worked in, such as the Western Addition, have never wavered in their appreciation for the impact he has made.

Smith’s impact can be captured by a recent experience. Smith was out at lunch when he was approached by a young man who asked, “Are you Mr. Smith?” When Rudy replied that he was, the young man said, “I want to thank you—you were my P.O. in S.F. and I was on the wrong path. You saved my life.”

Who could hope for a more impactful legacy?

— Marcelo Scafford and Susan Brissenden-Smith

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JAMES E. STRATTEN

James E. Stratten was born in Cedartown, Georgia, on November 20, 1913. He later attended Talladega College in Alabama where he earned his bachelor’s degree before moving to New York to attend Columbia University to receive a master’s degree in physical education (SFGate). He went on to play professional football with the New York Brown Bombers and Black Hawks in addition to playing semi-pro basketball in the Central New Jersey League (“New Supervisor”). In 1945 Stratten, who at the time was working as a regional supervisor for the United Service Organizations in New York, decided to move to San Francisco (SFGate).

In 1945, James Stratten was appointed as Executive Director of the Booker T. Washington Community Center (BTWCC), which was founded during World War I to serve the needs of the impoverished and neglected black community. Stratten’s primary goal at the center was to create different multicultural programs emphasizing leadership, responsibility, and education. He was responsible for founding programs like the Japanese Language School at the Community Center. Stratten worked closely with the Japanese community once they began to move back into the Fillmore after World War II and they were able to return the language school building on Bush Street back to the Japanese community after their displacement and removal to internment camps. This refounding of the school was one of Stratten’s dreams coming to fruition. He truly wanted to create a place where people of different ages and ethnic identities could come together and celebrate the diversity of the Western Addition.

During his tenure at the Booker T. Washington Community Center, Stratten earned many prestigious accolades and honors. In 1947, he became the first African American to be named to a grand jury in California. During his service, he was a representative at the White House Conference on Children and Youth and the White House Conference on Education. He also served on the California Youth Committee and was appointed to the Republican State Central Committee (“New Supervisor”). Additionally, Mayor Elmer Robinson appointed Stratten to be part of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency where he served from 1950 to 1956 (“New
Supervisor”). In 1954, he served as a member of the California State Board of Education, and from 1954 to 1960 he served on the advisory council of the California Congress of Parents and Teachers (“New Supervisor”). While working there, he represented the interests of the Fillmore community (SFGate).

Stratten was appointed by Mayor George Christopher to the San Francisco School Board in 1961, and then again in 1963 (SFGate). In 1964, he became the first African American president of the school board (Obituary). As the San Francisco School Board President, he was able to engage the community in how the district could better benefit the area by receiving the input of those living there.

After stepping down from the Booker T. Washington Center in 1967, he took a position appointed by Governor Ronald Reagan with the National Afro-American History and Culture Commission as the Administrative Representative to the Youth Authority (SFGate). There he used his experience from more than 20 years of work at Booker T. Washington Community Center to help other organizations. Unfortunately he was taken off the school board the same year he accepted this new job by Mayor John F. Shelley because Attorney General Thomas Lynch said that his new job made him an “officer of the state.” City Attorney Thomas M. O’Connor said that Stratten’s old job as a member of the school board made him an officer of the city and it was decreed by the city charter that Stratten could not serve in both positions at once (“School Board”).

James E. Stratten inspired the lives of many, including his son Ronald Stratten, who was the first black student elected as the student body president at Lowell High School in San Francisco. Ronald also worked for the NCAA’s Education Services division and followed in his father’s footsteps as a football coach at Portland State University (Bodovitz).

James E. Stratten left a rich legacy within the Western Addition community. He was a vitally important individual and left an imprint through his knowledge of community engagement and his understanding of the community’s assets. Not only was Stratten able to speak for the African American community but he also made an effort to include other cultural groups, such as the Japanese people who were integrating back from the internment camps. In essence, James E. Stratten has a place on the Ella Hill Hutch mural because he was a strong advocate for the Fillmore and worked to help others find their voices. Stratten died on March 30, 1996, but his legacy lives on through the changes he made in the school districts in San Francisco and through those that he inspired along the way.

—Nell Baylis, Zoe Foster, and Ethan Tan

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James Thigpen, one of the many notable community leaders depicted upon the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center Wall, was a man who thrived against the odds to become a well known and successful entrepreneur, restaurateur, and local San Francisco philanthropist. Born in Chicago on March 8, 1940, James Thigpen found himself in an era wrought with racism and prejudice. However, he never doubted his potential and was eventually able to attend Cornell University where he earned a bachelor’s degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management. Thigpen’s degree reflects the passion that he held for taking care of others. Thigpen did not want his newfound skills to go to waste and became an avid member in the hotel, restaurant, and educational aid industries. He was a participant on numerous boards: S.R. Martin College Preparatory School, the California Lutheran University Board of Regents, the Golden Gate University Committee on Hotel Restaurant Tourism Management, the San Francisco Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center. His participation demonstrated his eagerness to better his community. Restaurants and hotels ensured that a large sector of the economy brought continuous business into the area. Thigpen’s interest in education was spurred by his wish to better the future of the community through its youth. He was able to fund his contributions to the community through the money that he made with the various hotels and restaurants that he owned such as the Blue Diamond, The Terrace Restaurant at San Francisco International Airport, Thiggy’s at Lincoln Park Golf Course and Thiggy’s in Golden Gate Park. As one of Thigpen’s most well-known restaurants, Thiggy’s in the Richmond was even host to events like mayoral debates.

Sandra Crumpler, a business associate and friend of Thigpen explained: “He was always going to annual conferences for disadvantaged businesses who wanted to get into airports...He was always talking about the new international airport (plans) and he was very excited about getting more contracts for minorities. [James Thigpen] was a leader and a motivator and many people were encouraged by what he had done” (Sun Reporter).

Born during trying times, Thigpen was able to
James Thigpen was a highly regarded and successful entrepreneur, restaurateur, and local San Francisco philanthropist. He achieved his goals through perseverance. Despite any prejudices or labels that were placed upon black businessmen at the time, he stayed true to his passions and showed the community that he truly had a great message: that black entrepreneurs are no different than any other. Fred Jordan, a close friend of Thigpen’s, remarked “that although many other African American businessmen are victimized by the media and the establishment for grand achievements, Thigpen managed to rise above it all” (Sun–Reporter). Using his own restaurants, James Thigpen would generously fund different events to better his community. For example, in 1992 Thiggy’s donated a percentage of its gross receipts at the annual Candlelight Again fundraiser to help the San Francisco Unified School District’s after school programs with 29 other local restaurants.

According to a Sun–Reporter article from 1999, Thigpen was also an economic guru of the African American community and often gave his fellow community members financial advice. Thigpen was a founding member and chapter president of 100 Black Men of the Bay Area which was an organization whose purpose was “To improve the quality of life in African American communities by improving the educational, economic and social status of African Americans across the entire nation” (100 Black Men of the Bay Area, Inc).

More than 100 African American businessmen and women attended the Wholesale Food Industry Workshop sponsored by the Black business Listings/Northern California Black Pages according to California Voice. This was in an effort to educate those who were given an unfair start in life. Joe Bell, a close friend of Thigpen, explained that he believed that “once you get it you must always share with others. His biggest thing was helping educate kids where they could have a better start in life” (Examiner). James Thigpen died on June 8th, 1999, in Houston and is still remembered for his passion, thoughtfulness and dedication to his community. His place on the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center wall serves as a symbol of entrepreneurial and community spirit for all those in the Western Addition.

—Chase Nakayama; additional research by Zachary James

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DR. SHIRLEY A. THORNTON

Dr. Shirley A. Thornton, a woman dedicated to the pursuit of equal education and opportunity, lives by this life motto: “Let us use the knowledge we have, to gain the knowledge we need, to do the job we must for all children” (Thornton). A determined advocate for “excellence in education for all children,” Thornton is originally from New Orleans (YWCA). She now extends her advocacy into the Bay Area community and continues to dedicate her life to the education and empowerment of younger generations. Thornton earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from San Francisco State in 1965 and a doctorate in education from the University of San Francisco in 1985 (Thornton).

During her undergraduate years, she began her career in education as a Science and Physical Education teacher for Aptos Junior High School (Thornton). In the ensuing years, she was consistently promoted within the educational and administrative system. She was promoted from principal of Balboa High School to Area Superintendent of High School Operations and Instruction Division for the San Francisco Unified School District (Thornton).

Thornton used her time between her educational careers to develop relationships within the San Francisco community by working as an active member of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Using her background in biology, she was able to become an active participant in the fight for disease research. Although her love for the medical field did not necessarily follow her into her career, she continued to be a passionate member and advocate for her community. She is a self-described “scholar, educator, administrator, author, and school board member” (Thornton). Thornton has a wealth of intellectual qualifications, professional experience, and credit in the literary world. With the publishing of her textbook *Transforming Schools, Finding Success For Students At Risk Through Systemic Change*, Thornton paved the path for disadvantaged youth and aspiring changemakers.

Thornton’s accomplishments within the education sector have hardly gone unnoticed—in fact, she has received over 50 awards for her powerful insights and contributions, not only in local settings, but also in the greater educational field (Thornton). Dr. Thornton aimed to develop the whole person through exposure to educational opportunities, specifically for marginalized groups. Most notably, she developed a program in the educational sector known as the “California Local Educational Reform Network” which is a technical tool...
Dr. Shirley Thornton has helped transform the education system into an equitable and socially receptive institution.

for improving schools (YWCA). The program was piloted in Sacramento Schools in 1987–89 and worked to provide equal opportunities for all students regardless of race or income (YWCA). Such an advancement in education has helped students across the nation.

After dedicating her life to education as a teacher, counselor, and administrator, Thornton then worked as the Deputy Superintendent of California schools until 1995 (Thornton). Programs like these greatly helped African American youth address the barriers that many face in obtaining higher education.

From 1995 to 1996, Thornton served as Director of San Francisco Public Housing. Former San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan noted: “Thornton is a strong manager and effective leader who is ready to create change and better days for the Housing Authority and for San Francisco” (SF Gate). In 2000, Thornton decided to resign from her role as associate professor at Sacramento State University so that she could take the job as Senior Vice President and National Director of the Schools Division of the America’s Schools Program (Thornton).

Since 2006, Dr. Thornton has been an Adjunct Associate Professor in the California State University, Sacramento’s School of Education, in the Educational Administration and Policy Studies Department (Thornton). Additionally, she owns Thornton Educational Services which focuses on helping schools provide quality education for at-risk youth.

In order to continue providing these resources, Dr. Thornton co-founded the nonprofit Center For Excellence where she continues to act as the Board President (“Sausalito Marin City School District Board Meeting Minutes”). Center for Excellence provides a space for youth to use art as a way to create opportunity, love, and happiness (“Welcome to The Center for Excellence”). Thornton continues her personal mission today by building the foundations for holistic learning and education. Her main philosophy “stresses that all children can learn, and that high standards and expectations are necessary not only for the students but for all involved in their education” (Thornton). She continues to actively post on social media about contemporary issues, social events, and how to get involved. In an interview with College Partnership she explains her passion for her career: “If people go into it thinking it’s a job, then there’s a problem.” Her holistic approach to education is a testament to her devotion to making the world a better place.

— Kiana Martinez and Draucillia Bala; additional research by Olivia Walker

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BURL A.
TOLER

“Burl Toler was the best. He had everything an athlete should have: he loved the game, he was fast and he was the best tackler I’ve ever seen. He would have been a hell of an NFL linebacker,” said Gino Marchetti, defensive end for the Baltimore Colts and former teammate of Toler.

Burl Abron Toler, Sr., was born on May 9, 1928 in Memphis, Tennessee, to Arnold W. Toler, Sr., and Annie King Toler. Attending a segregated school during his senior year, he planned to play for the school football team but could not try out due to his arm getting burned by a vat of cooking grease. Nevertheless, Toler would eventually play football at the City College of San Francisco (CCSF) when he moved to Oakland with his uncle in 1948. His talent was spotted in a gym class by an assistant coach and he was immediately asked to play.

“Nobody could block Burl because he was so strong and quick,” said Walt Jourdan, a former CCSF running back. “Ollie Matson [the team’s star player] ran three straight dive plays, and Burl stopped him all three times. Then Ollie ran a sweep, and Burl was there to meet him.” The 1948 CCSF team finished 12–0, winning a national junior college title. Once the season was over, Toler and Matson transferred to the University of San Francisco to join the legendary 1951 Dons football team.

The 1951 Dons have been described as “one of the greatest college teams of all time” by the San Francisco Chronicle. However, they never had the opportunity to compete in the Orange Bowl because they were not invited to play. At the end of the 1951 season, the Dons defeated the College of the Pacific 47–12 in a game that was supposed to determine which team would be invited to the Orange Bowl. Despite the loss, College of the Pacific was invited instead because the Dons had two African American players on their football team: Burl Toler and Ollie Matson. USF teammate Marchetti said that “when we found out Burl and Ollie weren’t going to go, we said . . . we ain’t going.” The team stood in solidarity and never thought twice about going to the Orange Bowl without Toler and Matson.

Despite not going to the Orange Bowl, Toler was drafted to play for the Cleveland Browns (later traded to the Chicago Cardinals). However, a knee injury during the college all-star game cut his playing career short. He then became an NFL official with the help of NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle. Toler officiated for 25 years, from 1965–1989. Some
of these games were crucial, including Super Bowl XIV in 1980 and the 1982 AFC championship game. (He was also selected as an alternate for Super Bowl I.) He was, in fact, the African American official in any major league professional sport. Unfortunately, he was the target for many racial slurs. Jim Tunney, who worked on the same crew with Toler for 11 years, stated that Toler “[did not] allow racism to interfere in doing his job. He nev-
er mentioned it, and if it ever did occur, he just rose above it.” He was very passionate about the game, and would not allow anyone to ruin it for him.

While Burl Toler might not have become a star in the NFL, he was seen as much more than an athlete in the Fillmore community. While he officiated football games, he also taught at San Francisco’s Benjamin Franklin Middle School where he became the first black junior high school vice-principal. He was eventually promoted to principal. Because of his seventeen years of service to the school, it was renamed the Burl A. Toler Campus in 2006. The school was named in his honor because of his dedication to helping the community. When asked in a 1968 interview why he became an educator he said, “I had planned to play professional football, and I was also always interested in education and students. The knee injury led me into education sooner.”

Among his many contributions to the larger San Francisco community, Toler served as San Francisco Police Department Commissioner from 1978 to 1986. He also served on the Board of Trustees at the University of San Francisco from 1987 to 1998.

As testament to Toler’s excellence as a community leader, the University of San Francisco renamed Phelan Hall to become Toler Hall in May of 2017. According to a USF-sponsored article, Burl A. Toler was chosen for the honor because he embodied “USF’s Jesuit Catholic mission, as a student, a member of the 1951 Dons’ ‘undefeated, untied and uninvited’ football team, then as a beloved father, husband, longtime San Francisco educator and well-known NFL linesman official.” With the renaming of the residence hall, Toler’s legacy is now even further solidified.

Toler was a loving father and husband. He married his wife, Melvia Woolfolk, in 1953. They had six children, three daughters and three sons, and were also the proud grandparents of eight grandchildren.

Toler’s love for football was passed down to his son and grandson. Burl Toler, Jr., played college football for UC Berkeley, and Burl Toler Jr.’s son, Burl Toler III, played in the NFL. Toler III gained inspiration from his grandfather’s advice: “Do your best and the best will be good enough.”

After Burl A. Toler’s passing in 2009, all of San Francisco came to appreciate his proud legacy.

—Betsy Jacobo and Grace Jackson

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REV.
ARELIous
WALKer

Rev. Arelious Walker has led the True Hope Church of God in Christ for decades.

Rev. Arelious Walker, born in small-town Atlanta, Texas, in 1931, moved to San Francisco in 1956 in search of work opportunities. It would be here that the legendary community pastor opened his True Hope Church of God in Christ in the Bayview District on May 12, 1968, with the help of his wife, Hazel Walker. And although Walker has always demonstrated an immense ability to help others and be proactive in aiding impoverished communities, his church is the defining keystone of his career. It started off with only four members, but after years of hard work and expansion, they were able to move to a larger location in the Bayview on Gilman Avenue in 1978.

As Arelious focused on expanding the influence of his church, he made sure to do this by directly impacting the lives of many in his community. He was especially influential in offering the church as an alternative to drugs and crime in the Bayview, having gathered hundreds of people for talks of drug rehabilitation, strongly announcing that “when you accept Christ, you have no withdrawal.” Around this time, he created thousands of pamphlets entitled “What’s Happening in Our Black Neighborhoods” that served as a piece of motivation literature for those seeking a new opportunity in life away from drugs and crime. He also tended to visit housing projects, street corners, and broadcast talks over radio; he used the radio to promote his work at San Bruno Jail, where he tended to visit inmates and conduct regular worship services.

Homelessness was another issue that True Hope tended to tackle. As Walker put it: “We’re a community oriented church.” He wanted to help, but also wanted to make help far more available. He recruited homeless families to share “grits and goodies” for others during Christmas. By 1983, he helped gather more than 700 landlords and tenants from across San Francisco to meet at City Hall, attempting to bolster the city’s rent control laws. In 1987, he also helped garner 32,078 signatures to propose a measure that would elect San Francisco supervisors by district. “This is a mandate from the people of San Francisco... District elections will hold the supervisors of San Francisco accountable to the people.” These are prime examples of the community activism that made Arelious such a
special pastor.

In 1994, Walker held an Open Forum about the problem of incarceration with fellow Changemaker Reverend Amos Brown. He led one of the most effective jail ministries in the nation and aided the lives of countless citizens. His Caring and Restoration Home helped ex-offenders make their transition from prison into the real-world. He was quick to give attention to the vast difference in incarceration between neighborhoods like Pacific Heights and the Tenderloin or Bayview. He put this same effort toward job growth, such as in the Home Depot debate of 2002. Certain community officials argued its introduction would diminish local business, but Walker saw it as an opportunity for more than 200 jobs to surge into the community: “This isn’t just about the jobs,” he said, “This is about a neighborhood’s right of self-determination. It’s about respect.” This same year, after membership significantly grew, the church was able to expand by 30,000 square feet.

The True Hope Church was chosen as the site for the new Bayview Hope Housing Project in 2003, as Walker’s leadership for more than 35 years forwarding spiritual solace, day care, substance abuse rehabilitation, and job skills training did not go unnoticed. Mayor Willie Brown, along with a handful of others, worked alongside Walker in creating this groundbreaking low-income housing complex on the parking lot of True Hope. Any extra revenue the church garnered, Walker said, would go towards paying off the church’s mortgage, funding a new computer learning center, and a neighborhood association to keep the area clean.

Arelious Walker has now lived in the Bayview and led the True Hope Church for over 50 years alongside his wife Hazel and his five children. Pastor Walker has continued to passionately work to bring jobs, housing, needed services, and equity to southeast San Francisco. He also continues as the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Bayview Hunters Point, a representative of the Tabernacle Community Development Corporation, and leader of Bayview Hope Housing. His immeasurable commitment to community activism has cemented Walker’s legacy as a Changemaker, with his face to be among so many others who’ve made a difference on the Inspiration Murals.

—Marcelo Swofford

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DORIS MARGARET WARD was born in Chicago on January 27, 1932, to Robbie Floyd and Jesse Keys. She was raised by her grandparents Joseph and Julia Floyd, who lived in Gary, Indiana, and managed a family owned grocery store. From kindergarten through 12th grade, Ward attended Frable School where she was an active member of the debate team. She was also nominated the Queen of the Bud Billiken Parade, an event that has been hosted annually in Chicago since 1929 and is the largest African-American parade in the United States. During her youth, Ward was very active in the burgeoning civil rights movement and participated in sit-ins at bars. In 1980, Ward explained to the San Francisco Examiner that “Even though I recognized from a very early age what racism was, I didn’t let that daunt me. When they closed one door, I opened another.” This statement highlights the resilience that Ward carried throughout her life.

Upon graduating from high school, Doris Ward attended Indiana University and earned both her Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in education. During this time, she continued to further her lifelong battle against social injustice at the Indianapolis NAACP, where she opposed the hateful rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan. Ward spent ten years as a teacher in Indiana before deciding to move to California where in 1968, she attended San Francisco State University. After receiving her PhD in education at SFSU, Ward began her political career. She ran a successful campaign in 1972 and was appointed as a trustee for the San Francisco Community College District. Ward also took on several more positions including County Supervisor in 1979, President of the Board of Supervisors in 1990, and the San Francisco County Assessor-Recorder in 1996. While on the Board of Supervisors she wrote rent control legislation, worked for better oversight for police and pushed for more affordable housing. In 2000, she also became a delegate for the Democratic National Convention as a representative for California before she retired in 2006.

Ward centered her political career around social justice and equity for all. “The accomplishments that brought her the most joy included her sponsorship
Doris Ward remained committed to social justice while serving as the President of the Board of Supervisors and the San Francisco County Assessor.

or co-sponsorship of legislation governing minority business set-asides, rent control mandates for San Francisco apartment vacancies, and the divestiture of investments in apartheid South Africa.” Ward dedicated herself to fighting for the rights of underrepresented and marginalized people on both a local and global scale. She never shied away from taking action on issues that mattered and dedicated herself to the promotion of legislation that would improve the lives of others. Ward was also “a founding member of the San Francisco chapter of 100 Black Women Inc., and Black Women Stirring the Waters. She led the African American Action Network and served as Board Vice President of the Black Coalition on AIDS, which became the Rafiki Coalition for Health and Wellness.”

Ward was active in many social and political organizations around the Bay Area and she inspired others to engage in politics that were focused on equality and justice. Former Mayor Mark Farrell described Ward as a “fearless political leader” who possessed a “trailblazing presence whose courage and resolve helped inspire countless others to follow in her footsteps.” Current San Francisco Mayor London Breed, the city’s first African-American woman mayor, has been inspired by Ward since meeting her in high school. Breed had even worked for Ward on a campaign and praised her for her positive attitude, spirit, and kind nature.

Doris Ward passed away at the age of eighty-six in her San Francisco home on Saturday April 15, 2018. Rev. Amos Brown, a prominent pastor and civil rights activist in San Francisco, had kind words to say about Ward, fondly praising “her respect for education and hard work, and her respect for the dignity and worth of all people--from the high and mighty to the drunk on the corner.” Reverend Brown explained that “Whenever there was a controversy and people were running around in circles, she would always raise the piercing question, ‘What are you doing to deal with this matter?’ She was a doer.”

—Teresa Fishman and Grace Jackson

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ELOISE WESTBROOK

Eloise Westbrook was born in 1915 in Waco, Texas. She moved to the Bay Area twelve years before she earned her position as President of the Bayview–Hunters Point committee. In 1955, she was part of the staff of the Hunters Point poverty board. She was a mother, a grandmother to 15 children, and an active advocate for the San Francisco community. Community members have described her as “one of the most vocal advocates for the betterment of conditions for families living in the dilapidated warehouses at Hunters Point” (Bayview Footprints). Westbrook was a Bayview–Hunters Point pioneer and was described as “an outspoken, feisty, fearless woman, afraid of no one, no matter their status in life or power” (Metcalfe). Westbrook served as the head of the Hunters Point Joint Housing Committee and was sworn in on June 9, 1968, as only the second woman to take on this role. Not knowing that they would receive negative comments, the Joint Housing Committee flew out to Washington, D.C. to meet with the federal housing officials to fix the housing problem in San Francisco. Eloise Westbrook was tired of being disrespected by the Housing of Urban Development’s head and so she placed her foot on his chair so that he had no place to sit.

Westbrook never accepted no for an answer and Hunters Point’s residents were desperate for change. In 1970, the individuals from the Housing Committee had traveled a long way to fight for housing and the future of Hunters Point. HUD officials refused to negotiate with Hunters Point delegates which caused extreme levels of stress for Westbrook. Eloise Westbrook fought for the people until she physically couldn’t anymore. The levels of stress led Eloise Westbrook, Chairman of the Joint House Committee at that time, to have a stroke before fainting.

Westbrook led a delegation in 1973 under Mayor Alioto to get federal funding to build houses in Bayview Hunters Point. She was recognized as a woman who spoke her mind and was known as the voice of the community since 1980. She was the strongest tenants’ advocate on the commission. Her purpose was not only to build affordable hous-
Eloise Westbrook was an advocate for those who were in need of food, shelter, jobs, and accessible health care. Working with the redevelopment agency, but to build a better image for the neighborhood and to address the issue of social isolation that residents encountered within the city. Westbrook and her committee, who were known as “the big five,” hired their own architects, their own contractors, and created jobs for those in the construction field. Westbrook wanted more access to affordable housing and had a long-term plan to provide community members with jobs. She claimed, “I don’t think there’s another urban renewal that works the way Hunters Point works” (SFSU). The Bayview-Hunters Point community had always been involved in the decision making process for the new housing development program. Westbrook was known for her housing advocacy passion. It was no surprise when she decided to picket in front of the SF Housing Authority (Anders).

Eloise Westbrook attended San Francisco State University where she showed her support for the San Francisco State Strike. In a speech, Westbrook stated, “I only have But one life to give children, when I die I’m dead. And you’d better believe it. But I’m dying for the rights of people” (Bayview Footprints). Westbrook always fought for justice. At San Francisco State University, she publicly announced her support for the Black Student Union and Third World Liberation Front so that her alma mater could establish a College of Ethnic Studies.

Eloise Westbrook will forever be a legend to the San Francisco and Hunters Point community. She was an advocate for those who were in need of food, shelter, jobs, and accessible health care. She was a voice for those oppressed in the city. Westbrook passed away on September 13, 2011 at 96 years old (Metcalfe). In her memory, many health facilities carry her name including the Westbrook Plaza Health Center and Housing Complex (Metcalfe). Mayor Willie Brown spoke of Eloise Westbrook at her funeral, saying, “She used to scare me! She was a pure, unadulterated sister!” (Metcalfe).

—Ashley Cruz and Meisy Tunay

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Civil rights activist and entrepreneur Earl H. White was born in the small city of Muskogee, Oklahoma, in 1934 to parents Albert Earl White and Agatha White. Around the age of ten, White moved to San Francisco. He received a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of San Francisco in 1963 and continued his higher education at Pepperdine University, earning a master’s degree in business administration in 1975. He would later go on to acquire a doctorate from Washington International University in 1981. White was one of the most prominent leaders in the African American business community, helping many people through his entrepreneurial endeavors.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, White was the director of the San Francisco Model Cities Program, a series of programs designed to help those living in poverty. As director, he oversaw and assessed 21 projects that were worth $7.5 million. Also in 1971, White founded E.H. White, Inc., a financial consulting firm. The company created databases for San Francisco’s Purchasing Department and Human Rights Commission, which documented women and minority involvement in business enterprises. The company created contracts for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), San Francisco General Hospital, and Bechtel Corporation. These endeavors prioritized engineering, construction, and project management goals. In 1989, White became the Chief Administrative Officer and principal of Systems Support Technologies—a position he served in for eleven years.

White immersed himself in the San Francisco community, finding any way he could to positively impact people’s lives. He led the United States Black Chamber of Commerce from 1981 to 1985, representing and promoting African American business owners in the Bay Area. In 1995, White assumed the responsibilities of President of the San Francisco Black Chamber of Commerce (SF-BCC).

One of the primary tasks that White faced as a Republican President of the Black Chamber of Commerce was his conflict with California Governor Pete Wilson. Wilson, in an effort to advance his Republican political agenda in a Democratically
dominant state, was trying to garner attention from Republican politicians in other states; in order to accomplish this, he continued to abolish race- and gender-based affirmative action policies at the University of California at Berkeley. White responded to this by threatening to abandon the GOP, calling Wilson’s actions a disgrace to Bay Area politics.

The SFBCC, under White’s leadership, was able to stir up the political and business worlds in the city. Wells Fargo, in 1998, initiated $1 billion loan program nationwide to aid the success of small African American businesses. The SFBCC led the initiative over a span of 12 years and the Bay Area received a massive portion of these funds, nearly 10% of the total holdings, due to their efforts. In the year 1999, the National Minority Supplier Development Council received a citywide proposal changing the basis for minority-led basis criterion; for a business to be considered minority-owned, it would need to only be run by 30% minority workers rather than the usual 51%. However, White argued that it was part of the larger plan to try and destroy affirmative action in city politics. In May of 2000, Earl H. White passed away after a battle with colon cancer at the age of 66, leaving behind an extensive legacy in the city of San Francisco.

As Dr. Caesar Churchwell, President of Black Leadership Forum San Franciscans for Better Government said, “[Earl White] really wanted to see African Americans empowered—he wanted us to be more involved in the economy. He volunteered many long hours of his time to work for economic empowerment. Earl was a leader that will be sorely missed in the community.”

As Harry Alford, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Black Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C., expressed: “San Francisco has lost a great advocate. We have truly lost a great leader in the African American business community. It’s sad. He had been working on [computer technology] long before anyone knew about the Internet. For 30 years, he had been involved in technology issues—all the way back when IBM had those big mainframes . . . Earl was a trooper.” This eloquent expression of Earl White’s impact demonstrates his legacy as a Changemaker.

—Luigi Aieta, Althea Pyle, and Marcelo Swofford

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EUGENE E. WHITE

Revolutionary artist Eugene E. White was not afraid to depict the truth regarding race. His work unabashedly celebrates Black culture and art while faithfully encapsulating Black history and Black lives. White’s legacy as a creative thinker captivates and inspires people not only in San Francisco but also all over the United States and the world.

Eugene E. White was born in Ozan, Arkansas, on March 29, 1933, to James and Maggie White. He spent his younger years developing his artistic talents in an era where Jim Crow laws shaped the way he lived. As a young boy, White spent much of his childhood doing agricultural work. White’s rigorous upbringing played a huge role in his creative focus.

In an interview with the University of San Francisco’s Martín-Baró Scholars, White told an anecdote about how he would cleverly maneuver his way through his school subjects. He explained, “I used to bargain in school. I would look for people who were good in math or English and ask them to do my homework for me. If they said yes, I would draw them pretty pictures or write their names in calligraphy.” White showed an affinity for art since a young age but never fully realized it until later in his life.

In the 1950s, Eugene moved to Detroit and worked for Cadillac briefly as a designer. In 1958, White ventured to San Francisco, where he opened the very first black-owned gallery in the city in 1962. In 1963, White suffered a life-threatening car accident. Throughout his hospital stay, loved ones constantly surrounded and supported him. White credits his loved ones as the major reason for his survival.

After his time in the hospital, White began to take inspiration for his art from his childhood. He was drawn back to the plight, struggle, defiance, and beauty of being black in America. In 1964 he was invited by Bulart to select works to be displayed in the Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park.

Ever since his debut, White has earned numerous accolades and significant recognition for his work. White’s art gave the African American community validation and resolve. In all his work, White was able to portray the full range of black existence, from violence to poverty to black excellence. In 1967 White became the first black visual artist to display his work at the Monterey Jazz
Mayor Ed Lee proclaimed July 11, 2013, to be Eugene E. White Day in San Francisco.

In the 1970s his art was exhibited in the Chicago Black Expo, the Congress of African People, and the first Black Art Festival, among many others.

White’s influence led him to be asked to speak at Howard, Yale, Stanford, Notre Dame, and Harvard, among other universities. His influence also extends beyond the U.S. borders: he was given the opportunity to exhibit and speak about his art at FESTAC, an international art festival in Lagos, Nigeria.

Locally, White’s murals have graced the walls of the Third Baptist Church, the Ingleside Presbyterian Church, and the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center. His “Juneteenth” mural, commissioned by Mayor Brown, depicts the migrations of African Americans from the south. A pin portrait of White can also be found on the Buchanan Mall as well.

Always a devoted parent, he was awarded the Father of Year Award by KDIA radio in 1976.

From 1975–2012, White published a beautiful quarterly magazine called Kujiona (meaning “to see oneself” in Swahili). Unfortunately, during this period, in the 1980s, White’s studio suffered a major fire, destroying more than 50 works of art, but the fire strengthened his resolve to paint even more. Just after ending his print run of Kujiona, White turned his attention toward writing his autobiography, Jabo’s Boy—Now His Manchild, which was published in 2004.

In recognition of his many artistic contributions and his dedication to his community for over 50 years, the San Francisco Art Appreciation Society honored White on July 11, 2013, and Mayor Ed Lee proclaimed that day to be Eugene E. White Day in the city of San Francisco.

An outstanding Citizen Film documentary about White’s work and life, To See One’s Self, directed by Sophie Constantinou, was released in 2017.

Eugene E. White passed away on February 8, 2019. His life was celebrated by hundreds of mourners at Third Baptist Church, with poignant remarks made by Mayor London Breed and Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown. The Board of Supervisors formally celebrated White’s life at its March 5, 2019 Board meeting.

White is survived by his wife and community activist, Lynnette White; their daughter Tracye Taylor; grandchildren Grandville Taylor IV, Natasha Taylor, Nykoloe Taylor, Trevion Speed, Jamariion Speed, and Jamarie Speed; and great grandson, Grandville Taylor, V.

—Teresa Fishman, Yaqub Elmi, Kimberly McAllister, Ian Duke, Matt Chiodo, and Mei Lin

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REV.

CECIL
WILLIAMS

CECIL WILLIAMS is an activist and pastor whose work positively impacted the Tenderloin and the City of San Francisco. He pastored for decades at the celebrated Glide Memorial Church on the corner of Ellis and Taylor. Rev. Williams was responsible not only for expanding his church, but for using it as a catalyst for change. Today, Glide operates numerous programs aimed at connecting and giving back to the community. One of their current programs, Serve a Meal, recruits volunteers to serve 2,000 free meals a day to those in need. Other programs run by Glide include HIV/Hepatitis C services and testing, a free legal clinic, a childcare center, and the Glide Walk-In Center which provides assistance to clients in obtaining shelter and other critical needs (Glide).

Williams was born on September 22, 1929, in San Angelo, Texas. From a young age he felt drawn to the ministries. According to an interview done by the National Public Radio, at the age of two Williams’ mother told him that she knew he was to be a pastor and even gave him the nickname “Rev” (National Public Radio).

Williams said in a personal interview, “I wanted to certainly be a spokesperson for the people in our communities. But, before I even got to that point, my mother designated me a minister.” At the age of 12, he decided to take a year off of school and instead focus on strengthening the skills he needed to work in Methodist ministry. Williams graduated in 1955 from the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, one of the first African Americans to graduate from the university. In 1963, the Bishop of his church appointed him as pastor at Glide Memorial Church. At the time of his arrival, the all-white congregation was comprised of a mere thirty-five members.

Williams is known for being radical and going against the grain. Many of his values are based on the principles of Liberation Theology which focuses on empowering those facing oppression. Its core principles are empowerment, unconditional love, and acceptance. These principles are at the heart of Williams’ work with Glide and other influential
activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr.

Williams once said, “One reason people stand up and begin to say ‘no longer,’ is that they get angry and put out. When you disenfranchise people, then you also begin to understand those people are going to come back again. And when they come back, they are going to come back quite different from what they left. And that’s the way a revolution starts.” Rev. Williams emphasized that revolutions do not take a single form but instead start with people who are “dissatisfied” and who “are unable to live life fully.” This disturbance is important in the success of a revolution and making change in our world.

During a personal interview, Williams discussed his early days as a new pastor and how experiences with his new congregation shaped the church and its ideals. Williams knew that those who attended his church were there because they were missing something in their lives. One Sunday during his sermon, he hung a small mirror around his neck and said to his small congregation, “I want you to know that I’m mirroring your life so I can catch up with you. You won’t have to live this way any longer. You don’t have to go through these trials and tribulations.” This was an example of his unconditional love and acceptance. He refused to “stand idly by” and decided that change needed to occur in his community.

Williams also became known for inviting homeless people and people of the LGBTQ community into his church. It perplexed many people that a pastor would openly support same-sex marriage. However there were many fellow community members who supported his controversial decision. The Reverend explained, “I had people that were with me, who walked with me, stood with me, and would not let me do this by myself.” His biggest supporter was his wife, Janice Mirikitani, a sensei, poet, and activist. Her parents were put in Japanese internment camps when she was just a baby. Her perspective on race and social justice created an understanding within their relationship. During their interview with NPR, Mirikitani recounts that when she first met Williams she saw him inviting members of the community into the church who were looked down upon. From then on, Mirikitani supported his goal of bringing all members of the community together.

Rev. Williams is universally known for his warm heart. He once stated, “I don’t love people to death, I love people to life.” His words as a pastor are powerful and it is easy to see why he is able to initiate positive change everywhere he goes. Williams has always believed in the future of revolution among the youth. He believes that as long as there is inequality there will be the potential for change. Rev. Williams is a revolutionary legend who continues to make change in the city of San Francisco and the larger global community.

— Erica Mitchell; additional research by Kristen Williams and Isabel Tayag

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LIEUTENANT
HENRY WILLIAMS

As a civil rights activist and founder of a majority African American police organization, Henry Williams was a key motivator in improving relations between the San Francisco Police Department and black citizens. Born in 1927, Williams’ path to becoming a police officer and changemaker began in his youth (Copeland). He was educated at George Washington High School and after graduation he continued on to San Francisco Community College (Copeland). According to Williams, his first direct encounter with racism began when he enlisted in the Marines during World War II. He repeatedly observed racism and systematic oppression towards black people, but made every effort to translate this experience into improving race relations. After he finished his military service, Williams returned to San Francisco where he witnessed white police officers mistreating and targeting black people (Copeland). This was his motivation for becoming a police officer himself, and in 1952 he integrated himself into the San Francisco Police Department to promote the voice of the oppressed (Copeland).

Henry Williams was the first black police officer to be promoted beyond patrol officer in the city of San Francisco (Copeland). A long overdue achievement, this was one of the many landmarks left in Williams’ wake. He served as a lieutenant and by 1968, had co-founded a primarily black organization within the police department called Officers for Justice (Copeland). This cohort of officers worked to address “the issues of racism and lack of African American promotions [within the police system]” and, with determined aspirations for social change, Williams “was the first president of the organization, which was replicated in other areas across the country” (Copeland). Throughout his three decades of committed service, he received numerous awards, including a certificate he earned in 1967 for “meritorious conduct for his bravery in the line of duty” (Copeland).

As remarkable as his awards were, Williams’ legacy survived through his assertive engagement with the police department and his brave attitude that helped shape a progressive future. As of 2018, gun violence and systematic racism are plaguing our current political climate. The media coverage of these issues has spiked and the conversation is moving to involve everyone. It can be said that Williams is an underrated hero who initiated a disruption in the norm to achieve a greater good for
the people. In turn, he inspired current generations to participate in politics and challenge racial constructs. His legacy stands for confronting and reforming systems of segregation. He actively spoke out against police officers using their firearms freely in the line of duty. When he retired, Williams was proud to be able to say that he never used his guns in all his years of service and even dumped them into the ocean (Copeland).

Williams was a police officer during the post-war era, a time when police brutality was heavily afflicting black communities like the Fillmore and Hunters Point. Civil rights leaders in organizations like the NAACP and the CFCU pushed local government to address relations between police forces and minority groups. Black leaders in local communities lobbied the city, requesting that there be more African American representation in the police force to increase transparency between the parties, especially with struggling African American youth. So in 1956, two African American officers, Henry Williams and Jon Finney, were put into the Juvenile Division of San Francisco Police Department.

During that turbulent time, the Fillmore was a hub for African American businesses and entertainment and Hunters Point, conversely, was largely ignored by the rest of the city. Unemployment and poverty rates were high in correlation with the mounting instances of police brutality (Miller 2). Within his community, Henry Williams observed the destructive nature of this dynamic and officially co-founded Officers for Justice. Williams believed that the problem was rooted within the system itself. Through Officers for Justice, Williams’ aim was to address the racism within the police force and relations between white officers and the black community.

Williams carved a path and molded a future for many minority officers. He was able to work within a system and strive for the betterment of police–civilian relations. Henry Williams’ place on the Inspirations mural was earned through his initiative, courage, and a peaceful approach. His legacy still lives on within the organization he founded and in the battle against police brutality in the city.

—Olivia Walker and Sydney Summers-Knight

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In 1942, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore A. Wilson was drafted into the United States Air Force, where he began a decorated career as a Tuskegee Airman. Through his courage and bravery, he defied the stigma of a black presence in the armed forces. Wilson’s 26 years of active duty, through World War II and the Korean War, is a unique and inspiring story that stands as a historic beacon of black excellence in the midst of the outrageous circumstances of war and domestic injustice. Wilson’s scholastic pursuits, involvement with the finance industry, and over six-decade love for his wife, Doris Wilson, exemplify his talent and devoted spirit.

Wilson was born in Gloucester, Virginia, in 1920 and served the United States Air Force from 1942 through 1944. He was stationed as an active duty pilot in the European Theater. Wilson completed 60 missions during his deployment in Italy where he contributed to the extensive success of The Tuskegee Airmen, who were a group of all African-American aviators and the only fighter group to have a perfect record protecting the bombers. For context, white U.S. military pilots were not permitted to fly more than 52 missions, while African-American pilots often served more since they had less replacements. “The nine months was no bed of roses,” said Wilson during an interview, “we had 16 hour days, I flew 130 flying hours.”

At the beginning of his deployment, Wilson arrived in Cercola, Italy where he was stationed as a replacement pilot in the 99th squadron. For one mission, he was sent north along the Italian coastline to dive bomb. During the flight, Wilson fired his machine gun and dropped the 1,000 lb bomb, while shots were fired into his engine, causing the propeller to stop and start to windmill. Smoke entered the cockpit, leaving Wilson unable to read the gauges, allotting him one choice: jump. At 2,500 feet in the air, and 25 miles from ally shores, Wilson ejected himself from the plane remembering: “between the wing and the tail was only eight feet, so I had to jump from the wing and hope I wouldn’t hit the tail.”

Wilson escaped fire from the Germans by parachuting into an allies’ camp and remembers fighting with his operations officer because he wanted to rest the next day instead of flying. During an interview, Wilson jokingly said, “You know sometimes, when
I was flying airplanes, I thought about my wife and I thought she’s smart- she should be over here flying every other day and letting me rest.” Starting the next day, Wilson flew 46 more missions. Wilson became a 2nd Lieutenant in his first 12 months of service, a 1st Lieutenant 13 months after, and came back to the United States as a captain in 1945.

At the beginning of America’s involvement in World War II, Tuskegee University received a grant to train the first black aviators. This worked towards developing a class of 1,000 volunteers in America’s first black military airmen unit. The 332nd Fighter Group consisted of the 99th squadron, 100th squadron, 301st squadron and 302nd squadron. The men were trained as pilots, navigators, or bombardiers. According to the Tuskegee University Air Force Historical Research Agency, the Airmen of the 332nd had the highest success rates in escorting bombers across enemy borders in World War II. They stood unmatched by any other fighter group. The 99th squadron, where Lt. Col. Theodore A. Wilson flew, was awarded two Presidential Unit Citations between the years of 1943 and 1945, both for providing exceptional tactical air support and aerial support for the 12th Air Force in Italy. Overall, the courageous work performed by Lt. Colonel Wilson stands as historically significant in the fight towards racial integration in America because it boldly proved wrong all doubts held against black citizens fighting in the American armed forces.

Wilson also served in Korea from 1950 to 1952. During his deployment, Wilson flew 42 missions, became a Major in Korea in 1952, and became Lieutenant a Colonel in 1961. He also worked as a Chief Accounting and Finance Officer during his time overseas. Wilson was accountable for over two million dollars and 314 employees. He received an Accommodation Medal for outstanding service and payment alongside a bronze star for outstanding achievement.

Wilson retired as a decorated veteran and went off to college. He received his bachelor’s degree in sociology from Virginia Union University where he also became a finance officer and moved on to be assistant professor of the ROTC, eventually becoming the leading professor for the entire program. Wilson went back to school before working at Bank of America for 16 years. He started as a landing officer, then moved to a training officer, and ended his career as Assistant Vice President in Contributions.

Wilson met his wife Doris Wilson in college in Virginia, where she received a degree in mathematics. Theodore and Doris had two children and received their master’s degrees in business together.

In retrospect, Wilson says, “I am proud to look back on my life and accomplishments as most Tuskegee Airmen are.” Wilson’s work as a pilot and devoted citizen will be remembered throughout history and will be treasured in the hearts of Wilson’s family, friends, and many others.

—Annelise Suleiman and Hannah Shepherd

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Changemakers, written and researched by students at the University of San Francisco, documents and celebrates the lives and legacies of 96 inspiring African Americans featured on the Inspiration Murals at the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center in San Francisco’s Western Addition neighborhood.

Celebrated artist Eugene E. White painted the portrait of Ella Hill Hutch on the cover in 1992. He is seen here in front of the Inspiration Murals, painted in 1999 by Josef Norris.

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