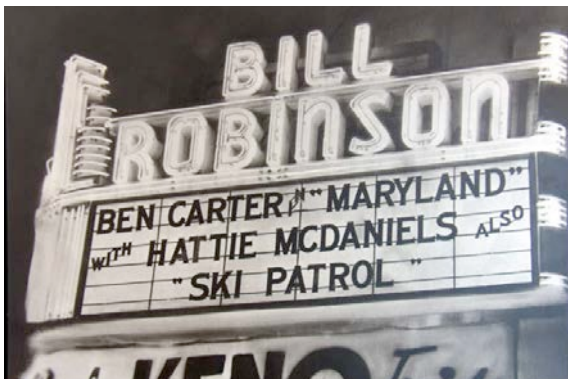


## LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

### Context: African American History of Los Angeles



*Prepared for:*

City of Los Angeles  
Department of City Planning  
Office of Historic Resources

NOVEMBER 2017



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## **PREFACE**

This context is a component of Los Angeles' Citywide Historic Context Statement and provides guidance to field surveyors in identifying and evaluating potential historic resources relating to Los Angeles' rich African American history. Refer to [www.HistoricPlacesLA.org](http://www.HistoricPlacesLA.org) for information on designated resources associated with this context and themes as well as those identified through SurveyLA and other surveys.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

This context was prepared by GPA Consulting with Alison Rose Jefferson. The GPA team included Teresa Grimes, Amanda Duane, Jenna Kachour, Allison Lyons, Sean Morales, Emily Rinaldi, and Audrey von Ahrens. Ms. Grimes is a Principal Architectural Historian at GPA and was the project manager and a co-author of the context. She holds degrees in Political Science and Architecture from the University of California, Los Angeles and has over 25 years of experience in the field. Other members of the GPA team prepared one or more themes in the context. Ms. Duane is an Associate Architectural Historian at GPA; she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Historic Preservation from the Savannah College of Art and Design. Ms. Kachour is a Senior Architectural Historian at GPA; she earned her Bachelor and Master of Planning degrees from the University of Southern California. Ms. Lyons is an Associate Architectural Historian at GPA; she earned her Master of Science degree in Historic Preservation from Columbia University. Mr. Morales is working toward his Master of Planning and Heritage Conservation degrees from the University of Southern California. Emily Rinaldi is an Architectural Historian at GPA; she earned her Master of Science degree in Historic Preservation from Columbia University. Ms. von Ahrens is an Architectural Historian at GPA; she earned Master of Science in Historic Preservation and Master of City Planning degrees from the University of Pennsylvania.

Alison Rose Jefferson earned a Doctorate of Philosophy in History from the University of California, Santa Barbara, a Master of Heritage Conservation degree from the University of Southern California, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Pomona College. Dr. Jefferson prepared the historical overview, participated in community outreach efforts, assisted in identifying potential historical resources, and advised on the themes. Her professional interests revolve around American and California history, the experiences of people of African descent, public history, spatial justice, heritage conservation, and cultural tourism. Jefferson's forthcoming book tentatively titled *Leisure's Race, Power and Place: Black Angelenos and the California Dream (1900-1965)* is being prepared for a book publication with the University of Nebraska Press.

The foundational document for this context was the National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) *Historical Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles*. The MPDF was prepared for the City of Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency in 2008 by Christopher A. Joseph and Associates with Dr. Becky Nicolaides. By extension, the authors of the MPDF contributed to this context. Nicolaides earned a Doctorate of Philosophy and Master of Arts

degree in American History from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Journalism from the University of Southern California. She went on to serve on the faculty of Arizona State University West and the University of California, San Diego. Nicolaides left her tenured post at UCSD in 2006 to become an independent scholar and historical consultant. She has written several noteworthy books and articles on the history of Southern California including *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles 1920-1965*, *The Suburban Reader*, "Introduction: Asian American Suburban History," and "The Social Fallout of Racial Politics: Civic Engagement in Suburban Pasadena, 1950-2000" to name just a few. She is currently working on her third book, *On the Ground in Suburbia: A Chronicle of Social and Civic Transformation in Los Angeles*.

The City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources organized two community meetings as part of the scope of work for the African American history context. The purpose of the meetings was to explain the goals and objectives of the project and to solicit information from the community to inform the context. The first meeting, hosted by Holman United Methodist Church, was attended by over 45 people. A second more focused meeting was held with the History Committee of the California African American Museum. As a result of both of these meetings, community members have contributed important information about people and places significant to the African American history of Los Angeles. Gail Kennard, Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commissioner, contributed to this context by sharing her special knowledge of African American history in Los Angeles and serving as a reviewer of various drafts.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose and Scope**

The African American historic context is a component of SurveyLA's citywide historic context statement and was funded with a grant from the California Office of Historic Preservation. This context provides a framework for identifying and evaluating properties relating to African American history in Los Angeles. It is not intended to be a comprehensive history of the African American community. This history has been well documented over the past 25 years in books, articles, and studies. This context draws upon this scholarship as well as the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for Historic Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles prepared in 2008. Whereas the MPDF covered the period from 1870 to 1958, SurveyLA's citywide historic context statement covers the period from about 1781 to 1980. (The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended over time to add themes and resources.) Another difference between the MPDF and this context is the framework for the evaluation of properties. The MPDF addressed the evaluation of properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and resulted in the listing of seven buildings and two historic districts. This context also includes eligibility standards for listing in the California Register of Historic Places and designation under the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Ordinance and Historic Preservation Overlay Ordinance.

This context provides a broad historical overview on the events that shaped the lives of African Americans in Los Angeles and then focuses on the various themes and geographic areas associated with

important extant resources. As the narrative reveals, these resources date primarily from the 1920s to the 1970s. The oldest resources are largely concentrated around the Central Avenue corridor, east and south of Downtown Los Angeles, the earliest African American neighborhoods. A small number of African Americans settled outside these neighborhoods in places like Watts, Pacoima, and Venice; however, few resources survive. Despite white resistance and racially restrictive covenants, African Americans began moving west from the Central Avenue corridor along Jefferson Boulevard as early as the 1920s. This trend increased during the 1940s, especially for the black middle class, and accelerated in the 1950s and 1960s when housing discrimination became illegal, although racial prejudice persisted in all aspects of life. As a result, there are a considerable number of resources associated with African Americans in the areas of West Adams, Leimert Park, and Baldwin Hills. Resources located in communities adjacent to the City of Los Angeles, such as Compton and View Park/Windsor Hills, were not included in the geographic scope of this context because they are separate jurisdictions. However, they are occasionally mentioned because they are important to the history of African Americans in Los Angeles, which did not begin or end at the city limits.

### **Evaluation Considerations**

The African American historic context may overlap with other SurveyLA contexts as follows:

- People with African heritage were among the founding settlers of the pueblo of Los Angeles in 1781. The Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement context covers resources from 1781 until 1849. The vast majority of resources associated with this early period of history have been identified and designated under various landmark or historic district programs.
- Properties significant for their architectural quality may also be eligible under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context. These may include buildings designed by important African American architects including Paul R. Williams, James H. Garrott, Ralph Vaughn, Robert Kennard, Norma Sklarek, and others.
- The Labor History context also references African American unions discussed in the Civil Rights theme below.

### **Acronyms**

Acronyms are used throughout this historic context statement. The ones used most often are as follows:

- ACLU - American Civil Liberties Union
- AAC - Afro-American Council
- BSCP - Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
- CAAM - California African American Museum
- CORE - Congress for Racial Equality
- CWC - Colored Women's Clubs
- DMC - Democratic Minority Council

- EEOC - Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- FAME - First African Methodist Episcopal Church
- FEPC - Fair Employment Practices Commission
- FHA - Federal Housing Administration
- HPOZ - Historic Preservation Overlay Zone
- HOLC - Home Owners Loan Corporation
- LAFD - Los Angeles Fire Department
- LAHCM - Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument
- LAPD - Los Angeles Police Department
- MPDF - Multiple Property Documentation Form
- NAACP - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- NAREB - National Association of Real Estate Brokers
- NACW - National Association of Colored Women
- SCLC - Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- UCLA - University of California, Los Angeles
- UCRC - United Civil Rights Committee
- UNIA - Universal Negro Improvement Association
- USC - University of Southern California
- YMCA - Young Men's Christian Association
- YWCA - Young Women's Christian Association



## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

### **Introduction**

From the beginning of Spanish colonial settlement in 1769 and the founding of Los Angeles in 1781, people of African ancestry have been integral shapers of California. By the time California was annexed to the United States in 1848, Los Angeles had emerged as a frontier center with settlers of varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Racial divisions and new political ideologies impacted the social relationships of Spanish and Mexican Californians, but opportunity for social mobility still existed. After this territory became part of the United States, African American pioneers would have to fight constantly shifting racial and class structures in negotiation for their rights as citizens. Even with these challenges, African Americans were, and continue to be, active participants in the development of Los Angeles and shaping its history as they capitalized on opportunities for economic advancement, greater social freedom, equity, and a chance for a fresh start.

### **Early History**

When the Spanish Empire expanded into the Americas, many persons of African origins played important roles as explorers, laborers, artisans, and servants. Some were free and others were enslaved. As Kenneth G. Goode and other scholars have noted, with few Spaniards in the region it was very difficult for Spain “to explore, exploit, and colonize” this territory. When California’s second pueblo – Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles de Porciúncula, Los Angeles for short – was founded on September 4, 1781, 26 of the first 46 settlers were of African and mixed-race ancestry. When Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, California became a Mexican province. During both Spanish and Mexican eras, even though settlers of African origin and other nonwhites suffered subordinated status and many injustices, fewer racial restrictions were imposed on them in California than in the United States. Some even achieved leadership positions and grew wealthy. During this period, these citizens built adobe houses, a few churches, and several public buildings. When California joined the Union as a state in 1850, the founders of Los Angeles with African and mixed-race ancestries were



*The city’s multiracial history, including the African ancestry, was not formally recognized until 1981 when a plaque commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Los Angeles’ founding was installed at El Pueblo Historical Monument Park. Miriam Matthews, the African American librarian in Los Angeles, was the project’s originator (Courtesy of the Charles H. Matthews, Jr. Collection)*



absorbed into the more general identities as Californios (Californians of Spanish descent) or Mexicans, and were marginalized under the Anglo American power structure.<sup>1</sup>

In 1849, California drafted a constitution that almost did not allow the freedom of African Americans. After much debate, slavery was forbidden and California entered the Union technically as a free state. Freedom for some African Americans was obstructed, and racially discriminatory legislation limited the ability to vote in elections and the right to testify in court to whites. The first English-speaking African Americans of Los Angeles were servants and enslaved persons brought to California by white officers of the Mexican American War. Slave owners continued to arrive and the absence of a functioning government allowed enslavement to endure in certain parts of the state. During this period, Los Angeles had a population of less than 2,000 residents with about a dozen African Americans from varied backgrounds. The town was a dangerous place, dominated by many whites from southern states who did not respect the law or welcome (particularly free) African American residents. Some African Americans suffered violence and harassment from racists with little or no legal recourse.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, African American men and women migrated to and persevered in Los Angeles, purchasing land, acquiring homes for their families, and carving out new lives in a temperate climate and sublime landscape. They participated in the abolition movement using both legal and extralegal means to help the enslaved attain freedom. By 1860, the African American population would grow to 66 in a general population of 4,385. Most men worked as porters, barbers, cooks, laborers, and domestic servants even if they were self-employed. There was also a cattle dealer, teamster, ship caulker, and mariner. Women's occupations were not recorded at this time.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marne L. Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles: Class, Gender, and Community, 1850-1917* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 14-26; Kenneth G. Goode with forward by Wilson Riles, *California's Black Pioneers, A Brief Historical Survey* (Santa Barbara, CA: McNally & Loftin, Publishers, 1973), chapters 1-2; Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 21; Jack D. Forbes, "The Early African Heritage of California" in *Seeking El Dorado, African Americans in California*, edited by Lawrence de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), 73-97; Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 118.

<sup>2</sup> "Free state" means that California was admitted to the Union as a state that banned enslavement and involuntary servitude. Lawrence de Graaf and Quintard Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado: African American Experiences in California* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), 12-13, 18-19; Willi Coleman, "African American Women and Community Development in California, 1848-1900," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 100-101, 103; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 19-24; Goode, *California's Black Pioneers*, 44, 49, 52-54; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, 192, 206-207. For more on the character of and lawlessness in Los Angeles in the 1850s see William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe, The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004) and John Mack Fargaher, *Eternity Street, Violence and Justice in Frontier Los Angeles* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2016).

<sup>3</sup> The 1860 United States Census did not record occupations of women, but many provided domestic services as employees or from their residences doing cooking, laundry, sewing, gardening and other domestic arts and processes. Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles*, 31, 34; de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 12-13; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 19-24; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, chapter 5.

Discrimination by employers limited occupation and wealth building opportunities throughout the nineteenth century for most of black Angelenos, while at the same time the region offered greater freedom and opportunity for African Americans than in other parts of the United States. A few of these early pioneers would become role models for the African American community of Los Angeles in the nineteenth century. While there is little information on the majority of nineteenth century African Americans in Los Angeles, into the twentieth century a few pioneers of the era would continue to be remembered by historians and local citizens.<sup>4</sup>



*African American pioneer Peter Biggs had a barbershop in the Bella Union Hotel, no longer standing on N. Main Street, 1876 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

Peter Biggs arrived in Los Angeles in 1847 during the Mexican American War as an enslaved person accompanying a white officer from Missouri. He gained his freedom to become one of the earliest African Americans to reside in the city. Biggs may have learned to speak Spanish and by 1860 he had married a Mexican woman, Delores Balenzuela, with whom he had a daughter named Juana Margarita. In the 1850 Census, of the two African American households identified, Biggs was the only African American head of household listed. The other African Americans lived in other people's homes or in small hotels. Biggs made his living as a barber and a bootblack, and his wife earned revenue from her property on N. Spring Street. At one time, his barbershop was located in

the Bella Union Hotel on N. Main Street. Evidence suggests he was very personable and respected among the Californios. Biggs' story illuminates the little known history of the early English-speaking pioneers from the United States in Los Angeles, and the interaction between the African American and the Mexican communities.<sup>5</sup>

Although some scholarship has been produced on the early African American experience in Los Angeles, there is still more to be investigated about its diversity and complexity. The Robert Owens, Bridget "Biddy" Mason, and John Ballard families are the most remembered to different degrees. In the early decades of California's statehood and prior to the Civil War, these families prospered and lived a few houses away from each other near Main and 1<sup>st</sup> Streets in what is now the Civic Center area of

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<sup>4</sup> de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 12-13; Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 19-24; Goode, *California's Black Pioneers*, 44, 49, 52-54; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> J. Max Bond, "The Negro In Los Angeles," (Ph.D. Diss, University of Southern California), 11-13; Delilah Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California* (Fairfield, CA: James Stevenson Publisher, Reprinted 2004), 101; Lonnie Bunch, "Black Angelenos, The Afro-American in Los Angeles, 1850-1950," (Los Angeles, CA: California African American Museum, 1988), 14; Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles*, 31; de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 13; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, chapter 5.

Downtown. Although these families lived near one another they were not living in an African American only neighborhood, such as the segregated neighborhoods that began to develop during the 1920s.<sup>6</sup>

Robert Owens was born enslaved in Texas. After purchasing freedom for himself, his wife Winnie, and their three children, Sara Jane, Martha, and Charles, the family migrated to Los Angeles and became residents between 1852 and 1853. Robert worked odd jobs, while Winnie took in laundry. Eventually, he won government contracts to supply the local U.S. military posts with cut wood, horses, mules, and cattle. On lots he purchased on San Pedro Street, Robert opened a livery stable and cattle sales venture where he employed ten vaqueros (cowboys) and sold his products to the general public. Robert invested and speculated in real estate throughout the city and county. The Owens home was a center of religious, social, and business gatherings for the early African American community. His son, Charles, assisted in managing the business ventures. When Robert died in 1865, Charles took over and successfully continued the family's real estate investment and livery operations. Respected by all sectors of this multiethnic and mixed-race community, Robert Owens was considered the wealthiest African American in Los Angeles when he died.<sup>7</sup>

Bridget Mason's accomplishments and challenges have become a symbol of African American achievement and the personification of the potential for upward mobility in Southern California during the early settlement era. Mason and her extended family were parties to the most significant slave case in Southern California as a consequence of the Mormon migration to San Bernardino. Arriving to the region in 1851 from Mississippi, after a stopover for a few years in Salt Lake City, the Mormon caravan of 150 wagons, 437 people, and assorted livestock established a new colony in San Bernardino. In 1856, the Mason family was emancipated in a court case overseen by Judge Benjamin Hayes. The Mason family was aided by several other African Americans recently freed from enslavement, including members of the Owens and Rowan families of Los Angeles and San Bernardino, respectively, and white allies. Some members of the Mason family chose to stay in San Bernardino, while others chose to move to Los Angeles.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Patty R. Colman, "John Ballard and the African American Community in Los Angeles, 1850-1905," in *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (Summer 2012), 206; Bond, "The Negro In Los Angeles," fn44, 23; Bunch, "Black Angelenos," 15.

<sup>7</sup> Among the property the Owens family owned over the years, Beasley notes parcels on San Pedro Street, Main Street near 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Olive Street between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, 110. Over the years other property owned by the Owens family were mentioned in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Colored American Magazine*, and *The First Los Angeles City and County Directory* and located in what is today Downtown on Spring Streets between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets, 10<sup>th</sup> and Albany Streets and at 1<sup>st</sup> and Alameda Streets. Bunch, "Black Angelenos," 14-19; Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place, Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 146-146; Colman, "John Ballard and the African American Community in Los Angeles," 206; Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles*, 52-53; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, chapter 5.

<sup>8</sup> Bridget Mason's children were Ellen (b. 1838), Ann (1844-1857), and Harriet (1848-1914). Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 110, 88-90; Lawrence de Graaf, "Race, Sex, and Region: Black Women in the American West, 1850-1920," in *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (May, 1980): 285-313; Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 138-167; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, chapter 5.

After settling in Los Angeles and living with the Owens family, Bridgette Mason supported herself and her family working as a midwife and nurse with a local white physician, Dr. John S. Griffin. Griffin was a friend of the Owens family and was a very successful real estate investor in addition to being a doctor. Mason gained a reputation as an important midwife in the city as she successfully delivered hundreds of babies from all socio-economic and racial strata of Los Angeles society. In 1866, she was one of the first African American women in Los Angeles to purchase property. Her \$250 investment located between Broadway and Spring and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets was on the outskirts of town in the 1860s, but by the time the property was sold from the 1880s to 1930s it was the business center of Los Angeles and appreciated in value accordingly. As a foundational member and leader of the early African American community, Mason was an important advocate of education. The Mason and Owens families merged via marriage of their eldest children (Ellen and Charles, respectively) shortly after Ellen gained her freedom from enslavement in 1856. Multiple generations of the families successfully participated in the real estate boom of the post-Civil War era to become one of the wealthiest and influential African American families in the California and the West into the 1920s. At the turn of the twentieth century the success stories of the Mason-Owens clan, and particularly grandson Robert C. Owens, may have helped to attract African American migrants from across the United States to Los Angeles looking for a fresh start.<sup>9</sup>



*Bridget "Biddy" Mason was buried at Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights in 1891. Other important African Americans buried here include the aviator James Banning and the publisher and civil rights activist Charlotta Bass, no date (Los Angeles Public Library)*

By 1860, the African American population increased from 12 to 66, and the community began to gain a greater identity. John Ballard from Kentucky was another early African American pioneer; when he married Amanda from Texas, both were newly freed from enslavement. He was a teamster and she stayed at home with their two children who had been born in California before their parents' nuptials in 1859. They had a live-in Indian laborer named Juan Jose, a practice not uncommon at the time among varied ethnic and socio-economic classes. While there was not a formal church site, Rev. Jessie Hamilton, a

recently arriving Methodist minister from Kentucky, officiated the Ballard's and three other marriage ceremonies within a year. Hamilton's arrival would have been an important occurrence at the time,

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<sup>9</sup> Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 138-167; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 19-24; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, chapter 5; Bunch, "Black Angelenos," 14-19; *Colored American Magazine*, December 1905, 482-485. Robert Curry Owens (b. 1858) and Henry L. Owens (b. 1860) were the offspring of Charles (d. 1882) and Ellen (Mason) Owens, Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 110; Lynn Bowman, *Los Angeles: Epic of a City* (Berkeley, CA: Howell North Books, 1974), 186. In 1989, "Biddy Mason Park" with a public art installation was unveiled at Mason's homestead near Broadway to commemorate her historical experience and era of Los Angeles history in a project produced by The Power of Place and the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles.

signaling the African American community's presence.<sup>10</sup> During the 1860s, in addition to being a teamster, Ballard raised hogs and invested in land and horses in El Monte, and purchased other property in Downtown Los Angeles. He returned from El Monte to live in Los Angeles on Hope and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets so his children could obtain an education in a formal institutional setting.

Although Bridget Mason's most enduring legacy became her role in establishing the First African Methodist Episcopal Church (FAME or First AME Church), Patty R. Colman has uncovered she was one of a number of prominent and financially secure members of the African American community "who worked together to found the first black church in Los Angeles." FAME was rooted in the religious activities held in the home of the Owens family. On March 13, 1869, Trustees of FAME including John Ballard, Jeremiah M. Redding, Charles Owens, Louis (or Lewis) Green, George Smith, John Hall, and Samuel Johns purchased land for \$75 at Charity (later Grand Avenue) and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets where they constructed the community's first formal church in Los Angeles. Of this group of African Americans, most had lived in Los Angeles at least a decade, with Charles Owens being the largest landholder and wealthiest. Bishop T.M.D. Ward, a spiritual and political leader in California, dedicated the church. Winnie Owens, Bridget Mason, and Alice Coleman were listed as the church's first members in Thompson and West's 1880 *History of Los Angeles County, California*. This church was a center for all sorts of community activities alongside religious fellowship, and a symbol of success as represented by the congregation's membership of such prominent men and women.<sup>11</sup>

While African Americans in Los Angeles were establishing their presence, helping families gain their freedom from enslavement, and building their first church, they were also connecting with the first organized civil rights struggles in the West, which began in the 1850s through the work of Rev. Ward and others like Rev. J.E.M. Gilliard. At the first statewide Colored Conventions in Sacramento in 1855 and 1856 (followed by San Francisco in 1857), in addition to other objectives, black Californians pushed for reform in the court testimony laws for nonwhites. Education and a black press were also discussed intensely at the Convention in 1856. In the first two Conventions, Thomas Rix (or Thomas J. Ricks) was appointed to collect signatures in Los Angeles County. Testimony rights continued to be a high priority in 1857. That year the Convention also protested the prohibition of African American homesteading of public lands by the U.S. Land Office, and the exclusion of their children from rural public schools. After the petitions were submitted in each respective year to the California legislature, no action was taken to amend the state's constitution. In October 1865, the last Convention was held in Sacramento. The focus

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<sup>10</sup> John and Amanda Ballard would eventually have a total of seven children (Dora, Julia, John, Willie, Henry, Freddie, and Alice) before Amanda died from complications related to childbirth at age 34 in 1871. Coleman, "African American Women and Community Development in California," 204-205, 217-218; 1870 U.S. Federal Census.

<sup>11</sup> In 1880, the church did not have a minister, Wilson, John Albert, *History of Los Angeles County, California* (Oakland, CA: Thompson and West, 1880), 120; Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 158, 163; Bond, "The Negro In Los Angeles," fn44, 23.



was on African American male suffrage, but there was no success in getting the California legislature to take action on their petition.<sup>12</sup>

Demoralizing African American citizens from coast-to-coast, the *Dred Scott* decision was announced in March 1857. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Roger B. Taney stated African Americans “‘had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.’” For African Americans in Los Angeles, the *Dred Scott* decision would have overruled Judge Hayes’ interpretation in the *Bridget Biddy Mason* case had it been decided one year later. The question of African American citizenship rights and equality would, unfortunately, take another hundred plus years to be fully defined and enforced by the American legal system and government.<sup>13</sup>

During the Civil War, there were many California residents who supported secession from the Union and formation of a separate independent republic sympathetic to the South. The Republican-controlled State Legislature in 1860 enacted numerous emergency procedures to counteract secessionist sentiments, such as making it a misdemeanor to display rebel flags. While California provided little manpower, the state supplied the Union Army with wool, wheat, and other vital materials and foods. California’s African American community was staunchly pro-Union and just like other black people they supported ridding the nation of slavery. African Americans in some parts of the state even organized military companies so they would be prepared if their service was needed. Sweeping changes resulted from the election of a Republican president, Abraham Lincoln in 1861. The state’s ban on black court testimony would be eliminated in 1863 after Leland Stanford was elected as the first Republican governor of California. Unfortunately, the prohibition on court testimony by ‘Indians, Mongolian and Chinese’ remained in place. Americans across the United States celebrated the end of the war in 1865, which brought ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment ending the enslavement system, and the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1868), which granted former slaves citizenship. The right to vote for (male) African Americans would come with ratification of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1870).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, 200-201, 204, 206; de Graaf and Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 10; Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier, African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 92; Resolution 17, *Proceedings of the First State Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California* (Sacramento, CA: Democratic State Journal Press, 1855), 16; *Proceedings of the First State Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California* (San Francisco, CA: J.H. Uddel and W. Randall Printers, 1856), 151; *Proceedings of the First State Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California* (San Francisco, CA: Office of the Elevator, 1865); Colman, “John Ballard and the African American Community in Los Angeles,” 213.

<sup>13</sup> Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, 200-201, 204, 206, 230; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 79-80, 92; Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, Segull 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005), 487-488.

<sup>14</sup> Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, “‘We Feel the Want of Protection’: The Politics of Law and Race in California, 1848-1878,” *California History*, Vol. 81, No. ¾, *Taming the Elephant: Politics, Government and Law in Pioneer California* Special Issue (2003), 118; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, 206; Taylor 1998, 92; Colman, “John Ballard and the African American Community in Los Angeles,” 212.

In Los Angeles, the passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment was celebrated in April 1870. Rev. Gilliard was invited to speak at the festivities, which included his presentation, a ceremony, a ball, and a dinner. Based in Northern California, Gilliard was a frequent contributor to the San Francisco *Elevator*, one of the earliest African American newspapers in California. He was also a participant in the California Colored Conventions. For many years, Gilliard traveled the state speaking on freedom and civil rights issues. His presence at the festivities suggests that black Angelenos were participating in statewide activism for freedom and civil rights. While Gilliard was in Los Angeles, Louis Green bravely led the community's battle for voting rights. Los Angeles County Clerk Thomas D. Mott, however, refused to add Green's name to the register on the basis "that federal amendments did not overrule a state constitution," and that the state needed to put in place enabling legislation before the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment could go into effect. Green interpreted Mott's position as a subterfuge to keep African Americans from voting, and hired the attorney Robert M. Widney to represent him in court. Judge Ignacio Sepulveda ruled in Mott's favor, arguing special legislation would be required to carry out the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment "as the right to vote cannot be denied to colored men, the qualifications necessary for the Clerks to register the individuals of that class [African Americans], are not in any manner prescribed." Fortunately for Green, before Widney could make the next legal challenge on his behalf, the U.S. Congress enacted legislation "which imposed fines and other penalties on those who obstructed individuals" from voting rights. Green registered to vote on June 21, 1870, along with two other men.<sup>15</sup>



*This upper section of this map shows with the street grid shows the area where most of the early African American settlers in Los Angeles lived from 1850 until the 1880s. C1F56727 U.S. Copyright Office Perspective map not drawn to scale. Bird's-eye-view of Los Angeles, 1871. Not drawn to scale. (Historical Society of Southern California, Library of Congress Collection)*

Several more African Americans would register over the next few weeks and months, including John Ballard, William Brown, and Charles Owens. In 1870, African Americans could celebrate getting the right to vote, winning significant battles against racial oppression and restrictions, establishing a presence as

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<sup>15</sup> Robert M. Widney later became an important Los Angeles civil leader. His accomplishments included becoming a judge and a founder of the University of Southern California, along with other business and civic activities.



a community, becoming successful business and property owners for some individuals, and gaining access to public schools for children. But the majority of this small community continued to work as domestic servants for white families and as laborers. Black Angelenos had more opportunities for socio-economic mobility and encountered less prejudice than in the South, but at the same time they continued to face a racial hierarchy. Primarily due to the Civil War, the growth rate was relatively slow in Los Angeles during the 1860s. A drought during the decade accelerated the disintegration of the great ranchos, with small farms and more intensive agricultural development occurring into the 1870s. The African American population by 1880 grew less than 1%, while the general population grew to 11,183 (see Table I).<sup>16</sup>

Though the African American community was small in the 1880s, several members accumulated property and new leaders emerged with an interest in civic affairs, but no social organizations developed outside of churches. Second Baptist Church was formed in 1885, the first African American



*Harriett Owens-Bynum and her family were some of the first African Americans to settle in the Boyle Heights. Bynum and her husband lived next door to her son John Wesley Coleman and his family at 2916 E. New Jersey Avenue. (The Negro Trail Blazers of California)*

Baptist church in Southern California. Its first meeting space was in a small hall on Requesena Street.<sup>17</sup> Then the congregation purchased lots on Maple Street, between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets where in 1888 "a rough framed church building was built on the back of lot[s] by the men of the church." Barley fields and narrow unpaved streets surrounded the site. A 1975 history produced by Second Baptist on the occasion of the congregation's 90-year anniversary noted there were no pictures of that 'first' church, but it was "a source of great pride for those dedicated pioneer members." On the same site in 1892, the congregation still led by Rev. C.H. Anderson built a two-story brick building on the front of the lots on Maple Street.

Early Second Baptist congregants and trustees included members of the Bynum Coleman clan who emigrated from Austin, Texas to Los Angeles in 1887. They left behind a 160-acre ranch and settled

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<sup>16</sup> After personal and professional challenges in early 1880, John Ballard and his family moved to 160 acres of land near a creek in Triunfo Canyon he purchased for \$50 in the hills of present day Westlake Village/Agoura Hills/Santa Monica Mountain District. For years a section of the mountainous area was referred to as "Nigger Ballard Hill" and eventually "Nigger Hill." It was even listed on government maps as "Niggerhead" until it was changed to "Negrohead" in the 1960s. In 2009, the mountain was officially renamed Ballard Mountain. Ballard descendants attended the mountain renaming and several continue to reside in the Southern California region in 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Requesena Street was renamed Market Street, but no longer exists. It was in the present day Civic Center area.

in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights.<sup>18</sup> The clan included Harriett Owens-Bynum, her husband Green Bynum, her son John Wesley Coleman, his wife Lydia, and their four children. The Bynum Coleman clan represented the significant and growing segment of professional and business class migrants, who joined the larger segment of mostly unskilled southern laborers who moved to Los Angeles throughout the 1890s.

Harriet Owens-Bynum was one of the first African American women to hold a leadership office at Second Baptist. After tiring of the long walk over the bridge to her job as a maid, she successfully began a hand laundry, then a bakery, and later a dairy before prospering as a real estate agent. In the 1890s and early decades of the twentieth century, Owens-Bynum and her family bought land and sold more than 65 houses and lots. They also rented places to African American families in Boyle Heights proximate to their family's residences around New Jersey and Savannah Avenues, and in other areas around the city. In her era, she was the first woman of any race to go into real estate on such a large scale.<sup>19</sup>



*In 1887, investor, employment agent, and civic leader John Wesley Coleman and his family were some of the first African American residents in Boyle Heights. (The Negro Trail Blazers of California)*

John Wesley Coleman was educated at Tilleston Institute (called Houston Tilleston College today) in Austin, Texas. As a newcomer to Los Angeles he held a job as a driver for the Black Diamond Coal Company and as a Pullman Company railroad porter for a time. Coleman eventually operated several different business ventures over his lifetime, including a successful Downtown café at 1<sup>st</sup> and Los Angeles Streets (demolished). In the 1900s, he and his wife Lydia owned an early successful hostelry called Hotel Coleman located at 145 S. San Pedro Street (demolished), and a furniture store in what is today Little Tokyo. Around 1907, Coleman opened an employment agency located at 211 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (demolished), where he helped African American newcomers find employment. As an acknowledgement of his successful service, some in the local African American media called him the "Employment King of Los Angeles." Along the way, he worked as a real estate agent and invested in property with his mother, including the Coleman Flats apartment building they owned at 205 Savannah Street in Boyle

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<sup>18</sup> Bond, "The Negro In Los Angeles," 1-39, 67-68; Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 244.

<sup>19</sup> Bynum's and Coleman's homes were located at 2916 and 2918 E. New Jersey Street, respectively in Boyle Heights. The houses still stand but are substantially altered. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 244; Charlotta Bass, *Forty Years, Memoirs From the Pages of a Newspaper* (Los Angeles, CA: Published by Charlotta Bass, 1960) 17-18; 1888-1890 California Voter Registration List (John Wesley Coleman listing); 1900 U.S. Federal Census.

Heights. In the 1920s, he built a hotel serving African Americans called Hotel Coleman De Luxe at the Lake Elsinore resort town in Riverside County.<sup>20</sup>

In civic affairs, Coleman served the Los Angeles and African American communities in several capacities. Among his many activities, Coleman helped to establish the Forum in 1903. Everyone in the African American community, no matter their socio-economic backgrounds or ideological affiliation, was welcome to become a member as long as they were “striving to be a useful member of society.” It aided the development of a sense of community, created a place for public discourse, and helped newcomers assimilate into local society. Black and white politicians stopped by the Forum’s Sunday afternoon meetings held at FAME seeking votes. In 1915, Coleman was one of the foundering members of the People’s Independent Church of God and Christ located at 18<sup>th</sup> and Paloma Streets (demolished).<sup>21</sup> In the 1920s, Coleman continued his leadership in the Forum and served as the only member of color from Boyle Heights on the Republican County Central Committee. He was also a leader in the Garvey movement, named for Marcus M. Garvey. Inspired by Booker T. Washington, Garvey advocated black economic uplift via self-reliance, political equality via self-determination, and the “liberation of Africa from European colonialism via a black army marching under the Red, Black and Green flag of Black manhood.”<sup>22</sup>

By 1890, the African American population of Los Angeles grew 9.2% to 1,258, and the general population grew to 50,935 (see Table I). The connection of two transcontinental railroads in 1876 (Southern Pacific) and 1885 (Santa Fe) combined with rate wars connecting the city to all parts of the United States, produced the boom of the 1880s. The growth of the modern city of Los Angeles and the West opened new markets for manufactured goods. Tourists and immigrants were enticed to Los Angeles by advertisements touting sunshine, new life opportunities, real estate sales, and investment speculation of railroad-owned lands in particular. Many African Americans would have also been enticed by the opportunity for their children to attend public schools, brought about by the state’s 1893 antidiscrimination law. Additionally, the history of less racially motivated violence and harassment

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<sup>20</sup> Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 136-138; 1902 Los Angeles City Directory; “Negroes Who Have Won Place or Fortune in Los Angeles and Pasadena, In Business Success,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 1909.

<sup>21</sup> People’s Independent is now located at 58<sup>th</sup> Street and West Boulevard. R.J. Smith, *The Great Black Way, L.A. in the 1940s and the Lost African American Renaissance* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2006), 73-78; Theodore W. Troy, “The Forum,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 1909; Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 137-138, 244; “J.W. Coleman,” *California Eagle*, June 24, 1916; “John Wesley Coleman and his Remarkable Career, Success and Contribution for a Better Citizenry,” *California Eagle*, December 21, 1923; “J.W. Coleman—Vice-Pres. UNIA,” *California Eagle*, December 26, 1924; Ernest Frederick Anderson, “The Development of Leadership and Organization Building in the Black Community of Los Angeles from 1900 Through World War II” (Ph.D. Diss, University of Southern California, 1976), 106-164; Bass, 46-47; Bunch, “Black Angelenos,” 24-26; James Adolphus Fisher, “A History of the Political and Social Development of the Black Community in California, 1850-1950” (Ph.D. Diss, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1972), 187-188; Emery J. Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles, Ideology and Community in the American Garvey Movement* (Los Angeles, CA: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 1980), 49-51; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 25-26, 233-234.

<sup>22</sup> Malik Simba, “Marcus Garvey,” Black Past.org, accessed July 1, 2017, <http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/garvey-marcus-1887-1940>.

directed towards African Americans encouraged migration to Los Angeles and other western U.S. destinations. From 1850 to 1900, Los Angeles grew from an isolated frontier town to an important city in the United States. In the nineteenth century Los Angeles emerged as the largest African American population center in Southern California.<sup>23</sup>

<b>Table I: African American Population and Percentage of Population in Los Angeles, 1850–1930<sup>24</sup></b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>African American Population</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Population</b>
1850	1,610	12	Less than 1.0
1860	4,385	66	1.50
1870	5,728	93	1.60
1880	11,183	102	Less than 1.0
1890	50,395	1,258	2.50
1900	102,479	2,131	2.01
1910	319,198	7,599	2.40
1920	576,673	15,579	2.70
1930	1,238,048	38,894	3.10

### **1890s to 1920s: Community Building**

The African American community in Los Angeles has been shaped and reshaped by successive influxes of migrants from other states. The socio-economic backgrounds and motives of these migrants influenced the qualities of this evolving community. One commonality was the optimism about their ability to make a better life for themselves out West. Though remaining a small part of the total Los Angeles population, the African American population from 1890 to 1900 grew by almost 40% from 1,258 to 2,131 as the general population grew by almost 51% to 102,479 (see Table I). While World War I was the era of the "Great Migration" in the eastern United States, the West was largely passed over by this great exodus of rural southern blacks that went to cities in the Midwest and Northeast. By 1920, the African American population of Los Angeles increased by 86.3% to 15,579 to make up less than 3% of the general population that increased about 82% to 576,673. Changes in land use patterns from the expansion of the streetcar system and increases in the size of the African American community lead to a rise in racial discrimination. As a result, the majority of the community began moving south from Downtown, with

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<sup>23</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 19-24; de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction" in *Seeking El Dorado*, 12-13; Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits, African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 15. For more on the character of modern Los Angeles emerging in the 1880s to the 1930s, see Robert M. Fogelson with a forward by Robert Fishman, *The Fragmented Metropolis, Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Federal Census; Taylor, 104, 135, 193, 223.

Central Avenue acting as the spine around which a vibrant community life was centered.<sup>25</sup>

Most African Americans moving to the West met an economy largely limiting them to lower level service employment. This created a constant tension with their view of themselves as “the better class of Negroes,” as Douglas Flamming has argued. Many of these newcomers arrived from cities in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia.<sup>26</sup> They brought with them middle class outlooks and ambitions. But no matter what their accomplishments before arriving in Los Angeles, most could only gain service jobs. These migrants joined earlier black Angeleno émigrés employed as janitors, porters, waiters, cooks, chauffeurs, draymen, or house and hotel servants. Often these lower status jobs may have been taken out of necessity due to discrimination compounded by competition from European and Mexican immigrants, and did not reflect their educational background or previous employment as professionals or skilled laborers in other states. Yet wages from menial jobs in Los Angeles were high when compared to the South. A janitor’s position could pay three to four times what an African American might have earned from farming in the South. A few black migrants opened up professional practices in medicine, dentistry, law, real estate, construction, and architecture. A few were educators, musicians, and photographers. Some opened small businesses. Many became homeowners, and some invested in other real estate. They created newspapers, and social, economic and religious networks.<sup>27</sup>

During this period, African Americans settled into the multiethnic neighborhood of rooming houses, apartments, and old houses that eventually became known as Little Tokyo, which was then adjacent to railroad yards. The earliest commercial district servicing African Americans centered around the “Brick Block” at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets, between Los Angeles and San Pedro Streets. As African Americans had been a part of the district since before the 1880s it became known as the “Negro district” because of their visual presence rather than numerical domination.<sup>28</sup> Until the 1900s, this district included a few restaurants, a hotel, stores selling groceries and furniture, and a barbershop. These establishments were emblematic of the efforts to strengthen the economy and pride of the African American community. A few problematic social and private clubs frequented by men from several nationalities and ethnicities also developed in this area. To get away from “the riffraff,” the respectable African American businesses owners moved their establishments a few block away to 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue. This marked the beginning of Central Avenue’s ascension as the center of African American life in Los Angeles.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 15-16; Lonnie Bunch, “A Past Not Necessarily Prologue: The Afro-American in Los Angeles,” in Norman Klein and Martin Schiesl, ed., *20<sup>th</sup> Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion and Social Conflict* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1990), 103; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 46-47.

<sup>26</sup> Bond, “The Negro In Los Angeles,” 25-37; Lawrence de Graaf, “The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 39 (1970), 332, 341-343; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 8, 45-50, 70-78, 118; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 23-26.

<sup>27</sup> Bond, “The Negro In Los Angeles,” 25-37; de Graaf, “The City of Black Angels,” 332, 341-343; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, quoted at 8, 45-50, 70-78, 118; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 23-26.

<sup>28</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 45-50, 117-120; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 15; Wild, 19-27.

<sup>29</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 45-50, 117-120; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 15; Wild, 19-27. On African American enterprises in the early twentieth century, also see Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland*,



For many years, Main Street was the dividing line between the east and west sides of Los Angeles. When W.E.B Du Bois visited the city in 1913, he observed that black Angelenos "without a doubt [were] the most beautifully housed group of colored people in the United States."<sup>30</sup> Some observers argue this perception of Du Bois and others contributed to the thought that Los Angeles was a wide-open city. African Americans had some latitude to choose their neighborhoods, but that choice was largely confined to the boundaries of the eastside where racial restrictions on housing were less prevalent. African American businesses, social institutions, and residents proliferated in the Central Avenue environs as whites moved out to other areas. White resistance and discrimination bound the African American community's gradual expansion southward down Central Avenue to the area between San Pedro Street (which turned into Avalon Boulevard) to the west, and Alameda Street to the east and eventually to Slauson Avenue on the south by the middle decades of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup>



*Flowers at the feet of children from the Furlong Tract standing for a group portrait, circa 1900 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

While the Central Avenue corridor would host the most African American settlers in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, some moved to other areas of the city where they were able to purchase land in sections along W. Temple Street and Occidental Boulevard, Boyle Heights as mentioned earlier, and the Furlong Tract (between 50<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Streets, and Long Beach Avenue and Alameda Street), and in areas west of the University of Southern California (USC). They also moved a few miles south of Los Angeles' border into the City of Watts (which consolidated with the

City of Los Angeles in 1926), and west to the oceanfront the City of Venice (which consolidated with the City of Los Angeles in 1925). Even while African Americans lived in these outer areas, they continued to participate in the social networks developed by African Americans in the Central Avenue neighborhoods.

As early as 1900 and into the late 1920s, African Americans began moving towards the environs of Central Avenue between 8<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets. By 1915, the *California Eagle* was referring to the area as

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1870-1930 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers In Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, "Colored California," *Crisis*, Vol. 5-6 (August, 1913), 194.

<sup>31</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 16; Bunch, "A Past Not Necessarily Prologue," 103; Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 2-3, 60-61, 65-69.

the “Black Belt of the city,” because of African American presence. Numerous African Americans founded churches, established businesses and newspapers, and opened theaters and other enterprises that acted as a powerful enticement for black home seekers. By 1919, 185 African American-owned businesses existed in Los Angeles. One quarter of them were located on Central Avenue with the others within a few blocks.<sup>32</sup>

When black realtor Sydney P. Dones opened the Booker T. Washington Building in 1916 at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue, this marked the more rapid development of African American enterprises on the street that was affectionately called by some, “The Avenue” for short. Storefronts were on the ground floor and residential rental units above. The Niemeyers, a white family of vintners with large land holdings in the area, constructed the building on the site of their old winery. Dones’ involvement with the building providing space primarily for black businesses and residents began within five years after it was constructed. It has been said by some who lived in this area in the 1920s, “if you stood at Twelfth and Central long enough you would meet every black person in Los Angeles and greet all those who had just arrived.” The streetcar and later bus lines stopped at 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue. Passengers would get off there, while others would continue down Central Avenue to their destinations as far south as Slauson Avenue. The Spike brothers’ record store was an institution at this intersection. The Hummingbird Café, Adams Sweet Shop, East Side Realty Company, and A.J. Roberts Funeral Home were among the businesses nearby.<sup>33</sup>

Churches, social and civic organizations, and newspapers grounded the African American community's identity. By the end of the 1920s, there were more than 15 African American churches serving the diverse tastes in the celebration of black Christianity. The multiethnic Azusa Street Revival from 1906 to 1915 sparked the development of Pentecostalism. A spin off of the First AME Church formed in 1915, the People’s Independent Church. It became one of the most influential African American churches in Los Angeles, especially under the leadership of Rev. Clayton D. Russell beginning in the 1930s. In his radio show, Russell promoted community social services and mobilization activities, such as where one could find employment and children’s programs and protests to challenge employment and housing discrimination.<sup>34</sup>

Social and civic organizations also reflected the diversity of the African American community, but were mostly the result of middle-class activists. Several self-help organizations were formed by black women including the Sojourner Truth Industrial Club, the Woman's Day Nursery Association, and the Helping Hand Society. Fraternal organizations like the Elks and Masons, and social clubs like the Silver Fox Club, the Just for Fun Club, and the Phys-Art-Lit-Mo Club, also presented opportunities for black community engagement. Civic organizations sponsored candidate debates for office seekers they endorsed. The civil

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<sup>32</sup> See *California Eagle*, October 4, 1919 for a good list of African American-owned businesses in Los Angeles in this era. Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 121-123.

<sup>33</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 122; de Graaf, “The City of Black Angels,” 335.

<sup>34</sup> de Graaf and Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 19; Flamming *Bound for Freedom*, 109-117.



rights group the Afro-American Council was established in the 1890s, before the Los Angeles branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) formed in 1913 and the Los Angeles branch of the National Urban League opened by 1921. The followers of Marcus M. Garvey formed a chapter of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1920/21, and Los Angeles became the center of the movement in the West. These organizations emerged to fight the rising tide of discrimination against all peoples of color in California.



*Wedding reception in 1953 at the Wilfandel Club at 3425 W. Adams Boulevard. The Wilfandel Club was founded in 1945 by African American women to promote civic betterment and culture. The clubhouse was one of the few integrated public meeting places in Los Angeles during the 1950s and is still used to today for meetings, weddings and other functions. Pictured left to right: Dr. Vada Somerville, Dr. John Somerville, mother of the bride Helen Louise Wheeler Riddle, father of the bride John Thomas Riddle, bride Joanne Tyler Riddle Jefferson, groom Thomas Jefferson, Jr., sister of the groom Rosie Jefferson Bryant. (Courtesy of Charmaine Jefferson-Johnson Family Collection. Photography by Richard Ito Studio)*

The NAACP won an early legal victory in 1918 when they forced the County of Los Angeles to open its nursing program to African American women. The attorney E. Burton Ceruti led the partnership between the Forum and the NAACP in their efforts to suppress the films *The Birth of a Nation* film (1915) and *Free and Equal* (1918) and their racist messages of African American incompetence during the Reconstruction era. Although unsuccessful, these efforts showed the political sophistication of the organizations at the time. In direct response to these films, African Americans opened their own studios

such as the Lincoln Motion Picture Company to produce films that portrayed black life in a more respectful manner with stories about black middle class aspirations. Using the legal system, attorneys for the NAACP successfully fought discrimination against African Americans in housing and in public accommodations such as movie theatres and restaurants.<sup>35</sup>

Two African American-owned weekly newspapers, the *California Eagle* and the *New Age*, along with the monthly news magazine the *Liberator*, provided the black community with news of local, national, and occasionally international political, economic, and civic rights activities, and social events its readers wanted and needed to know about for their survival and assimilation in Los Angeles. These publications also celebrated the accomplishments of the African American community by promoting local businesses, institutions, and activist groups. They successfully persevered, whereas earlier established African American newspapers in Los Angeles formed in the last three decades of the nineteenth century folded shortly after they appeared. In 1933, the most successful of all the African American newspapers, the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, was formed to become one of the most influential African American newspapers in the U.S., and continues to operate today.<sup>36</sup>



Ray I. Matthews standing, and Charles (left) and Louis (right) Blodgett sitting in an automobile outside the Darby Hotel at 234 W. Adams Boulevard. Louis Blodgett worked with architect James H. Garrott to build the first headquarters of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1928. Later Blodgett became the president of Liberty Savings and Loan Association. (Los Angeles Public Library)

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<sup>35</sup> de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 19-20; Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 192-193; Tolbert, 40; Bunch, "Black Angelenos," 1989, 26; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 242-243, 238.

<sup>36</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 26-33, 104-109; Charlotta Bass, "The Black Press," PBS, accessed March 22, 2017, [http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/modern\\_journalist/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/modern_journalist/index.html)

The influence of Los Angeles' African American community during this period reached beyond the city itself, to the state and nation. As early as 1910, the city became the center of the African American population, politics, and business in California and in the West, surpassing San Francisco and Oakland. An early symbol of African American progress was the election of Frederick Madison Roberts in 1918 as the first African American State Assembly member. His Assembly District included the Central Avenue corridor where most African Americans in the region lived at the time. While whites continued to make up the majority of the population in the district, and Mexican Americans and Japanese Americans were equal to African Americans in numbers, Douglas Flamming observes, "culturally and politically, black Angelenos [prominently] placed their stamp on the district" by the mid-1920s.

By the end of the 1920s, several important businesses were established, and prominent buildings were constructed on or not far from Central Avenue. The largest businesses included the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company (4261 Central Avenue, 1928, LAHCM #580), Blodgett Building (2508 Central Avenue, 1928), and Dunbar Hospital (1395 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, 1923, demolished). Other prominent buildings constructed during this period included the Second Baptist Church (2412 Griffith Avenue, 1926), 28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA (1006 E. 28<sup>th</sup> Street, 1926, LAHCM #851), Lincoln Theatre (2300 Central Avenue, 1926, LAHCM #744), and Elks Lodge (4016 Central Avenue, 1930, demolished).<sup>37</sup>

The Hotel Somerville at 4255 Central Avenue (now the Dunbar Hotel, LAHCM #131) was built in part to host the annual meeting of the NAACP in 1928, the organization's first on the Pacific Coast. This meeting location signaled the region, and particularly Los Angeles, had moved into the nation's civil rights mainstream. Drs. John and Vada Somerville built what all observers identified as a beautiful hotel, with the *Eagle* calling it "a monument to Negro enterprise." With the hotel's opening, a decisive shift south from 12<sup>th</sup> Street and the Booker T. Washington Building occurred with the blocks around this architectural landmark becoming the new center of cultural and business life of Los Angeles' African American community.<sup>38</sup>

### **1930s: Challenges and Progress**

Los Angeles' African American populations grew by almost 1,800% from 2,131 in 1900 to 38,894 in 1930, and almost three times its size from 1920 (see Table I). The general population of the City of Angeles grew to almost 1.2 million. The Great Depression upended stability and upward mobility for many people, not only African Americans. The African American community had the additional challenges of dealing with racially restrictive covenants, segregation and exclusion from many public places, and police brutality. The racially restrictive covenants and informal agreements between white homeowners that they would sell or rent only to whites in the early decades of the century now went all the way down to 92<sup>nd</sup> Street from Slauson Avenue. Many times, whites reinforced these racist policies and

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<sup>37</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 261-263.

<sup>38</sup> de Graaf, "The City of Black Angels," 349-350, 352; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 261-263, 284-287, 292; "Hotel Somerville," *California Eagle*, June 22, 1928.

actions with threats of violence against the homes of African Americans who attempted to move into this area until the 1940s. Even with these challenges, housing and educational opportunity in Los Angeles were much better for African Americans than in other major U.S. cities. Lack of employment opportunities due to racial discrimination continued to be a barrier to economic mobility and prosperity for African Americans in Los Angeles and across the U.S.<sup>39</sup>



*Lionel Hampton (far left) outside the Club Alabam a jazz club at 4016 Central Avenue established in the 1930s, 1953 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

During the 1930s, African Americans were excluded from employment in the two main industries that continued to thrive during the economic downturn – manufacturing and entertainment. During the 1920s, Los Angeles developed into the eighth largest manufacturing center in the nation. In other parts of the U.S., African Americans fared a bit better in obtaining this type of employment than Los Angeles. While the entertainment industry was one of Los Angeles's most profitable industries, African Americans were mostly relegated to stereotypical roles as maids, butlers, and janitors in films. There was employment for musicians in the movies and many others in the Central Avenue nightclubs and theaters, which carried over from the 1920s. During the Great Depression racially discriminatory labor policies increased in the lower end of the market (custodial work, etc.) making the range of opportunities even narrower, and the scarcity of employment made it very difficult for many African Americans in Los Angeles. Because African Americans were disproportionately employed in private homes,

restaurants, and railroad industries, they were particularly exposed in the economic crisis. By 1934 African Americans' unemployment rate reached 50%, a higher rate than among white Americans.<sup>40</sup>

As other groups moved out, new African American migrants moved into the neighborhoods around Central Avenue. Repatriation of large numbers of Mexicans and Filipinos, and some Japanese people who moved back to Japan, made more of the existing housing stock available. Housing constructed under New Deal programs later in the decade enticed white and some other non-black working class groups to residential tracts in the suburbs. These new developments were not available to African Americans because the Home Owners Loan Corporation "redlined" African Americans out of mortgage

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<sup>39</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 297; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 21-22; James P. Allen and Eugene Turner, *The Ethnic Quilt, Population Diversity in Southern California* (Northridge, CA: The Center For Geographical Studies, California State University, Northridge, 1997), 79.

<sup>40</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 22-27; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 225-226; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 296.



assistance initiatives, and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration required racially restrictive covenants as a precondition of loans.

African Americans continued to be alienated from U.S. politics. President Herbert Hoover continued the policies of previous administrations and refused to endorse anything related to civil rights. Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president in 1932, on an agenda of economic liberalism aimed at helping ordinary working people. His New Deal programs boosted Democrats and instigated some defections from Republicans, including African Americans. With this historic shift away from the party of Lincoln, in 1934 Democrat Augustus Freeman Hawkins won the election over Republican Frederick Madison Roberts to become the new California Assembly member representing the now 62<sup>nd</sup> District, which included white voters who supported organized labor and the multiethnic Central Avenue corridor. Hawkins' election occurred when a liberal coalition was pursuing the use of state power to revamp California's social and economic systems. Like Roberts, Hawkins was the only African American in the State Assembly (until William Byron Rumford was elected in 1948), and he found it difficult to get his proposed legislation passed.<sup>41</sup>



*Frederick Madison Roberts was the first African American elected to the State Assembly, circa 1919 (Oakland Public Library Collection)*



*Augustus Hawkins was the second African American elected to the State Assembly in 1934, replacing Roberts. He became the first African American from the West to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1963, circa 1964 (UCLA)*

There were a few other bright spots in the 1930s for black Angelenos. Up to 1925, African Americans had full access to public swimming pools, which was one of the most popular forms of recreation in the city. That year, the Los Angeles Playground Commission suddenly instituted racial segregation. In 1931,

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<sup>41</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 309, 311-312; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 33-34.

the civic activist Rebecca "Betty" Hill led the court battle to overturn the policy. Summer camps were also desegregated in the early 1930s. NAACP Los Angeles Branch President Dr. H. Claude Hudson called the desegregation of swimming pools "one of the greatest victories in the history of the progress of the Race." The victories to desegregate public swimming pools, along with an earlier victory clarifying the rights of African Americans to unrestricted access to public beaches, contributed to the slow success of the regional and national struggles for equality and social justice.<sup>42</sup>

In 1934 Leon Washington, publisher of the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, lead the first boycott to confront discriminatory hiring practices in small businesses along Central Avenue in the "Don't Spend Where You Can't Work" campaign that simultaneously occurred in other cities around the country. This campaign mobilized the African American community against a specific target as they protested in front of local stores that discriminated against blacks. African American community and civil rights organizations would frequently use organized protests and legal actions in the coming decades to stop employment and other discrimination in Los Angeles.<sup>43</sup>

Some African Americans did not suffer loss of employment in the Great Depression; rather they prospered in their professional practices and businesses, including a few high profile ones like Golden State Mutual Life Insurance. Struggling African Americans received some emergency relief funds and employment benefits to help them survive, even as New Deal programs authorized discrimination against them. Although with limited success, the Los Angeles branches of the National Urban League and NAACP energetically protested this discrimination in several of the federal programs, and fought to expand educational opportunities. The African American press did its part to politicize and urge its readership to challenge racial discrimination. Leading churches and the California Federation of Colored Women's Clubs network continued their work in the community's civil rights activism. In the 1930s, the Democratic Party and federal government gave African Americans in Los Angeles and the nation hope that their activism, along with that of their white allies, would make racial equality a high priority on the liberal agenda.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 216-218, 289, quote at 291; Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure, Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 54-55, 66-77; Daniel Cady, "'Southern California': White Southern Migrants in Greater Los Angeles, 1920-1930" (Ph.D. Diss, Claremont University, 2005), 198-199; Alison Rose Jefferson, *Leisure's Race, Power and Place: Black Angelenos and the California Dream, 1900-1965* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming).

<sup>43</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 303; Ernest Frederick Anderson, "The Development of Leadership and Organization building in the Black Community of Los Angeles from 1900 Through World War II," (Ph.D. Diss, University of Southern California, 1976), 101-102.

<sup>44</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 297, 320-321, 329-330, 332; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 29-30; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 230-231; Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: the Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), ix, 330-331; Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country, Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 68-69; Anthony Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-1940* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, publisher, 1989), 253-255.

The labor movement began to gain strength in Los Angeles and around the nation after the Wagner Act provided federal protection to organize unions in 1935. African Americans in other parts of the nation, due to their larger numbers in the industrial manufacturing workforce, would benefit directly from affiliation with the multiracial vision of the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and their support of civil rights organizations in campaigns against racial discrimination in the workforce. In Los Angeles, with the exception of a few American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions (waiters, letter carriers, and bricklayers), African Americans were involved in black-only unions such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) and the Musicians Local 767. The BSCP succeeded in abolishing the employment classification of “voluntary worker,” forcing the railroads to pay them a salary rather than making them survive on tips alone. In 1934, the Amended Railway Labor Act was passed which protected the Los Angeles local of the BSCP right to organize. From the 1930s onward, labor unions had a mixed record. While union advocacy slowly, and in limited job sectors, aided African Americans in workforce gains, widespread rank and file resistance continued to compound the work place challenges they faced for a few more decades in Los Angeles.<sup>45</sup>

By 1940, the African American population would grow to 63,774, and the city’s general population more than doubled, growing to 1,504,277 (see Table II). In the Central Avenue corridor the African American population grew 39.2% during the 1930s. African American newcomers tended to be less affluent, and from more diverse parts of the South than previous generations. They continued to face overt white resistance and threats of violence that limited their residential mobility, although black Angelenos led the nation in initiating lawsuits to eliminate racially restrictive covenants into the 1940s. They had minimal political representation compared to several cities around the U.S., where some African American city council and county officials had been elected to represent their interests. During this period of change in U.S. public policy, economics, employment, and society, African Americans mostly struggled on their own, but they were shown potential for hope in federal solutions to injustices.<sup>46</sup>

### **1941 to 1950s: Opportunity, Black Protest and Civil Rights Advancement**

World War II transformed the economic and social landscape for Los Angeles citizens in general, and African Americans in particular, as new employment opportunities eventually became available. The war years and following decade encouraged an accelerated increased migration of all groups to California. Anchored by large federal defense contracts during and after the war, the industrial sector of Los Angeles and the region grew dramatically. Through such organizations as the Los Angeles Negro Victory Committee and Urban League, African Americans and other marginalized communities in the city

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<sup>45</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 247-252; 321; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 26-29; 64-88.

<sup>46</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 308; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 34-35, 38, 44-45; de Graaf, “The City of Black Angels,” 350-351; Bond, “The Negro In Los Angeles,” 30; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 270; Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: the Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), ix, 330-331; Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is A Country, Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 68-69; Anthony Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-1940* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, publisher, 1989), 253-255.



contested discrimination and demanded equal opportunities. This activism led President Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 8802 (1941), which prohibited discrimination in defense employment and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to enforce the measure. For the next 20 years, African Americans in Los Angeles experienced their greatest economic advancement. They steadily increased their participation in the industrial workforce and union membership, purchased homes, and enjoyed what was purported to be a middle class standard of living that had previously been the province of whites.<sup>47</sup>



*Picket line outside the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Watts, 1948. The Southeast Interracial Council, Independent Party, and Fair Employment Practice Committee were protesting the bank's refusal to hire African American or Mexican American tellers (Los Angeles Public Library)*

African Americans continued to migrate to California in greater numbers than the general population, and Los Angeles persisted as their largest population center in the West (see Table II). The 1940s and 1950s saw an acceleration of whites moving out of the neighborhoods around Downtown. More accessible housing for African Americans in their restricted neighborhoods continued, but the

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<sup>47</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 352-353; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 3, 46, 52, 57; Anderson, 165-166, 172-190; Raphael J. Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White, Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 52.

community was challenged by the influx of wartime migrants. During the war years there was a citywide housing shortage impacting everyone, but especially African Americans. The ‘redlining’ policies of the federal government mortgage-assistance initiatives and bank loan underwriting programs begun in the 1930s continued to discourage investment in neighborhoods with communities of color.<sup>48</sup>

The federal government continued to promote racially restrictive covenants in new housing tracts in places such as the San Fernando Valley. An exception to this rule was Pacoima, located between the Golden State Freeway and Foothill Freeway, 17 miles northwest of Downtown. The community had its origins as a suburb for workers on the Southern Pacific railroad. Consequently, it drew a diverse population early on, including blacks, ethnic Mexicans, and Japanese. During World War II, 2,000 African Americans settled in the area, many of them defense workers; another 6,000 came in the 1950s. These included Green View Homes, a tract developed with three-bedroom homes, and Valley View Village, a 200-acre tract with 1,000 three-bedroom bungalows.

Most contractors who wanted to build housing for African Americans, however, could not get FHA insured loans. In addition, the FHA would not fund renovation projects for older housing stock; the program would only fund new construction. The federal government effectively doomed urban neighborhoods with escalating African American populations to decline in promoting all-white suburban neighborhoods. The U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) and *Barrows v. Jackson* (1953) overturned the judicial enforcement of restrictive covenants. These were the first of several legal victories against discrimination in housing and employment that would occur through the 1960s. The victories did not vanquish other forms of racist exclusion, but they did open Los Angeles to change – obscuring for some in subsequent generations of Angelenos the immediate experience and memory of racism.<sup>49</sup>

The integration of African Americans into the national industrial economy during the war years was one catalyst for some black Angelenos to move from Central Avenue and adjacent neighborhoods. During the postwar period, African Americans gained tremendous economic advances as they steadily increased their presence in the industrial workforce of the region, even with many industrial employers still participating in racially discriminatory hiring and promotion practices. Despite the gains, African Americans often were employed in the hardest, lowest paying positions, and contended with resistance from some unions. Employment opportunities in clerical occupations in the public sector also expanded for African Americans, especially for black women.

In the 1940s and 1950s, black Angelenos gained some white political allies, most notably Kenneth Hahn who served on the City Council from 1947 to 1952 and the County Board of Supervisors from 1953 to 1997. Hahn's ally on the Board of Supervisors was John Anson Ford, an important supporter and member of the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission. Hahn and Ford pressed for the creation of city and county fair employment practices committees. Mexican American World War II

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<sup>48</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 352-353; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 3, 46.

<sup>49</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 351, 367; Lawrence de Graaf, “African American Suburbanization in California,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 441; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 95.

veteran, public health care worker, and Community Service Organization organizer Edward Roybal represented the interests of some black Angelenos when he was elected to the City Council as the 9<sup>th</sup> District representative.<sup>50</sup>



*Supervisor Kenneth Hahn and Rev. Maurice Dawkins present a scroll to Jackie Robinson, the first African American in Major League Baseball, 1957  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Some successes and new leadership in the struggle for racial equality helped to energize community activism. New leaders in the local branch of the NAACP, including attorneys Loren Miller and Thomas Neusom and ministers Rev. Maurice Dawkins and Rev. J. Raymond Henderson, drew sustained support for protests and legal actions to force whites to deal with blacks' demands. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in which the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitutional separate public schools for blacks and whites was a dramatic turning point for African Americans across the nation. As a member of the legal team of the NAACP, Miller helped write the brief for this landmark case.

Desegregating the Los Angeles Fire Department was a highly publicized and eventually successful campaign by Miller, Neusom, and African American firefighters. The NAACP organized consumer boycotts to gain employment for African Americans at companies such as Anheuser-Busch, even while it continued to be difficult for blacks to secure housing in the surrounding community of Van Nuys where the company was located.<sup>51</sup>

In earlier decades, black Angelenos challenged daily indignities consistently and individually, but in these years they worked through new organizations that emerged such as the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission and the Los Angeles County Conference on Community Relations, as well as the Urban League, the Communist Party (until the House Committee on Un-American Activities reduced their influence by 1952), the NAACP, the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), the United Civil Rights Council, the Civil Rights Congress, the Democratic Minority Conference, churches, and other groups. Additionally black Angelenos began to pursue the development of political representation, which eventually paid off in the early 1960s. Through direct actions, electoral politics, and a much broader participation in daily urban life than in earlier decades, African American demands were forced into the public consciousness of white Los Angeles.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 153; Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, 31.

<sup>51</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 148-151.

<sup>52</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 131-136.

African American leadership in California, headed in part by State Assembly members Augustus Hawkins and Byron Rumford,<sup>53</sup> pushed forward full civic participation and racial justice with confidence that their goals would be addressed. Hawkins and Rumford, with the support of Gov. Edmund Brown, created the in 1958, which would handle approximately 700 cases of discrimination annually – a major victory for African Americans in California. As Douglas Flamming noted, the clearest lessons of the period with this rising tide of Democratic liberalism for African Americans was an ongoing commitment to get free, and even as the community and its leaders lost more battles than it won, there was a new road to freedom.<sup>54</sup>

During the 1950s whites, as well as Mexicans and Asians, continued to move to outlying areas of Los Angeles, while blacks moved largely into neighborhoods contiguous with the Central Avenue corridor. At the same time, a continuing influx of new African American migrants needed to be absorbed into the already overcrowded area that was poorly serviced by the City. With housing restrictions lifted, over the next five decades middle class African Americans continued to move west out of the old neighborhoods and into areas like Compton, one of Los Angeles County's oldest industrial and residential suburbs. Left behind was a more uniformly less affluent and less educated segment of the African American population in the Central Avenue corridor and adjacent South Los Angeles neighborhoods. By 1960, the Central Avenue corridor and adjacent neighborhoods were 95% African American.<sup>55</sup>

Many African American institutions, businesses, and professional offices, moved along with the more economically secure African American residents westward towards the West Adams, Leimert Park, and Baldwin Hills areas. Although Los Angeles was a source of new innovative styles of jazz, the nightclubs along the Central Avenue corridor all the way to Watts mostly closed by 1960 with only a few new ones opening in new African American neighborhoods. The exodus of the African American middle class from the eastside of Los Angeles to new areas continued from the postwar years through the 1960s. Even though African Americans who moved out of the old Central Avenue neighborhoods to new locations achieved a higher standard of living, they and those remaining in the old neighborhoods continued to share the common experience of racism, discrimination, and white resistance.<sup>56</sup>

### **1960s to 1980 and Beyond: The Rise of Black Power and Community Transformation**

The African American population grew more than five times from 63,774 in 1940 to 334,916 in 1960, continuing the trend of larger growth than the general Los Angeles population which grew from 974,738 to 2,479,015. By 1970, the black population increased to 503,606 and the general population to 2,816,061 (see Table II). More African Americans meant more obstacles faced from racism and white

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<sup>53</sup> Byron Rumford was the African American Assembly member representing Berkeley.

<sup>54</sup> Fisher, 230-232, 276; David M. Herszenhorn, "A.F. Hawkins, Civil Rights Lawmaker, Dies at 100," *New York Times*, November 14, 2007; Flamming *Bound for Freedom*, 363-364; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 157.

<sup>55</sup> Allen and Turner, 80-82, Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 377-379; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 97-98, 112-113, 125.

<sup>56</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 97-98, 112-113, 125, 130; Allen and Turner, 80-82; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 377-379; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 276-277.

resistance, as a rising group of consistently employed African American families purchased homes outside the Central Avenue corridor. After gaining access to more diverse private sector employment, their residential and social mobility was facilitated in large part by white- and blue-collar jobs in public sector employment. With larger population numbers, and determination to have their demands for full citizenship realized, African Americans began to take advantage of the emerging liberal coalition in state politics in efforts to expand black representation in the late 1950s into the early 1960s.

Redistricting created an additional State Assembly seat for Los Angeles, allowing for the election of Rev. F. Douglas Ferrell (Republican) and Mervyn Dymally (Democrat) in 1962, as Gus Hawkins moved up to the U.S. House of Representatives. Next African Americans won political victories in the City Council elections of 1963, changing the face of local politics for decades to come. Gilbert Lindsay was appointed and then elected as the city's first African American City Council member in the 9<sup>th</sup> District. Tom Bradley, police officer turned lawyer, won the seat in the 10<sup>th</sup>, and newcomer Billy Mills won in the 8<sup>th</sup>. African Americans were now representing three of the 15 City Council districts. This expanded black political representation at the local, state, and national levels brought substantive gains to the African American community in education, labor, and employment reforms, as well as very important neighborhood improvements in infrastructure, safety, and basic city services that had been denied to poorer neighborhoods.<sup>57</sup>



*Los Angeles City Council Members Gilbert Lindsay, Tom Bradley, and Billy Mills, 1963 (CSUN, Tom and Ethel Bradley Center)*

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<sup>57</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 121-129, 155, 157-158; Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, 44-46.



Having three African American members forced the City Council and the Los Angeles civic elite to acknowledge the growing civil rights movement, and move towards a greater awareness of the racial disparities in their own city. But these new representatives in conjunction with protests by a number of organizations were unable to change the racist policies of the Los Angeles Unified School District. In 1963, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a class action lawsuit to desegregate the schools. Even after a 1968 California Supreme Court ruling that called for the end of *de facto* segregation, a fiasco over busing left the procedure of desegregation unsettled. Additionally while there were many supporters of African American equality in Los Angeles, there continued to be many whites that were deeply hostile and resistant to the racial integration of neighborhoods.<sup>58</sup>



*In 1960, African Americans leaders Revs. Maurice Dawkins and Martin Luther King, Jr. picketed the Woolworth's store on Broadway to protest the company's refusal to service African Americans at lunch counters. The company eventually agreed to serve African Americans, and also hire them to work in its stores. (CSUN, Tom and Ethel Bradley Center)*

Some African Americans tired of what they viewed as token victories, moved from legal and political activities to increased picketing and boycotting campaigns of retail outlets and other businesses, and protesting segregated schools. In the 1960s, out of rage and frustration, many young people increasingly embraced Black Nationalist rhetoric, which sometimes led to friction with the police and the growth of groups such as the Nation of Islam. The Black Panther Party of Self Defense founded in Oakland and the United Slaves (US) founded in Los Angeles were two other distinctive brands of black nationalism that spread nationwide after the Watts uprising of 1965. Gerald Horne argues street gangs “with their dreams of emulating

other racial and ethnic groups by constructing illicit commercial empires” and their “ethos of fraternity” also saw a rise in response to the rage and frustration among black youth in Los Angeles. Other lasting influences and legacies of these movements are the Black Studies programs established in many universities.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 158, 167-168; de Graaf and Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 37-41; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 280. For more on the African American cultural scene in post-World War II Los Angeles, see Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West, Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) and the art scene in the 1960s-1970s, Kellie Jones, *South of Pico, African American artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

<sup>59</sup> de Graaf and Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 37-40; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 170-171; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 280. For an in-depth and complex examination of social history of the Watts uprising and its meaning, see Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time, The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Boston, MA: De Capo Press, 1997), quote at 11, 189-191, quote at 192, 193.

The deaths and property damage of the Watts uprising was the result of young African Americans' high unemployment rate, poor quality of housing, lack of access to decent education, and police brutality. A shock to black and white Angelenos and the nation, the Watts uprising showed the pain of American race relations in 1965. The perception and popular myth that Los Angeles was a city favorable for African Americans was shattered, and whites were forced to publicly deal with the long history of racial inequality. At the same time this area of the city and segment of the population finally saw more direct attention from City and State agencies, local business owners, civil rights groups, and social service organizations such as the Urban League, CORE, and Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC) among others.<sup>60</sup>



"Paint-up Day" organized by the Watts Towers Art Center, 1966 (Los Angeles Public Library)

In the wake of the Watts uprising, federal affirmative action programs were developed to expand employment opportunities for minorities. African Americans and Latinos began to find jobs in the public sectors in California, especially law enforcement. Due to general compliance with these policies in the late 1960s, African Americans gained substantial improvement in their occupational profile. Reforms in higher education saw increased admission of African Americans at the University of California, even as white backlash occurred in such cases as *Bakke v. the Regents of the University of California* (1978) where the California Supreme Court upheld the basic principle of minority preferences, but declared racial quotas unconstitutional.<sup>61</sup>

During this period there were widening socio-economic disparities among African Americans themselves and among whites produced by regional, national, and global economic restructuring. As early as 1963 blue-collar manufacturing jobs began relocating from South Los Angeles to outlying suburban areas and other Southern California counties. These varied manufacturing concerns sought lower taxes, more land to physically expand their operations, and new markets for their goods. By the 1970s, many of these companies closed due to international competition, and the employment opportunities they once provided moved overseas or disappeared. The narrowing of industrial employment impacted all American workers, but especially African Americans. Employment in manufacturing was important to working class black Angelenos because it pushed them into the ranks of the middle class financially, if

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<sup>60</sup> John H.M. Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough, Los Angeles Workers, 1880-2010* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 240-242; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 169-170; Horne, 13, 189-190; de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 41.

<sup>61</sup> de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 41.



not educationally. New manufacturing jobs were developing, but because of the continued housing discrimination in the suburbs, inadequate training and education, and poor transportation, the economic opportunities for many working class blacks were stymied. Their segregation became more entrenched in the neighborhoods of South Los Angeles.<sup>62</sup>

As employment opportunities were declining in the late 1960s, the last large exodus of African Americans from the South was occurring. The African American migrant population in Los Angeles grew by more than 50% during this period. This happened while there was increasing competition from new immigrants from Latin America and Asia for the manufacturing work that remained. The economic structural changes to this community made it even harder to absorb the new African American migrants and taxed the infrastructure of South Los Angeles even more. Opportunities existed for working class blacks in the service sector, but the salaries and benefits were not as good as what the manufacturing jobs had offered in the recent past.<sup>63</sup>

The civil unrest in 1965 encouraged those white families still remaining in South Los Angeles and Watts to move out. There was also an out-migration from older South Los Angeles neighborhoods by black Angelenos who could afford it. Those exiting were for the most part employed in white-collar occupations, were generally much better educated, and had higher incomes than those who remained. With this exodus, Leimert Park and Baldwin Hills became the heart of the more affluent African American community of Los Angeles. The San Fernando Valley, the cities of Inglewood, Carson, and Gardena, and even other more distant areas and other counties became the destinations for middle class blacks that gained more occupational choices and income in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1990s the hindrances to the pursuit of the California Dream of suburban residency and employment for African Americans substantially dissipated due to a successions of events occurring from the 1940s to 1960s, starting with the legal victories outlawing housing and employment discrimination and the growth of fair housing groups throughout the country.<sup>64</sup>

As Raphael Sonenshein and others have pointed out, the civil unrest and its aftermath simultaneously “solidified a movement for black political representation citywide” and fueled white socio-economic conservatism in the city. Unity across class boundaries, city geography, and political ideologies facilitated the ability of black political leader to mobilize power to address the concerns and demands of the black Angelenos. This turn of events eventually led to the historic election of Tom Bradley as the first African American mayor of Los Angeles in 1973, and to African Americans holding the largest number of political positions of any minority group in the state into the 1980s. By 1980, the population growth of the city leveled off as the Great Migration paused. The growth of the African American population reached 504,674, almost the same as it was in 1970. The population of the city as a whole grew by about 100,000

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<sup>62</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 170-171, 176, 179-180.

<sup>63</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 181-182, 185.

<sup>64</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 189-193, 201; de Graaf, “African American Suburbanization,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 415-416, 426; Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, 139-175, 159-161.

to reach 2,968,579 (see Table II). The 1980s saw some impressive gains for African Americans, with ten of the nation's 100 largest black businesses in California, and an array of sports and entertainment celebrities provided hope and inspiration if not real economic help.<sup>65</sup>

"The civil rights movement in Southern California finally got its reward" with Bradley's election according to John H.M. Laslett. His 20 years in office marked the longest tenure by any mayor in the city's history. During his administration, affirmative action and other civil rights policies and laws were enforced, opening the door for new opportunities of upward mobility for minority individuals and businesses as well as an expansion of African American, Asian, and Latino civil servants into upper ranks of city government for the first time. He also attempted to reform of the police department. However, from the 1970s to 1990s the majority of the city's uneducated, unskilled, or urban poor African American and Latino working men and women continued to struggle, laying the foundation for the creation of the large segment of underemployed working class families that is still present in the city.<sup>66</sup>

Since the founding of California and Los Angeles, African American men and women have strongly fought for and asserted their civil rights to shape their own community, and became key shapers of Los Angeles history thanks to their significant influence on the region's social geography, and its political, economic, religious, and cultural life. As demographic changes in the city of Los Angeles in the years beyond 1980 has occurred, the African American community's legacy and contributions continue as an important force in shaping its own and the city's greater community life.<sup>67</sup>

<b>Table II: African American Population and Percentage of Population in Los Angeles, 1940–1990<sup>68</sup></b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>African American Population</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Population</b>
1940	1,504,277	63,774	4.2
1950	1,970,358	171,209	8.7
1960	2,479,015	334,916	13.5
1970	2,816,061	503,606	17.8
1980	2,968,579	504,674	17.0
1990	3,485,398	484,674	13.9

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<sup>65</sup> Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, xv, 76-78, quote at 79, 80-84; de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 45-47.

<sup>66</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 170-171, 197; Laslett, quote at 264, 265.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 53.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Federal Census; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 3, 254, 270, 286-287, 314.

### **Themes Related to African American History in Los Angeles**

The following themes relate to extant resources that have important associations with African American history in Los Angeles. These themes are consistent with the overall content and format developed for Los Angeles' Citywide Historic Context Statement. The narratives here are intended to supplement and complement existing narratives for each theme.

Theme - Deed Restrictions and Racial Segregation

Theme - Commercial Development

Theme - Civil Rights Movement

Theme - Religion and Spirituality

Theme - Newspapers and Publishing

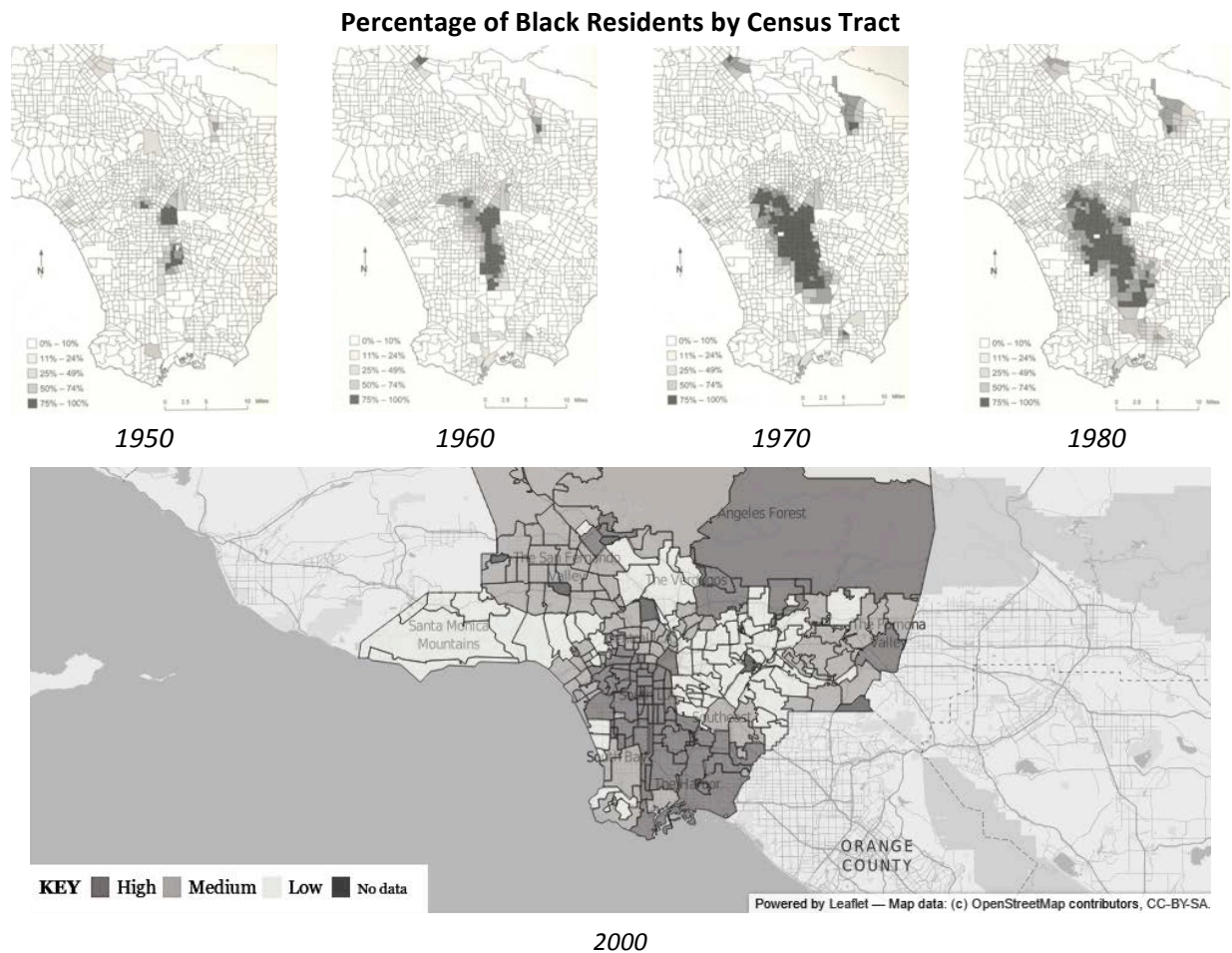
Theme - Social Clubs

Theme - Health and Medicine

Theme - Entertainment Industry

**THEME: DEED RESTRICTION AND SEGREGATION, 1915 - 1970**

Los Angeles and cities across the country show similar remnants of uneven development with racial groups such as African Americans concentrated in particular neighborhoods. This trend is a direct result of the institutionalized racism that persisted through the middle of the twentieth century. Throughout this period, African American settlement patterns in Los Angeles were generally restricted to east of Main Street from Downtown to Watts by a variety of tactics designed to keep black people out of white neighborhoods. Some tactics were informal actions of individuals, others were legal measures implemented by private groups or government agencies. By the postwar years, African Americans had become the most intensely segregated of all nonwhite groups in Los Angeles, even after the courts had declared deed restrictions unconstitutional. Although African American settlement drastically expanded outside its limited borders along the Central Avenue corridor following the 1960s, many of Los Angeles' predominately African American neighborhoods today are rooted in discriminatory practices and the community's triumphs over them.



An extremely common tool of racial segregation was the restrictive covenant, used widely in Los Angeles from 1900 to 1948. Restrictive covenants were legal clauses written into property deeds, which dictated that the owner could only sell or rent a property to “Caucasians,” otherwise the owner could lose the property. In some covenants, the excluded groups were mentioned by name, and invariably included African Americans, Mexicans, Asians, and occasionally Jews. A typical covenant lasted for 20 to 50 years. In 1917, one African American resident of Los Angeles described covenants as “invisible walls of steel. The whites surrounded us and made it impossible for us to go beyond these walls.”<sup>69</sup> Restrictive covenants were upheld as constitutional by the California and U.S. Supreme Courts in 1919 and 1926, which unleashed their widespread use in Los Angeles. One 1927 covenant blanketed the area between the USC campus and Inglewood, impeding black settlement there for 99 years. The use of covenants diminished after 1948, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that it was unconstitutional for courts to enforce the agreements, although it never declared the agreements themselves unlawful. In 1953, the *Barrows v. Jackson* decision strengthened enforcement against their use. It was not until the 1968 Fair Housing Act that they were deemed illegal.<sup>70</sup>



Loren Miller circa 1950  
(Huntington Library, Loren Miller Collection)

Loren Miller played a significant role in ending the use of restrictive covenants across the nation. Miller’s legal battle against segregation began with the *Fairchild v. Raines* case in 1944. He won the case for a black family in Pasadena that bought an unrestricted lot, but was nonetheless sued by white neighbors. In 1945, Miller was retained by a small group of wealthy African Americans who managed to buy houses in the predominantly white neighborhood of West Adams Heights, commonly referred to as Sugar Hill. Non-Caucasians were restricted from owning or leasing property in West Adams Heights as far back as 1902. When the covenants began to expire in the 1930s, some but not all property owners signed agreements renewing the

restriction on Non-Caucasians. This situation allowed African Americans such as businessmen Norman O. Houston and Horace P. Clark and actresses Louise Beavers, Hattie McDaniel, and Ethel Waters to move into the neighborhood. The white homeowners association filed a lawsuit to enforce the covenants, but lost in Los Angeles Superior Court. Judge Thurmond Clarke ruled “the court is of the opinion that it is time that members of the Negro race are accorded without reservation and evasion the full rights guaranteed them under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.” The white homeowners appealed to the California Supreme Court, but lost again.<sup>71</sup> After successfully representing the defendants, Miller went on to work with a team of lawyers to help bring the issue before the U.S. Supreme Court, resulting in *Shelley v.*

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<sup>69</sup> Bond, “The Negro in Los Angeles,” 69.

<sup>70</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 69; de Graaf and Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 25; Wendy Plotkin, “Restrictive Covenants,” in David Goldfield, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*, Vol. 2 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007), 681.

<sup>71</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 98-99.



*Kraemer*, where Miller presented part of the case before the justices.<sup>72</sup> When the court handed down its historic decision rendering the public enforcement of deed restrictions unenforceable in 1948, Miller solidified his reputation as a champion for civil rights.<sup>73</sup>

As evidenced by the Sugar Hill case, white homeowners associations in Los Angeles promoted racial segregation. These groups were sometimes instigated by developers, other times by specific residents in a given neighborhood, and often formed to defend the racial purity of the community. They conducted covenant-writing campaigns, organized meetings when the threat of “negro invasion” was imminent, and filed lawsuits in cases where individual covenants were broken. Homeowners associations grew in popularity after 1910. As Lawrence de Graaf put it, by 1920 “the use of block protective association restrictions as well as individual deed covenants heralded a more rigid and efficient era of residential segregation” in Los Angeles. Homeowners associations essentially brought group pressure upon white residents to abide by the practices of racial exclusion.<sup>74</sup>

Even the most famous African Americans were not immune from attacks by racist homeowners associations. In 1948, world-renowned actor, pianist, and singer, Nat “King” Cole, bought an \$85,000 home in the very desirable and upscale neighborhood of Hancock Park.<sup>75</sup> Despite his celebrity, Cole and his family were targeted by the homeowners association who aimed to keep the neighborhood exclusively white, as made blatantly clear by the affidavit presented to Cole stating that homes in the area were covered by 50-year covenants restricting ownership to members of the Caucasian race.<sup>76</sup> Ann Winters, the real estate broker who sold the home, received threatening calls saying she would be “driven out of the real estate business” and would “meet with a serious automobile accident within a few days.”<sup>77</sup> When the homeowners association failed to prevent the Coles from buying the



Nat “King” Cole and his family at their home in Hancock Park circa 1950 (*Larchmontchronicle.com*)

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<sup>72</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 98-99.

<sup>73</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 369.

<sup>74</sup> de Graaf, “The City of Black Angels,” 337; Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 69, 221; Arnold R. Hirsch, “With or Without Jim Crow: Black Residential Segregation in the United States,” in Arnold R. Hirsch and Raymond A. Mohl, eds., *Urban Policy in Twentieth Century America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 75.

<sup>75</sup> Leon Washington, “Nice Neighbors Seek to Bar Nat ‘King’ Cole,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 5, 1948.

<sup>76</sup> “King Cole Home Seized for Taxes,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1951.

<sup>77</sup> “Nice Neighbors Seek to Bar Nat ‘King’ Cole,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 5, 1948.

house at 423 S. Muirfield Road,<sup>78</sup> they sought to reimburse the Coles for the purchase price if they relinquished the property.<sup>79</sup> After the Coles refused, they were subject to verbal abuse and vandalism of their property.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, they continued to reside there, the singer until his death in 1965 and his wife until 1972.

The real estate industry also reinforced the color line. In 1924, the National Association of Real Estate Boards established a “code of ethics” which prohibited realtors from introducing “members of any race or nationality” to a neighborhood that would threaten property values. If a real estate agent violated this code, they would lose their license. As a result, many realtors practiced “steering” – they would not show properties in white neighborhoods to “unwanted groups.” Invariably, blacks would be steered away from white neighborhoods. This code stayed in effect until the late 1950s. Realtors in Los Angeles were open about their support for racial restrictions and segregation in housing, evident in a 1927 survey published in the journal *California Real Estate*. By “racializing” the process of real estate marketing, realtors played a significant role in promoting segregation.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to discriminating against black homebuyers, the Los Angeles Real Estate Board refused to admit black members, a trend consistent across cities in the United States and enforced by the National Association of Real Estate Boards. In response, African Americans formed the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) in 1947, calling its members “realists” because the white group had patented the term “realtor.”<sup>82</sup> The local chapter of the NAREB, the Consolidated Realty Board of Southern California was founded in 1949 and chartered in 1950.<sup>83</sup> Their first offices were located on Western Avenue near 36<sup>th</sup> Place. In 1973, they purchased the Sanchez Adobe (LAHCM #487) at 3725 Don Felipe Drive. The group provides training for real estate professionals as well as homebuyers and advocates for fair housing legislation.

Private developers were complicit in racial segregation as well. In the 1920s and 1930s, they often attached restrictive covenants to new property they were selling, even highlighting these restrictions in their sales pitches. Even in the postwar years, after the *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision, many large-scale developers of suburban tract housing illegally refused to sell homes to African Americans. They included some of the largest developers in Los Angeles, such as Milton Brock Builders, Lakewood Village Builders, and Julian Weinstock Builders. With new suburban tracts proliferating after the war, this practice closed off a huge segment of the booming housing market to black people.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> These events were occurring simultaneous with the *Shelley v. Kraemer* case, and it is unclear if it was the ruling against the use of restrictive covenants that stymied the homeowners association.

<sup>79</sup> “Nice Neighbors Seek to Bar Nat ‘King’ Cole,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 5, 1948.

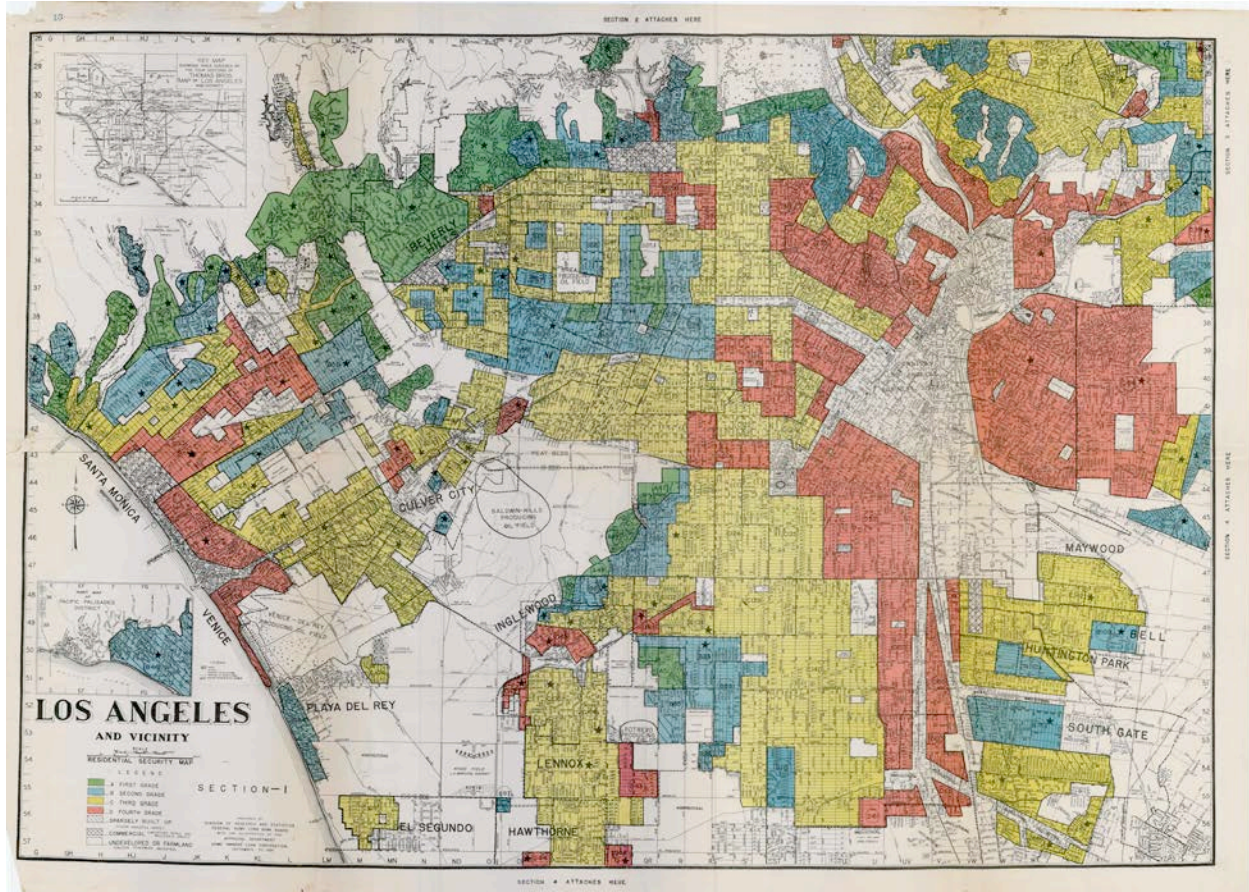
<sup>80</sup> “Hateful Sign Plastered on ‘King’ Cole’s \$85,000 Palace,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 12, 1948.

<sup>81</sup> Hirsch, “With or Without,” 75; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 106; Flaming, *Bound for Freedom*, 219-221. A good example of “steering” is described in Sides, 87.

<sup>82</sup> “Realtor Leader at Brokers Meet Outlines Scheme,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 25, 1949.

<sup>83</sup> The name was later changed to the Consolidated Board of Realists.

<sup>84</sup> Flaming, *Bound for Freedom*, 69; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 107.



1939 HOLC "redlining" map of central Los Angeles (LaDale Winling and urbanoasis.org)

While local practices were critical in setting the groundwork for racial exclusion, the U.S. government reinforced these policies beginning in the 1930s, thus putting the weight of federal authority behind segregation. Two New Deal housing programs established during the Great Depression to bolster the housing industry were central in this process: the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC, founded in 1933) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA, founded in 1934). The HOLC was formed to protect homeowners on the verge of foreclosure by refinancing mortgages and granting low-interest loans to those who had lost their homes. Significantly, it established an appraisal system for rating neighborhoods as “security risks” for these loans. It was this appraisal system that established a racially-determined ranking of neighborhoods, which advantaged white neighborhoods and relegated African American, Mexican, and Asian neighborhoods to the lowest rungs.<sup>85</sup> Purely because of the race of the residents, these neighborhoods routinely received the lowest (or red) rating, originating the term “redlining.” These areas were usually barred from receiving federal assistance. The worksheets and maps produced by the HOLC in the late 1930s show a strong correlation between race and poor ratings.

<sup>85</sup> Other criteria were also used to rank neighborhoods, such as class, the presence of industry, density, tax blight, etc. Race was a particularly salient category that determined an area’s ranking.



The Central Avenue corridor, Jefferson Park, and West Adams neighborhoods received red ratings, despite the general desirability of the housing stock.

The appraisal system of the HOLC was subsequently adopted by the FHA, which became the most important program for home ownership in the nation. The FHA, which insured mortgages granted by private lenders, was instrumental in spurring the postwar suburban boom and made home ownership possible for millions of white Americans for the first time. Blacks, however, were largely cut off from these programs. Up to 1948, the FHA supported the use of restrictive covenants, and was reluctant to guarantee home construction loans in areas without them. Nor would it guarantee loans for home renovations in the Central Avenue corridor, thus contributing to the deterioration of the area. Significantly, these programs – with their appraisal standards – heavily influenced the lending practices of private banks, which were reluctant to lend in redlined areas. These federal programs not only excluded blacks from mortgage insurance, but tacitly discouraged them from moving into white areas (with their better ratings), since their mere presence would downgrade a neighborhood. With their expansive reach and influence, these programs helped harden the lines of segregation and ensure their longevity.<sup>86</sup>

The final and most long-lasting mechanism of segregation was white violence and intimidation. As Doug Flamming explained, “incidents of white resistance to black neighbors occurred fairly regularly from the turn of the century onward.”<sup>87</sup> The actions ranged from polite requests to leave, to bombs, vandalism, and death threats. Such incidents rose in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly after the courts struck down



*This note that reads "Negros move off Dunsmuir north of Adams, we will bomb all Negroes off" was meant to intimidate William Bailey who had moved into the Mid-City neighborhood with his family in 1952 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

restrictive covenants. While these actions were especially prevalent in the blue-collar communities adjacent to black neighborhoods, they actually occurred all over Los Angeles when the black “threat” presented itself. In the 1950s, the Urban League identified 26 techniques that white homeowners used to exclude black homebuyers, including paying off neighbors to not sell to African Americans and cross burnings.<sup>88</sup> These practices represented the most consistent, long-lived technique that restricted the ability of African Americans to live where they pleased.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 352-353; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 107-108; Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in Working Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 179.

<sup>87</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 67.

<sup>88</sup> “About Us,” *Los Angeles Urban League*, accessed June 19, 2017, <http://laul.org/about/>.

<sup>89</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 101. These incidents are described in numerous sources.

One example of whites using violence against blacks in Los Angeles occurred in March of 1952 when two homes on S. Dunsmuir Avenue in the Mid-City neighborhood were bombed. The homes were located in an area that had recently opened to African American homebuyers as the deed restrictions expired. One of the homes belonged to middle school teacher William Bailey, his wife, and 12-year-old son, who were home at the time. The other home was in the process of being sold to Los Angeles City firefighter, Roger Duncan. Both men fought in World War II and were members of the famed Tuskegee Airmen.<sup>90</sup> Fortunately, no one was physically harmed in the bombings.<sup>91</sup> Targeted bombings like these, coupled with the circulation of pamphlets and notes threatening African Americans with violence if they continued to move into the area, were used as an intimidation tactic.<sup>92</sup>



*Protestors in front of the California Real Estate Association, sponsors of Proposition 14, along with a counter protester in Nazi uniform, 1963 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

Despite court decisions barring the exclusion of African Americans and other minorities from certain areas of Los Angeles, race-based housing patterns were still in force. However, a variety of organizations continued to lobby for fair housing legislation at the state and federal levels. In 1963, Byron Rumford, a black State Assembly member from Berkeley, sponsored the hotly contested California Fair Housing Act that prohibited racial discrimination by real estate brokers. The California Real Estate Association responded to what became known as the Rumford Act by sponsoring Proposition 14, which was designed to reverse fair housing measures. The NAACP challenged Proposition 14 and its appeal

succeeded in the California and U.S. Supreme Courts in 1967.

The federal fair housing legislation expanded on, and was intended as a follow-up to, the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964. The original goal was to extend federal protection to civil rights workers, but the bill was eventually expanded to address racial discrimination in housing. Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act was known as the Fair Housing Act of 1968, later used as a shorthand description for the entire bill. It prohibited discrimination in selling, renting, and financing housing based on race, religion, national origin, and sex. Following the passage of these two bills, African Americans in Los Angeles had more freedom to live in the neighborhood of their choice; however, their choices were still dependent on their socioeconomic status.

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<sup>90</sup> Stanley G. Robertson, "Police Reveal 'Leads' In Bombings: Local, State, Natl. Agencies Delve Into West Adams Blasts Full Scale Investigation Underway in Sunday Bombings of West Adams Homes," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 20, 1952.

<sup>91</sup> Karin L. Stanford, *Images of America: African Americans in Los Angeles* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 51.

<sup>92</sup> Robertson, "Police Reveal 'Leads' In Bombings."



**Associated Historic Resources**

The following tables describe designated and potential resources associated with deed restrictions and segregation. Eligibility Standards address residential property types including single-family residences, such as the homes of individuals who played prominent roles in breaking down racial barriers in housing. Historic districts such as neighborhoods are also included if they were critical in the battle against deed restrictions.

***Designated Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Cole, Nat “King” Residence	423 S. Muirfield Road	Cole (1919-1965) was one of the most popular American entertainers of the twentieth century. He lived in this house with his family from 1948 to his death in 1965, despite the objections of his white neighbors. It is contributing to the Hancock Park HPOZ.
Kinney-Tabor House	1310 S. 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Irving Tabor (1884-1987) worked for Abbot Kinney, the founder of Venice. After Kinney’s death and the subsequent move of his widow to a convalescent home, this house was given to Tabor. In 1925, he tried to move in, but some neighbors objected to having an African American living among them. Tabor moved the house to Oakwood, an African American enclave of Venice, in 1927. It is designated LAHCM #926.

***Potential Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Bailey, William Residence	2130 S. Dunsmuir Avenue	In 1952, following the opening of this Mid-City neighborhood to African Americans, multiple bombings and other forms of harassment occurred on this block.

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		One house targeted was the home of William Bailey and his family.
Drye, Maj. Frank L. Residence	1032 S. Arlington Avenue	In 1947, Maj. Frank L. Drye purchased this house in the predominantly white neighborhood of Country Club Park. In the case <i>Wright v. Drye</i> , Drye (and two other African American families on the block), represented by Loren Miller, battled Rev. W. Clarence Wright for the right to live in the neighborhood. <sup>93</sup> Superior Court Judge Stanley Mosk's ruling in the case was the second time a U.S. court ruled covenants unconstitutional. <sup>94</sup>
Duncan, Roger Residence	2135-37 S. Dunsmuir Avenue	Roger Duncan purchased this home in the Mid-City neighborhood in 1952 when the Dunsmuir Avenue bombings occurred. Undiscouraged, he lived here with his wife until at least 1960.
Houston, Norman O. Residence	2211 S. Hobart Boulevard	The movement to end segregation in the West Adams area began in 1938 when Houston (1893-1989) purchased this home. He waited three years to move in, fearing a backlash from his white neighbors. Once he did, other members of the African American elite soon followed.
Laws Family Residence	1235 E. 92 <sup>nd</sup> Street	The Laws family fought from 1942 to 1948 to keep this house they had built. <sup>95</sup> They were jailed for

<sup>93</sup> "L.A. County Brands All Negroes Degenerates; 'Ungodly' to Fight Ghetto, Says White Pastor; Pastor Presses Covenant," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 9, 1947.

<sup>94</sup> Grace E. Simons, "Judge Stanley Mosk Rules Race Covenants Illegal, 'Un-American': Upholds Negroes' Rights," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 30, 1947.

<sup>95</sup> "Covenant Hero Dies," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 2, 1967.

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

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		refusing a court order to vacate their home. <sup>96</sup> The <i>Shelley v. Kraemer</i> ruling in 1948 enabled their return.
Miller, Loren Residence	647 Micheltorena Street	Miller (1903-1967) was an attorney, journalist, and civil rights activist. In addition to arguing cases to end the use of restrictive covenants nationally, he served on the Los Angeles Superior Court from 1964 to 1967. Miller lived in this house in Silver Lake with his wife after it was built in 1940 until at least 1960. <sup>97</sup> The house was designed for the Millers by architect and friend, James H. Garrott, AIA. <sup>98</sup>
Sugar Hill Historic District	West Adams - Baldwin Hills - Leimert Park Community Plan Area	The Sugar Hill Historic District consists of 25 properties, bound by 22 <sup>nd</sup> and 25 <sup>th</sup> Streets and Harvard and Hobart Boulevards that are significant for their association with African Americans' quest to end deed restrictions that promoted racial segregation. Here in 1945, black homeowners hired Loren Miller to defend the right to own property and live in this once all-white neighborhood.

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<sup>96</sup> Karin L. Stanford, *Images of America: African Americans in Los Angeles* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 52.

<sup>97</sup> Los Angeles Street Address Directory, March 1960

<sup>98</sup> "Judge Loren Miller Residence, James H. Garrott AIA 1940," *Silver Lake News*, August 1, 2015. <http://thesilverlakenews.com/judge-loren-miller-residence-james-h-garrott-aia-1940/>

**Theme: Deed Restrictions and Segregation**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with deed restrictions and the segregation of African Americans. Deed restrictions and racial segregation are inexorably linked to the development patterns of Los Angeles and the social history of the African American community. Restrictive covenants and homeowner's associations formed barriers, which were often contested and defeated, creating noteworthy moments of resistance and triumph for African Americans. Federal housing programs, developers, and realtors contributed to the use of restrictive covenants to control where African Americans could live, resulting in the formation of black enclaves, some of which still exist today.

**Period of Significance:** 1915 - 1970

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1915 with the widespread use of restrictive housing policies and racial segregation in Los Angeles. The passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968 prohibited all forms discrimination in housing. The period of significance continues to 1970 as it took time to implement and enforce the law.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in West Adams, Hancock Park, Mid-City, and Venice.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A/B      CR: 1/2      Local: 1/2

**Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence, Multi-Family Residence, and Historic District

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include single-family and multi-family residential buildings and neighborhoods where restrictive housing policies were challenged and residential buildings that were the homes of African Americans who played prominent roles in ending deed restrictions and racial segregation.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with the residential development of the African American community, and/or associated with African Americans who made a significant contribution to challenging or ending racial segregation and restrictive housing policies in Los Angeles.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed, developed, or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Is a single-family or multi-family residence or neighborhood significant for its association with ending deed restrictions and racial segregation
- Under Criterion B, individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to ending deed restrictions and racial segregation

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential physical and character-defining features from the period of significance
- For districts, as a whole, retains most of the essential physical and character-defining features from the period of significance
- Under Criterion B, the individual must have resided in the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- For National Register, properties associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

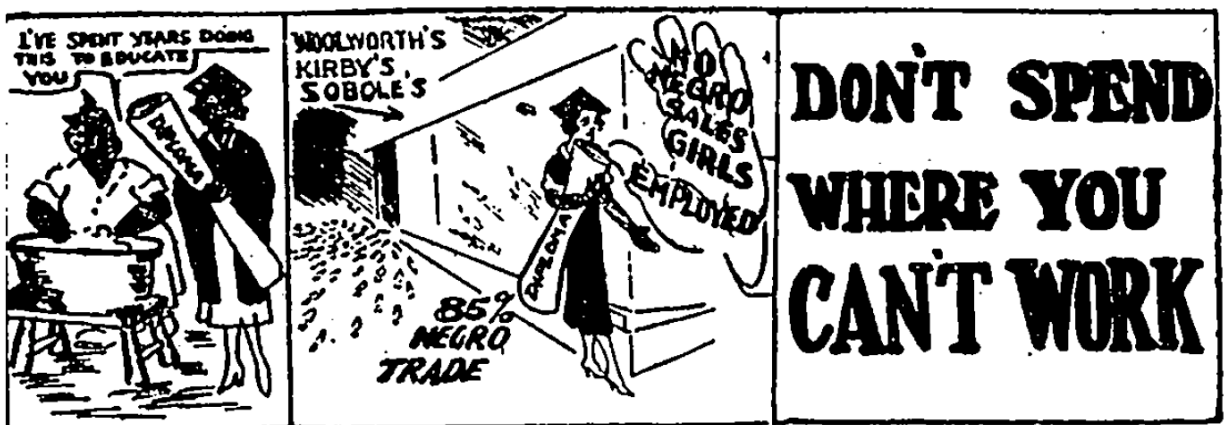
**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Under Criterion B, integrity is based on the period during which the significant person occupied the residence
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed



**THEME: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 1916 - 1980**

Black-owned businesses represented an important force in the African American community that helped forge a sense of racial pride and independence. The notion of "race enterprises" emerged nationally between 1850 and 1920, during the era of the first Great Migration when blacks encountered growing racism in urban public life. Out of this context, African American entrepreneurs emerged to cater to the needs and desires of black customers. The idea behind race enterprises was simple: take care of your own.<sup>99</sup> Like ethnic businesses that catered to new immigrants, African American businesses took on the conscious role of strengthening the black community by meeting its retail needs, employing its own, and spawning community leaders in the process. The notion of a "black economy" would not only promote the autonomy of the community, but would insulate blacks from exploitation and discrimination. Many African American leaders had articulated this idea. Booker T. Washington's version is the most remembered. His self-help ideology culminated in the formation of the National Negro Business League. By the 1920s, the idea of black capitalism had gained wide currency and was generally accepted by a broad cross section of black America.<sup>100</sup> The black press and churches promoted the idea of black-owned enterprises vigorously. Locally, the African American press promoted black businesses in their pages, and encouraged their readers to buy goods and services from these enterprises. In the late 1930s, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* initiated the "Don't Spend Where You Can't Work" campaign, which was part of a national push by black organizations and newspapers to encourage African American consumers to patronize businesses that bought black jobs, entrepreneurship, and independence along with goods and services, and bid farewell to white employment prejudice, insults, and overcharging.



Cartoon for the "Don't Spend Where You Can't Work" campaign in the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 6, 1934.

Particularly in the larger context of urban public life, where African Americans were often barred from freely patronizing commercial and public establishments, black enterprises promised respect to black customers. Nationally and locally, the African American businesses that were most successful catered to personal needs – such as undertakers, barbers, and beauticians. Insurance companies achieved the

<sup>99</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 117.

<sup>100</sup> Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 148.

greatest success, as they assured their customers fair treatment (unlike white-owned companies) and essentially sold security to clients contending with chronic job discrimination and instability.<sup>101</sup> Although they constituted only a small segment of the black workforce, black business owners came to assume a high profile in the community. Their enterprises also had a profound role in shaping black settlement patterns, anchoring and drawing settlers to certain neighborhoods in Los Angeles at various stages of history.

### **Commercial Identity**

African American businesses had roots in Los Angeles, dating back to the late 1850s when several black-owned operations opened on San Pedro Street between E. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets in present day Little Tokyo. By the 1880s, operations included a coffee shop, two furniture stores, and a grocery. By the 1890s, they were joined by a barbershop, printing shop, and tent and awning shop. In 1903, A.J. Jones opened a two-story hotel and restaurant. These enterprises soon attracted several men's clubs that became magnets for gambling, drinking, and prostitution. Black business owners chafed at these "dives," fearing the deleterious effects they would have on their more respectable, middle class operations. When calls to shut down the clubs failed, African American businesses fled the area and set up shop on Central Avenue.<sup>102</sup> All of the buildings associated with these businesses were demolished when Little Tokyo was redeveloped in the early 1970s.

Because black businesses had to compete with white businesses along Central Avenue, the public discourse around race enterprises intensified in the early 1900s. The black press vigorously encouraged readers to patronize black-owned stores, while celebrating business owners in glowing profiles. As the *New Age* intoned in 1915, "Even in the West, the Race is learning that the need of Race enterprise and the patronage of those established are becoming the rule for preservation."<sup>103</sup> Frederick Madison Roberts, Joseph and Charlotta Bass, and other community leaders also established a local branch of the National Negro Business League, a chamber of commerce-like organization devoted to promoting African American businesses. The community responded and African American businesses multiplied.

Sidney P. Dones was a pivotal figure, stimulating African American business development in the 1910s and staking out turf on Central Avenue. In 1914, he opened the Sidney P. Dones Company at E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue, a real estate, insurance, and legal enterprise, and two years later opened the Booker T. Washington Building at E. 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue, which became the heart of the Central Avenue business district. This three-story structure, with shops at street level and apartments and offices above, was dubbed the "Largest and Best Appointed Edifice on Central Avenue" by Joseph Bass in the *California Eagle*. Other operations proliferated nearby – a dry goods store, confectionaries, an ice cream parlor, billiard hall, auto repair shops, beauty parlors, barbershops, jewelers, a

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<sup>101</sup> Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 149-50.

<sup>102</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 118-119.

<sup>103</sup> Quoted in Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 120.

watchmaker, drug stores, furniture dealers, funeral homes, real estate offices, restaurants, the Southern Hotel, and the Angelus Theater. In 1919, the Progressive Business League (which had replaced the Negro Business League) reported 185 black-owned businesses in Los Angeles, one quarter of them on Central Avenue and many more within blocks of it.<sup>104</sup> With the notable exception of the Booker T. Washington Building, it appears that the buildings in this area of Central Avenue have been demolished and replaced with larger commercial or industrial buildings.

Black entrepreneurialism continued to flourish into the 1920s. More stores and businesses opened, about 60 of them chronicled photographically in the booklet *Western Progress* (1928). This publication showcased flower shops, real estate companies, drug stores, pharmacies, barbershops, beauty parlors, the Blodgett Motor Company, Burdette Pie Shoppe, and Dunbar Hospital, among others. Photographs of the La Republica Tea Room shows palm trees flanking a welcoming bungalow, the interior a refined space of elegant tables draped in white tablecloths. The accompanying text read, “It is here much of the social activity of Los Angeles can be found.”<sup>105</sup> African American businesses offered an array of services and amenities by this point, many of them catering to middle-class tastes. More businesses opened up further south on Central Avenue, including real estate offices, dry goods stores, a dressmaking shop, and a beauty parlor. Two organizations formed in the 1920s worked to advance black entrepreneurialism, the Pacific Coast Industrial Federation, which helped newcomers start businesses, and the Commercial Council of Los Angeles, whose mission was to promote “business, manufacturing, and immigration.”<sup>106</sup> Newspapers also continued to emphasize the importance of patronizing black businesses, while advertisements often included a photograph of the owner to indicate the proprietor’s race.<sup>107</sup>

### **Banks and Financial Institutions**

By the 1920s the most significant black businesses in Los Angeles appeared; foremost among them were the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company. This enterprise began in the early 1920s, when William Nickerson, Jr., Norman O. Houston, and George Allen Beavers, Jr., partnered to operate a California branch of the American Mutual Benefit Association, a black fraternal group based in Texas that sold insurance policies. Seeking to grow a company which would both hire and grant home and business loans to blacks, they struck out on their own. With the enthusiastic support of the community – people gave deposits and signed on as customers, even before the company was official – Golden State received its state license in 1925. At this point, it was operating in a one-room office at 1435 Central Avenue (demolished). The business flourished and by 1928 the company had constructed stately headquarters at 4261 Central Avenue. In the spirit of directing their business to African Americans, they hired James H. Garrott as the architect and Louis Blodgett as the contractor. The building is listed in the National and California Registers and designated LAHCM #580. By 1930 just five years after its founding,

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<sup>104</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 120-123; *California Eagle*, October 4, 1919.

<sup>105</sup> *Western Progress: A Pictorial Story of Economic and Social Advancement in Los Angeles, California* (Los Angeles, CA: Tenette & Bratton, 1929), 23.

<sup>106</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 229.

<sup>107</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 252.

the company was making \$240,000 annually, employing 130 blacks in white-collar positions, and granting mortgage loans to blacks for homes and businesses. In every respect, this company epitomized the meaning of race enterprise – by investing in the community, employing blacks, and offering fair prices for their services. It continued to grow during the Great Depression to become the largest black-owned company in the West.<sup>108</sup>



*The Blodgett Building at 2508 Central Avenue was the headquarters of Liberty Savings and Loan, 1954 (CSUN, Harry Adams Collection)*

Other significant black financial institutions appeared on Central Avenue during the 1920s, most notably Liberty Savings and Loan. Liberty Savings was established by a group of black businessmen in 1924. The founders included the Blodgett brothers, Louis and Charles, who were raised in Georgia and originally worked as contractors but rose to prominence as businessmen. Louis served as the president of Liberty Savings from its founding until it was sold in 1962. He was married to Nella Allensworth, the daughter of Colonel Allen and Josephine Allensworth, founders of Allensworth, California.<sup>109</sup> He also developed the Blodgett Tract at Wadsworth and Imperial in Watts. Liberty Savings was located in the Blodgett Building at E. 25<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue; the company encouraged thrift and homeownership among the African Americans. Homeownership was symbolically linked to freedom from both cultural and financial discrimination. The success of Liberty Savings was hailed

as “one of the outstanding marks of the race’s business enterprises of this city...”<sup>110</sup> This three-story building was developed and constructed by Charles Blodgett in 1928 and also included offices on the upper stories. Black professionals such as Charles Heard Matthews worked out of the building. Matthews was a prominent attorney in the community who served on numerous boards including Golden State and Liberty Savings.<sup>111</sup>

Although many banks and financial institutions closed during the Great Depression and struggled during World War II, Golden State and Liberty Savings survived. The need for African Americans to pool their resources and help each other had not dissipated. The FHA supported racially restrictive covenants on single-family residences, resulting in a drop in black homeownership. In 1948, Golden State opened a new office at 1999 W. Adams Boulevard, following the general movement of the African American

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<sup>108</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 253-258; de Graaf and Taylor, "Introduction," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 22.

<sup>109</sup> Allensworth was founded, financed, and governed by African Americans. In 1974, it became Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park.

<sup>110</sup> *Flash Magazine*, February 9, 1929, 21.

<sup>111</sup> Ruth Edmonds Hill, ed., "Miriam Matthews," *The Black Women Oral History Project*, 419.

population west. Once again, the company engaged an African American architect, Paul R. Williams, to design the building. The building is designated LAHCM #1000. Liberty Savings maintained their offices on Central Avenue and attempted to expand their customer base to the emerging Mexican American population. New black-owned banks and financial institutions were organized to improve access to capital for a community that had grown dramatically during and after World War II. These included Broadway Federal Savings and Loan, Watts Savings and Loan Association, Bank of Finance, and Founders Savings and Loan.



*In 1949, Golden State moved from their building on Central Avenue (UCLA, Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company Records)*



*The Golden State building on W. Adams Boulevard, 2009  
(Paul Turang Photography)*

Broadway Federal was created in 1946 as a mutual savings and loan by a group of civic-minded people interested in creating a financial institution that would serve the economic needs of African Americans. With an opening capitalization of \$150,000, Broadway opened its doors to customers on January 11, 1947. The founders included H.A. Howard, a real estate broker and investor, Dr. H. Claude Hudson, a dentist and civil rights activist, Paul R. Williams, an architect, and Helen Gahagan Douglas, an actress and politician, among others. These men and women, who were also community leaders, foresaw the financial needs of returning veterans. The original building consisted of a three-room office at 4329 S. Broadway. In 1954, the institution acquired a building at W. 45<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, which was remodeled by Williams (demolished).<sup>112</sup> After 23 years, Hudson retired as the chairman of the board in 1972.<sup>113</sup> The new management launched an advertising campaign to raise its profile as a financial institution operated by blacks for blacks. Billboards popped up in key locations around the city with clever slogans like "Keep your savings in the black" and "Your interest is our soul concern."<sup>114</sup> In 1995,

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<sup>112</sup> The building was destroyed by fire during the civil unrest that beset Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdict.

<sup>113</sup> Kenneth Miller, "The dynamic history of blacks \$1 trillion buying power," *L.A. Watts Times*, February 12, 2015; "About Broadway," Broadway Federal Bank, accessed March 19, 2017, <https://www.broadwayfederalbank.com/history>

<sup>114</sup> Martin Rossman, "Black Controlled S&L Builds Awareness Among Blacks," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1972.



the structure of the institution changed from a mutual savings association and the name was changed to Broadway Federal Bank.<sup>115</sup>



*Watts Savings and Loan was located at 1644 E. 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, 1954 (CSUN, Harry Adams Collection)*



*Family Savings and Loan, 1963 (CSUN, Harry Adams Collection)*

Watts Savings and Loan was incorporated in 1948 to provide a savings and home financing institution for this multicultural community in Southeast Los Angeles. The original founders included Lawrence B. Wilson, J.N. Brice, Faustina N. Johnson, and Dr. J.D. Fowler.<sup>116</sup> They had two buildings constructed on E. 103rd Street, which are now demolished; 1636 E. 103rd Street was constructed in 1949 and 1644 E. 103rd Street in 1954.<sup>117</sup> The person most often mentioned in association with Watts Savings is M. Earl Grant. He was the president and manager from 1950 to 1967. His rags to riches tale began in West Virginia where he was born in 1891. By 1923 he had settled in Pasadena and by 1924 he was operating the Altadena Disposal Company. In 1927, he started another business, a hog farm in El Monte, which he ran until 1952.<sup>118</sup> Grant was also a leading member of the NAACP, Prince Hall Masonic Temple, Green Meadow Boy Scouts District, and St. Barnabas Episcopal Church. In 1962, he was listed among the richest African Americans in America by *Ebony* magazine.<sup>119</sup> In 1963, Watts Savings moved to a new

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<sup>115</sup> For more information on Broadway Federal, see Abigail Rosas, "Banking on the Community," in *Black and Brown* in Josh Kun and Laura Pulido, ed., Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 71-73.

<sup>116</sup> "Watts Firm Given State O.K to Enter Savings, Loan Field," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 9, 1948.

<sup>117</sup> "Dreams Come True: Watts Savings and Loan Association Enters New Home," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 18, 1954.

<sup>118</sup> "First Negro Appointed to Renewal Post," *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1961.

<sup>119</sup> "Americas Richest Negros," *Ebony*, May 1962, 134-35.

building designed by Paul R. Williams at 3685 Crenshaw Boulevard. By this time the name had been changed to Family Savings and Loan.<sup>120</sup>



*Louis Ream (center), executive vice president of the Atlantic Richfield Oil Company makes a deposit to the Bank of Finance in 1966. Neville Beaubien, president and Dr. Edward H. Ballard, chairman of the board are standing on this left and right, respectively (CSUN, Charles Williams Collection)*

When the Bank of Finance opened in 1963, it was hailed as the first black-owned bank west of the Mississippi. Savings and loan associations and banks provide many of the same services, but are owned and chartered differently, hence the distinction. The founders included Tom Bradley, Dr. Edward H. Ballard, Dr. Perry Beal, Wilton A. Clarke, and Bernice Malbrue. At the time, Bradley had just been elected to the Los Angeles City Council.<sup>121</sup> When he was elected mayor, he resigned as a director to avoid any conflicts of interest. In 1964, the bank broke ground on a building at 2651 S. Western Avenue (demolished).<sup>122</sup> The building included a large community room on the ground floor and professional offices on the upper floors.

Later, the bank opened another branch at 8420 S. Vermont Avenue (demolished) and became one of the most active partners with the Small Business Administration in awarding loans in Los Angeles.

Black banking experienced a bit of resurgence during the 1970s. The Civil Rights movement encouraged blacks to empower themselves and minority communities were still underserved by mainstream banks. South Los Angeles saw an exodus of investment after the Watts uprising in 1965. Seeking to rectify the situation, Peter W. Dauterive established Founders Savings and Loan in 1972, in a takeover of Santa Barbara Savings. The acquisition included the building at 3910 W. Martin Luther King Boulevard (demolished). Dauterive had been associated with Broadway Federal for 23 years and started the new company because he wanted to provide home loans for a community scarred by the uprising. "I look on this as an opportunity to provide this community with financial services it needed pretty badly," he said in 1973.<sup>123</sup> While Founders Savings was controlled by blacks, it was deliberately integrated and included whites and Asians on the board.

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<sup>120</sup> "Family Savings in Grand Opening," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 14, 1963.

<sup>121</sup> "Bank of Finance Opens in October," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 15, 1963.

<sup>122</sup> "Bank of Finance Holds Ground Breaking Rites: Construction Begun for Deluxe Bank of Finance and Office Building," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 9, 1964.

<sup>123</sup> John A. Jones, "Unusual 'Turnkey Agreement Opens Door for New Black-Oriented S&L,'" *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1973.

By the 1980s, black-owned and controlled banks and financial institutions had declined nationally. In Los Angeles, the Bank of Finance, Family Savings and Loan, and Founders Savings were bought out or failed. The racially segregated business districts like Central Avenue that had created a captive market for banking services had disappeared. The banks that remained had to compete for customers with the larger banking industry for the first time. Additional competition came later when the Community Reinvestment Act was enacted in 1977 to encourage lending to low- and moderate-income communities.

## **Hotels and Motels**

Black-owned hotels were another notable business institution along Central Avenue. Due to discriminatory practices, most hotels that catered to African Americans were black-owned and located within the community. As such, the hotels represented a source of financial independence and racial unity. The first buildings that provided accommodations to black patrons were more houses with rooms for rent rather than traditional hotels. These early hotels appeared in the 1880s around Alameda Street and surrounding rail yards. One of the first was Austin House, located at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Hewitt Streets and owned by Charles Oliver. As the African American community shifted south in the early twentieth century, Charles Oliver opened Oliver's Palace at E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue. Oliver's Palace was the first black-owned hotel in the traditional sense. In the following years several other hotels catering to African American clientele opened, including the Lyons Hotel located at E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue as well as the Clark Hotel at Washington Boulevard and Central Avenue. None of these hotels are still standing. African American men's and women's groups also constructed clubhouses that included lodging, but these clubhouses are discussed in the Social Clubs Theme because they were not operated as commercial enterprises. The most important enterprise, notable for its symbolic meaning more than its profitability, was the Hotel Somerville. This five-story structure, with its Spanish-style patio, tall archways, and 100-plus rooms, was an elegant establishment that drew high praise from many quarters. W.E.B. Du Bois called it "a jewel done with loving hands... a beautiful inn with soul." It was especially appreciated for its newness, a structure built expressly for blacks, not a hand-me-down white hotel typical of eastern cities. The Somerville was built as an incentive for the NAACP to hold its national convention of 1928 in Los Angeles, a promise that sealed the organization's decision to come to LA. This annual convention, considered the most important civil rights event in America at the time, signified that the movement's eastern leadership finally recognized Los Angeles as an important player nationally, and not merely a



*The name of the Hotel Somerville was changed to Dunbar in the 1930s, circa 1935 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

remote western outpost.<sup>124</sup> The owners of the hotel, Drs. John and Vada Somerville, lost it during the Great Depression. The subsequent owner, Lucius Lomax Sr., changed the name to the Dunbar Hotel, in honor of the black poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar. At the heart of the Central Avenue jazz scene, musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie were among the Dunbar's frequent guests during the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1950s, however, the Dunbar's business began to decline as the African American population in the neighborhood began to move west. The Watts uprising in 1965 exacerbated the exodus from Central Avenue and by 1974 the hotel closed its doors, but is now operated as apartments. The building is listed in the National and California Registers and designated LAHCM #131.



*Advertisement for the Watkins Hotel in the Los Angeles Sentinel, May 8, 1947*

Dunbar as one the primary gathering places for the African American community. It was also part of a new business hub that was beginning to emerge around West Adams Boulevard and Western Avenue after World War II. The ground floor of the Watkins included a beauty parlor and barbershop. In 1952, there was the addition of the Rubaiyat Room, which became a fixture on the jazz scene.<sup>125</sup>

Although white-owned hotels in Los Angeles were beginning to offer accommodations to blacks during the postwar period, discrimination persisted. In the spring of 1948, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* reported on such an incident at the Biltmore Hotel. Larry Doby, an African American baseball player, was in Los Angeles for spring training with the Cleveland Indians.<sup>126</sup> Like Jackie Robinson before him, Doby endured racism and intolerance in the major leagues. While the rest of the team stayed at the Biltmore Hotel, Doby stayed by himself at the Watkins. The management of the Biltmore denied that they had discriminated against Doby. It was apparently the Cleveland Indians who made a separate reservation for him at the Watkins.<sup>127</sup>

To assist African Americans in avoiding the "embarrassing situation" of being turned away from businesses like hotels, black entrepreneurs created guide books for safe travel. The first tourist guide for

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<sup>124</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 281-2, 284-287. Du Bois quote at 287.

<sup>125</sup> For more information about the jazz scene see the Entertainment Industry Theme.

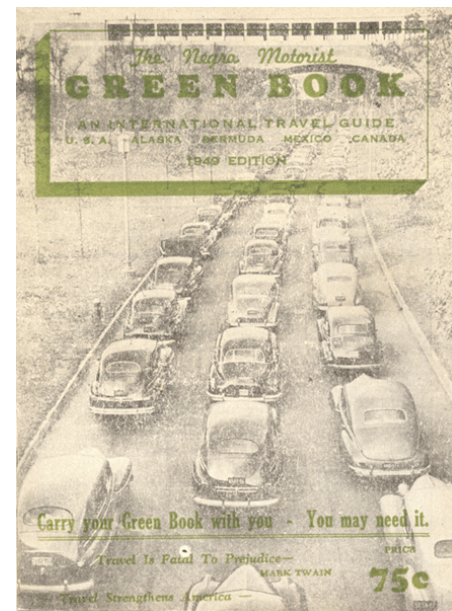
<sup>126</sup> Doby was the second African American to play in the major leagues and the first to play in the American League. He was also the second African American to manage a Major League Baseball team.

<sup>127</sup> Eddie Burbridge, "Larry Doby Segregated From Cleveland Tribe," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 25, 1948; Eddie Burbridge, "Layin' It On The Line," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 1, 1948



black travelers was *Hackley & Harrison's Guide for Colored Travelers* published in 1930 and 1931. It featured hotels, apartments, boarding houses, and garage accommodations in 300 cities in the United States and Canada. The 1930 edition included eight places in Los Angeles that welcomed African Americans including the 28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA (listed in the National Register and designated LAHCM # 851) and Mrs. J.O. Banks house at 1235 S. New Hampshire Street.<sup>128</sup>

A similar, but more enduring publication was *The Green Book* created by Victor H. Green in 1936. "Carry *The Green Book* with you. You may need it," advises the cover of the 1949 edition. And under that, a quote from Mark Twain, which is heartbreaking in this context: "Travel is fatal to prejudice." *The Green Book* became very popular, with 15,000 copies sold per edition in its heyday. It was a necessary part of road trips for many families during a time when segregation and Jim Crow laws made travel difficult and sometimes dangerous. Twenty-seven businesses in Los Angeles were included in the 1956 edition. In addition to places like the Dunbar, Clark, and Watkins Hotels, *The Green Book* included boarding houses and apartments as well as other businesses such as restaurants, beauty parlors, barbershops, service stations, and drugstores. Service stations were listed not for the gasoline, but for the bathrooms. In the early editions of *The Green Book*, most, but not all, of the listed businesses were black-owned. Beginning in the 1940s, the white-owned Clifton's restaurants at 618 S. Olive Street and 648 S. Broadway began serving and hiring African Americans. By 1960, the Biltmore Hotel was included in *The Green Book* despite their past record of discrimination. Shortly after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed the types of discrimination that made *The Green Book* necessary, publication ceased.



*The Negro Motorist Green Book, 1949*  
(New York Public Library)

## **Mortuaries and Funeral Homes**

Funeral homes played a significant role in the African American community in Los Angeles. It was the massive death toll of the Civil War that brought the modern American funeral industry into being. With so many soldiers dying on battlefields, the Union Army Medical Corps utilized embalming to ship bodies home for proper burial. As for the many soldiers whose bodies remained where they had fallen, black soldiers were often assigned the task of burying the dead.<sup>129</sup> By the late nineteenth century the job of undertaker, a semi-skilled laborer who was primarily responsible for building caskets and burying the dead, had evolved into funeral director, a professional who is responsible for embalming the dead and

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<sup>128</sup> Frank Norris, "Racial Dynamism in Los Angeles, 1900-1964: The Role of the Green Book," *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 99, No. 3, 265.

<sup>129</sup> Tiffany Stanley, "The Disappearance of a Distinctively Black Way to Mourn," *The Atlantic*, January 26, 2016.



planning a funeral. Black funeral directors arose out of a basic need in the community, as white funeral directors turned African Americans away. Black-owned funeral homes not only filled a void, but also preserved the traditions of African American mourning rituals called "homegoing celebrations." The black funeral tradition came about in part as a means to honor bodies that had been dishonored in life.



*Andrew and Ellen Roberts in front of their home at 1331 Wall Street, no date (African American Museum & Library, Oakland)*

The first black-owned funeral home in Los Angeles was established in 1905 as the Porter-Roberts Company, a joint venture between Andrew J. Roberts and William Porter. Roberts was born in Virginia but raised and educated in Ohio where he attended Wilberforce University and Oberlin College. After graduation he taught school and married Ellen Hemings. They moved to Los Angeles in 1888. Porter was from Cincinnati where he had been working as a funeral director. The Porter-Roberts Company was located at 12<sup>th</sup> and San Pedro Streets (demolished); the specific address is

unknown. In 1909, Roberts bought out Porter and formed A.J. Roberts & Sons with his sons Frederick and William, but also his daughter Estelle. In 1916, Roberts had a building constructed at 1119 S. Los Angeles Street. It was designed by Paul R. Williams and constructed by Charles Blodgett. In 1922, the business moved to 1415 Central Avenue (demolished).<sup>130</sup> Roberts also ran an apprenticeship program for morticians in addition to its other services.

As esteemed members of the community, African American funeral directors often served as political and religious leaders. A case in point was Andrew's son, Frederick Madison Roberts. Frederick was the first African American to graduate from Los Angeles High School. He attended the USC and graduated from Colorado College. He also attended the Barnes-Worsham School of Embalming and Mortuary Science. He remained in Colorado working as a teacher, newspaper editor, and tax assessor. In 1912, he returned to Los Angeles to work for his father in the family business. Additionally he bought the *New Age*, an influential black newspaper, where he served as the editor until 1948.<sup>131</sup> He also served in the State Assembly from 1918 to 1934.<sup>132</sup>

Owning a funeral home became a profitable business, and one that attracted other African Americans looking for economic opportunities. As the population grew, new mortuaries and funeral homes were established including the Connor Johnson Company, W.D. Fisher & Sons, Smith Williams Mortuary, and

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<sup>130</sup> "Andrew J. Roberts," *Negro Who's Who in California*, 1948, 128

<sup>131</sup> Robert Fikes, "Frederick M. Roberts," Black Past.org, accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/roberts-frederick-m-1879-1952>

<sup>132</sup> For more information on his career as a politician see the Civil Rights Theme.

Angelus Funeral Home. The Connor Johnson Company first appeared in the City Directories in 1920 and may have existed as early as 1918.<sup>133</sup> It was a joint venture between Charles Connor and Simon Peter Johnson. Johnson's wife and son eventually gained control of the company, but found new partners including the attorney and civil rights activist Crispus Wright and the mortician Joe Lewis.<sup>134</sup> Lewis had been operating another funeral home at 11129 Central Avenue since 1948.<sup>135</sup> By 1956, the company moved from its original location at 1400 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Street<sup>136</sup> to 4700 S. Avalon Boulevard, which was an existing funeral home that had been designed by Paul R. Williams for W.D. Fisher & Sons in 1944. W.D. Fisher & Sons appears to have operated only briefly. In 1962, the Connor Johnson Company had a chapel added to the building, which was dedicated by Dr. Martin Luther King.<sup>137</sup> He was in Los Angeles for a meeting of the Western Christian Leadership Conference.



*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Connor Johnson Funeral Home in 1962 (USC Digital Library)*



*Connor Johnson Funeral Home on Avalon Boulevard, 1965 (CSUN, Harry Adams Collection)*

The Angelus Funeral Home was founded in 1922 as a partnership between Fred Shaw and Louis G. Robinson. Due to competition with other funeral homes, this new venture got off to a slow start. Shaw sold his interest to Robinson who brought in new partners including Lorenzo Bowdoin and John Lamar Hill. Eventually Hill assumed full ownership and grew the company into one of the most successful and prominent black-owned businesses in Los Angeles. In 1947, John L. Hill Jr. became the president of the company.<sup>138</sup> In 1954, he became the first African American to serve on the five-member California State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers. He served on the board for 20 years. Hill was responsible for moving the company from Jefferson Boulevard to Crenshaw Boulevard in 1961. He saw the clientele moving west during the late 1940s and knew that the funeral home needed to follow. Both buildings

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<sup>133</sup> An article in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* on August 19, 1948 announced their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

<sup>134</sup> S.P. Johnson Sr. died in 1951.

<sup>135</sup> "Open House of Connor Johnson Company, Inc's Joe Lewis Funeral Home," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 28, 1959.

<sup>136</sup> Newspaper notices list the address as late as 1940.

<sup>137</sup> "Connor Stock Purchase Told," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 18, 1960; "King to Dedicate New Funeral Chapel," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 31, 1962.

<sup>138</sup> "John Lamar Hill, Jr.," *Negro Who's Who in California*, 1948, 56.

were designed by Paul R. Williams in 1934 and 1967, respectively. The building on Jefferson Boulevard is listed in the National and California Registers and designated LAHCM # 774. In 1956, the Roberts joined the Hills, under the Angelus Funeral Home brand.<sup>139</sup>

### **Associated Historic Resources**

The following tables describe designated and potential resources associated with the commercial development of the African American community. All of the aforementioned businesses and individuals were researched to identify potential resources. In some cases none were found and in other cases the properties identified have been demolished. Eligibility Standards address a wide variety of commercial property types including office buildings, banks, hotels, mortuaries, barbershops, and restaurants. Residential property types include single-family residences that were the homes of business leaders, particularly if their place of business is no longer extant.

### ***Designated Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Angelus Funeral Home #1	1010 E. Jefferson Boulevard	Angelus Funeral Home was founded in 1922. Paul R. Williams designed this building for the company in 1934. It is listed in the National and California Registers and is designated LAHCM #774.
Somerville Hotel/ Dunbar Hotel	4225 Central Avenue	Drs. John and Vada Somerville had this hotel constructed in 1928. The subsequent owner, Lucius Lomax Sr., changed the name in honor of the black poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar. It is listed in the National and California Registers and is designated LAHCM #131.
Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building #1	4261 Central Avenue	Golden State Mutual Life Insurance was founded in the early 1920s. James H. Garrott designed and Louis Blodgett constructed this building for the company in 1928. It is listed in the National and California Registers and designated LAHCM #580.

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<sup>139</sup> "Robert's Firm Joins the Angelus: Two Mortuaries Link Tradition with Modernity," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 8, 1952.

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building #2	1999 W. Adams Boulevard	In 1948, Golden State Mutual Life Insurance moved to this building designed by Paul R. Williams. The local branch of the NAACP rented space in the building until 1955. It is designated LAHCM #1000.
Hill, John Lamar Jr. Residence	1225 Westchester Place	Lamar (1886-1998) was a community and business leader. In 1947, he became the president of the Angelus Funeral Home. He lived in this house , now in the Country Club Park HPOZ, from 1952 until his death in 1998.
Hudson, Dr. Henry Claude Residence	759 E. 31 <sup>st</sup> Street	Hudson (1886-1989) was a dentist who became a civil rights activist and business leader. He was one of the founders of Broadway Federal Savings and Loan and served as the chairman of the board. According to the 1921 City Directory he lived at 759 E. 31 <sup>st</sup> Street. The residences he occupied in the 1930s and 40s have been altered or demolished.
	1230 S. Van Ness Avenue	Hudson moved to this house, now in the Country Club Park HPOZ, in the 1950s.
Park Wilshire Hotel	2424 Wilshire Boulevard	Constructed in 1924, this hotel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1949 and 1952. It is designated LAHCM #934.
Valle Vista Tourist Home	2408 Cimarron Street	Constructed in 1911, this house, now in the West Adams Terrace HPOZ, was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1951 and 1961.

### Potential Resources

Resource Name	Location	Comments
A.J. Roberts & Sons	1119 S. Los Angeles Street	Andrew J. Roberts hired Paul R. Williams to design and Louis Blodgett to construct this building for him in

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
		1916. The funeral home, A.J. Roberts & Sons was located here until 1922. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Angelus Funeral Home #2	3875 Crenshaw Boulevard	Angelus Funeral Home moved to this building in 1961, which was remodeled by Paul R. Williams in 1967.
Aquarius Book Store	4007 Raymond Avenue	Alfred Ligon opened a book store on Jefferson Boulevard in 1941. He and his wife purchased this bungalow in 1957 and operated the front as a book store and spiritual center until 1992.
Beavers, Jr., George Allen Residence	814 E. 31 <sup>st</sup> Street	Beavers (1892-1952) was a community and business leader. He was one of the founders of Golden State Mutual Life Insurance and served as the chairman of the board. He lived in this house from 1929 to at least 1942.
Blodgett Building	2508 Central Avenue	The Blodgett Building was constructed in 1928. The major tenant was Liberty Savings and Loan. The building also included professional offices.
Blodgett, Charles S. Residence	1953 Bonsallo Avenue	Blodgett (1872-1952) was a business leader. He was a partner in Blodgett Brothers construction company and one of the founders of Liberty Savings and Loan. He lived this house from at least 1917 to 1940. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Blodgett, Louis M. Residence	978 Dewey Avenue	Blodgett (1877-unknown) was a business leader. He was a contractor, real estate developer, and president of Liberty Savings and Loan. He lived in this house from at least 1910 to 1920.
	1102 S. Serrano Avenue	Blodgett lived in his house during the 1930s. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.



**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Booker T. Washington Building	1011-17 Central Avenue	Constructed in 1916, this building was occupied by numerous African Americans businesses.
Broadway Federal Savings and Loan	4329 S. Broadway	Broadway Federal Savings and Loan was founded in 1946. The company was located in this building until 1954.
	4835 Venice Boulevard	Paul R. Williams designed this branch bank for the company in 1967.
Clark, Horace P. Residence	2205 S. Hobart Boulevard	Clark (1901-unknown) was a prominent hotelier. In 1923 he opened his first hotel and contracted with railroad companies to house their employees. All of the hotels are gone, but Clark lived in this house in the Sugar Hill neighborhood in the 1940s. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Coleman, John Wesley Residence	2918 E. New Jersey Avenue	Coleman (1865-1930) was a businessman. In the 1900s, he and his wife Lydia owned a hotel, furniture store, and employment agency. The buildings in which those businesses were located are gone, but their home in Boyle Heights survives. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Connor Johnson Company	4700 S. Avalon Boulevard	This funeral home was designed by Paul R. Williams for W.D. Fisher & Sons in 1944. By 1949 the name had been changed to the Avalon Funeral Home and by 1956 it was owned by the Connor Johnson Company, which was founded around 1920. In 1962, the chapel was added and dedicated by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.
Family Savings and Loan	3685 Crenshaw Boulevard	Family Savings and Loan was founded in 1948, but the original name was Watts Savings and Loan. The company moved to this building designed by

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
		Paul R. Williams in 1963.
Fatburger	3021 S. Western Avenue	Constructed in 1947, this was the first hamburger stand in the chain founded by Lovie Yancey.
Harold & Belle's	2920 W. Jefferson Boulevard	At this location since it was founded in 1969. The restaurant was established by Harold and Belle Legaux, transplants from New Orleans. The building may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Hay's (Haye's) Motel	960 E. Jefferson Boulevard	Constructed in 1947, this motel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1949 and 1960.
Houston, Norman O. Residence	2211 S. Hobart Boulevard	Houston (1893-1989) was a community and business leader. He was one of the founders of Golden State Mutual Life Insurance. In 1938, he purchased this house in the Sugar Hill neighborhood when it was still subject to restrictive covenants. In 1941, he moved in and sparked a legal battle that was ruled on by the U.S. Supreme Court.
	172 E. 41 <sup>st</sup> Street	Before moving to West Adams Heights, Houston lived in this house.
Joe Lewis Funeral Home	11129 Central Avenue	Joe Lewis (not to be confused with Joe Louis the professional boxer) opened this funeral home in 1948. It became affiliated with the Connor Johnson Company.
Johnson, Simon Peter Residence	834 E. 28 <sup>th</sup> Street	Johnson was the co-founder of the Connor Johnson Company, a funeral home. He lived in this house during the 1930s.
Lincoln Hotel	549 Ceres Avenue	Constructed in 1916, this hotel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1939 and 1961.
Magnificent Brothers Barber Shop	4267 Crenshaw Boulevard	Magnificent Brothers Barber Shop has been located here since 1970.

**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Mark Twain Hotel	1622 N. Wilcox Avenue	Constructed in 1923, this hotel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1949 and 1961.
Morris Hotel	809 E. 5 <sup>th</sup> Street	Constructed in 1912, the Morris Hotel was a popular stop over with jazz musicians including Ornette Coleman. Between 1947 and 1949, it was included in <i>The Green Book</i> .
Moulin Rouge Motel/Thomas Hotel	2050 W. Jefferson Boulevard	Constructed in 1948, this motel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1953 and 1961.
Mrs. J.O. Banks House	1235 S. New Hampshire Street	Constructed in 1900, this house was included in <i>Hackley &amp; Harrison's Guide for Colored Travelers</i> in 1930.
Mrs. W.D. Grealoiu Tourist Home	1311 W. 35 <sup>th</sup> Place	Constructed in 1908, this house was included in <i>Hackley &amp; Harrison's Guide for Colored Travelers</i> in 1930 and in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1936 and 1941.
Mrs. S.H. Grier House	1121 E. 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street	Constructed in 1905, this house was included in <i>Hackley &amp; Harrison's Guide for Colored Travelers</i> in 1930.
Nickerson, William Jr. Residence	1214 E. 20 <sup>th</sup> Street	Nickerson (1879-1945) was a community and business leader. He was one of the founders of Golden State Mutual Life Insurance and served as the president until his death in 1945. He lived in this house during the 1930s and 1940s. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Norbo Hotel	526 E. 6 <sup>th</sup> Street	Constructed in 1912, this hotel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1950 and 1955.
Owens-Bynum, Harriet Residence	2916 E. New Jersey Street	Owens-Bynum (1850-unknown) was a businesswoman. She operated a variety of enterprises before prospering in real estate. She lived in this house in Boyle Heights. It may not retain sufficient integrity for

**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
		designation as a historical resource.
People's Funeral Home	4250 Central Avenue	People's Funeral Home opened at this location since 1938. However, the building has been remodeled more than once. The founders were Alphonso A. Robinson, Norman W. Hopkins, and John C. Blackwell.
Regal Hotel	815 E. 6 <sup>th</sup> Street	Constructed in 1917, this hotel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1940 and 1960.
Roberson's Motel	2111 E. Imperial Boulevard	Constructed in 1946, this motel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1949 and 1956.
Ruckers Mortuary	12460 Van Nuys Boulevard	Ruckers Mortuary has been in business since 1947. This building was constructed for the company in 1967. S. Del Rucker was the founder.
Styles Ville	13161 Van Nuys Boulevard	Established in 1958, Styles Ville is the oldest black barbershop and beauty salon in the San Fernando Valley, and perhaps all of Los Angeles.
Thompson, Noah Residence	1627 W. 35 <sup>th</sup> Place	Thompson (1880-1933) was a journalist and business leader. He helped direct the Commercial Council of Los Angeles. He lived in this house during the 1930s. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Watkins Hotel	2022 W. Adams Boulevard	In 1945, William Watkins purchased this apartment building and transformed it into a hotel that became one the primary gathering places for the African American community.
Western (Hayes) Motel	3700 S. Western Avenue	Constructed in 1949, this motel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1949 and 1963.
Wilcox Hotel	6504 Selma Avenue	Constructed in 1926, this hotel was included in <i>The Green Book</i> between 1949 and 1963.

**Theme: Commercial Identity**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage, commerce, and/or social history for its association with African American businesses of various types. As African Americans were excluded as customers and sometimes employees at white-owned businesses, they formed their own businesses to provide services and employment opportunities to members of the community. Black-owned businesses also document the settlement patterns of the population and were often popular meeting places. The individuals who established these businesses often emerged as community leaders.

**Period of Significance:** 1916 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** Although African Americans began to establish businesses in Los Angeles as early as the 1850s, the period of significance begins in 1916 with the construction of the Booker T. Washington Building, the oldest extant commercial building used by African Americans. The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Throughout Los Angeles, but particularly in areas historically associated with the African American community including South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, West Adams, Baldwin Hills, Leimert Park, and Pacoima.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Commerce, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

**Associated Property Types:** Commercial – Retail Building, Office Building, Restaurant, Mortuary/Funeral Home, Bank, Hotel, and Motel

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include a wide variety of commercial buildings.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme played an important role in the commercial growth and development of Los Angeles. Although they were black-owned and operated businesses, the customer base may have reached beyond the African American community.



**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Is associated with a business that made important contributions to commercial growth and development in Los Angeles and specifically to the African American community
- Was the founding location of, or the long-term location of, a business significant to the African American community

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential physical features from the period of significance
- May have particular significance for its association with an African American neighborhood
- May be associated with a business/corporation that has gained regional or national importance
- May also be a significant example of an architectural style and/or the work of a noted architect/designer
- For National Register, properties associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, Materials, and Association from the period of significance
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant business occupied the property
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Street-facing elevations should retain most of their major design features; some original materials may have been altered or removed
- Replacement of storefronts is a common alteration

**Theme: Commercial Merchants, Leaders, and Builders**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage, commerce and/or social history for its association with African Americans who made important contributions to commercial development in Los Angeles. Although they constituted only a small segment of the black workforce, black business owners came to assume a high profile in the community.

**Period of Significance:** 1850 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1850, with the arrival of the first African American settlers. It has been left open to 1850 to capture properties associated with business people in the nineteenth century that have not yet been identified. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, and West Adams.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Commerce, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: B                      CR: 2                      Local: 2

**Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence  
Commercial – Retail Building, Office Building, Restaurant,  
Mortuary/Funeral Home, Bank, Hotel, and Motel

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include the residences, offices, and commercial buildings associated with African American business leaders.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are associated with persons who played an important role in the commercial development of Los Angeles as it relates to the African American community.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to commercial development as it relates to the African American community
- Directly associated with the productive life of the individual in the area of commercial development

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential physical features from the period of significance
- Individual must have resided in or used the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- For the National Register, properties associated with individuals whose significant accomplishments date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional significance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant person occupied the residence
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed

## **THEME: CIVIL RIGHTS, 1895 - 1980**

While the modern Civil Rights movement is often associated with the 1950s and 1960s and the institutional segregation of the South, the seeds for the civil rights breakthroughs of the 1960s were planted much earlier and existed in all pockets of America dealing with discrimination and racism – including the West. Southern segregation was “de jure,” meaning it was codified in law; in the North and West “de facto” segregation prevailed. In these regions, discrimination and segregation existed in everyday practice, even if the laws were nominally non-discriminatory. In Los Angeles, civil rights campaigns focused particularly on de facto segregation in public accommodation, housing, education, and employment, which were often interrelated. A number of these efforts figured centrally in national civil rights cases, revealing the important role Los Angeles played in the national struggle for civil rights. Despite legal victories and gains at local, state, and national levels by the mid-1960s, many demands had not been met. The continued lack of quality education and employment options, coupled with persistent police brutality in many African American neighborhoods, resulted in the anger and frustration that exploded in the summer of 1965.

It should be noted that the black press played a central role in the long Civil Rights movement, but is discussed separately in the Newspapers and Publishing theme below.

### **Emerging Civic Engagement**

In 1900, the African American population of Los Angeles totaled 2,131, making it the second largest black community in the West, after San Francisco. This relatively small group of people created a network of civic groups that served as a springboard for political activism in Los Angeles for decades. The most prominent organizations included the Afro-American Council, Los Angeles Forum, and local branches of the National Urban League and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. These groups provided a critical method of civic engagement and developed a leadership class within the black community. Members and leaders cross-pollinated between these organizations, amalgamating a uniquely pragmatic approach to civil rights.<sup>140</sup> While the importance of these individual groups ebbed over time, their collective presence provided vital organizational resources for civil rights battles before, during, and after World War II.

Afro-American Council - The Afro-American Council (AAC) was a national collection of civic organizations established in the 1890s to combat Jim Crow discrimination in the South.<sup>141</sup> It was originally called the Afro-American League, but the name morphed into “Council” as the group evolved. While the national group’s influence dwindled by 1908, the California affiliate and local Los Angeles sub-council remained a political fixture until 1915. The Los Angeles sub-council met monthly, and elected delegates to the annual statewide convention. The organization directly appealed for civil rights by lobbying politicians

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<sup>140</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 192.

<sup>141</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 129-135.

against lynching and pardoning falsely accused African Americans, and providing a connection to the political process through political machines. While some later anti-discrimination organizations included white members and catered to middle class African Americans, AAC membership was explicitly black, male, and blue-collar. Los Angeles leaders included James M. Alexander, a porter; Charles C. Flint, a grocer; and John H. Jamison, a scrap-iron dealer. Many AAC members used this group as a vehicle to vault into better jobs, and in the process became political leaders within the black community. The Los Angeles sub-council eventually disbanded as the national organization closed, membership declined, local influence dwindled, and the NAACP established a local branch.

Los Angeles Forum - The Los Angeles Forum (known as the Forum) organized town hall style meetings for issues in the black community. The group was established in 1903 by Rev. J.E. Edwards, pastor of the First AME Church, Jefferson Edmonds, editor of the *Liberator*, and John Wesley Coleman, a businessman, among others.<sup>142</sup> It met weekly, first at the First AME Church at 801 Towne Avenue (LAHCM #71, demolished) and then at the Odd Fellows' Hall (7<sup>th</sup> and Wall Streets, demolished), to discuss current events, philanthropic causes, and political issues. In the early 1900s, the group raised money for causes as diverse as the San Francisco earthquake, the 28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA, and black agricultural homesteading experiments.<sup>143</sup> The Forum became more politically active during the 1910s. Up to this point, African American civic organizations were successful in maintaining the sense of "openness" that beckoned blacks to Los Angeles. The articulation of the "Shenk Rule" in 1912 caused concern among participants at the Forum, as well as many other black Angelenos, that Jim Crow practices were creeping into Los Angeles. The "Shenk Rule" was named for City Attorney John Shenk who maintained it was not illegal for businesses to charge blacks more than whites for the same goods and services. When Shenk decided to run for mayor in 1913, the Forum, along with black newspapers, encouraged African Americans to vote for his opponent, who narrowly won.<sup>144</sup> The Forum joined forces with the NAACP in an attempt to suppress D.W. Griffith's film, *Birth of a Nation* in 1915. The film was based on the book, *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* by Thomas S. Dixon. As black migration to Los Angeles skyrocketed in the 1920s, the influence of the Forum was diluted. However, it continued to meet until 1942.

Urban League – Founded in 1910, the National Urban League was dedicated to improving conditions for African Americans, particularly in the areas of economic rights and social welfare. The Los Angeles branch opened in 1921, formed in association with the Tuskegee Industrial Welfare League, a local black women's organization. Located at 2504 Central Avenue, the Urban League was a biracial organization. Typical of Progressive social reform efforts, the Los Angeles Urban League focused on collecting data and then agitating for change. Its dual goal was to expand job opportunities for blacks where they already had a foothold, and to open new job sectors as well. In 1926, the L.A. branch conducted an exhaustive study of the racial policies and hiring practices of manufacturers in Los Angeles; the results

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<sup>142</sup> McBroome, "All Men Up and No Man Down," 63-65.

<sup>143</sup> Bunch, *Black Angelenos*, 26.

<sup>144</sup> McBroome, "All Men Up and No Man Down," 64-65.



demonstrated that hiring and opportunity for African American workers was very much at the whim of the manager at each site.<sup>145</sup> The Los Angeles Urban League also sponsored vocational job training programs, and helped blacks integrate into previously all-white workplaces, such as bakeries.<sup>146</sup> This organization represented an important civic institution through the postwar period, particularly in addressing the unemployment and poverty.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People - The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was organized in New York in 1909 as a biracial group committed to eradicating racial discrimination, particularly through the courts. The prominent public face of the group was W.E.B. Du Bois, who campaigned on many fronts for equal rights and integration. His philosophy appealed to professionals, intellectuals, and the middle class, particularly in Los Angeles.<sup>147</sup>

In 1913, Dr. John Somerville wrote a letter to the headquarters of the NAACP in New York saying that there was great interest in starting a chapter in Los Angeles. The founders were Somerville, his wife Vada who was also a dentist, E. Burton Ceruti, Charles Alexander, John Shackelford, Betty Hill, Rev. Joseph Johnson, Rev. W.T. Cleghorn, and Charles Edward Block. Block served as the first president and Ceruti as legal advisor.

While the L.A. branch mirrored the policy positions of the national organization, the local branch launched specific campaigns to address local issues and problems. In 1915, they waged a vocal campaign against the film *Birth of a Nation*. Although the City Council voted unanimously in favor of the ban, the California Supreme Court quickly issued an injunction blocking the action. While the film ran at Clune's Theater (528 S. Broadway, now the Cameo Theater) for a year, the NAACP lobbied the City Council for an ordinance to restrict future racially incendiary films.<sup>148</sup> The local branch also pressed the Los Angeles County General Hospital nursing program to admit black women for the first time, which it finally did in 1919.<sup>149</sup>

The NAACP continued its role as the legal watchdog for the black community in the 1920s, and it was kept busy as a result of heightened incidences of racially motivated violence and discrimination during the decade. Dr. H. Claude Hudson was elected as the president in 1924, which ushered in an era of more aggressive leadership. Before settling in Los Angeles, Hudson had



*Drs. John and Vada Somerville were among the founders of the local branch of the NAACP in 1913, circa 1941 (USC Digital Archives, Charlotta Bass/California Eagle Photograph Collection)*

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<sup>145</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 244-47.

<sup>146</sup> Bond, "Negro in Los Angeles," 249.

<sup>147</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 143.

<sup>148</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 85-89.

<sup>149</sup> For more information, see the Public and Private Health and Medicine Theme.

served in the same role in Shreveport, Louisiana.<sup>150</sup> In 1928, the local branch attracted the national NAACP convention to Los Angeles, a defining moment in the history of the black community that signified its coming of age on the national civil rights scene. Indeed, the Somerville Hotel (4255 Central Avenue, now the Dunbar Hotel, LAHCM #131) was constructed in order to accommodate and impress visitors to the convention.<sup>151</sup>



*Betty Hill was a co-founder of the local branch of the NAACP. As a result of her persistence, public swimming pools were desegregated in 1931, no date (Wasabi Press)*

One of the NAACP's most important campaigns involved the desegregation of swimming pools.<sup>152</sup> The official policy was that Los Angeles pools were open to everyone, but managers of individual pools took it upon themselves to restrict black access to certain days of the week. In 1925, the Playground Commission adopted a policy of segregation called the International Day formula, regulating blacks to specific days at specific pools: Exposition Park on Mondays, Arroyo Pool on Wednesdays, North Broadway Pool on Fridays, and Vignes any day. The NAACP filed a lawsuit (*George Cushnie v. City of Los Angeles*) to challenge the policy. However, NAACP officials worried that the case might open a can of worms, as it was likely to evoke the precedent of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and its separate-but-equal philosophy. After several legal setbacks, Betty Hill fought the battle over pool segregation outside the purview of the NAACP. The case went to court, and the City was ordered to

integrate the pools. Hill and her supporters deftly maneuvered to block the City from appealing the decision. The pools dropped race restrictions in the summer of 1931.<sup>153</sup> Hill's former residence at 1655 W. 37<sup>th</sup> Place is designated LAHCM #791. The Betty Hill Senior Citizen Center at 3570 S. Denker Avenue is also named in her honor.

Son of Thomas Griffith Sr. the minister of Second Baptist Church, Griffith Jr. was the controversial president of the Los Angeles branch from 1935 to 1950. During this period, the African American population of Los Angeles was rapidly expanding, and during the initial period of Griffith's tenure membership in the branch followed suit. Complaints soon were heard that Griffith had done little to advance the African American cause in the city. Membership in the branch began to decrease from a high of 14,000 members in 1946 to only 6,000 members in 1948. There was a sharp division among those who had been in Los Angeles for a longer period of time and newer arrivals.<sup>154</sup> A concern that communists had infiltrated the organization also contributed to the downturn. Despite internal disputes, the branch made significant gains during this period. They won lawsuits allowing African Americans and

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<sup>150</sup> McBroome, "All Men Up and No Man Down," 74.

<sup>151</sup> For more information, see the Commercial Development Theme.

<sup>152</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 216.

<sup>153</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 291

<sup>154</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 140-141.

Mexican Americans to swim in Pasadena city pools, against the City of Los Angeles for employment discrimination, and the U.S. Supreme Court decision invalidating racially restrictive covenants.

Under dynamic new leadership consisting of Thomas Neusom and Loren Miller in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and Rev. H.H. Brookins in late 1960s, the branch waged campaigns to desegregate the Los Angeles Fire Department and Los Angeles Unified School District, boycotts to gain employment opportunities, and voter registration drives to increase political representation. These efforts breathed new life into the organization; however, it tended to appeal more to older and middle class rather than younger and working class African Americans in Los Angeles.<sup>155</sup> The leadership, often dominated by attorneys, also tended to favor court actions over mass protests.

By the time the NAACP had regained its footing, new groups emerged after World War II to continue the battle for civil rights. These included the Congress of Racial Equality, United Civil Rights Committee, and Democratic Minority Conference, to name a few (see below). The NAACP often worked hand-in-hand with these organizations and others.

### **Securing Voting Rights and Electing African Americans**

While African Americans were among the founding settlers of Los Angeles in the eighteenth century, they were not formally part of the electoral process until the 1870 election. Louis Green challenged the City to recognize their right to vote under the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and the 25 black Angelenos eligible to vote registered. Since that election, African Americans steadily retained voting rights, unlike the southern states where white violence and other repressive actions facilitated black disenfranchisement after the Reconstruction era. Consequently, the focus of black Angelenos was not on their right to vote, but their right to equal representation.

In this era before the Depression, the African American community in Los Angeles was a solid Republican voting bloc, showing its deep-seeded loyalty to the party of Lincoln. However, black political power at this time usually meant supporting or opposing white candidates based on how well they would represent black interests. An example of this electoral power was the defeat of John Shenk, the City Attorney who supported discriminatory practices against African Americans. The black community could lobby white politicians with the threat or promise of black voter support, but this did not equate to African Americans holding office. While a few blacks ran for office unsuccessfully early on, it was not until the progressive reforms of the 1910s that they began winning elections and using the political system to advance a civil rights agenda.

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<sup>155</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 148-150.

The turning point came in 1918, when the first African American was elected to the State Assembly. This marked the beginning of black political leadership in state politics, which would continue unabated. The man who broke the political color barrier was Frederick Madison Roberts, the editor of the *New Age* and the owner of a mortuary.<sup>156</sup> He initiated a serious campaign for the 74<sup>th</sup> California Assembly District, which included the Central Avenue corridor, where African Americans represented only 20% of the district electorate.<sup>157</sup> Running as a Republican, Roberts faced four white challengers, and won the Republican nomination by 173 votes. At the time, Los Angeles was staunchly Republican so winning the nomination from the party was the equivalent of securing the seat. However, the Democratic challenger made Robert's race the sole campaign issue, as his campaign materials pronounced, "My opponent is a nigger."<sup>158</sup> Roberts prevailed and won by approximately 500 votes. In both the primary and general election, Roberts dominated the black vote, and clinched the victory by also winning white precincts apart from the Central Avenue corridor. Roberts' first issue of business in Sacramento was to usher through a bill to increase the punishment for businesses that instituted racially discriminatory practices. Roberts remained a popular politician in both the white and black community; he handily won the next

election, and went on to represent the district for almost 15 years. While his longtime residence on Jefferson Boulevard has been demolished, the Frederick Madison Roberts Park at 4700 Honduras Street is named in his honor.



*Congressman August Hawkins (right) and Los Angeles City Council Member Gilbert Lindsay (left), 1963  
(CSUN, Charles Williams Collection)*

Roberts eventually lost his seat in 1934 to Augustus Hawkins, also an African American but a Democrat. The race was a microcosm of the changing tide of black political allegiances in America.<sup>159</sup> Roberts represented the old guard, "Lincoln" Republicans who viewed Democrats as synonymous with racism and the South. However, Robert's party affiliation was out of date by 1934, when most blacks in the nation had swung to the Democratic Party in support of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, Hawkins represented a new generation of black political leadership. His election signified the realignment of black Los Angeles from the Republican to Democratic column, even as it hinged on the support of a bi-racial, pro-labor coalition.

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<sup>156</sup> For more information about the *New Age*, see the Newspapers and Publishing Theme.

<sup>157</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 160.

<sup>158</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 175.

<sup>159</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 318.

Hawkins held the Assembly seat for the next 28 years, during which time he advocated tirelessly for fair housing legislation. In 1962, Hawkins was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he continued to fight for civil rights.<sup>160</sup> Although there do not appear to be any historical resources associated with Hawkins, the Nature Park at 5790 Compton Avenue, Mental Health Center at 1720 E. 120<sup>th</sup> Street, and High School at 825 W. 60<sup>th</sup> Street are named in his honor.

In any case, the African American 74<sup>th</sup> Assembly seat remained the only elected office on any level representing the Central Avenue corridor for decades.<sup>161</sup> On a local level, the presence of black elected representation was hampered by the racial and political geography of Los Angeles; the City Council districts were too big to make black constituents a critical force.<sup>162</sup> Moreover, the reapportionment of districts every four years diluted the black vote among different districts. The black community, however, exerted political influence through their white representatives and worked closely with Kenneth Hahn, Edward Roybal, and John Anson Ford. Ford was a member of the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors from 1935 to 1958 representing the 3<sup>rd</sup> District. On his motion in 1944, the Board of Supervisors established the Joint Committee for Interracial Progress that later became the Human Relations Commission.<sup>163</sup> Roybal was a member of the City Council from 1949 to 1962 when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. On the City Council, Roybal represented the 9<sup>th</sup> District, a multiracial area of the eastside that included the Central Avenue corridor. He worked with the NAACP in the integration of the Los Angeles Fire Department. Roybal lived at 628 S. Evergreen Avenue while he was on the City Council.<sup>164</sup> Hahn was on the City Council from 1947 to 1952 representing the 8<sup>th</sup> District and a member of the Board of Supervisors from 1952 to 1992 representing the 2<sup>nd</sup> District; both districts included African American neighborhoods in South and Southeast Los Angeles. He was an ardent supporter of civil rights and the only public official to meet with Martin Luther King Jr. when he visited Los Angeles in 1961.



*County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn greeting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at LAX, 1961 (Pinterest)*

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<sup>160</sup> *Flamming Bound for Freedom*, 320-29, 350.

<sup>161</sup> *Sides, L.A. City Limits*, 154.

<sup>162</sup> *Sides, L.A. City Limits*, 152.

<sup>163</sup> The committee became an official agency of the County government in 1958 and was renamed the Human Relations Commission.

<sup>164</sup> The house is listed in the National and California Registers.



While these officials prioritized the interests of the black community, they were considered an inadequate substitute for black elected leaders by many in the African American community.<sup>165</sup> The Democratic Minority Conference (DMC) was formed in the early 1950s to promote black political candidates, increase voter registration, and reapportion City Council districts based on race. The founding members included Tom Bradley, a former police lieutenant turned attorney, Gilbert Lindsey, Hahn's deputy, and Leo Branton and Vaino Spencer, both attorneys. Through grass roots organizing the DMC grew to 600. The DMC offices were located at 4713 S. Western Avenue (demolished). They also worked with the Committee for Representative Government, led by *Los Angeles Sentinel* publisher Leon Washington.<sup>166</sup>

In 1963, the efforts of the DMC finally paid off. Lindsay became the first black member of the City Council when he was appointed to the vacant 9<sup>th</sup> District seat in January 1963, after Roybal won election to Congress. Roybal, Hahn, and Mayor Sam Yorty urged the City Council to appoint him. He won election in his own right later in the year. Lindsay's former home is located in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Place National Register Historic District and is designated LAHCM #726. At that time, Bradley won in the 10<sup>th</sup> District and newcomer Billy Mills won in the 8<sup>th</sup>. Suddenly African Americans held three of the 15 seats on the City Council. Bradley and Lindsay pushed for school desegregation under the banner of the United Civil Rights Council, discussed below.



*Tom Bradley (center) at a campaign event with actors and philanthropists, 1969 (CSUN, Guy Crowder Collection)*

Emboldened by the victory in 1963, Bradley ran for mayor in 1969 against the incumbent Yorty. Bradley held a substantial lead over Yorty in the primary, but was a few percentage points shy of winning the race outright. Yorty won reelection in the runoff, however, by playing racial politics. Yorty questioned Bradley's credibility in fighting crime and painted a picture of Bradley as a threat to Los Angeles because he would supposedly open up the city to feared Black Nationalists. Bradley did not use his record as a police officer in the election. With the racial factor, even liberal white voters became hesitant to support Bradley.<sup>167</sup>

With an unconventional coalition of liberal African Americans and Jews and moderate business leaders, Bradley unseated Yorty in 1973. His election made him

the second African American mayor of a major American city. His 20 years in office (he retired in 1993) had its highs and lows, but he was immensely popular throughout the city. Bradley supported the

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<sup>165</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 157.

<sup>166</sup> Sides, "A Simple Quest for Dignity," 128-29.

<sup>167</sup> Jane Fritsch, "Tom Bradley, Mayor in Era of Los Angeles Growth, Dies," *New York Times*, September 30, 1998.

development of Downtown, Century City, and Warner Center, facilitated the growth of the airport and harbor, and backed the Summer Olympic Games in 1984, which benefited the city greatly. While he was mayor, Los Angeles surpassed Chicago as the second largest city in the country. Although he attempted to reform the Los Angeles Police Department, the City Charter prevented him from dismissing the chief.

Another African American politician to emerge from Los Angeles during the late 1960s and early 1970s was Yvonne Braithwaite Burke. She represented the 63<sup>rd</sup> State Assembly District from 1967 to 1973 and the 28<sup>th</sup> Congressional District from 1973 to 1979. During her tenure on the Appropriations Committee, she fought for increased funding to aid school districts like Los Angeles to comply with desegregation mandates. In 1979, shortly after leaving Congress, Gov. Jerry Brown appointed her to the Board of Regents of the University of California; but she resigned later that year when Brown appointed her to fill a vacancy on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Burke was the first female and first African American supervisor. In 1980, Burke was defeated in her bid for a full term in the seat by Republican Deane Dana. When Dana retired in 1992, she ran again and defeated State Senator Diane Watson.

### **Housing Segregation**

In the first half of the twentieth century, African Americans in Los Angeles were not segregated in certain neighborhoods by blatant Jim Crow housing laws, but rather by a variety of underhanded mechanisms described in the Deed Restrictions and Segregation theme. Central among these mechanisms was the restrictive covenant, used widely in Los Angeles and cities nationally from 1900 to 1948. The use of covenants was challenged in two important U.S. Supreme Court cases that had major implications for Los Angeles housing.<sup>168</sup> In the 1948 case *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the Supreme Court ruled that racially restrictive covenants could not be enforced by the state, because the enforcement of the covenant would require the state to implement a discriminatory action. In the 1953 case *Barrows v. Jackson*, the Supreme Court expanded upon the 1948 decision by barring any financial awards to plaintiffs if covenants were broken. These court victories redirected black settlement patterns in Los Angeles, as black families faced fewer legal barriers to own a home wherever they chose.

The *Shelley v. Kraemer* case had roots in an epic Los Angeles covenant battle in the Sugar Hill neighborhood. Up to the late 1930s, Sugar Hill was an exclusive white neighborhood in West Adams. In 1938, blacks finally broke the color line there when businessman Norman O. Houston purchased a home in the area (2211 S. Hobart Boulevard). He waited three years to move in, fearing a backlash from his white neighbors. Once he did, other members of the black elite followed.<sup>169</sup> The West Adams Heights Improvement Association filed a lawsuit contending that the white homeowners who sold the homes violated the racial covenant on the property. Loren Miller argued the case for the NAACP, and won in

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<sup>168</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom* 69; de Graaf, *Seeking El Dorado*, 25.

<sup>169</sup> de Graaf, "City of Black Angels," 346-47; Bond, "Negro in Los Angeles," 69; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 66, 68, 97, 290, 350; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 98-99. Sugar Hill was part of the landmark *Shelley v. Kraemer* case that struck down race restrictive covenants in 1948.

California Supreme Court. When the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, it was considered under the *Shelley v. Kraemer* case and Loren Miller wrote the brief and argued the case along with Thurgood Marshall.

### **Equal Education, School Desegregation, and Busing**

When California joined the Union in 1850, statutes were enacted that denied African Americans the right to receive a public education, among other things. After a petition sent by African Americans to the Los Angeles Board of Education in 1872, the California Supreme Court ruled in *Ward v. Floor* segregation in educational practices as unconstitutional, breaching U.S. Constitution's 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments. The judges ruling, however, created a loophole that allowed separate schools. The African American school-aged population in Los Angeles remained small until 1900, so separate schools were not created in the city.<sup>170</sup>

Access to educational opportunities was a powerful factor in attracting African Americans to Los Angeles at the beginning of the twentieth century. For African Americans like many other communities, education represented a means towards upward mobility. Education became the main priority for African American women who bore the responsibility for their children's schooling. During the 1910s, Eva Carter Buckner was the head of the NAACP school committee, which investigated incidents of racial prejudice in public schools.<sup>171</sup> Few were apparently reported as public schools in Los Angeles were not segregated by law.

As African American settlement increased during the 1910s and 1920s it became more concentrated east of Main Street, specifically along the Central Avenue corridor. Black children attended public school with other ethnic and racial minorities that were also subject to restrictive covenants and other forms of housing discrimination. One of the few schools that were predominately African American was 51<sup>st</sup> Street Elementary (5108 Holmes Avenue, named changed to Holmes Avenue Elementary), which was in the heart of the Furlong Tract. The Furlong Tract was a small African American neighborhood between E. 50<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Streets, Long Beach Avenue and Alameda Street. Around 1903, Irish farmer James Furlong developed this area expressly for African Americans to aid in their advancement. He sold lots to black families, who settled the area. While mainly African American children attended the school, the principals and teachers were exclusively white. In 1911, Bessie Burke joined the staff. She was the first African American teacher in the Los Angeles public school system. By 1918, she was promoted to principal of the school, another first for her race.

During the 1920s and 1930s, schools in Los Angeles remained multiracial. By the postwar period, however, Los Angeles schools had become deeply segregated between white and nonwhite students. The official policy of the Los Angeles Board of Education was purportedly one of color blindness. All

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<sup>170</sup> Campbell, 63-68.

<sup>171</sup> Flamming, 148.

students attend the school closest to their homes regardless of race. White students in racially mixed neighborhoods; however, were able to seek a waiver and attend a predominately white school. This practice, combined with racial discrimination in housing, resulted in de facto segregation well into the 1950s. When the NAACP started investigating the practice in 1953, and the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954, schools became a central focus of the Los Angeles Civil Rights movement.<sup>172</sup> A motivating factor in the legal challenges to deed restrictions was not just access to better housing, but better schools that were concentrated in wealthier, whiter areas. In this respect, the civil rights battle over education was very much tied to housing. If black families were restricted to living in certain areas with substandard schools, there was de facto school segregation.



*Freedom March through Downtown, 1963*  
(Los Angeles Public Library)

In the early 1960s, civil rights activists began a two-pronged approach of direct actions and legal challenges to school desegregation, neither of which were entirely successful. The United Civil Rights Committee (UCRC) formed following an appearance by Martin Luther King, Jr. at Wrigley Field (demolished) in 1963. Along with members of the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the UCRC launched a campaign of sit-ins, marches, and other nonviolent actions, calling upon the Los Angeles Board of Education to adopt policies aimed at correcting racial segregation and

broadening the curriculum. This coalition asserted the need for the Los Angeles Board of Education to redraw its school boundaries, the ability for black students in overcrowded schools to attend predominantly white schools, and the hiring of more black teachers throughout the district.<sup>173</sup> In June of 1963, the UCRC and NAACP organized the Freedom March. The key organizers were Marnesba Tackett, chair of the UCRC education committee, and Christopher Taylor president of the NAACP. The march attracted between 1,000 and 2,000 participants, which was the largest civil rights demonstration in the history of Los Angeles at the time. The march targeted all forms of racial segregation and discrimination in the city, but the principal focus was school desegregation. The march began at FAME church at 801 Towne Avenue (LAHCM #71, demolished) and ended about three miles away at the offices of the Los Angeles Board of Education (333 S. Beaudry Avenue). The UCRC continued a series of marches throughout the summer, but its efforts at school desegregation met with considerable opposition.

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<sup>172</sup> Sides, L.A. *City Limits*, 161.

<sup>173</sup> Sapphos Environmental, Inc. *Los Angeles Unified School District, Historic Context Statement, 1870-1969* (Los Angeles, CA: LAUSD, 2014, 111.

Also in 1963, the ACLU filed a class-action school desegregation lawsuit on behalf of two African American high school students, Mary Ellen Crawford and Inita Watkins. The lawsuit highlighted two schools—both located in the southern portion of the school district, only one mile apart—with pronounced racial imbalance: Jordan Senior High School in Watts, whose student population was 99% black, and South Gate Senior High School, which had 97% white students.<sup>174</sup>

The case of *Crawford v. Los Angeles City Board of Education* became a watershed for Los Angeles schools. Filed in 1963, and effectively ending in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1982, the case “encapsulated and propelled the legal and political framework of an era.”<sup>175</sup> As a result of *Crawford*, the California Supreme Court ordered the school board to formulate a plan to correct de facto racial imbalance in the schools. The most controversial solution proposed and implemented was busing students; programs were first voluntary and then mandatory.<sup>176</sup> In 1975, Diane Watson became the first African American woman elected to a seat on the Los Angeles School Board. She became the leading proponent of busing students to end the racial segregation in the sprawling district. Watson relinquished her seat on the School Board in 1978 to run for the California State Senate. The following year, the California state legislature placed a constitutional amendment, Proposition 1, on the ballot. Proposition 1 declared that school boards had no obligation or responsibility to exceed the guarantees of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment with regard to student school assignment or pupil transportation. The amendment passed by more than two-thirds, ending all mandatory student reassignment and busing, though all students were (and are still) able to attend the school closest to their homes.

### **Employment Discrimination**

Civil rights efforts also focused on job discrimination. As explained in the Historical Overview, African Americans faced widespread discrimination in employment and advancement in Los Angeles. Such practices were legal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the absence of state or federal statutes to demand otherwise. In Los Angeles, black males were relegated to service and general labor jobs in the early years; by the 1940s, some began breaking into industrial work with the help of federal anti-discrimination laws. Black women worked mostly in domestic service early on, and made gradual progress in other job sectors over time. Overall, African Americans were usually relegated to the lowest job rung, with poor pay, dismal prospects for promotion, and little support from organized labor. This represented a significant barrier to economic opportunity for the black community. It clearly made life hard for many, but it also stimulated protest, activism, and entrepreneurialism.

Within the expansive economy of Los Angeles, African Americans made mixed progress during World War II. Though certain doors opened, many black workers contended with persistent discrimination by

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<sup>174</sup> Sapphos, *Los Angeles Unified School District, Historic Context Statement*, 111.

<sup>175</sup> Herbert R. Sosa, “Fragmented Diversity: School Desegregation, Student Activism, and Busing in Los Angeles, 1963–1982” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2013), xiv.

<sup>176</sup> *LAUSD Historic Context Statement*, 111.



employers and unions, as well as the changing geography of industry. In June of 1941, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, banning discriminatory employment practices by federal agencies and all unions and companies engaged in war-related work. The order also established the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to enforce the new policy; however, change was slow. To speed up the process for racial equality Rev. Clayton Russell and Charlotta Bass organized the local Negro Victory Committee. They were one of many organizations throughout the country to galvanize around the "Double V" campaign to fight both international and domestic racism. They also led fights to locate defense industry job training centers in Watts, hire black conductors and locomotive drivers on the Los Angeles Railway (LARY), and end exclusion and racism in the armed forces and labor unions. One of their most successful campaigns was against the United States Employment Service (USES) in 1942. The committee's protest ended USES's policy of placing black women exclusively in janitorial and service positions in defense plants.

Like many wartime organizations, the Negro Victory Committee's momentum faded by the end of World War II.<sup>177</sup> Through their efforts African Americans found work in the shipbuilding, steel, meatpacking, automobile, rubber, chemical, and oil refining industries. In some cases, these gains were temporary, such as in shipbuilding that came to a halt, or on the docks where the longshoremen's union demanded that black workers quit when the war ended. But in other sectors, blacks found a permanent foothold in industry, especially in the steel, rubber, and food industries along the Alameda Corridor (adjacent to Central Avenue). Black women experienced some employment gains during and after World War II. Many worked in defense plants during the war, and stayed in manufacturing jobs after, mostly in the apparel industry. They also had better success securing jobs in the aerospace/electronics industry, where employers were more inclined to hire black women than men. They also made significant gains as public sector clerical workers.

Job discrimination became an important target of civil rights activism during the postwar years, galvanizing legal challenges and direct actions. One of the most publicized campaigns for equal rights in employment involved the local branch of the NAACP and the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD). In 1924, the LAFD decided to assign all of the black firefighters in the city to Fire Station #30. As the population around the Central Avenue corridor rose and as Fire Station #30 (1401 Central Avenue, LACHM #289) became over



*Los Angeles Fire Commission Meeting, Loren Miller seated on left and Chief Alderson on right, 1954 (USC Digital Archive)*

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<sup>177</sup> Joseph Bernardo, "Negro Victory Committee," accessed September 5, 2017, <http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/negro-victory-committee-1941-1945>

crowded, Fire Station #14 (3401 Central Avenue) was designated the second all-black company. Civil service regulations were regularly violated to maintain the segregated system and retain the rank of captain as the highest open to African Americans. By 1953, the NAACP was pressing for equality in hiring, transfers, and promotions in LAFD. An alternative put forth to integration put forth by the LAFD management, was to convert Fire Stations #20 and #21 to all-black companies to open up promotional opportunities. The idea, however, was rejected in favor of full integration. When Fire Chief John Alderson refused to integrate the department, the mayor fired him. The desegregation plan was implemented by a new chief in 1956. Fire Stations #14 and #30 are listed in the National and California Registers.

Beginning in the 1930s, Leon Washington organized pickets of numerous businesses on Central Avenue that refused to hire black workers. To stifle the community's efforts, an anti-picketing ordinance was proposed and adopted in 1938.<sup>178</sup> When Washington nonetheless picketed the Avalon Market he was arrested. Loren Miller defended him in court and succeeded in having the case dismissed and the ordinance invalidated as unconstitutional.<sup>179</sup> The black community continued to target specific companies that discriminated in hiring for much of the postwar period with picket lines, labor strikes, and consumer boycotts. What all of these strategies had in common was that they disrupted business-as-usual and used public space to make a spectacle that commanded attention. These strategies were also used to support African American causes in other states.

In 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which ended discrimination and segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It is considered one of the crowning legislative achievements of the modern Civil Rights movement. The act created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce laws prohibiting workplace discrimination. From 1965 through 1971, however, the EEOC lacked any real enforcement authority. Instead, Congress authorized the agency to investigate claims of discrimination. If the EEOC found reasonable cause to believe that discrimination occurred, the agency referred the case to the Department of Justice to litigate. In 1972, Congress passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Act to give the EEOC authority to conduct its own enforcement litigation. Since then African Americans in Los Angeles and throughout the nation have worked through legal system to defend themselves against discrimination in the workplace.

### **The Watts Uprising and Aftermath**

The same year the Civil Rights Act was passed by Congress, Proposition 14 was overwhelmingly passed by Californians. The proposition repealed the Rumford Act, which was one of the most significant and sweeping laws protecting the rights of blacks and other minorities to purchase or rent housing.

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<sup>178</sup> "Anti-Picket Law Rapped by Publisher, Measure on September 17 Ballot Would Cripple Job Drive," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 28, 1938.

<sup>179</sup> "Picket Law Held Void," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 20, 1939.

Sponsored by the California Real Estate Association, the proposition was endorsed by the *Los Angeles Times*, John Birch Society, Republican Assembly, and other conservative groups. Gov. Brown stated that the passage of Proposition 14 would put into California's Constitution "a provision for discrimination of which not even Mississippi or Alabama can boast."<sup>180</sup> Although Proposition 14 was ruled unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court in 1966 and U.S. Supreme Court in 1967, it demonstrated the number of whites who resisted the idea of racial equality and the fear among blacks that the idea was unattainable. Notwithstanding the gains for racial equality at the federal levels, the disillusionment of African Americans over Proposition 14 contributed to the civil unrest that took place during the rest of the decade.



*Leon Washington (center left) and Dr. H. Claude Hudson (center right) at a defeat Proposition 14 rally, 1964  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

In August of 1965, the Watts neighborhood exploded with racial and socio-economic frustration. It began when the Los Angeles Highway Patrol stopped Marquette Frye and his brother, alleging that the two young black men were speeding. Backup was called from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)

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<sup>180</sup> "Brown Assails Prop. 14," *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1964.



as a crowd of African Americans gathered to watch the scene. Since the incident was close to Frye's home, his mother emerged to find her son resisting arrest. Fearful that his arrest may ignite a riot, one LAPD officer drew his firearm. Catching a glimpse of the gun, Mrs. Frye jumped onto the officer's back, causing the crowd to cheer. LAPD officers arrested all three of the Fries. Enraged by the family's arrests and the aggressive manner in which the officers chose to respond to the situation generally, Watts' residents protested as the police cars drove away. Less than an hour later, black Angelenos took to the streets. Six days later, 34 people were dead, hundreds more injured, and a wide swath of South L.A. was scarred with burned-out buildings and looted stores.



*14,000 National Guard troops were sent to Watts to patrol the streets, finally ending the unrest, 1965 (Getty Images)*

Gov. Brown asked John A. McCone, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, to form a commission to investigate the uprising. Known as the McCone Commission, it released a report that affirmed commonly held assumptions about the sources of anger that lead to the uprising—poor community-police relations, a predominately white police force, family disorganization, defective behavior—while giving less attention to economic marginalization and unemployment of the residents. Rather than comparing the status of blacks and whites in Los Angeles, the report compared the status of blacks in Los Angeles with those in other parts of the country. “A Negro in Los Angeles has long been able to sit where he wants in a bus or a movie house, to shop where he wishes, to vote, and to use public facilities without discrimination. The opportunity to succeed is probably unequalled in any American

city.” Black leaders in Los Angeles asserted a distinctly different opinion in reaction to the report. “I think when the Los Angeles Negro compares his living and decides his way of life... is unfortunate, he compares it with Los Angeles, not with Harlem, not with Philadelphia, not with Kansas City,” professed Loren Miller, who was by this time a judge on the California Superior Court.<sup>181</sup>

The commission had offered up ambitious prescriptions including: literacy and preschool programs, improved police-community ties, increased low-income housing, more job-training projects, upgraded health care services, more efficient public transportation, and many more. While some of the recommendations were adopted and sustained, bringing with them a handful of substantive changes in Watts, most were not. Some were enacted and then, for a variety of reasons, were scaled back or allowed to fade away altogether. The Black Panther Party and United Slaves (US) Organization that formed in the late 1960s were appealing to black youth who had given up on government programs that were created after the Watts uprising.

The Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party was formed in November of 1967 by an undercover FBI agent who had infiltrated the national Black Panther Party headquarters in Oakland. The Panthers exposed and expelled the undercover agent shortly thereafter and the chapter blossomed under new leadership, gaining hundreds of new recruits in early 1968 then launching a free breakfast program and free medical clinic. As the Panthers grew, the chapter came into conflict with Ron Karenga’s US Organization, dedicated to militant Black Nationalism. A shoot-out between the groups on the UCLA campus left two of the Panther leaders dead. Shoot-outs with Los Angeles police took the lives of other members, and the LAPD and FBI waged a campaign of constant harassment including the arrest of 42 Panthers in one two-week period. Continued assault by the LAPD and FBI stripped away the foundation of the chapter until it crumbled in 1970.

By the 1970s, the movement for civil rights by African Americans in Los Angeles made significant gains. African Americans used the legal system to desegregate public spaces like swimming pools and municipal departments like the LAFD. Boycotts, sit-ins, and pickets forced businesses and industries to hire and serve African Americans without discrimination. Black political representation was at an all-time high with African Americans holding offices at all levels of government. African Americans with economic means could live in the neighborhoods of their choice. Other demands for equal rights, however, remained elusive. While schools in the South were desegregating, those in Los Angeles were not. The police brutality and racial profiling that blacks had faced throughout their history in Los Angeles would continue and become a major civil rights issue in the twenty first century.

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<sup>181</sup> Quote at Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 172, see Robert Fogelson, "White on Black: A Critique of the McCone Commission Report on the Los Angeles Riots," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 3 (September 1967) 337-367.



**Associated Historic Resources**

The following tables describe designated and potential resources associated with the African American Civil Rights movement. All of the aforementioned organizations and individuals were researched to identify potential resources. In some cases none were found and in other cases the properties identified have been demolished. For example, no extant or intact resources associated with Edward Burton Ceruti, Augustus Hawkins, Thomas Griffith Jr., Frederick Madison Roberts, or Rev. Clayton D. Russell were found. Eligibility Standards address a wide variety of property types including institutional, commercial, and residential buildings and the sites of important events in the history of the long struggle for civil rights.

***Designated Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Branton Jr., Leo Residence	1818 Wellington Road	Branton (1922-2013) was an attorney and civil rights activist. He was the first African American to graduate from the Northwestern University School of Law in 1948. He moved to Los Angeles and started the first black-owned law practice in the state. Branton filed and won several cases against the LAPD for the mistreatment of African Americans. He lived in this house in the 1990s, which is now in the Lafayette Square HPOZ.
Bunche , Ralph J. Residence	1221 E. 40 <sup>th</sup> Place	Bunche (1904-1971) was a scholar and diplomat significant for his work with the United Nations. In 1950, he won the Noble Peace Prize for negotiating an armistice between the Arab States and Israel. His boyhood home near Central Avenue is listed in the National and California Registers and is designated LAHCM #159.

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Hill, Betty Residence	1655 W. 37 <sup>th</sup> Place	Born Rebecca Jane Lapsley (1876-1960), Hill was a civil rights activist. She was a founding member of the local branch of the NAACP and led the battle to desegregate public swimming pools in Los Angeles. She lived in this house from at least 1920 to 1940. It is designated LAHCM #791.
Hudson, Dr. Henry Claude Residence	759 E. 31 <sup>st</sup> Street	While working as a dentist, Hudson (1886-1989) attended Loyola Law School at night, graduating in 1931. He studied law to provide services to the NAACP and served as the president from 1924 to 1934. He was instrumental in desegregating Los Angeles County beaches and establishing Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital. When he moved to Los Angeles he lived at 759 E. 31 <sup>st</sup> Street. The residences he occupied in the 1930s and 40s have been altered or demolished.
	1230 S. Van Ness Avenue	Hudson moved to this house in the 1950s, which now in the Country Club Park HPOZ.
Fire Station #30	1401 Central Avenue	In 1924, the LAFD decided to assign all of the black firefighters in the city to Fire Station #30. Constructed in 1913, the building is now the African American Firefighter Museum. It is listed in the National and California Registers and designated LACHM #289.
Fire Station #14	3401 Central Avenue	Fire Station #14 opened to black firefighters in 1936 to provide a second segregated station. The original building was replaced with this one in 1949. It is listed in the National and California Registers.

**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
First African American Episcopal Church (Site of)	801 Towne Avenue	Built in 1904, the congregants of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church worshiped here until 1967. The church hosted the Forum for many years. It is designated LAHCM #71; however, the building was destroyed by fire in 1972.
Lindsay, Gilbert Residence	774 E. 52 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Lindsay (1900-1990) became the first African American City Councilman in 1963, a post he held until his death at age 90. He lived in this house in the 1960s and 70s. It is listed in the National and California Registers as contributing to the 52 <sup>nd</sup> Place Historic District, and is designated LAHCM #726.
McTernan, John T. Residence	2226 W. Wayne Avenue	McTernan (1910-2005) was a white civil rights lawyer. His firm Margolis and McTernan worked on cases against covenants that prevented African Americans from occupying and owning homes in white neighborhoods. He also represented Angela Davis, a UCLA faculty member dismissed for being affiliated with the Communist Party. Constructed in 1960, his house is designated LAHCM #1065.
Roybal, Edward Residence	628 S. Evergreen Avenue	Roybal (1916-2005) was the first Latino elected to the Los Angeles City Council since 1887, and the first Latino from California elected to the U.S. House of Representatives since 1879. He was an ally of the African American community and champion of civil rights and equal access to education, health care, and housing. His house is listed in the National and California Registers.

**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**

Context: African American History of Los Angeles

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Somerville Hotel/Dunbar Hotel	4225 Central Avenue	Drs. John and Vada Somerville had this hotel constructed in 1928 to attract the national NAACP convention to Los Angeles. It is listed in the National and California Registers and is designated LAHCM #131.

***Potential Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Black Panther Shooting (Site of)	UCLA, Campbell Hall, Room 1201	On January 17, 1969, members of the rival black radical group US shot Black Panther leaders Bunchy Carter and John Huggins to death in Campbell Hall. Afterward, Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt assumed leadership of the group.
Black Panther Headquarters	4115 Central Avenue	On December 8, 1969, the LAPD deployed its newly formed SWAT unit to raid the Southern California headquarters of the Black Panther Party. A four-hour shoot out at 41st Street and Central Avenue ensued.
Bradley, Tom Residence	3807 S. Welland Avenue	Bradley (1917-1998) was the mayor of Los Angeles from 1973 to 1993. He has been the only African American mayor, and his 20 years in office mark the longest tenure by any mayor in the city's history. He lived in this house when he was elected to the City Council in 1963.
Burke, Bessie Residence	1352 W. 37 <sup>th</sup> Street	Born Bessie Bruington, Burke (1891-1968) was the first African American teacher and principal hired in the Los Angeles public school system. She lived in this house from at least 1938 to 1941.

**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**Context: African American History of Los Angeles

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
Hahn, Kenneth Residence	No Address Found	Hahn (1920-1997) was a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors from 1952 to 1992, and previously a Los Angeles City Councilmember. He represented the south central community of Los Angeles, and lived in the area for his entire life. Although white, he was deeply respected in the black community for supporting civil rights and affirmative action.
Holmes Avenue Elementary	5108 S. Holmes Avenue	Built as the 51 <sup>st</sup> Street School in 1910, it was rebuilt after a fire in 1922 and reopened as the Holmes Avenue Elementary School. The school was located in the Furlong Tract, which was marketed to African American homebuyers.
MacBeth, Hugh Ellwood Residence	1558 W. 37 <sup>th</sup> Street	MacBeth (1884-1956) was an attorney and civil rights activist. In 1913, he moved to Los Angeles and soon became an important player in the legal and political scene. He lived in this house from at least 1920 to 1940. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Mills, Billy G. Residence	3621 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue	Mills (1929 - ) is an attorney, retired Los Angeles Superior Court judge, and former Los Angeles City Council member, serving from 1963 to 1974. He was one of the first three African Americans elected to the council. He lived in this house until at least 1970; it may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.



**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**Context: African American History of Los Angeles

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
	3905 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	He appears to have lived in this house in Leimert Park during the 1970s and possibly later.
Miller, Loren Residence	647 Micheltorena Street	Miller (1903-1967) was an attorney, journalist, and civil rights activist. In addition to arguing cases to end the use of restrictive covenants nationally, he served on the Los Angeles Superior Court from 1964 to 1967. Miller lived in this house in Silver Lake with his wife after it was built in 1940 until at least 1960. <sup>182</sup> The house was designed for the Millers by architect and friend, James H. Garrott, AIA. <sup>183</sup>
Tackett Tillmon, Marnesba Residence	2540 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Tackett (1908-2008) was a civil rights activist who worked to eliminate inequities in education and played a key role in the battle over public school desegregation. She lived in this house from at least 1965 to 1973.

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<sup>182</sup> Los Angeles Street Address Directory, March 1960

<sup>183</sup> "Judge Loren Miller Residence, James H. Garrott AIA 1940," *Silver Lake News*, August 1, 2015.  
<http://thesilverlakenews.com/judge-loren-miller-residence-james-h-garrott-aia-1940/>

**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**Context: African American History of Los Angeles

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
Spencer, Vaino Hassan Residence	3521 Victoria Avenue	Spencer (1920-2016) was the first African American judge in California and the third in the nation. Spencer served 46 years on the bench, becoming one of the longest-serving jurists in state history. Spencer devoted her free time to legal and civil rights activities. She served on the California Attorney General's Committee on Constitutional Rights and board of directors of the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing. She lived in this house from at least 1952 to the late 1960s.
	1808 Wellington Road	Spencer moved to this house in the late 1960s, and appears to have lived here until her death. It is now in the Lafayette Square HPOZ.
Terry, Jessie Residence	1152 E. Adams Boulevard	Terry (1885-1979) helped found several civic organizations including the African American branch of the YMCA, the first PTA at Jefferson High School, and the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Council of Negro Women. Terry was appointed the first African American member of the City of Los Angeles Housing Authority Commission in 1939 and became the first woman manager of a city housing project. She lived in this house during the 1930s and 1940s.

**Theme: Important Events and Institutions in the African American Civil Rights Movement**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the area of ethnic heritage for its association with the African American community as well as other relevant area(s) of significance including politics/government, law, and/or social history. By 1895, African Americans began forming organizations to prevent Jim Crow practices from creeping into Los Angeles. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the “separate but equal” doctrine that formed the basis for state-sanctioned discrimination, drawing national and international attention to the plight of African Americans. In the turbulent decade and a half that followed, civil rights activists used nonviolent protest and civil disobedience to bring about change, and the federal government made legislative headway with initiatives such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Period of Significance:** 1895 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** Although African Americans have been fighting for their civil rights since California joined the Union in 1850, the period of significance begins in 1895 with the establishment of Afro-American Council. It was not the first civil rights organization in California, but it was the first to involve the citizens of Los Angeles in a meaningful way. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Throughout Los Angeles, but particularly in areas historically associated with the African American community including South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, West Adams, Baldwin Hills, and Leimert Park.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Politics/Government, Law, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A                      CR: 1                      Local: 1

**Associated Property Types:** Institutional – Church Building, Courthouse, School, and Fire Station  
Commercial - Retail Building and Office Building  
Public Places - Site of Event

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include commercial and institutional buildings used by organizations and groups that played an important role in the African American Civil Rights movement. In addition, property types include the sites of important events such as demonstrations.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with important events and institutions in the African American Civil Rights movement.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Is directly associated with events and institutions that were pivotal in the history of the African American Civil Rights movement

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Interior spaces that functioned as important gathering/meeting places must remain readable from the period of significance
- For National Register, properties associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, Design, and Association from the period of significance
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant organization occupied the property
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed

**Theme: Important Persons in the African American Civil Rights Movement**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the area of ethnic heritage for its association with a person who played an important role in the African American Civil Rights movement. Other applicable areas of significance may include politics/government, law, and/or social history. In many cases, significant individuals were involved with numerous groups, some of which only functioned briefly. Thus, the residence of an individual is often the property that best represents their productive life.

**Period of Significance:** 1895 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** Although African Americans have been fighting for their civil rights since California joined the Union in 1850, the period of significance begins in 1895 with the establishment of Afro-American Council. It was not the first civil rights organization in California, but it was the first to involve the citizens of Los Angeles in a meaningful way. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Throughout Los Angeles, but particularly in areas historically associated with the African American community including South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, West Adams, Baldwin Hills, and Leimert Park.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Politics/Government, Law, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: B CR: 2 Local: 2

**Associated Property Types:** Residential – Single-Family Residence and Multi-Family Residence

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include single-family and multi-family residential buildings that were the homes of prominent leaders in the African American Civil Rights movement.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with important persons in the African Civil Rights movement.



**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Individual must be proven to have played a significant and influential role in the African American Civil Rights movement
- Directly associated with the productive life of the person who made important contributions to the history of the African American Civil Rights movement

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- For single-family residential, the individual must have resided in the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- For multi-family properties, the apartment or room occupied by the person must be readable from the period of significance
- For National Register, properties associated with individuals whose significant accomplishments date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, Design, and Association from the period of significance
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant publication occupied the property
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed

**THEME: RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY, 1869 - 1980**

Churches were crucial anchors of the African American community. They represented spaces of racial autonomy and freedom, where blacks came together by choice and strengthened ties of mutuality. They were sanctuaries of spiritual freedom, places where people could freely express themselves unfettered by the expectations or pressures of white society. For African Americans in Los Angeles, Doug Flamming writes, “Black churches were their pride and joy, their haven in a racist America.”<sup>184</sup> They also represented springboards for community leadership, as well as centers of social life, business networks, and civil rights activism. Churches, too, reflected the diversity of the African American community by class, background, and cultural proclivities. They played a vital role in allowing blacks congregants to express their individuality, while tying them to the broader community.

African American churches in Los Angeles evolved in both national and metropolitan contexts. The church has deep roots in African American history as an institution with far-ranging meaning and significance. Since the days of slavery, blacks embraced the Christian faith, particularly its message of liberation and deliverance. Blacks were quick to form their own churches after emancipation, independent of white intervention. In the South, their churches were predominantly Methodist or Baptist; in the North and Midwest, the leading denomination was the African Methodist Episcopal Church. For African Americans, the church represented a space of black autonomy – spiritual, social, political – and as such it became a powerful institution. In Los Angeles, black churches grew in a metropolitan context of extraordinary religious diversity. As Michael Engh notes, Los Angeles was unusual for its extensive multiplicity of faiths, reflecting the region’s early racial and ethnic diversity, which coexisted with firmly established mainline churches – especially Protestant. This coexistence led generations of observers to characterize religion in Los Angeles with a mixture of alarm and reassurance – alarm over the dizzying array of sects and creeds, reassurance that the mainline churches had established a firm, stabilizing presence in the city.<sup>185</sup> In some ways, black religious life reflected this metropolitan pattern.

In the African American community, a handful of powerful mainline churches were the dominant institutions, coexisting with a copious assortment of smaller churches. Black churches in Los Angeles appeared early and proliferated quickly, following the broader geographic patterns of black settlement. By 1926, according to the federal religious census, Los Angeles had 33 black churches with over 10,000 members; by 1936 there were 54 churches with 17,296 members.<sup>186</sup> The actual numbers were probably higher, since census enumerators usually overlooked smaller storefront churches.<sup>187</sup> A number of these churches moved often, sometimes occupying structures once owned by other (white) congregations.

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<sup>184</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 110.

<sup>185</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 109-110; Michael E. Engh, S.J., “Practically Every Religion Being Represented,” in Tom Sitton and William Deverell, eds., *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 201-202.

<sup>186</sup> Engh, “Practically Every Religion,” 205.

<sup>187</sup> de Graaf and Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 20.

By 1900, the two leading churches in the black community were the First AME (FAME) Church and Second Baptist Church. The churches attracted thriving and well-connected congregations and recruited top clergymen. These churches remain influential in the African American community to this day. FAME was the first black church to form in Los Angeles. It began in the 1850s in the home of Robert and Winnie Owens, where Bridget Mason was also a resident. The church was located in two different buildings (both demolished) during the late nineteenth century. In 1903, the church moved to a building at 8<sup>th</sup> and Towne, six blocks west of Central Avenue. The Gothic Revival style building was a “magnificent architectural landmark,” with a sanctuary four stories high, topped by a bell tower with four spires.<sup>188</sup> FAME was well known for its 50-voice choir, as well as its leadership role in the community. In 1903, church members launched the Los Angeles Sunday Forum, commonly called the Forum, which became a key civic hub and place for the community to discuss issues and express themselves without the threat of censorship, and would lay the groundwork for black activism and communication.<sup>189</sup> The church moved west to its current location at 2270 S. Harvard Boulevard in 1969.<sup>190</sup> In 1971, the building at 8<sup>th</sup> and Towne was designated as a LAHCM #71, but in July of 1972 it was destroyed by fire.<sup>191</sup>



*First AME Church at 8<sup>th</sup> and Towne, circa 1950, destroyed by fire (CAAM)*

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<sup>188</sup> Quote from Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 113.

<sup>189</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 24-25, 310. In 1999, First AME’s membership was 17,000, and the church ran a wide array of social outreach programs. It continues to represent a leading institution of in the black community. See de Graaf and Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Seeking El Dorado*, 52.

<sup>190</sup> “The End of an Era: Historic 8<sup>th</sup> and Towne Gives Way to the New – First AME Begins Another Century of Service to God and Man,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 8, 1969.

<sup>191</sup> “Fires Damage Historic Church, Stores, Plant,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1972.

Second Baptist was founded in 1885 by a small group of African Americans who attended the white First Baptist Church. The church grew into a cultural hub for the black community under the leadership of their first pastor and founder Rev. S.C. Pierce. After meeting for years in small, temporary buildings near the Plaza in Downtown Los Angeles, they moved into a two-story brick building at 740 Maple Avenue (demolished) in 1892. However, the congregation soon outgrew the building. Second Baptist was well-connected to the Western Baptist Association, and had the ability to recruit top ministers. One such example was Rev. Thomas Griffith Sr., who became pastor in 1921. A preacher and former Army chaplain, Griffith immediately got to work organizing the effort to build a new, larger church for Second Baptist. They raised \$175,000 and enlisted architects Paul R. Williams and Norman F. Marsh to design the building, which opened in 1926 at 2412 Griffith Avenue.<sup>192</sup> At the dedication, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., the well-known pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City, gave the sermon, which lauded the new building as the “most elaborate” Baptist church on the West Coast.<sup>193</sup> Prominent community members belonged to the congregation, including John Neimore and Charlotta and John Bass.<sup>194</sup>



*Second Baptist Church, 2412 Griffith Avenue, no date (Los Angeles Public Library)*

While FAME and Second Baptist drew the middle class segment of black Los Angeles, other churches attracted working class congregants, some of whom rejected the perceived conservatism of these two mainline congregations. In some cases, the rejection was literal, as discontented congregants left these churches to form their own. Indeed, both FAME and Second Baptist spawned a number of splinter

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<sup>192</sup> History Council of the California African American Museum, *Sampling the Historic Black Churches of Los Angeles: Bus and Driving Tour* (Los Angeles, CA: California African American Museum, 2012), 27.

<sup>193</sup> Engh, “Practically Every Religion,” 205-206.

<sup>194</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 111-112; *Sentinel* 50, April 14, 1983, 105.

churches, particularly after periods of internal wrangling over religious, class, and cultural differences. One of the most important “spin-offs” was the People’s Independent Church of Christ, which formed in 1915 when members of FAME proceeded to form a more progressive, “democratic” church. By the 1930s, this church “had become the most prominent and popular church in the city,” drawing a broad cross section of the black community.<sup>195</sup> Under the leadership of its charismatic minister Clayton D. Russell, it fully embraced a mission of social outreach to the black community, with social services, cooperative markets, an employment bureau, extensive programs for children, and a civil rights division. During World War II Russell organized the Negro Victory Committee, which challenged job and housing discrimination. People’s Independent Church developed a reputation as an institution that helped the “common” people.<sup>196</sup> Churches that splintered off from Second Baptist included, by 1920, New Hope Baptist, Mount Zion Baptist, St. Paul Institutional Baptist, and Tabernacle Baptist.<sup>197</sup>



*Asberry Residence, 216 N. Bonnie Brae Street, 2014 (HistoricPlacesLA)*

Another denomination that attracted working class – and significantly multiracial – congregants was Pentecostalism. African American minister William Seymour and his wife Jennie Moore Seymour started the movement when they began holding Bible studies at the home of Richard and Ruth Asberry at 216 N. Bonnie Brae Avenue.<sup>198</sup> The Apostolic Faith Mission founded by this group moved into an abandoned building (demolished) at 312 Azusa Street in present-day Little Tokyo. The meetings that were held there from 1906 to 1915 became

known as the Azusa Street Revival and are considered by historians to be the primary catalyst for the spread of Pentecostalism. A number of churches formed from these roots, including the Church of Christ, Church of God in Christ, and Assemblies of God.<sup>199</sup>

This religious diversification continued into the 1930s, particularly as less affluent black migrants entered the city. Uncomfortable in the middle class mainline churches, newcomers gravitated to the

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<sup>195</sup> E. Frederick Anderson, *The Development of Leadership and Organization Building in the Black Community of Los Angeles From 1900 through World War II* (Century 21 Publications, 1980), 82.

<sup>196</sup> Anderson, *The Development of Leadership*, 81-83; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 52; Engh, “A Multiplicity and Diversity of Faiths: Religion’s Impact on Los Angeles and the Urban West, 1890-1940,” *Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 28 (Winter 1997), 466.

<sup>197</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 111.

<sup>198</sup> History Council, *Sampling the Historic Black Churches of Los Angeles*, 15.

<sup>199</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 115.



many storefront churches proliferating around Central Avenue. Along with other denominations, small Baptist congregations multiplied – by 1936 there were 31 black Baptist churches alone – finding sanctuaries in tents, rented homes, and vacant buildings. Their services were emotional and spontaneous, at cultural odds with the established mainline churches.<sup>200</sup> Some examples of these churches listed in Los Angeles City Directories included the Evergreen Missionary Baptist in a commercial building at 1658 Tarleton Street, the Tabernacle Baptist Church in a residence at 950 Hemlock, and Immanuel Baptist in a residence at 4608 Compton Avenue.<sup>201</sup>



*Ward African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1177 W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street, 2014  
(HistoricPlacesLA)*

Beginning in the late 1930s and increasing in the late 1940s, the African American population of Los Angeles expanded westward as the economic and legal circumstances that restricted where they could live changed for the better. During this period they started to settle areas like Jefferson Park and West Adams, then even farther west into the Crenshaw, Leimert Park, and Baldwin Hills neighborhoods. (For more information on settlement patterns, refer to the Deed Restrictions and Segregation theme.) As the African American

population in these neighborhoods grew, new black churches were founded. Holman United Methodist Church was originally formed in 1945 and called Morgan Chapel. Under the leadership of Rev. Laneau L. White, Holman became one of the most influential black churches in Los Angeles.<sup>202</sup> In 1951, they purchased the former Pepperdine Estate at 3320 W. Adams Boulevard and in 1958 commissioned a sanctuary building by Kenneth Nels Lind. In some cases, existing black churches moved west. For example, the Ward African Methodist Episcopal Church dates back to 1902. From 1920 to 1950, the church was located at 1250 E. 25<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished). In 1951, the church acquired the building at 1177 W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street, which was constructed in 1905 for the Magnolia Avenue Christian Church, a white congregation. The demographic shift in these neighborhoods also meant that churches with primarily white congregations sometimes transformed into interracial or predominately black congregations. St. Brigid

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<sup>200</sup> Bond, “Negro in Los Angeles,” 202-204. In her study of Chicago, Liz Cohen argues that the black church was actually a fragmenting force in the black community, exacerbating schisms by class, especially. “Church membership served as an index to social and economic status, and membership change became part of upward mobility” (*Making a New Deal*, 148). The same might be concluded for Los Angeles, although historians have yet to show this through systematic research.

<sup>201</sup> City Directories, Los Angeles, 1932, 1936.

<sup>202</sup> History Council, *Sampling the Historic Black Churches of Los Angeles*, 54.



Roman Catholic Church at 5214 S. Western Avenue had a predominately white congregation in the 1950s, a mostly African American congregation by the 1980s, and now serves a mixed race congregation that includes Latinos.



*Rev. Hillery T. and Rosa Broadous in front of Calvary Baptist Church of Pacoima, no date (CSUN, San Fernando Valley History Collection)*

Although courts struck down restrictive covenants, other segregation practices continued throughout the postwar period. In the San Fernando Valley, these practices were especially pervasive, making Pacoima one of the only places for African Americans to live in the Valley. In the 1940s and 50s, churches emerged to serve these residents, becoming social “nuclei” for these communities and later a jumping off-point for the fair housing movement in the Valley.<sup>203</sup> One of the best known and most influential of these churches was the Calvary Baptist Church. The Calvary Baptist Church at 12928 Vaughn Street was constructed in 1957. The congregation was established in 1955 by Hillery T. and Rosa L. Broadous. Hillery and Rosa met in 1936, married the next year, and moved to Oregon. After Hillery served in World War II, they moved to the San Fernando Valley, settling in Pacoima. Hillery and Rosa were pillars of the African American community there. They helped found the San

Fernando Valley branch of the NAACP<sup>204</sup>, the Fair Housing Council of the San Fernando Valley, and the San Fernando Inter-Faith Center Council and Joint Venture, which was an organization that gathered federal funding for community projects.<sup>205</sup> In a controversial case, Calvary Baptist Church fought for low-income housing in the Pacoima area, having requested a zoning change for a ten-acre area on Dronfield Avenue, southeast of Van Nuys Boulevard and FHA funding for the project. Opponents to the project suggested that the creation of more low-income housing would “extend the Black ghetto,” while the church argued that low-income families’ needs were not being met.<sup>206</sup> The legacy of the couple lived on in their nine children, many of whom followed their parents’ footsteps in activism and community service and maintaining the positive influence of the Calvary Baptist Church of Pacoima to this day.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Architectural Resources Group, “Historic Resources Survey Report: Arleta-Pacoima Community Plan Area,” *SurveyLA Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey* (Office of Historic Resources, March 2014), 10.

<sup>204</sup> Valerie J. Nelson, “Rosa L. Broadous, 1918-2008: Matriarch of Prominent Baptist Church and Family,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 2008.

<sup>205</sup> “Pacoima Cleric Was Longtime Activist,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1982.

<sup>206</sup> “Housing Proposal Divides Negroes,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 1966, SF1; while the re-zoning request was eventually granted, it is unclear whether the housing project was ever built. “11 to 1 Vote Oks Pacoima Housing Plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 1966, SF8.

<sup>207</sup> Jill Leovy, “William T. Broadous Dies at 71; San Fernando Valley Church Leader and Advocate,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 2016.

Although African American churches were predominantly Protestant, as discussed above, a smaller cross-section of African Americans and African immigrants practice Islam. This community originated with enslaved West African Muslims who were forcibly brought to America as part of the transatlantic slave trade. These Muslims struggled to maintain their cultural and religious practices under the dominion of slaveholders, but many of these customs and practices were lost in the United States.<sup>208</sup> In the early 1900s through the 1920s, attempts were made by immigrant Muslims to introduce Islam to the African American community with some success. However, the spread was minimal, and may have been due to a disconnect between the needs of the community at that time and how the Muslim missionaries presented Islam. Whatever the reason, Islam would not be prevalent in the African American community until the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>209</sup>



*Mourners gather outside Mosque No. 27 for the funeral for Robert Stokes, 1962 (CSUN, Harry Adams Collection)*

In 1930, the Nation of Islam (NOI) was founded in Detroit by Fard Muhammad. His message resonated with African Americans who had been hit especially hard by the Great Depression, and he gained a small following. When Fard disappeared in 1934, Elijah Poole—later Elijah Muhammad became the leader of the budding movement. In 1946, Elijah began to transform the NOI into a Black Nationalist organization that promoted racial separatism and ethnic pride. He and his followers established dozens of mosques—or temples, both terms were used—throughout the United States.<sup>210</sup> By this time the fiery activist Malcolm X had become one of Elijah's primary

missionaries, encouraging African Americans to “do for self,” and advocating for black schools, black institutions, and black-owned businesses, and attracting hundreds of followers. In 1956, Malcolm X established Mosque No. 27 at 5606 S. Broadway in Los Angeles.<sup>211</sup> Mosque (or Temple) No. 27 was the first officially organized Muslim group in Los Angeles.<sup>212</sup> Malcolm X returned to Los Angeles in 1962 to

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<sup>208</sup> Dawn-Marie Gibson, *A History of the Nation of Islam: Race, Islam, and the Quest for Freedom* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2012), 1.

<sup>209</sup> Gibson, 11-12

<sup>210</sup> Edward E. Curtis IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960-1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 2-3.

<sup>211</sup> "The Life of Malcolm X, The Lost and the Found, 1955-1960," The Malcolm X Project at Columbia University, accessed September 9, 2017, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ccbh/mxp/nationofislam.html>

<sup>212</sup> Ron Kelly, “Muslims in Los Angeles,” in *Muslim Communities in North America*, eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 154.

protest police brutality. On April 27<sup>th</sup> of that year Robert Stokes was killed and others were injured in a clash between mosque members and police officers.<sup>213</sup> By 1963, Malcolm X had grown frustrated with Elijah and left the NOI, deciding instead to travel to Mecca and convert to orthodox Islam. Even though many members, like Malcolm X, became disappointed and left the NOI, many more would join in their place as the organization continued to grow in the 1960s and 70s, gaining tens of thousands of followers.<sup>214</sup> Malcolm X was replaced as missionary by Louis Farrakhan, who would later become the national spokesman for the NOI.<sup>215</sup>

The positive aspects of the NOI were continually overshadowed by the organization's extreme stances and inflammatory rhetoric.<sup>216</sup> In the 1960s and 70s, the NOI continued to draw criticism from black and Muslim leaders, including the NAACP and Islamic Center of Washington DC, condemning them and denying them legitimacy within the Islamic faith,<sup>217</sup> and the Southern Poverty Law Center identifies them as a known hate group.<sup>218</sup> After the death of Elijah Muhammad, he was succeeded by his son, Wallace Deen Muhammad, who made attempts to reconcile the NOI with mainstream Islam. Louis Farrakhan, rejected his efforts and created a "resurrected" splinter group of the NOI. Today, Farrakhan is a highly controversial figure, and has come under fire for his hateful statements against groups such as Jews, Catholics, LGBTQ persons, and whites, and for aligning himself with repressive and violent foreign leaders including Muammar Ghadaffi, Robert Mugabe, and Idi Amin.<sup>219</sup> Research indicates that this NOI offshoot is represented by a single storefront in Los Angeles at 8713 S. Vermont Avenue.<sup>220</sup>

In 1975, when Wallace Deen Muhammad steered the original NOI towards Sunni Islam, many NOI members followed his lead, making Masjid Bilal the "first identifiable mainstream Islamic community in the City of Los Angeles." Abdul Kareem Hassan, the current imam, joined the NOI in the 1950s. He quickly rose through the ranks and served as a regional director for the NOI in the 1970s. In 1973, he helped orchestrate the purchase of the former Elks Lodge at 4016 Central Avenue. The building was demolished in the 1980s after suffering earthquake damage, and in 1999 the Center began a three-phase plan to rebuild and expand. The first phase, the Bilal Learning Center, was completed in 2007. Plans and fundraising for phases two and three are underway.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> "Both Sides of Near Riot Story Revealed," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 3, 1962.

<sup>214</sup> Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion*, 3-5.

<sup>215</sup> "Nation of Islam," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed June 19, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/nation-islam>.

<sup>216</sup> "Nation of Islam."

<sup>217</sup> Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion*, 3-5.

<sup>218</sup> "Nation of Islam."

<sup>219</sup> "Nation of Islam."

<sup>220</sup> Kelly, 155.

<sup>221</sup> "About Masjid Bilal Islamic Center," Masjid Bilal Islamic Center, accessed June 19, 2017, <http://www.masjidsbilalonline.com/about-masjid-bilal-islamic-center.html>.

While black churches have a long history of supporting their communities, these roles became especially important during the tumultuous period of the 1960s and 1970s. Numerous congregations were actively involved in civic and political organizations such as the NAACP, while larger or more prosperous congregations with the means made more ambitious efforts to help remedy systemic inequalities, particularly with regard to economic development and housing. Others organized committees or educational programs to inform members of issues that affected their lives and the lives of people in the community, such as the Social Action Committee that was established at Trinity Baptist Church. In 1961, Second Baptist Church sponsored a group of twelve Freedom Riders, who were members of the congregation, on their bus trip to Mississippi.<sup>222</sup> The spacious sanctuary played host to speeches and lectures by renowned intellectuals and activists including Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Coretta Scott King, and Malcolm X.



*Trinity Baptist Church, 2040 W. Jefferson Boulevard, 2017  
(Los Angeles Sentinel)*

Among the prominent religious leaders to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s were Rt. Rev. Bishop H.H. Brookins, Rev. James Lawson, Rev. Cecil Murray, and Rev. Thomas Kilgore, Jr. These men, and others like them, were spiritual leaders inside the church and civic leaders outside the church. They simultaneously served their congregations and championed black empowerment and civil rights in Los Angeles. Brookins was appointed as the pastor of the First AME Church in 1959, and by the time of the Watts uprising in 1965, he was one of the most visible black leaders in the city. He was a co-founder and president of the UCRC, organizer of Rev. King's first Los Angeles appearance, and mentor to Mayor Tom Bradley. Lawson was a leading theoretician and tactician of nonviolence with the Civil Rights movement in the United States. He moved to Los Angeles in 1974 to lead Holman United Methodist Church where he served for 27 years before retiring in 1999. During this time Lawson hosted "Lawson Live," a weekly call-in radio show, where he discussed human and social rights issues. After serving in the Air Force during the Korean War, Murray moved to Southern California to attend the School of Theology at Claremont College. In 1977, he was assigned to the First AME Church as pastor. He transformed the congregation from a few hundred to several thousand members. Going beyond worship services, the church created 40 task forces concerned with health, substance abuse, homelessness, emergency food and clothing, housing, training, and employment. Kilgore was the pastor of the Second Baptist Church from 1963 to 1985. In the early 1960s, Kilgore and about a dozen other prominent African American ministers formed an alliance that was the forerunner of the local chapter of the Southern Christian

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<sup>222</sup> History Council of the California African American Museum, 11-13.

Leadership Conference (SCLC), the only SCLC chapter west of the Rockies. Reaching out beyond the African American community, Kilgore was instrumental in forming a "sister" relationship with the socially progressive Wilshire Boulevard Temple.

Black churches not only provided important spiritual sustenance, but also played an array of social, economic, and political functions. They provided aid to newly arrived migrants to the city, publicized job information, spawned several key social organizations (like the Forum), and provided both meeting space and leadership for the NAACP and Urban League – indeed, ministers often served as regional directors of these organizations. Charlotta Bass recalled, “church was not only a place of worship; it was likewise the social, civic, and political headquarters where people assembled for spiritual guidance, *and* civic analysis, political discussions, and social welfare talks and lectures.”<sup>223</sup> Churches played an important social function as well, a place “to see and to be seen... a great clearinghouse for social gossip,” as one congregant put it.<sup>224</sup>

### **Associated Historic Resources**

The following tables describe designated and potential resources associated with African American religious traditions and institutions. Eligibility Standards address institutional property types including religious buildings and campuses.

#### ***Designated Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Bethlehem Baptist Church	4901 S. Compton Avenue	Completed in 1944 Rudolph M. Schindler, the Bethlehem Baptist Church was a worship space for its African Americans congregants until 1975. It is designated LAHCM #968.

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<sup>223</sup> Bass, *Forty Years*, 21, 13, quoted in Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 116.

<sup>224</sup> Bond, “Negro in Los Angeles,” 219.

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
Crouch Memorial Church of God in Christ	1001 E. 27 <sup>th</sup> Street	During the 1950s, Bishop Samuel M. Crouch acquired this building constructed in 1895 for the Haven Methodist Episcopal Church and converted it into the Crouch Memorial Church of God in Christ. It is listed in the National Register, California Register, and 27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Street HPOZ as a contributing building. However, it was substantially destroyed by a fire in 2013.
Evening Star Missionary Baptist Church	5892 S. Brentwood Street	The Evening Star Missionary Baptist Church was founded in 1932. In 1952, the African American congregation purchased this building constructed in 1928 as Talmud Torah Tifereth Jacob. It is designated LAHCM #1007.
First African Methodist Episcopal Church (Site of)	801 Towne Avenue	Built in 1904, the First African Methodist Episcopal Church worshiped here until 1967. Founded in 1872, it was the first black church of Los Angeles. It is designated LAHCM #71; however, the building was destroyed by fire in 1972.
First AME Zion Cathedral & Community Center	1449 W. Adams Boulevard	First African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) is among the oldest African American churches in Los Angeles. H.M. Patterson designed this building in 1904 for the West Adams Presbyterian Church. AMEZ moved here in 1968. It is listed in the California Register and designated LAHCM #341.



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Resource Name	Location	Comments
Holman United Methodist Church	3320 W. Adams Boulevard	In 1945, the Holman United Methodist Church was organized. In 1951, they purchased the former Pepperdine Estate and in 1958 commissioned a sanctuary building by Kenneth Nels Lind. In 1965, the education building was designed by Clyde Grimes. The property is contributing to the Jefferson Park HPOZ.
McCarty Memorial Christian Church	4101 W. Adams Boulevard	Designed in 1932 by Thomas Barber and Paul Kingsbury, the McCarty Memorial Christian Church became racially integrated in the 1960s. It is listed in the National and California Registers and contributing to the West Adams Terrace HPOZ.
Second Baptist Church	2412 Griffith Avenue	Founded in 1885, Second Baptist Church was the first black Baptist church in Los Angeles. As it grew, it eventually settled at this address in 1924. The building was designed by Paul R. Williams and Norman F. Marsh. It is listed in the National and California Registers and designated LAHCM #200.
St. Phillip the Evangelist Church	2716 S. Stanford Avenue	Established in 1907, St. Phillip's was the first black Episcopal church in Los Angeles. The building was constructed in 1929 and is designated LAHCM #987.
St. Phillip the Evangelist Church Parish Hall	2800 S. Stanford Avenue	Built in 1961, this parish hall was constructed after St. Phillip's transitioned from a mission to a parish. It designated LAHCM #988.

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
Trinity Baptist Church	2040 W. Jefferson Boulevard	Trinity Baptist Church grew from a Sunday School that began in 1917. In 1948, the congregation moved to this location and in 1964 a new sanctuary building was designed by Paul R. Williams. It is contributing to the Jefferson Park HPOZ.
Westminster Presbyterian Church	2230 W. Jefferson Boulevard	Founded in 1904, Westminster Presbyterian Church was the first black Presbyterian church in Los Angeles. In 1949, the congregation moved to this building constructed in 1931 as St. Paul's Presbyterian Church. It is designated LAHCM #229 and contributing to the Jefferson Park HPOZ.

***Potential Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Asberry Residence	216 N. Bonnie Brae Street	This is where Rev. William J. Seymour and his wife held small prayer meetings. These meetings at Richard and Ruth Asberry's residence grew in numbers and believers, until they decided to find a larger place.
Calvary Baptist Church of Pacoima	12928 Vaughn Street	Rev. Hillery T. and Rosa L. Broadous moved to Pacoima in 1946. In 1955, the couple founded this church that provided a place for African Americans and Latinos to worship.
Cochran Avenue Baptist Church Campus	1304 S. Cochran Avenue	Founded in 1928, Cochran Avenue Baptist Church is one of the only African American churches in the Mid-Wilshire area.

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
First African Methodist Episcopal Church	2270 S. Harvard Boulevard	Designed by Paul R. Williams, the church was constructed by 1968 to accommodate the growing number of members of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church.
Hamilton United Methodist Church #1	1380 E. 18 <sup>th</sup> Street	Founded in 1904, this was the home of Hamilton United Methodist Church from 1919 to 1953. It may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
Hamilton United Methodist Church #2	6400 S. Figueroa Street	In 1953, the congregation purchased an existing campus. James H. Garrott redesigned the buildings between 1955 and 1958.
Mount Carmel Missionary Baptist Church	3064 E. 1 <sup>st</sup> Street	This property was occupied by Mount Olive, described in the 1925 City Directory as a “colored” church. In 1935, the Mount Carmel Missionary Baptist Church had the existing building constructed. It was the spiritual center for African Americans living in Boyle Heights.
Grant African Methodist Episcopal Church	10403 S. Central Avenue	Founded in 1906, Grant African Methodist Episcopal Church moved to this location in 1954.
Second African Methodist Episcopal Church	5500 S. Hoover Avenue	Founded in 1908, the Second African Methodist Episcopal Church was originally located in the Furlong Tract. This building was designed by Edith Northman in 1934 as the Sephardic Hebrew Center. In 1958, it was purchased by the Second African Methodist Episcopal Church.

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
St. Brigid Roman Catholic Church	5214 S. Western Avenue	During the 1960s, the congregation of this Catholic church shifted from white to black. In 1979, the first African American priest under the Josephite Father's organization, Father William L. Norvel, was appointed pastor.
St. John's United Methodist Church	1715 Santa Ana Boulevard	This building was constructed as Mexican Methodist Episcopal Church in 1930. By the 1950s it was the home of St. John's United Methodist Church, which has been serving the community of Watts since 1925.
St. Odilia Roman Catholic Church	5222 Hooper Avenue	St. Odilia's was opened in 1927 as a "negro" church. The Society of African Mission (SMA) Fathers staffed the parish until 1992, when the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement took over. Today the congregation is primarily Latino.
St. Paul's Baptist Church	110 W. 49 <sup>th</sup> Street	Founded in 1907, St. Paul's Baptist Church moved to this building designed by Jonathan H. Fleming and William Ainley in 1951. Rev. John Branham arrived in 1946 and instilled a gospel music ministry represented by the Echoes of Eden Choir.
St. Victor's Hall	1207 E. 16 <sup>th</sup> Street	In 1923, this building was established as the first Catholic mission for African Americans. It was rededicated as the St. Turibius Roman Catholic Church. It was eclipsed by St. Odilia's parish, a larger builder further south on Hooper Avenue.

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
Victory Baptist Church	4800 S. McKinley Avenue	Established in 1943, Victory Baptist Church was well known for its gospel choir in the 1950s, and hosted many civil rights fundraising events in the 1960s.
Ward African Methodist Episcopal Church	1177 W. 25 <sup>th</sup> Street	This building was constructed in 1905 for the Magnolia Avenue Christian Church. It was acquired by Ward African Methodist Episcopal in 1951.
Wesley United Methodist Church	112 W. 52 <sup>nd</sup> Street	Wesley United Methodist Church was established in 1888 in Texas. Known as the "church on wheels," the congregation purchased an existing church constructed in 1910. A new large sanctuary and chapel was constructed in front of it in 1955.
Nation of Islam Mosque No. 27	5606 S. Broadway	Opened in 1954, Mosque No. 27 was the first public place of worship for Muslims in Los Angeles. In 1971, the Nation of Islam relocated to Vermont Avenue.

**Theme: Religion and Spirituality and Ethnic/Cultural Associations**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage, religion, and/or social history for its association with the African American community. Churches represented spaces of racial autonomy and freedom, where blacks could worship in their own spaces and according to their own traditions. They also represented springboards for community leadership, as well as centers of social life, business networks, and civil rights activism.

**Period of Significance:** 1869 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1869 with the establishment of the First AME Church, the oldest black congregation in Los Angeles. However, the earliest extant religious buildings in Los Angeles date to the 1920s, when congregations constructed churches along the Central Avenue corridor. The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Throughout Los Angeles, but particularly in areas historically associated with the African American community including South Los Angeles, West Adams Baldwin Hills, and Leimert Park. Isolated examples are located in Mid-City and Pacoima.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Religion, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A/B CR: 1/2 Local: 1/2

**Associated Property Types:** Institutional – Religious Building and Religious Campus

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include individual buildings as well as campuses with multiple buildings.

**Property Type Significance:** Religious buildings and campuses were often the spiritual, social, and cultural center of the black community. These buildings may be associated with individual leaders as well as groups of individuals who collectively contributed to the religious life of the black community.



**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Represents an important association with the African American community in Los Angeles
- Under Criterion B, individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to the history of religion
- Under Criterion B, directly associated with the productive life of the person who made important contributions to the history of religion

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

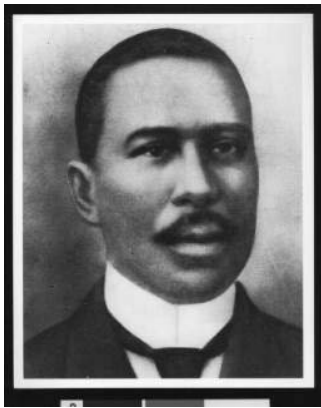
- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- As a whole, retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance (for campuses)
- Under Criterion B, the individual must have resided in or used the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- May be important for its association with numerous historic personages for the cumulative importance of those individuals to the community
- May reflect the changing demographics of a Los Angeles neighborhood
- May represent a significant event or movement in the social history of Los Angeles
- May also be a significant example of an architectural style and/or the work of a noted architect/designer
- For National Register, properties must meet Criteria Consideration A
- For National Register, properties associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, Design, and Association from the period of significance
- Under Criterion B, integrity is based on the period during which the significant person occupied the property
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed

**THEME: NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLISHING, 1879 - 1980**

Black newspapers were instrumental in fostering “community consciousness,” in the words of Charlotta Bass, editor of the *California Eagle*. They accomplished this by publicizing social events, supporting black businesses, and most importantly reporting on civil rights issues. They were race conscious in their articles and editorials, openly advocating for the rights of African Americans and often spearheading local civil rights campaigns. Indeed, African American papers became civil rights players in their own right. As Josh Sides notes, “the black press of Los Angeles played a crucial role in politicizing its readers [and]... prodded their readerships to challenge racial discrimination.”<sup>225</sup> The two most significant black newspapers were the *California Eagle* and the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, which had the longest runs and deepest impacts in Los Angeles. It took time for black journalism in Los Angeles to settle into this role after a brief, contentious beginning.



John J. Neimore, circa 1910  
(USC Digital Archive)

The early years of L.A.’s black press were marked by bitter, partisan sniping among rival editors, as well as the rise of John J. Neimore, arguably the founder of black journalism in Los Angeles. The earliest black newspapers appeared in the late 1870s and 1880s and were all short-lived. The first black paper in Los Angeles was the *Owl*, established in 1879 by Neimore, a former slave who had migrated from Texas. Although it folded in short order, he regrouped with partners to form the city’s second black paper, the *Weekly Observer*, which appeared in March 1888 in the midst of the region’s land boom. Headed by Neimore, Thomas Pearson, and William Sampson, this paper’s masthead read “Our Liberty We Prize, Our Rights We Will Maintain.”<sup>226</sup> It lasted less than a year, quite likely because of political differences among its three founders. They soon parted ways. Neimore began a third newspaper, the *Advocate* in late 1888, while Sampson took full control over the *Weekly Observer*, renaming it the *Western News* by 1889. These early papers did little to advance unity in the fledgling black community as they waged ruthless mudslinging campaigns against each other, goaded on by the local political parties. By 1890, all of these newspapers had folded.<sup>227</sup>

By 1900 the black press in Los Angeles had taken a more respectable turn. Neimore persisted in the field and eventually became a major voice among local African American papers as well as the growing black community. In 1892, he formed the *Southern California Guide*, which had a three-year run, and soon thereafter launched the *Eagle*, a weekly newspaper that would have a long, influential life in Los Angeles. Neimore served as editor and general manager of the *Eagle* for nearly 17 years until his death in 1912. He was a Republican, who advocated passionately for the rights and interests of African

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<sup>225</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 30.

<sup>226</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 104.

<sup>227</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 104-106.

Americans. Neimore also reflected middle class, Baptist sensibilities, evident for example in his 1903 campaign against vice among the black-owned clubs along the Brick Block and his call for more respectable black businesses. In this orientation, Neimore was an exemplar of the black middle class in Los Angeles in both his outlook and leadership in the community. Neimore was elected to the Afro-American Council, the first notable civil rights group in Los Angeles, and was an early, active member of Second Baptist Church.<sup>228</sup>



*Charlotta Bass with a group of businessmen standing in front of the offices of the California Eagle, circa 1935 (USC Digital Archive)*

By 1911 Neimore's health was in decline. That year he hired Charlotta Spear, a recent arrival from Rhode Island, to work part time soliciting subscriptions and doing odd jobs. Neimore mentored her in the workings of a newspaper for African American consumers, emphasizing the importance of political activism, racial advocacy, and the urgent need to defend and expand the rights of African Americans. In 1912, on his deathbed, Neimore turned control of the *Eagle* over to Spear, who would run the newspaper for the next 40 years. Joe Bass, a Midwesterner with years of experience in newspapers and Republican Party politics, joined the *Eagle* in 1913

as a reporter soon after arriving in Los Angeles. He became editor in 1914 when he married Charlotta, working in partnership with her for the next 20 years. They renamed the newspaper the *California Eagle*. Joe Bass died in 1934, leaving Charlotta to run the paper solo until the early 1950s. She sold the paper in 1952 to Loren Miller who ran it until he became a judge in 1964, when he sold it to other parties and it folded.<sup>229</sup>

Through its run, the *Eagle*, covered news of interest to African Americans from the local to the national, advocating strongly for civil rights and speaking out against racial injustice. While the *Eagle* reported on local community news, such as business openings, church activities, clubs, and social events, it gave prominence to coverage of politics, economics, and civil rights. It essentially followed the conventions of African American papers across the country. The *Eagle* reflected the outlooks of its editors over time, shifting its political leanings somewhat as control of the paper changed hands. Neimore articulated the paper's mission when he described it – and all African American papers in the West – as the new Underground Railroad, leading blacks to freedom. The Besses shared the sentiment, fully embracing the paper's role as an agent of black rights and unity. While Joe Bass was a loyal Republican for most of his

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<sup>228</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 27, 111, 119, 131; Charlotta Bass, *Forty Years: Memoirs from the Pages of a Newspaper* (Los Angeles CA: California Eagle Press, 1960), 12.

<sup>229</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 26-33, 104-109; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 148.

life, Charlotta Bass began as Republican but shifted leftward over the years.<sup>230</sup> The *Eagle* was a tireless advocate for civil rights, railing against restrictive covenants, job discrimination, and police harassment, while reporting regularly on stories of discrimination and injustice perpetrated against African Americans. It also celebrated the accomplishments of the black community by boosting local businesses, institutions, and activist groups. Under Loren Miller's leadership, the *Eagle* especially targeted job discrimination in the police and fire departments, police brutality, and persistent housing discrimination.<sup>231</sup>

At the same time the *Eagle* emerged in Los Angeles, another notable African American publication appeared – the *Liberator*, which ran from 1900 to 1914. It was established by Jefferson Lewis Edmonds, a former slave from Mississippi who had migrated to Los Angeles in the 1880s. Edmonds had been educated in Freedmen's Bureau schools in Mississippi and came to embrace progressive Republican ideology. About a decade after arriving in Los Angeles with his family, he formed the *Liberator* as a monthly magazine that trumpeted the cause of civil rights and "good government." He was an outspoken editor, criticizing both the black and white powers of Los Angeles when he saw the need, while still maintaining their respect. The *Liberator* transitioned to a weekly by 1911 and ceased operations in 1914 when Edmonds died.<sup>232</sup>

Another significant African American owned newspaper in this period was the *New Age*, whose run in Los Angeles lasted from 1912 to 1948. It was established by Oscar Hudson who ran a publication of the same name in Albuquerque. When he migrated to Los Angeles in 1907, he brought the paper with him. Hudson went on to become a lawyer – the first African American elected to a California bar association – and U.S. Consul to Liberia from 1917 to 1923. Hudson sold the *New Age* to Frederick Madison Roberts<sup>233</sup> in 1912, whose editorial leadership soon made the paper a solid fixture in the community. He described the *New Age* as a "Journal for Community Interests and Race Welfare" and introduced a new masthead with an African American Lady Liberty presiding over a panoramic view of Los Angeles. Under his editorship, the *New Age* vigorously advocated for civil rights and denounced racism, taking aim at such targets as the *Los Angeles Times* and Anheuser Busch for their racist portraits of blacks. Roberts was elected to the state legislature in 1918, which had a tempering effect on his editorials, but the paper remained a voice for racial equality. While his longtime residence on Jefferson Boulevard has been demolished, the Fred Roberts Recreation Center at 4700 Honduras Street is named in his honor.

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<sup>230</sup> Alonzo Smith, "Charlotta Bass," Black Past.org, accessed March 13, 2017, <http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/bass-charlotta-1879-1969>.

<sup>231</sup> Flaming, *Bound for Freedom*, 26-33, 104-109; "Charlotta Bass," PBS, accessed March 13, 2017, [http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/news\\_bios/bass.html](http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/news_bios/bass.html)

<sup>232</sup> Lonnie Bunch, "Jefferson L. Edmonds, Black Propagandist of the California Dream," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 129-44.

<sup>233</sup> Roberts was the great grandson of Sally Hemings and is believed to be the great grandson of President Thomas Jefferson. For more information about his career as a politician see the Civil Rights Theme.

More influential still was the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the brainchild of Leon H. Washington, Jr. This newspaper was established in 1933 and has continued operating since. Hailing from Kansas, Washington arrived in Los Angeles in 1930 at age 23, and worked at a few minor papers before joining the *Eagle* as an advertising salesman. He struck out on his own to form the *Sentinel* in 1933, with financial backing from his cousin Loren Miller. At first he operated out of his home on E. Vernon Avenue, but by 1939 he had an office at 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and Central Avenue (demolished). Washington was an astute businessman, which helped assure the paper's financial success and longevity. Doug Flamming calls the *Sentinel* "easily the most sophisticated race paper ever offered to the community."<sup>234</sup> Fay Jackson and Loren Miller joined the staff in the 1930s, lending the energy of a newer generation of black leadership.



*The staff of the Sentinel standing in front of their offices, 1933  
(Los Angeles Sentinel)*

The *Sentinel* was a robust force in the community, offering extensive coverage of local news, railing against racism and discrimination, and spearheading activism in its own right. Washington vigorously promoted the "Don't Spend Where You Can't Work" campaign during the Great Depression, part of a national protest movement that boycotted businesses that refused to hire African Americans. Washington organized pickets of numerous businesses on Central Avenue that refused to hire black workers. To stifle the community's efforts, an anti-picketing ordinance was proposed and adopted in 1938.<sup>235</sup> When Washington nonetheless picketed the Avalon Market he was

arrested. Loren Miller defended him in court and succeeded in having the case dismissed and the ordinance invalidated as unconstitutional.<sup>236</sup> Washington was a staunch Democrat, and vigorously supported both black and white candidates of the Party. The *Sentinel* grew to become the largest black-owned newspaper in the West. In 1972, it reached a peak circulation of 39,277.<sup>237</sup> Washington served as the publisher until his death in 1974. In the 1980s, the paper finally moved from Central Avenue to a new building on Crenshaw Boulevard. Washington's wife Ruth, who worked as a photographer for the paper as well as the business manager, assumed the role of editor and publisher until her death in 1990.

Newspapers like the *Eagle* and the *Sentinel* were also important in supporting the careers of black journalists and photographers like Fay Jackson, Almema Lomax, and Charles Williams. Jackson founded two short-lived publications, the *Flash* and the *California News*, but found her greatest success as a

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<sup>234</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 303.

<sup>235</sup> "Anti-Picket Law Rapped by Publisher, Measure on September 17 Ballot Would Cripple Job Drive," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 28, 1938.

<sup>236</sup> "Picket Law Held Void," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 20, 1939.

<sup>237</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 303; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 30; *Sentinel* 50, April 14, 1983.

writer for the Associated Negro Press. Her column appeared in 216 black newspapers across the U.S.<sup>238</sup> Lomax went to work for the *Eagle* in 1938. In 1940, she left to host a radio news program and in 1941, she started her own publication, the *Herald Tribune*. Lomax quickly earned distinction for her newspaper. In 1946, she won the Wendell L. Willkie Award for Negro Journalism with a provocative story challenging the stereotype of black men's sexual prowess. Fiercely independent, in 1959, she closed the paper, divorced her husband, and moved her six children to Tuskegee, Alabama to be closer to the front line of the Civil Rights movement. Later she became a copy editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle* and a reporter at the *San Francisco Examiner*.<sup>239</sup> Charles Williams was a freelance photographer who worked for the *Eagle*, the *Sentinel*, and other publications. His career was interrupted during World War II because he moved to be near his wife, Yoshi Kuwahara, who was placed in a Japanese internment camp. Upon their return to Los Angeles, Williams began his wide-ranging coverage of the African American community including civil rights, churches, politics, social activities, nightclubs, and celebrities. Williams also established the California School of Photography and gave many aspiring photographers, including Harry Adams, their start.<sup>240</sup> Later he became a field deputy of Councilman Gordon Hahn.

Before the 1970s, very few white publications hired black journalists or photographers. An exception to the rule was Chester L. Washington who became the first African American writer for the *Los Angeles Mirror* in 1949. He covered the Superior Court.<sup>241</sup> The *Mirror* was launched as an afternoon paper by the *Los Angeles Times* in 1948. When it ceased publication in 1962, Washington went to work for the *Sentinel*. Four years later, he began his publishing career by purchasing the *Central News* and *Southwest News*, two weeklies. Over the course of several years, Washington purchased a number of additional papers to create Central News-Wave Publications. By the 1980s mainstream newspapers started recruiting black journalists. More black readers turned to white publications because of the presence of black writers, causing a decrease in the number of black-owned newspapers. Today, the tradition of the black press in Los Angeles continues with the *Sentinel*, *LA Watts Times*, and *Wave*.

### **Associated Historic Resources**

The following tables describe designated and potential resources associated with African American newspapers as well as individuals who played important roles in the black press. Eligibility Standards address residential and commercial property types, although very few resources appear to remain. All of the aforementioned newspapers and individuals were researched to identify potential resources. In some cases none were found and in other cases the properties identified have been demolished. The

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<sup>238</sup> Penelope McMillian, "Granddaughter Keeps Memory of Pioneering Black Journalist Vivid," *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1988.

<sup>239</sup> Elaine Woo, "L.A. Journalist, civil rights activist," *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2011; "Almena Lomax," Black Past.org, accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/lomax-almena-1915-2011>

<sup>240</sup> "Charles Williams," *Negro Who's Who in California*, 1948, 64.

<sup>241</sup> Pamela Newkirk, *Within the Veil: Black Journalists, White Media* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000), 59.



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present location of the *Los Angeles Sentinel* is 3800 Crenshaw Boulevard, but the building was not constructed until 1988. Almena Lomax and Leon Washington Jr. lived in Pasadena.

### ***Designated Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Bass, Joseph and Charlotta House	697 E. 52 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Joseph (1863-1934) and Charlotta (1874-1969) Bass were co-editors and publishers of the California Eagle. Joseph died in the early 1930s, and Charlotta continued to manage it until 1951. Her later years were devoted to politics. The Basses lived in this house from 1930 to 1945. It is listed in the National and California Registers as a contributor to the 52 <sup>nd</sup> Place Historic District, which is also an HPOZ.

### ***Potential Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
<i>California Eagle</i> Offices	4071-75 Central Avenue	The <i>California Eagle</i> , the oldest African American newspaper in Los Angeles traces its origins to 1879, when John J. Neimore, a Texan, started the paper. It was first known as <i>The Owl</i> , later to become the <i>Eagle</i> , and when Charlotta Bass took over, the <i>California Eagle</i> . The newspaper was located in this building from approximately 1939 to 1942.
<i>Herald Dispatch</i> Offices	1431 Jefferson Boulevard	At this location from at least 1957 to 1963. Founded in 1952 by Sanford and Pat Alexander, the <i>Herald Dispatch</i> featured the columns "Mr. Muhammad Speaks" by Elijah Muhammad and "God's Angry Men" by Malcolm X. It was

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
		published as a daily until 1977 and as weekly until 1981.
Jackson, Fay Residence	1454 W. 36 <sup>th</sup> Street	Jackson (1902-1988) founded <i>Flash</i> in the late 1920s, the first black news magazine on the West Coast, and during the 1930s she became the first black Hollywood correspondent with the Associated Negro Press (ANP). She lived in this house with other members of her family from at least 1930 to 1940.
	1325 S. Van Ness Avenue	Jackson lived in this house from the 1950s until her death in 1979.
Miller, Loren Residence	647 N. Micheltorena Street	Although best known as a civil rights attorney, Miller (1903-1967) was a writer for the <i>Los Angeles Sentinel</i> in the 1930s, and the publisher of the <i>California Eagle</i> from 1952 to 1964. He lived in this house in Silver Lake from 1940 until his death in 1967.

**Theme: Important Events in Newspapers and Publishing**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage communications and/or for its association with African American newspapers. The black press was the independent voice of the African American community in Los Angeles. African American newspapers helped blacks adjust to life in Los Angeles during the period of overt discrimination and segregation and played an instrumental role in the Civil Rights movement.

**Period of Significance:** 1879 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1879 when John J. Neimore established the *Owl*, the first black newspaper in Los Angeles. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in Southeast Los Angeles.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Communications, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

**Associated Property Types:** Commercial - Retail Building and Office Building

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include commercial buildings that were used by newspapers and publishing companies. The facilities may or may not have been purpose built.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with important developments in the history of the black press in Los Angeles.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Was the founding or long-term location of a publication significant to the black press

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential physical features from the period of significance
- Publication may be located in a building designed for another use
- Publication must have occupied the property for a significant period in its history, if it is not the founding location
- For National Register, properties associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, Design, and Association from the period of significance
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant publication occupied the property
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed

**Theme: Important Persons in Newspapers and Publishing**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage, communications, and/or social history for its association with important members of the black press. African American publishers, editors, journalists, and photographers served as the voice of the community. African American publishers often used their newspapers to further the political agenda of the black community, both nationally and locally.

**Period of Significance:** 1879 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1879 when John J. Neimore established the *Owl*, the first black newspaper in Los Angeles. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in Southeast Los Angeles.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Communications, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: B CR: 2 Local: 2

**Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence  
Commercial - Retail Building and Office Building

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include the residences or offices of prominent members of the black press.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with persons who played an important role in the history of the black press.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to the history of the black press
- Directly associated with the productive life of the person who made important contributions to the history of the black press

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- The individual must have resided in or used the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- For the National Register, properties associated with individuals whose significant accomplishments date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional significance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant person occupied the property
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed



**THEME: SOCIAL CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS, 1885 - 1980**

African American social clubs and organizations in Los Angeles fostered a sense of community identity and pride. As is the case with other ethnic and racial groups, the social life of black Angelenos was organized around gender, age, recreational pursuits, sexual orientation, and shared educational or religious backgrounds. Because of exclusionary practices by whites, members of the African American community often formed their own clubs, establishing separate chapters of national white clubs as well as distinct local organizations. The clubs founded by black Angelenos ranged from purely recreational golf clubs to groups with strong civil rights agendas focused on improving conditions and elevating the African American community.<sup>242</sup>

In the early years of African American settlement in Los Angeles, many African American women opened their homes to newly arriving migrants, establishing private networks that helped people secure food, housing, and employment, and make social connections. Early settlers such as Bridget Mason and Winnie Owens established this tradition of combining mutual aid, entrepreneurship, and social networks. By the 1870s, several other African American women owned and operated small boardinghouses in the city (known buildings have been demolished).<sup>243</sup> The boardinghouses were not explicitly understood as social clubs, but were significant to the community because they established a tradition of uniting socially around a place and not, at first, dividing along lines of class, gender, and education. Restaurants remained popular informal gathering places for the community. La Republica Tea Room (1710 Central Avenue, demolished) was a center of social activity through the 1920s. Social stratification within the African American community of Los Angeles occurred much later than other cities with black populations of a similar size.<sup>244</sup>

The African American community of Los Angeles began forming traditional social clubs like those found in eastern cities in the late nineteenth century. In the early years, African American clubs did not have dedicated buildings. The community was small and generally located Downtown. Meetings and events were held in residences, churches, or rented spaces. By the 1910s, clubs and organizations began to construct buildings, which were often shared. Numerous clubs and lodges rented space in the Odd Fellows Hall (7<sup>th</sup> and Wall Streets, demolished), as well as the upper floor of Scott Hall, which contained a large ballroom (6<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue, demolished).

Organizations and clubs in the African American community provided a critical method of civic engagement. Participation in the organizational structure of many clubs created a leadership class within the black community. Clubs also provided outlets for differing racial philosophies, from the Booker T. Washington school of practical self-help found in the Sojourner Truth Industrial Club, founded

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<sup>242</sup> Nina Mjagkij, *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003).

<sup>243</sup> Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles*, 75.

<sup>244</sup> Stanford, *African Americans in Los Angeles*, 37.

in 1904, to the W.E.B. Du Bois concept of equal rights and integration found in the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP, founded in 1913. While the dominance and importance of these individual groups ebbed over time, their collective presence provided critical organizational resources for the civil rights and electoral battles of the mid-twentieth century. The influence of these groups is discussed throughout this context, but especially in the Civil Rights theme where their role in the social life of the community is discussed.

### **Fraternal Organizations and Female Auxiliaries**

Fraternal organizations with social and charitable objectives were among the first clubs established in Los Angeles during the late nineteenth century. Hundreds of local chapters from over 50 nationwide fraternal and public service organizations were established across Los Angeles County by the end of the 1920s.<sup>245</sup> Membership in fraternal organizations surged following World War I, as newcomers arrived in Los Angeles, and declined drastically by the 1960s. The majority of these organizations had auxiliary organizations that were open to female family members of male members.

In Los Angeles, numerous “colored chapters” of national benevolent and fraternal orders were established by the early 1900s.<sup>246</sup> From the 1910s through early 1940s, most of these groups met at 1209 Central Avenue (demolished).<sup>247</sup> These orders promoted morality, charity, and community service among their membership. Their charitable activities included civic improvement projects, social services, and public celebrations that enriched the surrounding community. Each of these organizations aimed to help the African American community in different ways. The True Reformers, for example, promoted the growth of African American-owned business enterprises. Other fraternal orders were part of international benevolent associations with long histories of African American chapters. In addition to a social gathering component, these groups covered the costs of a burial and ensured members’ families would be cared for after the members’ death.

The Odd Fellows was one of the earliest fraternal organizations with an African American chapter in Los Angeles. The organization originated in eighteenth century England. It was religiously and politically independent, but advocated for civil liberties. The local black chapter was founded in the 1880s. In 1885, the group purchased property on Wall Street between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets and eventually built a two-story brick building. The group contracted a member to build the bricks and other members to build the building.<sup>248</sup> The Household of Ruth, a female auxiliary of the Odd Fellows, was founded on June 20, 1888, and boasted 72 members by 1909.

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<sup>245</sup> Los Angeles City and County Directory (1929).

<sup>246</sup> Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles*, 180.

<sup>247</sup> *Los Angeles Negro City Directory* (1930-31), 133.

<sup>248</sup> Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles*, 180.

<b>Eastern Star</b> (Colored)
Affectionate Chapter No. 16 meets 4th Thursday evening 1209 S Central av
Deborah Chapter No 13 meets 2d and 4th Friday afternoons 1209 S Central av
Electra Chapter No 3 meets 2d and 4th Tuesday afternoons 1209 S Central av Mrs Dora Gamble sec.
Queen of Sheba Chapter No 7 meets 1st and 3d Tuesday afternoons 1209 S Central av Mrs Adah Barnes sec.
<b>Colored Lodges</b>
Egyptian Temple Mystic Shrine, meets 2d Saturdays at 1209 S Central av.
Egyptian Court No 5, meets 4th Thursday evening at 1209 S Central av Mrs W L Willingham sec.
B F Talbot Lodge No 8, meets 2d and 4th Tuesdays at 1209 S Central av, Thos A Skinner sec.
Angel City Lodge No 18, meets 1st and 3d Fridays at 1209 S Central av, H W Markham sec.
Delta Lodge No 21, meets 2d and 4th Fridays at 1209 S Central av, Paul E Brown sec.
Holland Lodge No 2 meets 1st and 3d Mondays at 1209 S Central av, Wm Martin sec.
Los Angeles Consistory No 26, (Scottish Rite) meets 3d Saturdays at 1209 S Central av, L G Dandridge sec.
St Johns Lodge No 6, meets 1st and 3d Tuesdays of each month at 1209 S Central av, T A Harris sec.

*List of African American lodges in Los Angeles City Directory, 1922. Note that all groups met at 1209 S. Central Avenue (demolished)*

African Americans in Los Angeles established branches of the Freemasons and Foresters during the early 1900s. The Ancient Order of Foresters, originally a British organization, opened to African Americans in the United States in the 1890s. The organization was known for its medical benefits, providing its own doctors and medicine for the sick. It also paid a death benefit of \$75 for burial. The first Foresters branch in Los Angeles was Court Solomon #8677, founded in 1897. A masonic lodge was established in Los Angeles in 1853. Widespread racism excluded African Americans from many masonic lodges across the United States, including the lodge in Los Angeles. African Americans established separate Freemason lodges that were often called Prince Hall lodges after Prince Hall, one of the first African American Master Masons.<sup>249</sup> The first African American masonic lodge in Los Angeles was Saint John Lodge 16 (later changed to 5), established in 1887.<sup>250</sup> The Freemasons and Foresters had women's branches. The two African

American women's branches of the Freemasons, organized under the Eastern Star women's auxiliary, were called the Queen of Sheeba, founded in 1904, and the Electa #5 (founding date unknown). The women's group of the Foresters was the Pride of the West Circe #207, founded in 1900. Many of these organizations met at 1209 S. Central Avenue (demolished) until the 1920s.

In 1924, the Prince Hall Masons of Los Angeles constructed the Prince Hall Masonic Temple just off Central Avenue at 1050-1055 E. 50<sup>th</sup> Street (listed in the National Register). Several chapters of the Order of the Eastern Star also met at the Prince Hall Masonic Temple. The construction of the building at this location reflected the movement of the African American community south along the Central Avenue corridor. Several other club buildings were constructed by the African American community in this area in the 1920s.

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<sup>249</sup> On March 6, 1775, Prince Hall and 14 other African American men were made Master Masons of Irish Constitution Military Lodge No. 441 in Boston, Massachusetts. When the Military Lodge left the area, the men were given the authority to meet as a lodge and conduct Masonic funerals, but not to confer degrees or do other Masonic work. The 15 men applied for and obtained a Warrant for Charter from the Grand Lodge of England in 1784 and formed African Lodge #459. This led to a tradition of separate, predominantly African American masonic lodges in North America. Collectively, the practice of these separate, African American lodges is known as Prince Hall Freemasonry. Many Grand Lodges refused to recognize the Prince Hall Lodges and Prince Hall Masons in their territory as legitimate.

<sup>250</sup> "History of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of California, Inc. 1855-2005," January 2002, accessed June 21, 2017. <http://mwphglcal.org/images/forms/GLHistoryCal.pdf>.

Early and prominent clubs associated with the African American community in Los Angeles included:

- Elks (est. 1906)<sup>251</sup>
- Foresters (est. 1897)
- Freemasons (est. 1887)<sup>252</sup>
- Knights of Pythias (est. 1901)
- Odd Fellows (est. 1885)
- True Reformers (est. unknown)
- Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor (est. unknown)
- United Brothers of Friendship (est. 1888)



*Group photo of King Solomon Lodge No. 28, an African American Masonic order chapter, 1955 (CSUN, Tom and Ethel Bradley Center)*

### **Women's Clubs**

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Los Angeles has had a large women's club movement. Local black women's organizations grew out of churches, mutual aid societies, and literary clubs. Many of these clubs were united under the umbrella of the California Association of Colored Women's Clubs (CWC), founded in 1903. As Douglas Flamming explained, "The CWC offered women a source of power, and an arena for service, that was unmatched by mixed-gender organizations."<sup>253</sup> The CWC was eventually affiliated with the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), a national coalition of women's clubs founded in 1896. The NACW was part of the wider reform movement of the late nineteenth century; the organization formed in response to heightened racism, a need for social services within the black community, and exclusionary policies of many white-run organizations, including white women's clubs.<sup>254</sup> While black and white women's clubs had similar missions and activities, they operated separately. Racial tensions ran high among white women's clubs in the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1902, the all-white National Federation of Women's Clubs held their biannual convention in Los Angeles. The attendance of black women's clubs at the convention was debated in several *Los Angeles Times* editorials; ultimately, African American women were excluded from the convention despite their widespread embrace of the club movement.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Paul R. Williams designed the Golden State Lodge for the Order of the Elks in 1930. The building has since been demolished.

<sup>252</sup> Some of these Freemason lodges were: Saint John Lodge (est. 1887), Prince Hall (est. 1901), John G. Jones Shriners (est. unknown), Golden Rule Lodge (est. unknown), King Solomon Lodge No. 28 (est. unknown), and Mt. Calvary Grand Lodge (est. c. 1928).

<sup>253</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 141.

<sup>254</sup> Jenna Snow, *Historic Preservation Consulting, Historical Resource Assessment: 1209 East 6th Avenue, Los Angeles, California* (Los Angeles, CA: March 16, 2016), 18.

<sup>255</sup> Snow, 17.

Black women were enormously influential, organizing clubs to address every area of life, from home to politics.<sup>256</sup> Following a nationwide trend, the organization of clubs grew to cope with community problems. By 1910, in proportion to the population, black women had developed at least as many, possibly more, voluntary associations than had their white counterparts.<sup>257</sup> When the NAACP got underway, various observers remarked that most of its local work was performed by women.<sup>258</sup> By the end of 1910, there were around 20 black women's clubs in Los Angeles, most affiliated with the CWC. These women's clubs provided a political outlet for women, since many of the earliest black civil rights organizations were limited to men, and women could not vote in California until 1911. Reinforcing segregation of black and white women's clubs, the 1930 *Los Angeles City Directory* does not include any of the above women's clubs and the meeting locations for many black women's clubs could not be determined.

Black women's clubs in Los Angeles promoted a unique combination of culturally conservative ideals – such as morality and motherhood – and political activism in the cause of civil rights. In the early 1900s, the Sojourner Truth Club of Los Angeles, affiliated with the CWC, was among the most notable of these organizations. Sojourner Truth Clubs, with a mission to sponsor the social and moral uplift of the community, were established by African American women across the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Sojourner Truth Club of Los Angeles organized the Sojourner Truth Industrial Home and the Day Nursery of Los Angeles (1119 E. Adams Boulevard; later at 1780 Crenshaw Boulevard) in 1913 with financial backing from black churches. The home provided lodging and training for unmarried African American women. The Day Nursery, as the name indicates, also provided a day care center for hundreds of children every month so their mothers could stay employed. This was the first collective effort undertaken by a black women's club in Southern California to provide living quarters and job training for unmarried women and single mothers.<sup>259</sup>



*Eva Carter Buckner was a poet and local suffrage leader who wrote many club songs and took an early leadership role in the initial membership drives of the NAACP in Los Angeles (The Negro Trailblazers of California)*

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<sup>256</sup> Some early African American women's clubs in Los Angeles included the Women's Progressive Club, organized in 1903; a branch of the Sojourner Truth Industrial Club, founded in 1904; and, also in 1904, the Young Women's Dramatic Club, a group with an emphasis on literary awareness.

<sup>257</sup> Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of All: Black Women's Voluntary Associations," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (1990), 5.

<sup>258</sup> Scott, "Most Invisible of All," 17.

<sup>259</sup> Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 139.

The clubs of the 1910s and 1920s were led by several educated, upper middle-class women. California black women often fit social and organization activities into a schedule of paid employment, for they held jobs outside the home to a greater degree than any other population group.<sup>260</sup> Vada Somerville, the first black woman licensed to practice dentistry in the state of California, was a member of the Sojourner Truth Club and the founder of the Phy-Art-Lit-Mor Club, a group focused on exposing members to culture. She and her husband John were also influential in establishing Los Angeles' branch of the NAACP in 1913.<sup>261</sup> Eva Carter Buckner was a poet and local suffrage leader who wrote many club songs and took an early leadership role in the initial membership drives of the NAACP in Los Angeles.<sup>262</sup>

Before the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the female complement to the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), opened to African American women, similar services were often provided by Phyllis Wheatley Women's Clubs. Phyllis Wheatley Women's Clubs were named after Phyllis Wheatley, a slave poet who lived from 1753 to 1784. The first Phyllis Wheatley Women's Club was established in 1895 in Nashville, Tennessee. The founders sought to improve the status of African American women in American society by promoting a proper Victorian image for the African American societal elite and by work on behalf of the poor to improve their condition. Services provided by the clubs included lodging for women, homes for the elderly and infirmed, educational and recreational programs for youth, and a forum for discussing political issues. The first Phyllis Wheatley club of Los Angeles formed in 1949 and was located 2125 S. Harvard Boulevard (demolished).

Women's clubs in Los Angeles declined during the Depression as the government took over many mutual aid and welfare functions. In the post-World War II years, social clubs for African American women were often affiliated with religious organizations or sororities (discussed below). After World War II, many civic organizations such as the NAACP, the Urban League, and the UNIA were open to women, giving them new avenues of participation.<sup>263</sup>

Notable African American women's clubs of Los Angeles included:

- The Wilfandel Club
- Women's Auxiliary of the Colored Voters League
- Sons and Daughters of Africa
- Young Women's Married Thimble Club
- Iroquis Friday Morning Club<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Willi Coleman, "African American Women and Community Development," in *Seeking El Dorado*, 112.

<sup>261</sup> The NAACP met at 4108 Central Avenue from 1930 to 1931. This building has been demolished.

<sup>262</sup> Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers of California*, 229.

<sup>263</sup> See the Civil Rights theme for more information about these organizations.

<sup>264</sup> The Los Angeles Negro City Directory 1930-31 says the club had recently purchased a clubhouse, but does not list a location. The group is best known for providing college scholarships for African American students. Ralph Bunche, one of the most significant diplomats of the twentieth century, received a scholarship from Los Angeles' Iroquois Friday Morning Civic and Social Club of Los Angeles for his graduate studies in political science at Harvard University in the 1920s.



- Monday Women's Club
- Eastside Cooperative
- LINK, Incorporated

### Sororities and Fraternities

Sororities and fraternities often have significance beyond the university community, forming a base for future political and civic activism in addition to friendships. Social critics argue that historically black Greek organizations differ from those that are traditionally all-white because of the organizations' lasting importance to African Americans long after they have left their respective colleges and universities.<sup>265</sup> Fraternities using Greek letter names were often formed by university graduates as scholarly societies in the 1700s. The Sigma Pi Phi fraternity was founded as such a group in 1904 by African American college graduates. The group was known as the "Boulé." It is not known if the Boulé met in Los Angeles.



*Members of the Beta Omega Chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity at USC, 1945 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

The modern American system of undergraduate fraternities and sororities with Greek letter names began in undergraduate colleges of upstate New York during the 1820s. The first of these groups for African Americans was Alpha Phi Alpha, founded at Cornell University in 1906. Nationally, there are now nine historically black sororities and fraternities. These are sometimes referred to as the "Divine Nine."<sup>266</sup>

Though the first African Americans were admitted to universities in Los Angeles in 1903, the first African American Hellenic or Greek organizations were not established in Los Angeles

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<sup>265</sup> Lawrence Otis Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2000), 10.

<sup>266</sup> The "Divine Nine," in order of establishment, are:

1. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Founded 1906, Cornell University
2. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Founded 1908, Howard University
3. Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Founded 1911, Indiana University
4. Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Founded 1911, Howard University
5. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Founded 1913, Howard University
6. Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Founded 1914, Howard University
7. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Founded 1920, Howard University
8. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Founded 1922, Butler University
9. Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Founded 1963, Morgan State University

until the 1920s.<sup>267</sup> Chapters were often citywide groups based at USC, and included students from multiple universities within the city. When it was established in 1921, Alpha Phi Alpha was the fourth chartered fraternity of USC and the first historically black fraternity on the West Coast. Alpha Kappa Alpha, a sorority originally founded at Howard University in 1908, opened a Los Angeles citywide chapter based at USC in 1922. The chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) was founded three years later in 1925. Two additional African American Greek chapters were organized at USC in the 1920s: Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (1923) and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (1924).

Research indicates that chapters moved frequently and did not have traditional “houses” until the early 1960s. For a brief period in the 1950, USC’s chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity met at 2116 S. Western Avenue, a Craftsman home built in 1911. The UCLA chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority was associated with apartment buildings at 1625 W. 35<sup>th</sup> Street and 234 W. 45<sup>th</sup> Street in the 1930s. The USC chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha moved to 2615 Ellendale Place in 1961 and has been located there since.

### **Youth Groups**

The American incarnation of the YMCA was founded in Boston and New York during the mid-nineteenth century as a “viable urban alternative for the web of supportive moral institutions’ the young men from the countryside had left behind” when they migrated to industrializing cities.<sup>268</sup> YMCAs provided support for men seeking lodging and employment and opened branches in several American and Canadian cities in the 1850s.

The YMCA organization wrestled with the issue of slavery and segregation from its earliest conventions. Following the Civil War, the YMCA encouraged African Americans to organize independent associations and send delegates to annual conventions.<sup>269</sup> The encouragement was limited as the YMCA branches were autonomous and the central body did not provide financial assistance. In the post-Civil War era, most African American communities lacked the financial resources to establish branches, despite the need for its services as African Americans migrated to industrializing cities throughout the nation. The African American community saw the mission of the YMCA, with its emphasis on providing moral environments, education, and support for newly arrived men in cities, as a means for advancement. African American YMCA branches met in private homes when funding for buildings could not be secured.

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<sup>267</sup> The first African American to graduate from a Los Angeles university was Alice Rowen Johnson. In 1888, she graduated from the Los Angeles Normal School, which became the southern branch of the University of California in 1919. Diana McNeil Pierson became the first black female graduate of USC when she received her undergraduate degree from USC in 1909.

<sup>268</sup> Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 9.

<sup>269</sup> Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 16.



*28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA, circa 1926, architect Paul R. Williams appears fifth from the left in the first row  
(Designeastoflabrea.blogspot.com)*

Thomas A. Greene led the formation of the African American branch of the YMCA in Los Angeles in 1906 and served as the Executive Secretary until 1932. The African American branch of the YMCA grew rapidly during the first two decades of its existence and outgrew its first two buildings at 731 S. San Pedro Street (1906-1916, demolished) and 1400 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street (1916-1926, demolished). A new YMCA building was constructed in 1926 at 1006 E. 28<sup>th</sup> Street (listed in the National Register and designated LAHCM # 851). The building was a culmination of a series of vigorous fundraising drives held during the 1920s. The 28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA secured matching funds from Julius Rosenwald, a Jewish man from Chicago who made his fortune with Sears, Roebuck & Company.<sup>270</sup> He stipulated that African American YMCA chapters could receive funding if their buildings included separate quarters for men and boys, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, class and clubrooms, a restaurant, and no fewer than 50 dormitory rooms.<sup>271</sup> Swimming instruction had long been a core mission of YMCAs nationally. Unfettered access to a swimming pool was especially significant because African Americans were all but excluded from public pools in Los

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<sup>270</sup>Between 1924 and 1933, eleven YMCAs, including one in Los Angeles were constructed with a block of donations from Rosenwald. Rosenwald supported the YMCA “because its institutions provided African Americans with opportunities for self-help and personal improvement and not with charity.” Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 75-81.

<sup>271</sup> Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 81.



Angeles until 1932. Throughout the twentieth century it was the site of important political meetings and social gatherings.

A sister organization to the YMCA, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), emerged in the United States in the 1870s with a similar goal of providing moral environments and aiding women entering the new industrialized, urban-based work force. The YWCA formed in Los Angeles in 1893, but the organization did not create a branch for African Americans until 1919 when the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Branch for Colored Girls was established with rented rooms at 1108 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished).<sup>272</sup> The African American YWCA purchased the building around 1921.<sup>273</sup>

Other youth-oriented organizations for African Americans in Los Angeles included the Boys & Girls Clubs and Jack and Jill of America. The Boys & Girls Clubs began as an afterschool care program for boys in Connecticut during the 1860s. Although limited in numbers, records from the earliest Boys' Clubs indicate that African American youth were included.<sup>274</sup> The clubs focused more on African American youth following the mass movements of African Americans to northeastern cities in the 1910s and 1920s. A formal department to create African American Boys' Clubs formed in 1926. Fourteen African American Boys' Clubs formed by 1931, though none of these branches appear to have been in Los Angeles. The Boys' Club organization first appeared in Los Angeles in 1942 with the All Nations Boys Club (810 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, demolished) but research did not indicate if this group was part of the official Boys' Club organization's focused efforts to reach African American youth.<sup>275</sup> The organization expanded throughout the city during the twentieth century and became the Boys & Girls Clubs of America in 1990.

Jack and Jill was another national organization with programs for African American families.<sup>276</sup> The organization originated in Pennsylvania in 1938 as a club for African American mothers. It was created by a group of middle and upper middle-class mothers who wanted to bring their children together to experience a variety of educational, social, and cultural opportunities, which, due to segregation and racism, were not available to African American children, regardless of the socio-economic status of their parents. The first chapter in Los Angeles was founded in 1949 by Emily Brown Portwig, a pharmacist, who was also an important supporter of the YWCA. The organization has gathered at numerous homes throughout the city since its founding.

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<sup>272</sup> Christy Johnson McAvoy, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Mary Andrews Clark Memorial Home, Los Angeles," 1995, 4.

<sup>273</sup> Eileen V. Wallis, *Earning power: women and work in Los Angeles 1880-1930* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2010), 176.

<sup>274</sup> Kofi Lomotey, *Encyclopedia of African American Education* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2010), 111.

<sup>275</sup> The 1968 Los Angeles City Directory lists the following boys' clubs: 1339 E. 120<sup>th</sup> Street, 5619 De Longpre Avenue (division of the Assistance League of Southern California), 324 McDonnell Avenue, 3218 Wabash Avenue (Salesian Boys Club), 2530 Cincinnati Street, and 2635 Pasadena Avenue (All Nations Boys Club).

<sup>276</sup> The organization was perceived as one for upper middle class African American children.

**Gays and Lesbians<sup>277</sup>**

African Americans were part of L.A.'s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities from the beginning. Before World War II, semi-public meeting places for LGBT people were scarce. They mainly included bars and nightclubs. It was not uncommon for whites and people of color to share these spaces, but some discriminated against African Americans. It was more common for LGBT African Americans to meet privately. During the postwar period, political activism within the LGBT community was on the rise. Inspired by the African American Civil Rights movement, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender persons began to form a bond and to think of themselves as a persecuted minority. Several gay people of color played key roles in ONE Incorporated, the leading homophile organization of the 1950s and 1960s. Greg Byrd, an African American, was the first president of Gay Liberation Front, a political group that formed in the 1970s. But more often than not, black gays and lesbians inhabited separate spaces from their white counterparts. LGBT institutions in Los Angeles were dominated by whites, and even LGBT events and meeting places tended to be located in white neighborhoods. Racial discrimination at predominately white venues encouraged the growth of bars and nightclubs for gays and lesbians of color. Catch One was established for African Americans by Jewel Thais-Williams in 1972 at 4067 W. Pico Boulevard. The disco became the primary center of black LGBT community activism and social life in Los Angeles. Catch One played a vital role in the lives of LGBT persons of color, not just as a place to have fun, but also a place to develop social support. Lesbian and gay bars were also places where people became engaged politically. Thais-Williams regularly allowed local black lesbian and gay community groups to use the space for meetings and events, and also housed HIV and peer counseling services, poetry readings, discussion groups, and dependency groups (like Alcoholics Anonymous).<sup>278</sup> In more recent years, LGBT African Americans have found more success in expressing both their ethnicity and sexuality.<sup>279</sup>

**Other Organizations**

The clubs discussed above represent only a selection of the numerous groups formed by the African American community in Los Angeles and many sites of the community's social life. Patriotic, civic, and social groups formed in response to community needs. Many clubs were short-lived. The Silver Fox Club, the Just for Fun Club presented opportunities for black community engagement in Los Angeles, but did not last for multiple generations.<sup>280</sup> Other short-lived clubs formed in response to specific needs. During

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<sup>277</sup> For more information on gays and lesbians in Los Angeles see GPA Consulting, *SurveyLA LGBT Historic Context Statement* (Office of Historic Resources, September 2014).

<sup>278</sup> Mignon R. Moore, "Black and Gay in LA," in Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramon, ed., *Black Los Angeles: American dreams and Racial Realities* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010), 210.

<sup>279</sup> Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 281, 285, 287.

<sup>280</sup> For example, Hugh Macbeth's All-American League was formed to steer the patriotism and national discussions about democracy towards voting rights and racism. Lonnie G. Bunch, *Black Angelenos: the Afro-American in Los Angeles 1850-1950: June 11, 1988-March 6, 1989* (Los Angeles, CA: California Afro-American Museum, 1988), 34.

World War II, the Victory Committee was established to protect the rights of black servicemen, and ensure black access to wartime employment and vocational training.

**Associated Historic Resources**

The following tables describe designated and potential resources associated with African American social life. Eligibility standards address institutional property types, although very few resources appear to remain. Hotels and churches were also important places in the social lives of African Americans and were important meeting places for events and activities, but are discussed in other themes, primarily Religion and Spirituality. Additionally, many popular sites for recreation are located outside the boundaries of the City of Los Angeles. Though sites such as “Inkwell Beach” in Santa Monica, Bruce’s Beach in Manhattan Beach, Eureka Villa/Val Verde in Santa Clarita, Lake Elsinore in Riverside County, Parkridge Country Club in Corona, and the Cosmopolitan Golf Club that met at the Fox Hills Golf Course were important to Los Angeles’ African American community, these places fall outside the geographic scope of this context because they are located in separate jurisdictions.

***Designated Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
28 <sup>th</sup> Street YMCA	1006 E. 28 <sup>th</sup> Street	Constructed in 1926, the YMCA building was the site of important political meetings and social gatherings. It also allowed access to a swimming pool, which was especially significant because African Americans were all but excluded from public pools in Los Angeles until 1932. The building was designed by Paul R. Williams. It is listed in the National and California Registers and is designated LAHCM #851.
Holiday Bowl	3722 S. Crenshaw Boulevard	The Holiday Bowl is significant to the Japanese American and African American communities as a shared community space serving the Crenshaw neighborhood. While the bowling alley at the rear of the building has been demolished, the coffee shop portion at the front has



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Resource Name	Location	Comments
		been incorporated into the new building. The front portion is designated LAHCM #688.
John G. Jones Masonic Temple	5900 S. Broadway	The John G. Jones Masonic Temple was originally constructed as the Moneta Masonic Lodge and has been continuously used as a lodge since 1949. John G. Jones lodges were an African American division of the Shriners, a group comprising Masons. They were named after an African American attorney from Chicago named John G. Jones. The building is designated LAHCM #725.
Prince Hall Masonic Temple	1050 E. 50 <sup>th</sup> Street	The Prince Hall Masonic Temple was constructed in 1926. During the 1930s several chapters of the Order of the Eastern Star, the women's auxiliary lodge, also met here. The building is listed in the National and California Registers.
Wilfandel Club	3425 W. Adams Boulevard	Founded in 1945, the Wilfandel Club took its name from a portmanteau of the names of its primary founders, Della Williams and Fannie Williams. The club members raised funds to purchase this property that was once the home of the real estate developer Percy Clark. The clubhouse provided people of all races with a public meeting place in the 1950s, a function it continues to provide to this day. The building is contributing to the West Adams Terrace HPOZ.

***Potential Resources***

Resource Name	Location	Comments
Benjamin J. Bowie American Legion Post 228	5115 Central Avenue	Post 228 was named in honor of Corporal Benjamin J. Bowie, who was drafted into the Army on Oct. 28, 1917. He served in combat with the 92nd Infantry Division, until he was tragically killed on Sept. 11, 1918 by friendly fire. Bowie was the first African American from Los Angeles killed in World War I. The post was founded in 1922 and originally met at 1126 E. 46 <sup>th</sup> Street. They purchased this building in the 1940s.
Jewel's Catch One	4067 W. Pico Boulevard	Catch One was owned and operated by Jewel Thais -Williams. When it opened in 1972, it was one of the first black gay dance club in the U.S. The name changed to UNION in 2015.
Kappa Alpha Psi House	1846 Crenshaw Boulevard	The Los Angeles chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi was chartered in 1938, but a group of young men at UCLA had been meeting as early as 1923. The fraternity moved to this house in 1961 and has occupied the building since then. The house was originally constructed as a single-family home in 1914.
Phyllis Wheatley Home	1415 S. Manhattan Place	The Phyllis Wheatley Association was sponsored by two women's clubs, the Altura Club and the Athenians. In addition to providing an affordable place to live for women moving to Los Angeles, the clubs offered employment referral services. They purchased a house at 2125 S. Harvard Boulevard in 1949, which appears to have been

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
		demolished for the I-10. By 1963, the association had moved to another house on Manhattan Place.
Mt. Calvary Grand Lodge	1131 W. Manchester Avenue	Excellent example of an early Masonic lodge constructed in 1928. The building has endured some alterations, but may still be locally eligible for its association with this organization and the surrounding community.
Monday Women's Club	1209 E. 6 <sup>th</sup> Street	The Monday Women's Club was a black women's club established in 1925 in the Oakwood area of Venice. It was one of several black women's clubs in Southern California. Although the club closed in 1971, the building is extant.
Eastside Cooperative	1468 E. 20 <sup>th</sup> Street	The Eastside Cooperative was originally organized by black women in 1922, with the purpose of fostering a better understanding of the civic, economic, political and social conditions in the City and County of Los Angeles. In 1927, it was reorganized to include both sexes. In 1930, it maintained an office in this building, but it may not retain sufficient integrity for designation as a historical resource.
San Fernando Valley Boys and Girls Club	11251 Glenoaks Boulevard	Established in 1966, the club moved to this location in 1968. It provides recreational and social services to youth of all races in Pacoima.
USC Alpha Kappa Alpha House	2615 Ellendale Place	Organized in 1908, Alpha Kappa Alpha is the first African American sorority. The citywide chapter was based at USC and had multiple locations after it was established 1922. The sorority moved to this house in 1961 and has occupied the

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
		building continuously since then. The house was originally constructed as a single- family home in 1900.

**Theme: Social Clubs and Organizations**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the African American community. Clubs and organizations played a key role in the social history of black Angelenos. While some clubs were formed purely for social purposes, others had charitable, benevolent, and educational agendas.

**Period of Significance:** 1885 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1885, when the first formal club for African Americans in Los Angeles, the Odd Fellows, was organized. The earliest extant club buildings in Los Angeles date to the 1920s, when fraternal organizations constructed lodges along the Central Avenue corridor. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, West Adams, Venice, and Pacoima.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

**Associated Property Types:** Institutional – Social Club, Meeting Hall  
Commercial – Nightclub  
Residential – Single-family Residence

**Property Type Description:** Property types associated with this theme reflect a wide range of uses by various organizations, clubs, and groups. They include institutional buildings, constructed to house one or more African American community organizations and/or clubs. The buildings often included residential spaces. Property types also include commercial and residential properties that served as important meeting places.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme played an important role in the social history of the African American community in Los Angeles. Club buildings are significant in the context of civic engagement if they were the home of an important African American club or organization.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Is associated with an African American club or organization that played a pivotal role in the social history of Los Angeles
- Played a significant role in the social life of the African American community

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Strongly associated with the social history of the African American community
- For National Register, a property associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance
- May also be a significant example of an architectural style and/or the work of a noted architect/designer

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, Design, and Association from the period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may be altered or removed
- Buildings may be modest in their workmanship and materials due to the limited financial resources of most organizations
- Primary interior spaces such as social halls and large meeting rooms should remain as readable spaces



**THEME: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH AND MEDICINE, 1923 - 1980**

When African American settlers first arrived in Los Angeles in the 1850s, healthcare was provided by community leaders who lacked formal training. Gradually, African Americans with professional medical training migrated to California. Many of these men and women graduated from the Howard University School of Medicine in Washington D.C. or the Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. Both of these medical schools were established after the Civil War to train African Americans.<sup>281</sup> Doctors, dentists, nurses, and pharmacists were often among the most formally educated and respected members of the black community. In the early days of Los Angeles, they often rose to become the most prominent figures and leaders in the community. Access to medical care was limited by segregation; black doctors could not train in Los Angeles' hospitals and black patients were turned away from every hospital except county-owned facilities.<sup>282</sup> Access to healthcare for the black community expanded in the 1920s as African Americans founded hospitals and training programs.<sup>283</sup> By the 1940s, healthcare services expanded beyond hospitals as several African American medical professionals opened offices, clinics, and stores. Towards the end of the twentieth century, African Americans continued to face healthcare disparities despite the fact that new hospitals and medical schools were established to serve the community in the 1970s.

**Early Years, 1850s – 1910s**

The movement to provide healthcare and medical training to the African American community was guided by a number of black pioneers. Among Los Angeles' earliest African American settlers was Bridget Mason, who supported her family working as a midwife and nurse with a local white physician, Dr. John S. Griffin. Mason gained a reputation as an important midwife as she successfully delivered hundreds of babies from all economic classes and racial groups of Los Angeles society. As the city grew in the late nineteenth century, healthcare options expanded with the immigration of professionally trained individuals from the East Coast. The first African American doctor in Los Angeles was Monroe Majors, M.D., who arrived to Los Angeles in 1888. Dr. Majors was the first black doctor to pass the California State Board of Medical Examiners test and the first black doctor to practice medicine west of Denver. He spent two years in Los Angeles before returning home to Waco, Texas, but retired to the town of Monrovia in the Los Angeles area in the 1930s.

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<sup>281</sup> The first medical department class was held in 1868. Howard University Hospital was the successor institution to the Freeman's Hospitals, established by the Freedman's Bureau to take care of former slaves. Meharry Medical College was established in 1876 as Meharry Medical Department of Central Tennessee College.

<sup>282</sup> Jennifer Vanore, "An Unexpected, But Pivotal, Path: The Negro's Who's Who in California And West View Hospital," Libraries and Archives of the Autry, August 12, 2011. Accessed June 29, 2017, <https://autrylibraries.wordpress.com/2011/08/12/an-unexpected-but-pivotal-path-the-negros-whos-who-in-california-and-west-view-hospital/>.

<sup>283</sup> Substantial background information for this theme was developed from Charles H. Epps, Jr, M.D., Davis G. Johnson, Ph.D., and Audrey L. Vaughan, M.S., "Black Medical Pioneers: African American 'Firsts' In Academic and Organized Medicine," in *Journal of The National Medical Association*, Vol. 85, No. 8, 629-44.

Many early healthcare professionals in the African American community were dentists and pharmacists. Alva C. Garrott, D.D.S. was the first African American dentist in Los Angeles. Dr. Garrott was a dual graduate of Howard University with degrees in pharmacology (received in 1892) and dentistry (received in 1899). In 1901, he opened an office in the Wilson Block (1<sup>st</sup> and Spring Streets, demolished).<sup>284</sup> The USC Dental College was one of the first schools of health in Los Angeles to admit African American students.<sup>285</sup> John A. Somerville, a native of Kingston, Jamaica, came to California in 1902 and received his D.D.S. from USC in 1907.<sup>286</sup> He was the first black student at the school and was forced to defend his enrollment at a meeting of fellow students before they would accept him as a classmate.<sup>287</sup> Integration was the exception, not the norm. When John's wife Vada Somerville followed in his footsteps and enrolled in the dental college a decade later, she was the only woman and only African American graduate in the class of 1918. The Somervilles opened an office attached to their home on the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> and San Pedro Streets (demolished). They were community leaders who helped establish the local chapter of the NAACP in 1913 and spurred the development of the Central Avenue corridor with the construction of the Hotel Somerville in 1928 (4225 Central Avenue, now the Dunbar Hotel, LAHCM #131). John Somerville also served on the Los Angeles Police Commission from 1950 and 1953.



*Wilson Block building at 1<sup>st</sup> and Spring Streets, location of Dr. Alva C. Garrott's dental practice, no date (Los Angeles Public Library)*

### **Black Hospital Movement**

For most of the twentieth century, black physicians trained and practiced and many black patients received care in racially segregated hospitals.<sup>288</sup> The first black hospitals were established because African Americans were often prohibited from seeking medical treatment or training in white hospitals. African American doctors, dentists, and pharmacists were also barred from joining the American Medical Association (AMA), which limited their opportunities. In response, black medical professionals formed the National Medical Association (NMA) in 1895. By 1919, there were 118 black hospitals in the

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<sup>284</sup> Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles*, 106.

<sup>285</sup> The school was founded in 1897.

<sup>286</sup> "Dr. John A. Somerville Dies in L.A. at the Age of 91," *Jet*, March 8, 1973.

<sup>287</sup> Flammig, *Bound for Freedom*, 85.

<sup>288</sup> Vanessa Northington Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920-1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), xi.

United States.<sup>289</sup> The black hospital movement was initiated by African Americans associated with the NMA and the affiliated National Hospital Association (NHA) in the 1920s to improve medical and educational programs.<sup>290</sup> Concurrently, the NAACP worked to integrate training programs at white hospitals.

With the momentum of the black hospital movement, healthcare opportunities began to expand slowly for African Americans in Los Angeles during the 1920s and 1930s. Under the leadership of Dr. Charles Edward Block, the NAACP pressured the nursing school of Los Angeles County General Hospital<sup>291</sup> to integrate in 1919. Block convinced the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors that African American students could have filled the desperate need for nurses during World War I if they had been admitted then. Libbie Jennings Craft, Los Angeles native who previously trained at the Lincoln School for Nurses in New York City,<sup>292</sup> was the first African American to receive a certificate from the County-run school. Two private hospitals open to African Americans were founded in Los Angeles during the 1920s. The first black-owned private hospital was the Dunbar Hospital, founded in 1923 (1393 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, demolished)<sup>293</sup> by Richard S. Whittaker, M.D. Dr. Whittaker came to California in 1922, originally practicing in Pasadena. In 1923, he moved his practice to Los Angeles “where he saw the need for a Negro Hospital, because of the discrimination to Negro patients in Los Angeles.”<sup>294</sup> The hospital was small with only 20 beds. It operated until 1938 providing a collegial atmosphere for the doctors and a modern medical facility for the growing community along the Central Avenue corridor.

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<sup>289</sup> It is difficult to quantify the number of black hospitals from this period. In 1919, there were 118 black hospitals in the U.S. In 1944, following the black hospital movement, there were 124 black hospitals. It is assumed that the hospitals of the 1910s were smaller.

<sup>290</sup> Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves*, xi.

<sup>291</sup> Los Angeles City Directory, 1932-42. By 1938 it was also referred to as “General Hospital,” as well as “Los Angeles County Hospital” in 1939.

<sup>292</sup> The Lincoln School for Nurses, founded in 1898, trained black women to become nurses. It was the first school of its type in the United States.

<sup>293</sup> *Los Angeles Negro City Directory* (1930-31).

<sup>294</sup> *Negro Who's Who in California* (1948).



*Dr. Ruth J. Temple (third from left) at a luncheon for disease prevention in 1950 (CSUN, Tom and Ethel Bradley Center)*

One of the most influential African American physicians in Los Angeles during this era was Ruth J. Temple, M.D. Temple came to Los Angeles as a child in 1904. In 1918, she was the first black woman to graduate from the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University in San Bernardino County). After graduation, she opened Temple Health Institute, run from her home at 1038 El Molino Street.<sup>295</sup> The health clinic's model was duplicated in communities across the nation. The Los Angeles City Health Department granted her a scholarship to pursue her Master's degree in public health at Yale University in 1941. Dr. Temple returned to

Los Angeles and served as the Director of Special Health Services Division of the Health Department. She was also a professor at White Memorial Hospital, affiliated with Loma Linda University, in Los Angeles where she taught medical students of all races. Temple held many prominent positions with the Los Angeles City Health Department from 1942 to 1962 and received numerous awards and honors.<sup>296</sup>

Another influential physician from this period was Leonard Stovall, M.D. Dr. Stovall became the first African American to graduate from Hollywood High School, the first African American graduate of USC Medical School, and the first African American physician on staff at Los Angeles County General Hospital. His offices were located at 1161 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished) from 1925 through the 1950s. He also ran the 28<sup>th</sup> Street Health Center in the 1930s (903 E. 28<sup>th</sup> Street).<sup>297</sup> In 1935, he established The Outdoor Life and Health Association (1430 Central Avenue, demolished). The association organized health education outreach programs to teach the prevention of disease and the appreciation of outdoor activities. One of the first projects was the construction of a rest home for tuberculosis patients in the town of Duarte, near the sanitarium that evolved into the present day City of Hope. In 1942, the association purchased a ten-acre site for the care of 36



*Dr. Leonard Stovall (CSUN, Tom and Ethel Bradley Center)*

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<sup>295</sup> It is unclear where this building was located. El Molino Street is no longer extant in the City of Los Angeles. Board of Medical Examiners of the State of California, *Directory of Physicians and Surgeons, Osteopaths, Drugless Practitioners, Chiropractors, Midwives Holding Certificates Issued Under the Medical Practice Acts of the State of California* (1920), 126; Year: 1920; Census Place: Los Angeles Assembly District 63, Los Angeles, California; Roll: T625\_107; Page: 5A; Enumeration District: 185; Image: 461.

<sup>296</sup> Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1156-1157.

<sup>297</sup> *Los Angeles City Directory* (1939).

tuberculosis patients that admitted all races, but was the only such facility to treat African Americans.<sup>298</sup> The Outdoor Life and Health Association was reportedly the only non-profit, non-sectarian interracial organization in the United States run by African Americans.<sup>299</sup>

### **Modern Practice, 1940-1980**

By the 1940s, several African American medical professionals and pharmacists had opened offices and stores outside of hospital settings. After Dunbar Hospital closed in 1938, Dr. Whittaker moved to offices at 1055 E. 43<sup>rd</sup> Street (demolished). *The Green Book* of 1949 listed five African American drug stores in the southeastern section of Los Angeles (none extant).<sup>300</sup> Numerous dentists also had practices in the community. Later in the postwar period, the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company financed the construction of professional medical facilities to serve the black community. Among these was the Julian W. Ross Medical Center, which opened in 1957 (1818 S. Western Avenue).<sup>301</sup>

In the 1940s, private hospitals established by African American doctors in Los Angeles were often formed as interracial institutions. The Rose-Netta Hospital (4412 S. Hooper Avenue, demolished) was founded in 1941 as an interracial hospital by Dr. Curtiss King.<sup>302</sup> Rose-Netta Hospital was one of the first truly interracial hospitals in the United States, employing African American, Mexican, Japanese, and Caucasian people.<sup>303</sup> The Red Cross established the first interracial blood bank in 1942 at Rose-Netta Hospital. In 1945, a group of African American healthcare professionals came together to plan a large, 300-bed facility to serve all residents of Los Angeles, regardless of race. The West View Hospital Association formed with the intention of building the first “inter-racial, non-sectarian, non-profit hospital, open to every race, creed and color in the finest tradition of American democracy.” The group found it incredibly difficult to raise the needed funds and was never able to see the project to fruition.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> In the 1950s, it housed 50 patients, 28 of which were white. After its first 15 years, it is reported to have arrested 500 cases of tuberculosis.

<sup>299</sup> Outdoor Life and Health Association program, 1946. Roberts Family Papers. Oakland Public Library Digital Collections. <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8q24113/>

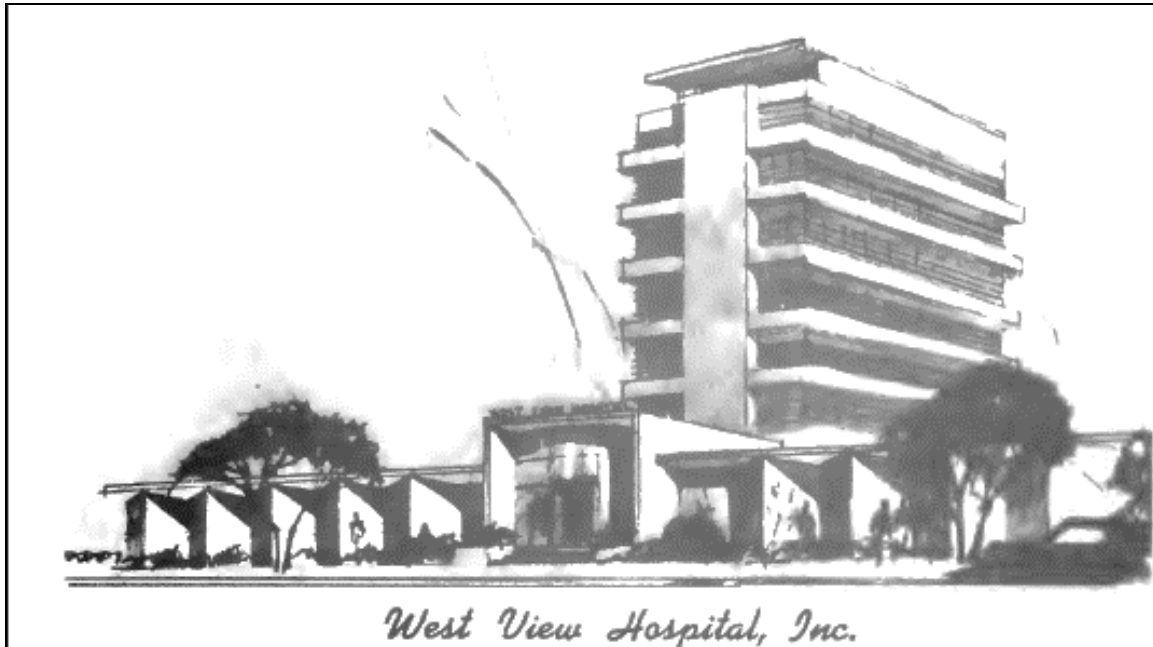
<sup>300</sup> The addresses were: 4375 Central Avenue, 4012 Central Avenue, 4406 Avalon Boulevard, 3112 S. Western Avenue, and 2100 W. Jefferson Boulevard.

<sup>301</sup> Mitchell F. Rice and Woodrow Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital: From Slavery to Segregation to Integration* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994), 51; Gene Sherman, “Economic Factor Key to Equal Recognition,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1962.

<sup>302</sup> Rice and Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital*, 52.

<sup>303</sup> *Negro Who's Who in California* (1948), 32.

<sup>304</sup> Vanore, “An Unexpected, But Pivotal, Path: The Negro's Who's Who In California and West View Hospital.”



*Rendering of West View Hospital by Paul R. Williams. The hospital was never constructed (Negro Who's Who)*

In the postwar period, access to medical training remained limited for prospective African American health professionals. There were only two black medical schools in the United States through the 1970s. In 1947, Los Angeles County Hospital was one of only 18 hospitals in the United States that offered internships for black physicians.<sup>305</sup> In 1948, only 25% of the African American students entering medical school enrolled in predominantly white institutions. This figure would change dramatically in the 1950s and 1960s when racial discrimination lessened and African Americans were able to attend predominately white medical schools in larger number. By 1968, 47% of African American medical students trained at formerly traditionally white medical schools.

The Watts uprising in 1965 brought attention to the substandard availability of medical care in the community. The McCone Commission determined that diminished access to healthcare was a major factor that triggered the unrest.<sup>306</sup> Two hospitals and one medical school were founded in response to the increased awareness of poor living conditions in the community following the uprising. The Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science was founded in 1966 to train African American medical professionals.<sup>307</sup> An affiliated hospital, Los Angeles County Southeast General Hospital, was established in 1968. It was renamed Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital in 1972, and renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital in 2012. Charles R. Drew University and Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital are both located south of Watts in unincorporated Los Angeles County.

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<sup>305</sup> Rice and Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital*, 33.

<sup>306</sup> Darrell Dawsey, "25 Years After the Watts Riots: McCone Commission's Recommendations Have Gone Unheeded," *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1990.

<sup>307</sup> The school was named after Dr. Charles Richard Drew, who developed a system for the storing of blood plasma revolutionized the medical profession by enabling the creation of blood banks.





*West Adams Community Hospital Los Angeles, 1974  
(CSUN, Tom and Ethel Bradley Center)*

West Adams Community Hospital (2231 S. Western Avenue) was founded in 1971 as “a first-class black community hospital.”<sup>308</sup> One of the founders was William Beck, a graduate of Meharry Medical College in 1952. Dr. Beck completed an internship at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center in 1952 and served as assistant clinical professor of surgery at USC from 1967 to 1970. An additional comprehensive health center named for Dr. H. Claude Hudson opened in 1979 at 2829 S. Grand Avenue in unincorporated Los Angeles County.<sup>309</sup>

#### **Associated Historic Resources**

There are no designated resources associated with this theme. The following table describes potential resources associated with healthcare and medicine in Los Angeles. All of the aforementioned institutions and individuals were researched to identify potential resources. In some cases none were found and in

other cases the properties identified have been demolished. Extant resources located in other cities or unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County were not included because they are outside the geographic scope of this context. Eligibility Standards address institutional and residential property types including public and private healthcare institutions, such as hospitals, clinics, and medical office buildings. The homes of prominent individuals involved in healthcare and medicine in the African American community are also included.

#### **Potential Resources**

Resource Name	Location	Comments
West Adams Community Hospital	2231 S. Western Avenue	West Adams Community Hospital was established in 1969 by a group of African American physicians. This building was completed in 1971, and the hospital closed in 2013.

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<sup>308</sup> “Hospital Founder ‘Weathers Storm,’” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 15, 1978.

<sup>309</sup> Kenneth Hahn, “Some Very Positive Things Have Taken Place,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 22, 1985.

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
Julian W. Ross Medical Center	1818 S. Western Avenue	This medical center was named for Dr. Julian W. Ross, the head of obstetrics and gynecology at Howard University. The medical center opened in 1957. It was owned and occupied by African American doctors. The building is located within the boundaries of the Harvard Heights HPOZ, but is a non-contributor because it post-dates the period of significance.
Somerville, Drs. John and Vada Residence	2014 Virginia Road	Drs. John (1883-1973) and Vada (1885-1972) Somerville were the first African American man and woman to graduate from the USC Dental School. They lived in this house from at least 1956-1960. The Somervilles had another residence and office at 1800 S. San Pedro Street during the 1920s and 30s and 334 E. Jefferson Boulevard in the 1940s, but those buildings are no longer extant.
Stovall, Dr. Leonard Office and Residence	903 E. 28 <sup>th</sup> Street	Dr. Gerald Leonard Stovall (1925-2013) was the first African American to graduate from the USC Medical School as well as the first African American physician on staff at General Hospital. In 1932, he established the 28 <sup>th</sup> Street Health Center at this location. By 1952, the clinic relocated to 806 E. Jefferson Boulevard, but the building has been demolished.
	1927 Victoria Avenue	Stoval lived at this house from at least 1956 to 1960.

**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**Context: African American History of Los Angeles

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Resource Name	Location	Comments
Vernon Medical Building	231 W. Vernon Avenue	The Vernon Medical Building was constructed in 1952. It was occupied by African American doctors, dentists, and pharmacists. It continues to serve the community, which is predominately Latino.
Washington Medical Center	5220 Washington Boulevard	The Washington Medical Center was constructed in 1963. It was occupied by African American doctors, dentists, and pharmacists. It was listed in operation up to 1987.

**Theme: Healthcare and Medicine**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and health/medicine for its association with the African American community. Historically, blacks were denied care at white hospitals. As more African Americans obtained medical degrees during the early twentieth century, black physicians, dentists, and pharmacists began to respond to racism by forming their own associations and building their own hospitals, offices, and clinics. During the postwar period, medical institutions were established in predominately African American neighborhoods to improve access to healthcare.

**Period of Significance:** 1923 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1923 with the founding of Dunbar Hospital, the first black-owned private hospital in Los Angeles. The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, and West Adams.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Health/Medicine

**Criteria:** NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

**Associated Property Types:** Institutional – Health/Medicine – Hospital and Clinic  
Commercial - Retail Building and Office Building

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include purpose-built institutional buildings, such as hospitals and smaller clinics as well as retail buildings used as pharmacies and medical office buildings.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme played an important role in the African American community in Los Angeles because they were places that provided healthcare services by black medical professionals.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Medical building or clinic with a significant relationship to the African American community
- Was the founding location of, or the long-term location of, a healthcare or medical institution significant to the African American community
- May also be significant as a good example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect or builder

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- May be associated with a healthcare or medical institution that has gained regional or national importance
- For National Register, properties associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Setting, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some materials may have been altered or removed

**Theme: Important Persons in Los Angeles's Medical History**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the area of ethnic history and health/medicine for its association with the African American community. Doctors, dentists, nurses, and pharmacists were often among the most formally educated and respected members of the black community. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they often rose to become the most prominent figures and leaders in the community.

**Period of Significance:** 1850 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1850 with the arrival of the first African American settlers. It has been left open to 1850 to capture properties associated with individuals who may have worked in healthcare and medicine in the nineteenth century and who have not yet been identified. The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, and West Adams.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Health/Medicine

**Criteria:** NR: B CR: 2 Local: 2

**Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence  
Institutional – Health/Medicine – Clinic  
Commercial - Office Building

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include residences that often served as doctor's offices or clinics as well as purpose built offices and clinics.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are those associated with persons who played an important role in the history of healthcare and medicine as it relates to the African American community.



**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to the history of health/medicine as it relates to the African American community
- Directly associated with the productive life of the person who made important contributions to the history of the health/medicine

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- The individual must have resided in or used the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- May also be a significant example of an architectural style and/or the work of a noted architect/designer
- For National Register, properties associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant person occupied the property
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed

## **THEME: ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY, 1908 – 1980**

African Americans have had a long and complex history in the entertainment industry including music and recording, motion pictures, radio, and television. Arguably, music was the medium in which African Americans found the greatest success, developing multiple genres that have been embraced by Americans of all races. With the growth of recorded music, radio, and talking pictures in the late 1920s, there was a considerable amount of movement back and forth between these mediums. But as in other industries, African Americans met discrimination not only in the way they were depicted but also in their ability to gain employment. While African Americans remain a constant and dominant force in music and radio, they continue to be underrepresented in motion pictures and television both in front of and especially behind the camera.

### **Music and Recording**

Although Central Avenue is famous for the role it played in the development of West Coast jazz, the musical history of the African American community is much deeper and more complex. Music has played a key role in the history of African Americans in Los Angeles since the late nineteenth century. The origins of this musical culture of the black community can be traced to a combination of factors including churches, music teachers, recording companies, and migrants from New Orleans. From these various individuals and institutions Los Angeles contributed to the development of gospel, classical, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock n' roll, and pop music. The fact that one particular style or generation of musicians did not characterize the Central Avenue music scene allowed these various musical idioms to develop somewhat simultaneously.

#### *Gospel and Choral Music*

Music is important to the religious services of African Americans so it can be surmised that music was abundant during the later part of the nineteenth century when the city's first black congregations were formed. Until the 1930s, black church music mostly consisted of spirituals that were sung without accompaniment. Spirituals evolved out of the songs of the enslaved that were lined and repeated in a call-and-response pattern similar to that found in the music of West and Central Africa. The distinction between spirituals and gospel songs is only slight. Gospel music emerged in the first few decades of the twentieth century as blues and early jazz styles began to exert their influence on church musicians. This was particularly true of holiness churches that permitted displays of enthusiasm in services as opposed to mainline protestant churches that maintained a certain level of decorum. Thomas Dorsey is considered the father of contemporary gospel music.<sup>310</sup> The son of a minister, Dorsey was a consummate musician and as a young man composed and arranged blues music. When he began writing religious music in the early 1930s, he continued to employ the rhythmic style of the blues. This

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<sup>310</sup> Eric Pace, "Thomas A. Dorsey is Dead at 93, Known as the Father of Gospel Music," *New York Times*, January 25, 1993.

combination of the sacred with the secular continues to define gospel music to this day. Dorsey appeared in Los Angeles around 1937 at the Central Baptist Church (4414 Central Avenue, demolished), assisted by the Dorsey Gospel Singers the following week at the same church. Years later, the Dorsey ensemble performed numerous times in the Los Angeles area.<sup>311</sup> Sallie Martin and Doris Akers were famous gospel composers and singers who also spent time in Los Angeles. Martin gained fame touring with Dorsey then formed her own group based in Los Angeles during the 1940s. She recruited Akers as a pianist and vocalist. While in Los Angeles Akers became the director of the Sky Pilot Choir, a racially integrated group.



*Victory Baptist Church had a well-known gospel choir, circa 1945 (Victory Baptist Church)*

During the 1940s, gospel trios and quartets gained popularity and had a major influence in the development of rhythm and blues vocal groups during subsequent decades. The most innovative of these groups in Los Angeles was the Three Sons of Thunder. Formed in 1941, the group included Eugene Douglas Smallwood, Arthur Atlas Peters, and Earl Amos Pleasant. This trio later added another vocalist, Nathan Kirkpatrick and a white organist, Kenneth Kramer. Not affiliated with any particular church, they performed at churches, revivals, and meeting halls

spreading their particularly high spirited and raw edged brand of gospel music. Smallwood composed and published many of the group's songs, which became popular in the genre of gospel music. He also directed the Zion Hill Baptist Church (5025 McKinley Avenue) Choir from 1936 to 1946. In 1946, he started his own congregation, Opportunity Baptist Church (1112 E. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, residence). Following Smallwood's path, Peters started Victory Baptist Church (4802 McKinley Avenue) in 1943 and Pleasant started Mount Moriah Baptist Church (1021 E. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, demolished) in 1945. By the 1960s Los Angeles developed into a major center for gospel music primarily due to the groundwork laid by these three men.<sup>312</sup>

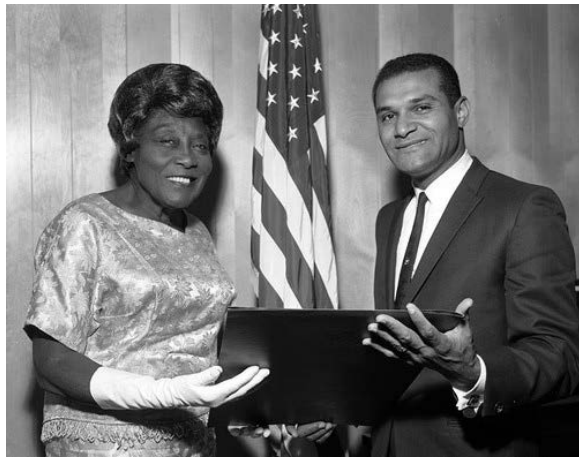
Mass choirs, in terms of overall popularity, soon replaced quartets in gospel music. Perhaps one of the most important of these was the Wings Over Jordan Choir. This group was organized in 1937 by Rev. Glen T. Settles in Cleveland, Ohio, and was the first full-time professional black choir. They made broadcast history with the first independently produced national and international radio programs created by African Americans. They performed weekly on the *Negro Hour* over WGAR, a CBS radio

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<sup>311</sup> Tom Reed, *The Black Music History of Los Angeles, Its Roots: A Classical Pictorial History of Black Music in Los Angeles, 1920-1970* (Los Angeles, CA: Black Accent L.A. Press, 1992), 397.

<sup>312</sup> Reed, *The Black Music History of Los Angeles*, 398; Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, "California Black Gospel Music Tradition," in *California Soul: Music of African Americans in the West* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 132-133.

affiliate. The choir relocated in Los Angeles in 1956. As such, many black Angelenos toured with the group in its later years.<sup>313</sup>



*A.C. Bilbrew receiving resolution from City Councilman Billy Mills in 1966 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

Many gospel choirs emerged from local black churches and went on to achieve broader popularity via radio and recording. Under the leadership of James Early Hines and Gwendolyn Cooper Lightner, the St. Paul Baptist Church (100 W. 49<sup>th</sup> Street) developed a well-known gospel choir named Echoes of Eden, which began broadcasting weekly in 1945 on radio station KFWB.<sup>314</sup> Victory Baptist Church also had a weekly radio program, featuring Thurston Frazier as director of the choir.<sup>315</sup> A.C. Bilbrew was a leading figure in choral and gospel music in Los Angeles. Born in Arkansas and educated at USC, she was the choir director for a number of prominent black churches including

Phillips Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (1406 Newton Street, demolished; 973 E. 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, currently), the People's Independent Church of Christ (Paloma Avenue and 18<sup>th</sup> Street, demolished), and Hamilton Methodist Church (1376 E. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, now Christian Light Baptist Church). She was also a pioneer in radio, becoming the first African American soloist on the radio in 1923, and later, the first African American to have and host a show in 1942. Bilbrew was a champion of women's rights and childhood literacy. The Los Angeles County Library at 150 E. El Segundo Boulevard is named in her honor.

Gospel choirs, quartets, and small groups continued to be popular during the 1950s and 1960s. In some cases established musicians from other parts of the country moved to Los Angeles where the environment allowed them more opportunity for creativity and exposure. But there were also many native Angelenos such as Albert A. Goodson, Margaret Pleasant Douroux, and Andraé Crouch who rose to fame. Formed in 1960, the Mighty Clouds of Joy was perhaps the most famous gospel group based in Los Angeles. The original members were classmates at Jefferson High School. They represent the growth of the gospel music industry in the 1960s and into the 1970s when the artists no longer depended on the support



*The Mighty Clouds of Joy, circa 1960 (Peacock Records)*

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<sup>313</sup> "Wings Over Jordan Choir," African American Registry, accessed April 6, 2017, [http://www.aaregistry.org/historic\\_events/view/wings-over-jordan-choir-original](http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/wings-over-jordan-choir-original)

<sup>314</sup> Cogdell Djedje, "California Black Gospel Music Tradition," 133-135.

<sup>315</sup> Bette Yarborough Cox, *Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall* (Los Angeles: BEEEM Publishing, 1996), 83.

of churches and when listeners included non-churchgoers.<sup>316</sup> In a break with tradition, the group added bass, drums, and keyboards to the standard guitar backup and developed a funky sound that split the difference between gospel and rhythm and blues.



Poster for *Run Little Chillun*, a folk opera composed by Hall Johnson, 1933

Music provided a convenient way for African Americans to participate in the motion picture industry. Not only were choral groups hired to perform on sound tracks, but black songwriters, composers, arrangers, and musicians were employed.<sup>317</sup> A case in point was Jester Hairston. A multi-talented man who composed and arranged more than 300 gospel songs and spirituals for film, Hairston also worked as an actor. For 13 years he was the assistant conductor for the Hall Johnson Negro Choir. He moved to Los Angeles in 1935 with the choir, which had been hired to create the choral music for the films *The Green Pastures* (1936) and *Lost Horizon* (1937). Because of Hairston's talent as an arranger, Dimitri Tiomkin hired him as his choral arranger for the next twenty years. In 1943, he formed his own professional choir, the Jester Hairston Metropolitan Choir, which performed in numerous films such as *Carmen Jones* (1954) and *Lilies of the Field* (1963).<sup>318</sup>

### *African American Music Teachers and Schools*

An important subtext to the history of African American music in Los Angeles is that of the dedicated teachers who helped their students overcome hurdles of racism, some of them eventually winning international recognition. Some worked as private teachers, some formed conservatories, and others worked in the public school system. There were 22 in 1910, 73 in 1920, 226 in 1930, and 260 in 1940. Overall musicians comprised a large percentage of the city's black professional class.<sup>319</sup>

In the 1910s and 1920s, piano teachers became very popular in the community. Most parents wanted their children to be able to take piano lessons, envisioning it as a means toward upward mobility. In 1912, William Wilkins opened the Wilkins School of Music on Central Avenue at 14<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished).<sup>320</sup> At the main school there were over 250 pupils, seven assistant piano teachers, and a kindergarten program with 40 children. In 1948, Wilkins purchased a home at 1514 W. 29<sup>th</sup> Street and opened a "West Los Angeles" branch of the school.<sup>321</sup> John Gray was another music teacher with a large

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<sup>316</sup> Cogdell Djedje, "California Black Gospel Music Tradition," 142-143.

<sup>317</sup> Cox, *Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall*, 41.

<sup>318</sup> Reed, *The Black Music History of Los Angeles*, 391 and Cox, in *Seeking El Dorado*, 262.

<sup>319</sup> Cox, in *Seeking El Dorado*, 252.

<sup>320</sup> Cox, *Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall*, 14.

<sup>321</sup> Laura Meyers, ed., *West Adam's Landmarks of African American History* (Los Angeles, CA: West Adams Heritage Association, 2011), 16.



following. In 1926, he founded the African American Musicians' Association.<sup>322</sup> This organization differed from the musician's union in that the union consisted mainly of jazz musicians seeking employment. The association was composed of community music teachers, public school music teachers, and community members who appreciated music. In 1928, it became the Los Angeles branch of the National Association of Negro Musicians.<sup>323</sup>

Classical training could also be had through Los Angeles public high schools, which were a breeding ground for some of the finest jazz musicians in the United States from the 1930s through the 1950s. Charles Mingus, Buddy Collette, and the Woodman Brothers went to Jordan High School in Watts. Eric Dolphy and Herb Geller were classmates at Dorsey High School near Baldwin Hills. Walter Benton, Jimmy Knepper, Russ Freeman, and Larry Bunker graduated from Manual Arts High School near Exposition Park. But for sheer numbers, no school in Los Angeles turned out more renowned musicians than Jefferson High School in the Central-Alameda neighborhood. Don Cherry, Dexter Gordon, Art Farmer, Ernie Royal, Jackie Kelso, Ginger Smock, Bill Douglass, O.C. Smith, Roy Ayers, and Horace Tapscott are just a few of the gifted musicians who attended Jefferson High School.

In part Jefferson bred so many musicians because it was so close to the jazz clubs on Central Avenue, but the other part of the equation was Samuel Browne. He was the first black music teacher in the Los Angeles public school system. Browne was a native of Los Angeles who graduated from Jefferson in 1926 and taught there from 1936 to 1961. Although trained as a classical musician at USC, his students wanted to play jazz so that is what he taught them. As one of the few African Americans on the faculty of the school, he found friendship amongst his students and their families. Browne often went with his students to the jazz clubs on Central Avenue or took them to orchestra rehearsals led by Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, and Stan Kenton. He also invited professional musicians into the classroom. Alma Hightower and Lloyd Reese also played a significant role in music education during the 1940s and 1950s. Hightower bought a home at 466 E. Vernon Avenue in the 1940s and converted it into



*Samuel Browne, 1925  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*



*Jefferson High School, 1939  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

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<sup>322</sup> Cox, *Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall*, 19.

<sup>323</sup> Cox, *Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall*, 35.



a music studio. She also owned the homes next door and used them as rental properties. Hightower's students included Chico Hamilton, Charles Mingus, Buddy Collette, Dexter Gordon, and Clora Bryant.<sup>324</sup>

### *Black Composers and Performers of Classical Music*



Florence Cole-Talbert, no date (Black Past.org)

As a result of the fine quality of musical instruction in the black community, there were many well-educated musicians living in Los Angeles, however very few found success in the world of classical music, which was almost exclusively the realm of white Americans and Europeans. The exception to this rule can be found in the careers of William Grant Still and Florence Cole-Talbert. A classical composer who wrote nearly 200 works, Still is often referred to as the dean of African American composers. Born in Mississippi, Still moved to Los Angeles in 1937. He was the first African American to conduct a major American symphony orchestra, the first to have a symphony of his own performed by a leading orchestra, the first to have an opera performed by a major company, and the first to have an opera performed on national television. Still's home at 1262 S. Victoria Avenue is designated LAHCM #169 and a contributing building to the Country Club Park HPOZ.

A critically acclaimed soprano, Florence Cole-Talbert moved to Los Angeles with her family in 1910 and was the first African American to attend Los Angeles High School. They lived at 459 E. 29<sup>th</sup> Street. She studied at USC and the Chicago Musical College and began singing in New York City in 1918. Later she married a pianist and director named William P. Talbert. In 1924, she traveled to Europe to play in *Aida*, and returned to the United States three years later. She recorded and released three songs, including *Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen*. After she retired from singing, Cole-Talbert accepted a teaching position at Bishop College, Texas where she was the first black director of music.<sup>325</sup>

### *The Jazz Scene*

As significant as sacred and formal music were in black culture, it was jazz that made the Los Angeles African American community nationally and internationally famous. The music that came to be known as jazz emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century from the artistic meeting of other genres including ragtime, gospel, marching band, and especially the blues. In contrast to gospel that was powered by strong vocals and blues that grew out of the rural South and was typically performed by a soloist, jazz was primarily an instrumental and collaborative idiom that was very much influenced by the black urban experience. No city was more important in the development of this new form of music than

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<sup>324</sup> Jessie Carney Smith, ed., *Notable Black American Women: Book II* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1996), 413-414.

<sup>325</sup> For a full discussion of Florence Cole Talbert's life and music see Patricia Turner, "Our Divine Florence," in *The Black Perspective in Music* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1984), 57-79.

New Orleans where, despite strident racial segregation, musicians could tap into the city's spectacularly broad range of musical influences and where opportunities to hear, play, and practice music were extraordinarily abundant. The origin of jazz in Los Angeles has been attributed to a number of musicians who moved here from New Orleans and formed social dance bands. The most noted of these early bands were Bill Johnson's Original Creole Ragtime Band and the Freddie Keppard Original Creole Band. Paul Howard, Edward "Kid" Ory, Alton Redd, and Jelly Roll Morton all moved to Los Angeles from New Orleans during the 1910s and 1920s, solidifying Los Angeles as an important scene for jazz music. The Spikes brothers, Benjamin<sup>326</sup> and John, are credited with building the jazz scene in Los Angeles by bringing Jelly Roll Morton from New Orleans to cut a record, forming their own bands, and running several clubs. In 1919, they opened a record store at 1203 Central Avenue (demolished). During this period, there was an influx of middle-class African Americans and a significant in-migration of African American musicians who helped make the record store a profitable venture in the community. In addition, bands began to rehearse there and it became a gathering place for musicians by the early 1920s.<sup>327</sup> The brothers also published music, managed an employment agency for musicians, and operated Sunshine Records. Kid Ory's Original Creole Jazz Band recorded for them in 1921.<sup>328</sup>



*Kid Ory's Original Creole Jazz Band, 1922 (Red Hot Jazz.com)*



*"Society Blues" was released by Sunshine Records in 1922, note the band name was Ory's Sunshine Orchestra (Red Hot Jazz.com)*

Ferdinand Joseph La Menthe Morton, more popularly known as "Jelly Roll" Morton, was a seminal figure in the birth and development of jazz in the early decades of the twentieth century. A multi-talented pianist, composer, arranger and bandleader, who some call the first composer of jazz music, Morton wove disparate musical strands -- blues, stomps, and ragtime, plus French and Spanish influences—into the fabric of early jazz. He moved to Los Angeles around 1917, stayed until 1922, and returned off and on until his death in 1941 at Los Angeles County Hospital.<sup>329</sup>

The jazz brought to Los Angeles from New Orleans by Morton and others was later referred to as Dixieland.<sup>330</sup> The burgeoning motion picture industry attracted musicians from other parts of the

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<sup>326</sup> His childhood nickname "Rebel" was shortened to "Reb".

<sup>327</sup> Cox, *Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall*, 13.

<sup>328</sup> Ory later claimed that he recorded with Nordskog Records in Santa Monica under his own label and merely sold at Spikes Brothers Music Store. Andre Nordskog also claimed that he owned the recordings, but for some reason called the band "Spike's Seven Pods of Pepper Orchestra." Most scholars attribute the recordings to Sunshine Records and the Spikes brothers.

<sup>329</sup> Lacinda Mennenga, "Ferdinand Joseph La Menthe Morton," Black Past.org, accessed April 6, 2017, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/morton-ferdinand-joseph-la-menthe-jelly-roll-1885-1941>.

country, and by the mid-1920s there were many homegrown musicians as well who contributed to the development of a new form of jazz. During the 1930s, jazz was transformed from an individual, often improvised music into a composed music called swing. Swing was considered a more commercial form of jazz that was largely performed by all-white bands. However, there were a few African American bandleaders that found great success in swing including Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington, and Benny Carter.



*Scene from Jump for Joy performed at the Mayan Theater in 1941 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

During an extended engagement in Los Angeles with his orchestra, Duke Ellington befriended Sid Kuller at a party and the two conceived the musical revue *Jump for Joy*. A daring and risky venture for the times, the show masqueraded as a musical review and featured an all-black cast including Ivie Anderson, Herb Jeffries, Dorothy Dandridge, and Wonderful Smith. *Jump for Joy* was, in fact, a social satire that fiercely attacked racism. Although it is most closely associated with Ellington, many others contributed to the show's creation. Ellington's musical collaborator during this period, Billy Strayhorn, co-wrote the score. Kuller, a Jewish comedy writer best known for his work with the

Marx Brothers, and Paul Webster, a Jewish lyricist who would go on to win three Academy Awards, wrote most of the songs. The Jewish actor John Garfield was the principal investor in the show. The original production opened on July 10, 1941 at the Mayan Theater at 1038 S. Hill Street (designated LAHCM #460) and ran for 122 performances.<sup>331</sup>

The physical manifestation of jazz music on the built environment can be found in the development of nightclubs. These were mainly located along Central Avenue from Little Tokyo to Watts. They appeared during the 1920s, peaked during the 1930s, and started to fade by the 1950s. As well as being gathering places for the black elite, Central Avenue's nightclubs attracted a substantial white audience. Curtis Mosby, an enterprising musician from Kansas City, led the Dixieland Blue Blowers and by 1929 or 1930 opened nightclubs in Los Angeles and San Francisco. He ran two Apex Clubs, one in each city. The famous Club Alabam succeeded the Southern California Apex Club as the mecca for music lovers around 1932. The Club Alabam occupied the site of the old Club Araby, which itself preceded the Apex. It was owned by the Rizzo brothers; Mosby managed it; however, and bought it around 1940. It occupied the

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<sup>330</sup> Although there were several bands from the 1910s and 20s with "Dixieland" in their names, the term is commonly used to refer to the revival movement in the 1940s.

<sup>331</sup> Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 21-28.

lower level of a building next to the Dunbar Hotel.<sup>332</sup> The building is listed in the National and California Registers and designated LAHCM #131. Other clubs included the Downbeat, the Flame, and the Casablanca, all owned by or managed by Elihu "Black Dot" McGhee; Jack's Basket Room run by the former boxer Jack Johnson; Shepp's Playhouse and Club Finale in Little Tokyo; and Joe Morton's Plantation Club in Watts. Of these, only Jack's Basket Room survives at 3217 Central Avenue.

While swing remained popular through World War II, several new forms of jazz began to appear. Bebop originated in New York and was brought to Los Angeles by two of its pioneers, Charlie Parker and John "Dizzy" Gillespie. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, leading bebop players including Dexter Gordon, Charlie Mingus, Wardell Gray, and Buddy Collette emerged from Los Angeles. In addition to the innovations happening in bebop, there were a number of other musicians making highly regarded jazz in Los Angeles. Gerald Wilson began playing in Los Angeles in the 1930s and formed his own Gerald Wilson Orchestra in 1944, which he performed with off and on until his death in 2014. Wilson was a celebrated composer and created arrangements for Duke Ellington, Billie Holliday, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, and Harry Belafonte, to name a few.<sup>333</sup> One of the stars of Wilson's orchestra was Melba Liston. Liston is

considered the first female horn player to make a big impact on jazz music.<sup>334</sup> Liston moved with her family to Los Angeles at age 11 and joined the musician's union at age 16. After playing with Wilson's band, Liston played with Dizzy Gillespie and Billie Holliday. Liston was also well known as an arranger, composing music for Art Blakey, Charles Mingus, and her long-time collaborator Randy Weston.



*Jazz at the Philharmonic, Philharmonic Auditorium  
on Pershing Square (demolished) 1944  
(Life Magazine)*

According to author Bette Yarborough Cox, the decline of the jazz scene on Central Avenue can be attributed to a variety of factors. The proliferation of the jukebox in the early 1940s allowed smaller clubs to eliminate the cost of live bands, but still provide the dance music craved by their patrons. By the late 1940s, black musicians began performing at previously all-white clubs in Hollywood and theaters in Downtown Los Angeles. The most notable impresarios of integrated clubs in Los Angeles were two Jewish men, Billy Berg and Norman Granz. Berg operated several clubs in Hollywood and was the first to invite Charlie Parker and

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<sup>332</sup> Douglas Henry Daniels, "Los Angeles' Jazz Roots, The Willis H. Young Family," in *California History* Vol. 82, No. 3 (2004), 50-51.

<sup>333</sup> Don Heckman, "Gerald Wilson dies at 96; multifaceted jazz musician" *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 2014.

<sup>334</sup> Myrna Oliver, "Melba Liston; Jazz Trombonist, Composer" *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1999.



Dizzy Gillespie to the West Coast in December of 1945. Granz began his Jazz at the Philharmonic (JATP) concerts at Philharmonic Auditorium (demolished) in July of 1944. When JATP toured from 1945 to 1957, Granz insisted on integrated bands and audiences, otherwise he would cancel the booking.<sup>335</sup> This trend of integration eliminated the need for white audiences to go to Central Avenue to hear jazz. The amalgamation of the black and white musicians' unions in 1953 reinforced this trend by expanding employment opportunities for black musicians. Finally, by the early 1950s the black audience began to decline as the middle-class began moving west.

The dissolution of the Central Avenue jazz scene and the end of segregation in local musicians' unions helped breed a new Los Angeles avant-garde music movement in the 1950s. Saxophonist Paul Horn would later recall that when he "moved from New York to Los Angeles in 1957, [he] quickly realized the East Coast was extremely conservative. California was wide open - an experimental, innovative, and exceptionally creative environment."<sup>336</sup> This experimentation took two different routes. Artists such as Stan Kenton, Chico Hamilton, Chet Baker, and Gerry Mulligan began to form cool jazz based on a distinctively Californian sound characterized by relaxed tempos and lighter tones. The music also focused more on contrapuntal horn arrangements with many groups omitting chordal accompaniment by guitars and pianos, while including non-standard jazz instruments such as French horns and cellos. On



*Home of Eric Dolphy, 1593 W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street 2014  
(HistoricPacesLA)*

the other end of the spectrum, artists such as Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry experimented with what would become free jazz. Eric Dolphy hosted jam sessions in the studio behind his parents' home at 1593 W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street that became a laboratory for a new sound in jazz. It was at this studio in 1954 that trumpeter Clifford Brown first met and heard saxophonist Harold Land, who he asked to join his well-known quintet with drummer Max Roach. Brown died in a car crash in 1956, and Land spent the rest of his influential career in Los Angeles.<sup>337</sup>

Although the scene on Central Avenue was largely over, jazz clubs began shifting west with the black middle-class. Places such as Oasis Club, Rubaiyat Room at the Watkins Hotel, and Town Tavern were thriving on Western Avenue and other clubs like the Parisian Room, Earl Bostic's Flying Fox, and Maverick's Flat opened even farther west on Crenshaw Boulevard. As many of Los Angeles' jazz greats

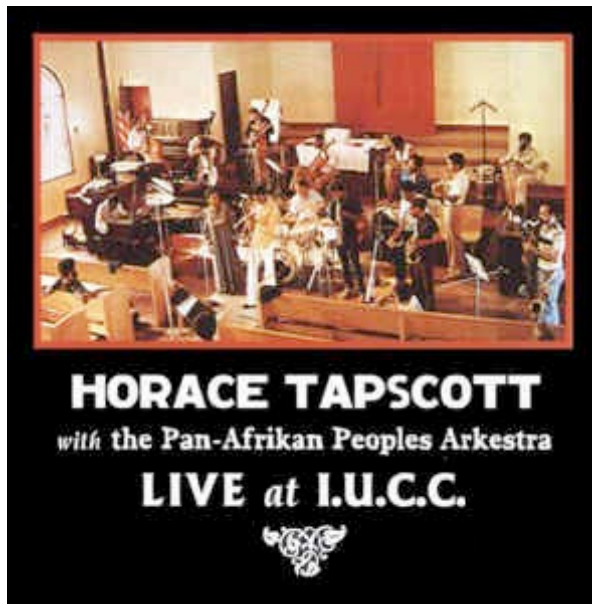
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<sup>335</sup> Richard Severo, "Norman Granz, Who Took Jazz Out of Smoky Clubs and Put It in Concert Halls, Dies at 83" *New York Times*, November, 27, 2001.

<sup>336</sup> Steve Isoardi, *The Dark Tree: Jazz and the Community Arts in Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 37.

<sup>337</sup> Ted Gioia, *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California, 1945-1960* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 321.

such as Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman, and Chico Hamilton moved to the East Coast to the healthier jazz economy in New York City, a new scene began to emerge in their wake. During this time, tension between African Americans and the police was building while economic opportunity began to wane and the culture around jazz in Los Angeles began to shift. Longtime jazz instructor Samuel Browne left the music department at Jefferson High School in 1961 for a position at the newly opened Palisades High School.<sup>338</sup> Horace Tapscott, a veteran of the end of the Central Avenue era, took it upon himself to rebuild the jazz community in South Los Angeles. Tapscott formed the Underground Musician's Association (UGMA), which became a nexus for musicians around Los Angeles, operating out of a series of houses in South Los Angeles throughout the 1960s. UGMA was conceived as an organization that would play music from the community for the community.<sup>339</sup> UGMA worked with members of the Black Panther Party such as Elaine Brown to create community events that went beyond performing music.



*Album cover from live recording of The Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra at Immanuel United Church of Christ, 85<sup>th</sup> and Holmes Avenue, 1979 (Nimbus West Records)*

Much of the innovative music coming out of South Los Angeles during the 1960s originated from the Studio Watts Workshop (10311 Grandee Avenue, demolished). Created in 1964 by artist Jayne Cortez and accountant James Woods, Studio Watts offered programs that ranged across the arts.<sup>340</sup> Musicians John Carter and Bobby Bradford often rehearsed at Studio Watts, where they formed the New Art Jazz Ensemble in 1966. South Los Angeles was not the only place with a communal jazz scene in the 1960s. Billie Harris started the Azz Izz Jazz Culture Center at 1031 W. Washington (now Abbott Kinney) Boulevard in Venice. While Tapscott and UGMA performed music aimed at their local community, there were still musicians working in film and television. Gerald Wiggins, known for his work with his jazz trio, also worked as a versatile studio musician and gave voice lessons to Marilyn Monroe.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Isoardi, *The Dark Tree*, 41.

<sup>339</sup> Isoardi, *The Dark Tree*, 53.

<sup>340</sup> Isoardi, *The Dark Tree*, 75.

<sup>341</sup> Don Heckman, "Jazz pianist played with his trio, plus many greats," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 2008.

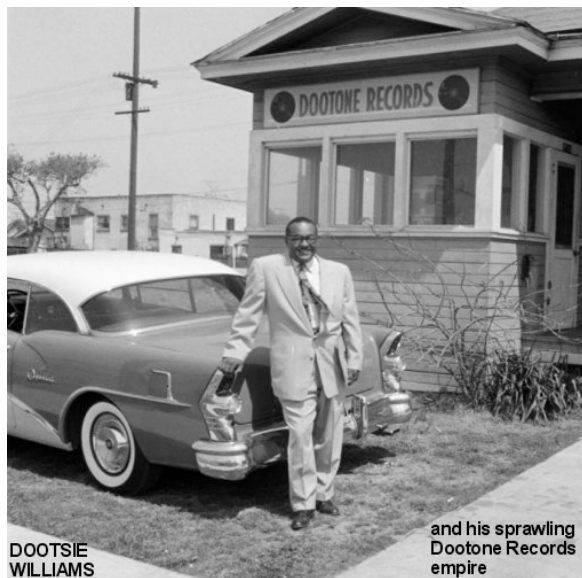


### *Contemporary Music*

As jazz music became increasingly complex, other types of music began to take its place in the spotlight. Rhythm and blues, soul, rock, and pop music came into their own in the 1950s and 1960s, with Los Angeles playing a key role. Rhythm and blues, which would spawn soul and rock music, was a product of large urban cities in the postwar period. This was especially true in places like Los Angeles where musicians were fusing the sounds of bebop and cool jazz traditions with those of newly transplanted Oklahoma and Texas boogie-woogie and blues singer-pianists.<sup>342</sup> Los Angeles was especially well known for pioneering the up-tempo “jump” rhythm and blues style. This music that was being locally popularized in clubs on Central Avenue, began spreading to the masses due to the entrepreneurship of a small group of record companies that realized a gap in the market. Large record companies did not know how to sell rhythm and blues records because as an emerging art form it did not fit neatly into the previously existing genres. Rhythm and blues was not the widely acclaimed African American big band music of Count Basie and Duke Ellington, nor was it the well-known country music associated with cowboy culture in the middle of the country.<sup>343</sup> Local independent record labels were best suited to promote this new type of music because they were seeing it evolve in their community and were small enough organizations to quickly adapt to the evolutions. Modern Records was owned by the family team, the Bihari Brothers. Joe, Jules, and Saul Bihari started Modern Music in 1945 to fill their own jukeboxes they operated in clubs on Central Avenue.<sup>344</sup> Once the Biharis realized there was money to be made and a dearth of labels creating records for their Central Avenue customers, they formed Modern

Music. They had their first big hit in 1946 with "So Long" by Johnny Moore's Three Blazers and scored again six months later with Hadda Brooks' "That's My Desire".<sup>345</sup>

A significant aspect of the musical life of the community were black-owned independent record companies. The earliest of these was the Sunshine Record Company formed by the Spikes brothers in 1921. In 1940, a recent graduate of Jefferson High School, Leroy Huerte, left behind a singing career with Victor recording artists, The Four Blackbirds, took over a record store on Central Avenue, installed a basic recording studio in the back, and started Bronze Records. With the successful



Dootsie Williams standing in front of his house at 9512 Central Avenue, circa 1955 (Vocal Group Harmony)

<sup>342</sup> Ralph Eastman, "Central Avenue Blues: The Making of Los Angeles Rhythm and Blues, 1942-1947," in *Black Music Research Journal* (Spring 1989), 20.

<sup>343</sup> Eastman, "Central Avenue Blues., 20.

<sup>344</sup> Eastman, "Central Avenue Blues, 40.

<sup>345</sup> Eastman, "Central Avenue Blues, 44.

recording of a gospel group called The Five Soul Stirrers, Bronze Records was established. In the early 1940s, Leon and Otis Rene embarked on the first of several independent recording ventures through the creation of two labels, Excelsior (owned by Otis), and Exclusive (owned by Leon). Beginning with the release of Joe Liggin's The Honeydripper on Exclusive in 1946, the brothers would be at the center of the rhythm and blues sound emerging from Los Angeles in the mid-1940s. Former bandleader Dootsie Williams started what would become Dootone Records in 1949. In the early days, Williams recorded out of a garage behind musician Ted Brinson's home in Jefferson Park (2190 W. 31<sup>st</sup> Street). It was here that they recorded the smash hit "Earth Angel" by The Penguins. Williams soon bought his own office and recording studio, which he created by converting a house on Central Avenue in Watts into his multi-use complex. Dootone Records would find success in later years by recording Redd Foxx's early comedy records. Another significant African American record label owner was Jack Lauderdale. Lauderdale founded Down Beat Records in 1947 but changed the name to Swing Beat Records in 1949 to avoid conflict with Down Beat magazine. He finally decided on Swing Time Records in 1950. Lauderdale's record company is best known for recording Ray Charles's early 1950s successes as well as guitarist Lowell Fulson's work in the 1940s.

One of the earliest and most noteworthy rhythm and blues groups to emerge during the 1950s was the Coasters. Formed in Los Angeles as an offshoot of a doo-wop group called the Robins, the Coasters achieved nationwide fame as a vehicle for songwriters Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller, who were responsible for penning some of the biggest hits of rock n' roll. The Coasters achieved crossover success with both white and black audiences for their humorous lyrics, often aimed towards teenagers. In 1987, the Coasters became the first vocal group inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

As rhythm and blues began to be reinterpreted into rock by white musicians from Elvis Presley to the Rolling Stones, the 1960s and 1970s also spawned a new musical genre with distinctly African American roots tied to gospel and blues that became known as soul. Soul music is largely thought to have originated in the southern states with the record labels Stax and Volt with a heavy influence by Motown Records in Detroit. Many of the artists associated with soul music around the country ended up in Los Angeles, which by this time had cemented itself as not just the capital of filmmaking, but the entertainment industry at large. Motown records officially relocated to Los Angeles in 1972, though they had opened an office in Hollywood by the mid-60s. Some of the talent that migrated to Los Angeles included the Jackson 5, Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, and Sam Cooke. Whereas most African American musicians that came to Los Angeles to work in previous decades settled in historically African American neighborhoods, these new artists benefitted from housing reforms and increased salaries, leading them to settle all over the city. The Jackson 5 lived in Encino, Sam Cooke in Los Feliz, Barry White in Sherman Oaks, and Marvin Gaye in the Hollywood Hills.

Not every contributor to Los Angeles' soul music scene was a transplant. Two homegrown singers were Etta James and Brenda Holloway. Etta James (born Jamesetta Hawkins) spent the first 12 years of her life in Watts. She then moved to San Francisco with a relative where she was discovered at the age of 14 by Los Angeles musician Johnny Otis. James moved back to Los Angeles in 1954 to record her hit "The Wallflower." James recorded her biggest hits in the 1960s, but in her private life she struggled with addiction and lived in poor conditions with her family in South Los Angeles. Brenda Holloway was born



*Brenda Holloway, circa 1960 (Soulwalker)*

in Atascadero but moved to Bandera Street in Watts at age two.<sup>346</sup> Holloway was active in music and at the age of 15 she was singled out for her violin playing by the orchestra conductor at Jordan High School to study at USC.<sup>347</sup> In addition to playing violin, Holloway sang at churches near her home. She got her break when she caught the attention of Motown Records owner Berry Gordy while singing at the Coconut Grove. Holloway was the first West Coast

artist signed to Motown. Her star continued to rise in the following years but her career came to a halt in 1968 when, feeling she was mistreated and underutilized compared to the Detroit-based artists, she left in the middle of a recording session. Holloway would not return to the mainstream music business but her sense of style and charisma was imitated by many artists after her.

Los Angeles has been one of the epicenters of rock music from the 1960s onward. Although the African American community of Los Angeles was crucial to the development of rhythm and blues, which



*Brooks and Presley at Loving You recording sessions, 1957 (Pinterest)*

spawned rock, they were largely left out of the rock music scene of the 1960s. A few notable exceptions were Arthur Lee, Johnny Echols, Billy Preston, John Creach, and Dudley A. Brooks. Lee and Echols were both born in Memphis and raised in South Los Angeles, they formed a band called Love, which is now considered to be one of the most important and influential groups of the 60s. Their 1967 album *Forever Changes* is regarded as a classic and frequently lands on greatest album lists. Lee became a counter-culture icon as well as one of the only African Americans to find success in a rock scene largely dominated by whites. His flamboyant fashion style also served as an influence to others who would reach

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<sup>346</sup> Kimasi L. Browne, "Brenda Holloway, Los Angeles's Contributions to Motown," in *California Soul: Music of African Americans in the West* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 328.

<sup>347</sup> Browne, "Brenda Holloway," 329.

stardom such as Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone. Although born in Houston, Billy Preston was a piano prodigy who grew up in South Los Angeles. Known primarily for playing with the Beatles in the film *Let it Be*, Preston led a storied career that put him onstage with musical greats from Sam Cooke, Ray Charles, and Little Richard, to the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, and Sly and the Family Stone. Creach and Brooks were veteran musicians who transitioned to rock. Creach moved to Los Angeles in 1945 and performed and recorded with jazz and blues groups. In 1967, he met Joey Covington, the drummer for Jefferson Airplane, who introduced him to other rock bands. Brooks, who began as a jazz pianist for Duke Ellington, later became the preferred session musician and close collaborator of Elvis Presley while working at Radio Records in West Hollywood. They worked on almost 20 records together.

Black Angelenos' influence on the music industry has done anything but diminish since the 1980s. Early spoken word pioneers The Watts Prophets emerged from the Watts Writer's Workshop and were a progenitor of rap music, which would become a trademark genre for South Los Angeles's African American community.

### **Motion Pictures**

The history of African Americans in film had an inauspicious start in 1915 with *Birth of a Nation*. Set during the American Civil War and directed by D.W. Griffith, the film was the first Hollywood blockbuster. It was also hugely controversial, both in its own day and today, for its promotion of white supremacy and glorification of the Ku Klux Klan. The film drew significant protest from the African American community upon its release. The NAACP protested premieres of the film in numerous cities including Los Angeles. The group received no support from whites that viewed censorship as a violation of free speech and appreciated the technical and visual achievements of the film, despite the objectionable subject matter. Nevertheless, the NAACP pressed its campaign and achieved a modest victory in having the most odious scenes excised from the film.<sup>348</sup> But if the purpose of the film was to inspire white supremacy, the effect was the opposite. It heightened black racial identity and led to the development of independent black cinema.



Poster for *The Realization of a Negro's Ambition*, 1916 (Wikipedia)

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<sup>348</sup> Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977) 41-69; Barbara Tapa Lupack, *Literary Adaptations in Black American Cinema: From Micheaux to Morrison* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 25-33.



The formation of motion picture companies by African Americans was a direct response to *Birth of a Nation*. Based in Los Angeles, the Lincoln Motion Picture Company was the first motion picture company controlled by blacks and was renowned for the quality of its features and its serious treatment of middle class black life. Founded in 1916, the company sought to produce films that depicted positive images of African Americans. Noble Johnson, an actor, was president of the company. The secretary, Clarence A. Brooks, was also an actor. Dr. James T. Smith worked as treasurer and Dudley A. Brooks was assistant secretary. The officers first met on the balcony of Smith's Drugstore at 905 Central Avenue, but eventually opened an office at 1121 Central Avenue (both demolished.)

The first Lincoln production was a drama about black middle class aspirations entitled *The Realization of a Negro's Ambition* (1916). The second Lincoln production, *A Trooper of Troop K* (1917), dealt with a massacre of black troops in the Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry during the American operation against Mexican bandits and revolutionaries in 1916. Although Johnson wanted the films to play to wider audiences, they were mostly booked in special locations at churches and schools and the few "colored only" theaters in America. By 1920 Lincoln had completed five films including *A Man's Duty* (1919), but it proved to be a minor business operation.



Noble Johnson on the set of a film, no date  
(Hollywood Heritage)

Johnson gave up his position with the company when he became a contract actor at Universal Pictures, and Smith assumed the company presidency. Smith accepted an offer for financial backing by a white investor, P.H. Updike. George Johnson, Noble's brother, supervised the marketing and promotion of what would become Lincoln's most ambitious, but last project. In October 1921, Lincoln began production on their film *By Right of Birth*. The script was written by Dora Mitchell based on a story by George P. Johnson. Johnson rented the Trinity Auditorium (now the Embassy Auditorium) in Downtown Los Angeles for the evenings of June 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1921. Although both evenings were sold out, the effort did little to improve the overall financial prospects of the company. The Lincoln Motion Picture Company began its existence with great expectations that were stymied by a post-World War I depression, an unreliable means of distribution, and a limited pool of capital. Although Lincoln only lasted until 1925, it ushered in a new subset of films, commonly referred to as "race" movies.<sup>349</sup>

Race movies featured all-black casts and were mostly produced by white-owned studios to appeal to black movie-goers; however, one young African American filmmaker succeeded where others failed.

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<sup>349</sup> Lupack, *Literary Adaptations in Black American Cinema*, 75-80.

Oscar Micheaux began his filmmaking career after negotiations with the Lincoln Motion Picture Company to adapt his novel *The Homesteaders* to the screen broke down and he determined to make the film himself in 1919. He would go on to produce more than 40 films in his long and distinguished career, including *Body and Soul* (1925), Paul Robeson's motion picture debut.<sup>350</sup>

The year 1927 ushered in a new era in the motion picture industry. The use of sound films now connected the silent staged scenes in movies to the voices of actors and the action of those scenes. The use of blackface in sound films was a carryover from silent films, which often depicted African Americans in this way. Al Jolson epitomized the custom in the *Jazz Singer* (1927), the first feature length sound motion picture.

Within a few years, black-faced white actors were phased-out of films in favor of using African Americans to play black characters. However, African Americans were relegated to roles dealing almost entirely with light comedy, music, or dance. Therefore, we see Stepin Fetchit, an African American actor, getting star billing in a series of films based on his character known as "The Laziest Man in the World." Stepin Fetchit was the stage name of Lincoln Perry. His film persona and stage name have long been synonymous with the stereotype of the servile, shiftless, simple-minded black man in early twentieth century American film. By the mid-1930s, Perry was at his peak, and black leaders were putting pressure on Hollywood to rid the screen of the stereotype he was responsible for perpetuating. They believed the "Stepin Fetchit" character was keeping whites from viewing blacks as capable of joining the mainstream.

Several other actors and actresses who achieved near stardom in the 1930s and 1940s included Clarence Muse, Nina McKinney, Ethel Waters, Lorenzo Tucker, Bill Robinson, Thelma "Butterfly" McQueen, Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge, and Louise Beavers. Of course, Hattie McDaniel won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance as "Mammy" in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Less well known, but equally noteworthy, was Louise Beavers who also played noticeable, yet stereotypical, maid roles in numerous films including *She Done Him Wrong* (1933) and *Bombshell* (1933), for which she received an Oscar nomination. She was one of the first actors to break through the traditional black role of servitude and/or comic relief by bringing more meaning and humanity to the screen, most notably in *Imitation of Life* (1934). Despite the fact that she



Hattie McDaniel at Academy Awards ceremony in 1940 with presenter Fay Bainter (Oscars.org)

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<sup>350</sup> The Micheaux Film and Book Company, was based in Chicago and later New York.



had yet again been cast in the role of a housekeeper, *Imitation of Life* was the first major film where black characters had story lines equal to white characters. Beaver's co-star in the film was Nina McKinney, who played her light-skinned daughter who tried to "pass as white." At the age of 16, she was cast in King Vidor's *Hallelujah* (1929). Based upon the strength of that performance she was given a five-year contract with MGM. But there were no roles for pretty black leading ladies, so she only appeared in two films before her contract expired.

While there were a few African Americans who had contracts with motion picture studios, there were many more who functioned as extras. In 1926, the leading motion picture studios formed the Central Casting Corporation of Hollywood. Central Casting employed several African Americans who were responsible for recruiting extras from the community. In the mid-1930s, extras were paid an average of \$7.50 per day, while the scale for actors under studio contracts ranged from \$25.00 per day to \$500.00 per week.

The period of integration in the motion picture industry began in 1949 with the release of *Home of the Brave*, a film that dealt with racism and bigotry during World War II. Two other films that year involved light-skinned African Americans "passing for white": *Lost Boundaries* (1949) and *Pinky* (1949). These films were cutting edge in that they placed black and white actors in dramatic roles depicting situations centered around issues of black plight and race.



*Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte in Carmen Jones, 1954 (Otto Preminger Films)*

In the 1950s, African Americans began to make strides behind the camera in mainstream cinema. William Walker, who is best known as Rev. Sykes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, was on the board of directors of the Screen Actors Guild from 1952 to 1971. In 1952, Walker, with actor Ronald Reagan, presented a report to the board titled "More and Better Roles for Negroes in Motion Pictures." This report caused a stir but no real changes occurred. In 1963, Walker partnered with the NAACP and negotiated SAG's Theatrical Agreement to include a non-discrimination clause. In 1953, Ike Jones was the first African American graduate from UCLA's

film school.<sup>351</sup> Jones would later have the distinction of being the first African American hired as a producer on a major motion picture for *A Man Called Adam* (1966).<sup>352</sup> In 1954, Dorothy Dandridge starred in *Carmen Jones* and was the first African American actress to be nominated for a Best Actress

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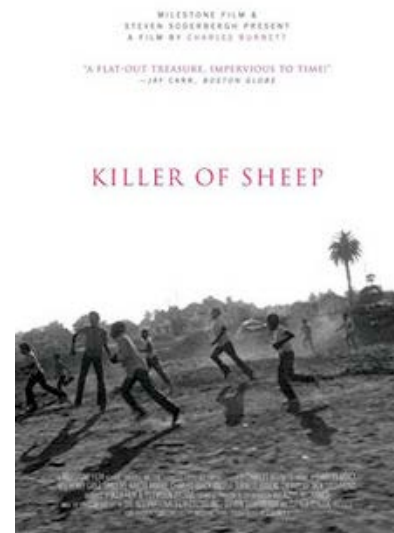
<sup>351</sup> S. Torriano Berry, *Historical Dictionary of African American Cinema* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), xxi.

<sup>352</sup> David Coker, "Ike Jones Dies at 84; Pioneering African American Film Producer," *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 2014.

Oscar. The nominations continued to come for other actresses, including Best Supporting Actress for Juanita Moore in *Imitation of Life* (1959). 1963 was a tumultuous year for civil rights across the country. In a time when much of the focus on civil rights was on the southern states, the NAACP began a campaign in Hollywood demanding fair hiring of African Americans and the accurate portrayal of black culture.<sup>353</sup> Despite the support of high-profile white actors such as Marlon Brando and Charlton Heston and the theoretical support of the industry, only small gains were made. Notably, Sidney Poitier became the first African American to win the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in *Lilies of the Field* in 1964.

The Watts uprising of 1965 triggered a shift in all aspects of African American life in Los Angeles, and filmmaking was no different. Elyseo Taylor, the first African American faculty member in the film school at UCLA, moved to Los Angeles in 1965 and spent much of his time working with youth at the Mafundi Institute and Watts Happening Coffee House, centers for artists and activists on E. 103<sup>rd</sup> Street (demolished), to teach them how to document their own communities.<sup>354</sup> Taylor would go on to head the Media Urban Crisis program, which taught minority college students skills in mass communications. Though Taylor left the university and the city when he was denied tenure, his role at UCLA sparked what would become the L.A. Rebellion group of filmmakers. Two of the earliest L.A. Rebellion filmmakers were Larry Clark and Los Angeles local Charles Burnett. Burnett grew up in Watts and used the neighborhood as a subject in his film *Killer of Sheep* (1978).<sup>355</sup> These filmmakers and others would go on to create a black cinema that provided an alternative to classical Hollywood cinema.

The Blaxploitation film movement of the 1970s grew contemporaneously with the LA Rebellion filmmakers. Whereas the LA Rebellion attempted to create a black cinema based on introspection and authenticity, Blaxploitation films were more audacious in promoting black empowerment while also perpetuating stereotypes. The defining film of the genre, *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) was directed by African American filmmaker Melvin Van Peebles and takes place in Los Angeles. Sadly and ironically, most of the Blaxploitation films of the era were not produced or directed by African Americans. A notable exception to this rule was Wendell James Franklin's *The Bus Is Coming* (1971). Franklin, a native of Los Angeles, had climbed his way up from working as a parking attendant to finally forming K-Calb



Poster for *Killer of Sheep*, 1978  
(Milestone Films)

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<sup>353</sup> Christopher Sieving, *Soul Searching: Black-Themed Cinema From the March on Washington to the Rise of Blaxploitation*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 19.

<sup>354</sup> Allyson Field, et al., *L.A. Rebellion : Creating a New Black Cinema*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 6.

<sup>355</sup> Robert E. Kapsis, *Charles Burnett : Interviews*, (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 140.

(black spelled backwards) Productions with Horace Jackson.<sup>356</sup> Franklin was the first African American admitted to the Directors Guild of American in 1960.<sup>357</sup>

## Radio

The role of African Americans in the motion picture industry was parallel to radio, and performers moved back and forth freely between the two mediums. In the early days of radio, a mixture of positive and negative stereotypes characterized African Americans. Radio shows such as *Beulah* and *Amos 'n' Andy* featured black characters that were carefree, inarticulate, and inept. At the same time, broadcasts by bandleader Duke Ellington, singer Paul Robeson, and others exposed predominantly white radio audiences to the work of talented and refined African American artists. In the 1950s, black radio fueled the popularity of rhythm and blues music and was instrumental in lowering cultural barriers between blacks and whites. Yet African Americans did not make gains in radio management and ownership until the 1970s.

The career of Eddie Anderson exemplified the predicament of African Americans in radio. His talent as a singer, comedian, and dancer blossomed on the stage of the Apex Club on Central Avenue. He received his big break when he appeared as a Pullman porter on Jack Benny's radio program. They formed an instant rapport and Benny gave him a recurring part. Debuting in 1937, "Rochester" was the first black character with a regular role on a national radio program. While he played Benny's manservant, "Anderson often got the better of his boss," as historian R.J. Smith points out.<sup>358</sup> The fact that Anderson was cast as a black character was a major step forward from programs such as *Beulah* and *Amos 'n' Andy* where white actors played blacks. Despite the fact that Anderson was cast as a domestic servant, the African American community held him in high esteem. Anderson was a fixture on Central Avenue and was elected honorary mayor, a position he took somewhat seriously. Anderson was one of the highest paid African American actors in Hollywood at the time and used his wealth in 1941 to commission Paul R. Williams to design his home in West Adams.

Black-oriented programming also played a part in early radio. On November 3, 1929, white-owned radio station WSBC in Chicago premiered *The All-Negro Hour*, the first radio program to feature African American performers exclusively. The program, hosted by former vaudeville performer Jack L. Cooper, featured music, comedy, and serial dramas. *The All-Negro Hour* went off the air in 1935, but Cooper continued to host and produce black-oriented programming for WSBC. One such program was *Search for Missing Persons*, a series launched in 1938 that reunited African American migrants from the south with lost friends and relatives. His success along with a general trend toward expansion in the radio industry led to a rise of black-oriented radio stations following World War II.

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<sup>356</sup> "'A Black Man Made me a Director,' says Franklin" *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 15, 1971.

<sup>357</sup> Then called the Screen Directors Guild.

<sup>358</sup> R.J. Smith, *The Great Black Way: L.A. in the 1940s and the Lost African American Renaissance* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2006), 17.



*Joe Adams at KOWL, no date  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The pioneers of black broadcasting in Los Angeles were Forest Perkins and Rev. Clayton D. Russell. Beginning in the late 1930s they would buy time on white-owned radio stations in 15, 30, and 60-minute increments and then sell commercial time to black-owned businesses that would run during the programs, which typically had a religious orientation. In 1938, Russell produced a 15-minute church service on KFOX, which included announcers Joe Adams and Forest Perkins. In 1941, Russell's program was expanded to one hour and included gospel music.

Live radio broadcasts during the 1940s were commonplace. Local musicians like Sonny Criss, Dexter Gordon, Art Farmer, Hampton Hawes, and numerous others could be heard on radio stations that had remote facilities. These broadcasts gave musicians a new audience by letting outsiders

experience the music that was being created on and around Central Avenue. Numerous white disk jockeys like Al Jarvis made important contributions by giving black recording artists airtime on pop music stations. Joe Adams worked for Jarvis at KFWB and around 1943 began doing live in-studio broadcasts featuring Count Basie's Orchestra and Joe Liggins. He also worked at NBC Radio, acted, and hosted his own television show.

KGFJ would become the dominant black radio station in L.A. through the 1960s. Founded in 1927, KGFJ was the first station in the country to broadcast 24 hours a day. They broadcasted from the Odd Fellows Temple at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Oak Street. The building is now known as Casa Camino Real and is designated LAHCM #300. From 1940 to 1942 A.C. Bilbrew hosted the *Gold Hour* on KGFJ, which provided a source for church news and songs for L.A.'s black community. Charlotta Bass, publisher of the *California Eagle* newspaper, also hosted a news discussion program. In the early 1950s, the station increased its marketing to the African American community with a two and one-half hour block of rhythm and blues, but the popularity of the program transcended race. The station eventually embraced the format and became a widely respected soul music station, employing popular disc jockeys including Hunter Hancock and Nathaniel "the Magnificent" Montague. In 1973, KDAY became the second station in Los Angeles to program specifically for the African American radio market. To counter the competition from KDAY, KGFJ was rebranded and changed the call letters to KKTT. KKTT remained white-owned until 1979 when it was purchased by the Inner City Broadcasting Corporation.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Ron Dungee, "KGFJ-AM: The End of an Era, One-Time Radio Giant Passes into History," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 29, 1996.

## Television



Louise Beavers was one of three actresses that played the main character in *Beulah*, no date (TV Party)

African Americans appeared in one of the earliest television broadcasts. In 1939, NBC aired *The Ethel Waters Show*, a televised performance of Ethel Waters' play *Mamba's Daughters*, which co-starred well-known African American actors Georgette Harvey and Fredi Washington.<sup>360</sup> But it would be many years before African Americans were given another starring role on television. As in film, African American representation on television began with racial stereotyping. The earliest African American roles came on shows like *Beulah* (1950-1953) and *Amos 'n' Andy* (1951-1953). *Beulah* began as a radio program that aired from 1945 to 1954 and used its popularity to transition into the burgeoning television medium. Initially the show was filmed in New York City and starred Ethel Waters in the titular role, but filming moved to Los Angeles by 1951. When the show moved to Los Angeles, ABC

hired film star Hattie McDaniel to play Beulah.<sup>361</sup> McDaniel died of cancer in 1952 and was replaced by Louise Beavers. Waters, McDaniel, and Beavers were all residents of the affluent Sugar Hill neighborhood in West Adams area of Los Angeles.

While *Beulah* was criticized for its stereotypical portrayal of the African American woman as "mammy," *Amos 'n' Andy* was even more controversial within the African American community. Similar to *Beulah*, *Amos 'n' Andy* began as a radio program that ran in different forms from 1928 to 1963. When the program was adapted for television black actors were cast, although they were instructed to mimic the voices and speech patterns of the white actors who had originated the characters on radio. Although it was revolutionary for an all-black cast to appear on television, some African Americans thought this achievement was diminished by the content of the show. The show was designed as a situation comedy set in Harlem. The majority of the stories revolved around the character Kingfish (played by Tim Moore) and his schemes to both avoid work and, if possible, take financial advantage of the ignorance of Andy (played by Spencer Williams) and other characters.<sup>362</sup> The NAACP mounted a formal protest almost as soon as the show was televised. The group organized a boycott of Blatz beer, the show's sponsor. Although quite popular, Blatz withdrew its sponsorship and CBS cancelled the show in 1953; however, it remained in syndication for years later.

Another radio program that made the transition to television was *The Jack Benny Program*. The casting remained the same with Eddie Anderson playing Rochester from 1951 to 1965. Although African

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<sup>360</sup> Donald Bogle, *Primetime Blues: African Americans on Network Television* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 9.

<sup>361</sup> Bogle, *Primetime Blues*, 25.

<sup>362</sup> Bogle, *Primetime Blues*, 38.



Americans were relegated to servants at best in their early roles, these were still crucial in creating space for African Americans on the new medium of television. Singer Etta James would later recall growing up in Los Angeles, “all the black actors were heroes. They might play fools on the screen, but the folks in the neighborhood knew it took more than a fool to break into lily-white Hollywood.”<sup>363</sup>



*The Nat King Cole Show aired from 1956 to 1957 (Facebook)*

African Americans began to receive more serious dramatic roles throughout the 1950s. Before he became a movie star, Sidney Poitier had his breakout role in the Philco Television Playhouse production of *A Man is Ten Feet Tall* (1955). Ethel Waters continued to appear in a variety of roles such as the mother of a boxer, played by Harry Belafonte, in *Winner By Decision* (1955). Sammy Davis Jr. became a mainstay during this time, playing in many roles including a rare depiction of African Americans in the Wild West in the *Dick Powell's Zane Grey*

*Theater* episode entitled *Mission* (1959).<sup>364</sup> However, none of these fine actors were given regular casting on a major program. One exception to this phenomenon was *The Nat “King” Cole Show*, which premiered in 1956. Cole was a hugely popular singer at the time, and NBC thought they could translate his broad appeal into big ratings. Although Cole had the help of many stars such as Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett, and Sammy Davis Jr. who would often take a pay cut and work for industry minimum wage to help the beloved host, the time slot and difficulty finding sponsors doomed the show, which Cole ended in December of 1957.<sup>365</sup> Nat “King” Cole was living at the time with his family in Hancock Park, where they were the first African American family to move into the neighborhood less than ten years earlier.

African Americans continued to receive more and more screen time on television during the 1960s. The quality of the roles also began to improve. Bill Cosby, who had already made a name for himself as a comic, starred in *I Spy* (1965-68), a secret-agent buddy adventure series. The series was the first to include a white and black lead that treated each other as equals. Diahann Carroll played a black nurse in *Julia* (1968-71). Julia was criticized for not tackling the racial issues of the day, but was ultimately a step forward in positive representations of African Americans on television. In the 1970s, another previous barrier was broken. *The Flip Wilson Show* (1970-74) was the first successful variety show hosted by an African American on network television.

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<sup>363</sup> Bogle, *Primetime Blues*, 57.

<sup>364</sup> Bogle, *Primetime Blues*, 87.

<sup>365</sup> Bogle, *Primetime Blues*, 77.



### Associated Historic Resources

The following tables describe designated and potential resources associated with the history of African Americans in the entertainment industry. Eligibility Standards primarily address residential property types such as single-family and multi-family residences, but also include recording studios and nightclubs. The tables are not intended to be an exhaustive list of African American people in the entertainment industry. The research focused on the identification of extant resources associated with African Americans who played critical roles in the formation of the industry, and creative people who expressed their African American identity in their work. In some cases, multiple extant resources were identified and all are included below if they were associated with the productive life of the individual. Many individuals and companies associated with the entertainment industry, including African Americans, lived and functioned in neighboring cities such as Beverly Hills, Culver City, and West Hollywood. These properties were not included below because they fall outside the geographic scope of this context because they are located in separate jurisdictions.

### Designated Resources

Resource Name	Location	Designation
Anderson, Ivie Residence	724 E. 52 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Anderson (1905-1949) was a jazz singer who performed with the Duke Ellington Orchestra among other groups. She lived in this house from 1930 to 1945. It is listed in the National and California Registers as a contributor to the 52 <sup>nd</sup> Place Historic District, which is also an HPOZ.
Beavers, Louise Residence #1	2130 W. 29 <sup>th</sup> Street	Beavers (1902-1962) was an actress best known for her role in the film <i>Imitation of Life</i> (1934), a breakthrough film for African Americans. She lived in this house from at least 1936 to 1938. It is contributing to the Jefferson Park HPOZ.
Brinson Jr., Theodore "Ted" Home and Studio	2190 W. 30 <sup>th</sup> Street	Brinson (1908-1981) was a musician and engineer who lived and recorded music in this house from the 1950s to the 1970s. It is contributing to the Jefferson Park

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		HPOZ.
Cole, Nat “King” Residence	423 S. Muirfield Road	Cole (1919-1965) is one of the most well-known singers in American history. He lived in this house with his family from 1948 until his death in 1965. It is contributing to the Hancock Park HPOZ.
Dandridge, Ruby Residence	2012 S. Victoria Avenue	Dandridge (1900-1987) was an actress known for her work on stage, film, and radio, but best remembered as the mother of Dorothy Dandridge. She moved into this house in 1951. It is designated LAHCM #1044.
Laster, Georgia Residence	2108 W. 29 <sup>th</sup> Street	Laster (1928-1961) was a classical soprano. She lived in this house from at least 1956 until her death in 1961. It is contributing to the Jefferson Park HPOZ.
Lincoln Theater	2300 Central Avenue	Opened in 1927, the Lincoln Theater was the largest of five theaters along the Central Avenue corridor that provided entertainment to the black community. It was a key venue in jazz history, featuring performs such as Lionel Hampton and Duke Ellington, among many others. It is listed in the National and California Registers and designated LAHCM #744.
Maverick’s Flat	4225 Crenshaw Boulevard	Opened in 1966, Maverick's Flat soon gained a reputation as one of the foremost music venues in Los Angeles with acts such as the Temptations, Tina Turner, and Marvin Gaye making appearances during its heyday. It is designated LAHCM #679.
Mills Brothers Residence	2090 W. 30 <sup>th</sup> Street	The Mills Brothers (1928-1982)

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		was a vocal quartet made up of brothers that rose to fame on radio during the 1930s. Harry Mills lived here in 1945. It is contributing to the Jefferson Park HPOZ.
Otis, Johnny Residence	2077 S. Harvard Boulevard	Born Ioannis Alexandres Valietes to Greek immigrant parents, Otis (1921-2012) grew up in a predominately African American neighborhood and chose to live as a member of the community. He was a seminal figure in rhythm and blues as well as rock n' roll. He lived in this house from 1967 to the 1980s. It is contributing to the Harvard Heights HPOZ.
Rawls, Louis "Lou" Allen Residence	1120 S. Gramercy Place	Rawls (1933-2006) was a three-time Grammy winning rhythm and blues singer and television voice actor. He dedicated his life towards the United Negro College Fund. Rawls lived here in 1967. It is contributing to the Country Club Park HPOZ.
Ray Charles Worldwide Offices and Studios	2107 W. Washington Boulevard	Charles (1930-2004) was a singer, songwriter, musician, and composer who worked in and combined a variety of genres. He opened this recording studio in 1964. It is designated LAHCM #776.
Razaf, Andy Residence	3429 Country Club Drive	Razaf (1895-1973) was a poet, composer, and lyricist for many famous songs including "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Honeysuckle Rose." He lived in this house from 1959 to 1965. It is contributing to the Country Club Park HPOZ.
Rene, Otis Residence	2124 W. 24 <sup>th</sup> Street	Otis (1898-1970) and Leon Rene (1902-1982) operated Exclusive

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		and Excelsior Records in the 1940s. By 1956, Otis lived in this house, which is contributing to the West Adams Terrace HPOZ.
Spikes, Benjamin “Reb” Residence	2419 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Spikes (1888-1982) was a jazz saxophonist and entrepreneur. He lived in this house from 1951 to 1960. It is contributing to the West Adams Terrace HPOZ.
Still, William Grant Residence	1262 S. Victoria Avenue	Still (1895-1979) was a classical composer who completed over 150 songs, five symphonies, and eight operas. He lived in this house from 1971 until his death in 1979. It is designated LAHCM #169.

**Potential Resources**

Resource Name	Location	Comments
5-4 Ballroom	5409 S. Broadway	This music venue opened in 1922, but was “whites only” at the time. By the 1940s African Americans moved to the area, and the venue hosted the biggest names in jazz and rhythm and blues until 1968 when it closed.
Anderson, Edmund Lincoln “Rochester” Residence	1924 W. Rochester Circle	Anderson (1905-1977) was the first black actor with a regular role on a national radio program. In 1941, he commissioned Paul R. Williams to design this house where he lived until his death in 1977.
Azz Izz Jazz Cultural Center	1031 W. Abbott Kinney Boulevard	Jazz saxophonist Billie Harris (1937-2014) opened this music venue in 1970, and it quickly became part of the counterculture scene in Venice. It was used as a west side base for the Union of God’s Musicians and Artists

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		Association for approximately a decade.
Beavers, Louise Residence	2219 S. Hobart Boulevard	Beavers (1902-1962) was a film and television actress best known for her role in the film <i>Imitation of Life</i> (1934), a breakthrough film for African Americans. She moved into this house sometime before 1942, and remained here until her death in 1962.
Berry, Richard Residence	142 W. 54 <sup>th</sup> Street	Berry (1935-1997) was a musician influential in the doo-wop scene. He wrote the original breakout hit "Louie Louie" while living here.
Brooks, Clarence A. Residence	1333 E. 28 <sup>th</sup> Street	Brooks (1896-1969) was an actor and one of the founders of the Lincoln Theater Company. He lived in this house from at least 1930 to 1940.
Brooks, Dudley A. Residence	2323 Cloverdale Avenue	Brooks (1913-1989) was a songwriter and pianist who began in jazz and later became Elvis Presley's session player. He lived in this house from at least 1956 until his death in 1989.
Charles, Ray Residence	3910 S. Hepburn Avenue	Charles (1930-2004) was a renowned singer, songwriter, musician, and composer. He lived in this house from 1958 to 1964.
Coleman, Ornette Residence	3999 St. Andrews Place	Coleman (1930-2015) was a jazz musician and composer who spent some of his formative years in Los Angeles. He is listed at this address in the 1956. Coleman moved to New York in 1959.
Cole-Talbert, Florence Residence	459 E. 29 <sup>th</sup> Street	Cole-Talbert (1890-1961) was a classical soprano born in Detroit. She lived in this house in 1910 and was the first African American to attend Los Angeles High School. It may not retain sufficient integrity

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		for designation as a historical resource.
Collette, William "Buddy" Residence	1406 St. Andrews Place, Apt. 1	Collette (1921-2010) was a jazz flautist, saxophonist, clarinetist, and composer. He lived here in 1952 and wrote a song inspired by the apartment called the "St Andrews Place Blues."
Criss, Sonny Residence	10306 Mary Avenue	Criss (1927-1977) was an alto saxophone player in the bebop style. He moved to Los Angeles as a teenager, and rose to prominence in the underground jazz scene. He lived here from 1960 to 1965.
Dolphy, Eric Residence	1593 W. 36 <sup>th</sup> Street	Dolphy (1928-1964) was a jazz saxophonist, flautist, and clarinetist. This was his childhood home which included a studio where other musicians often gathered in the 1940s and 50s.
Dootone Records	9512 Central Avenue	Walter "Dootsie" Williams (1911-1991) was a record producer. He used this house as his offices and studios from 1951 to at least 1979.
Earl Bostic's Flying Fox	3724 W. Martin Luther King Boulevard	Bostic (1913-1965) was an alto saxophonist who was a major influence on jazz legend John Coltrane. Flying Fox was his club and restaurant that operated during the 1950s and 60s.
Exclusive Records	6272 Sunset Boulevard	Owned by the Rene brothers, Exclusive Records featured many early blues players such as Joe Liggins, Jack McVea, Herb Jeffries, and Johnny Moore. They operated at this location from at least 1947 to 1950.
Hacienda Motel	9137 S. Figueroa Street	This was the place where internationally-acclaimed gospel,



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		rhythm and blues, and soul singer Sam Cooke (1931-1964) was murdered.
Hawes Jr., Hampton Residence	1634 E. 46 <sup>th</sup> Street	Jazz pianist Hawes (1928-1977) lived in this house from 1953 to 1960, during which time he was named "New Star of the Year" by <i>Downbeat Magazine</i> .
Hightower, Alma House and Studio	466 E. Vernon Avenue	Hightower (1888-1970) was a vocalist and music teacher. She lived here and taught many well-known musicians at this location from 1943 into the 1960s.
Hill, Linda Residence aka "Lino's Pad"	1222 E. 75 <sup>th</sup> Street	Hill (1935- 1987) was a pianist and vocalist. She is regarded as a matriarch of the Union of God's Musicians and Artists Association. Dubbed "Lino's Pad," her house was memorialized in a Horace Tapscott composition of the same name.
Jack's Basket Room	3217 Central Avenue	This jazz club operated from 1939 to 1951. It operated under various names including Jack's Basket Room and Bird in the Basket. It appears to be the only music venue remaining on Central Avenue from this period.
Jackson Family Residence	4641 N. Hayvenhurst Avenue	Michael Jackson (1958-2009) and his family lived in this house in Encino from 1971 to 1988.
Johnson, Noble Residence	1214 W. 37 <sup>th</sup> Street	Johnson (1881-1978) was an actor and producer. In 1916, he co-founded the Lincoln Motion Picture Company. He is listed at this address in the 1930 City Directory.
Land, Harold Residence	5106 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Land (1928-2001) was a tenor saxophonist during the bebop era. He lived in this house from the 1960s until his death in 2001.

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Marvin's Room Studio	6553 W. Sunset Boulevard	Marvin Gaye opened this recording studio and nightclub in 1975. He sold it in 1979 due to financial troubles. It was later called Eldorado Studios in the mid-1980s. In 1997, the studio was restored by John McClain. Since then, big name artists like Michael Jackson, Usher, Mariah Carey, and Lenny Kravitz have recorded here.
McDaniel, Hattie Residence	2203 S. Harvard Boulevard	McDaniel (1895-1952) was the first African American woman to win an Academy Award – for her performance in <i>Gone with the Wind</i> (1939). She lived in this house in the Sugar Hill neighborhood from 1941 until her death in 1952.
Moore, Tim "Kingfish" Residence	1700 S. Harvard Boulevard	Moore (1887-1958) was an actor best known for his role as "Kingfish" on the <i>Amos 'n Andy Show</i> . This was his home when he died in 1958.
Moreland, Mantan Residence	706 E. 55 <sup>th</sup> Street	Moreland (1902-1973), nicknamed "The guy with the eye," was a film actor in the 1930s and 40s. He is listed at this address in the 1940 U.S. Census.
Oasis Club	3801 S. Western Avenue	A jazz club that hosted many legends in the 1950s and 60s including Eric Dolphy and Lawrence Marable.
Ory, Edward "Kid" Residence	3715 Arlington Avenue	Ory (1886-1973) was a Louisiana-born jazz musician. He lived here from 1946 to 1955 during which time he started up the Kid Ory Creole Orchestra again.
	1001 E. 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street	Ory lived here from at least 1930 to 1944 when he took a break from music.
Randolph, Lillian Residence	4190 Sutro Avenue	Randolph (1898-1980) was a

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		prolific actress and singer. She worked through 1970s, by which time she had made more than 75 film and TV appearances. Randolph lived in this house from 1965 to 1980 and taught acting classes here.
René, Leon Residence	1183 E. 50 <sup>th</sup> Street	René (1902-1982) was a musician and composer. With his brother Otis, he owned Exclusive and Excelsior Records. He is listed at this address in the 1940 U.S. Census.
René, Otis Residence	1413 W. 37 <sup>th</sup> Place	René (1898-1970) was a musician and composer. With his brother Leon, he owned Exclusive and Excelsior Records. He is listed at this address in the 1940 U.S. Census.
Rubaiyat Room	2022 W. Adams Boulevard	The Rubaiyat Room opened in 1952, within the historic Watkins Hotel. In 1987, the club moved to a different venue a few blocks north.
Spikes Brothers Residence	1488 W. 35 <sup>th</sup> Place	Benjamin Franklin “Reb” (1888-1982) and John Curry Spikes (1883-1955) were jazz musicians and entrepreneurs. They lived here from 1922 to 1950. During this period, they operated Sunshine Records.
Stewart, Nick Residence	2110 Virginia Road	Stewart (1910-2000) was a stage, film, and television actor. In 1950, he founded the Ebony Theater Showcase on Washington Boulevard. The theater closed in 1996 and was demolished in 1998. It is the current site of the Nate Holden Performing Arts Center and current home of the Ebony Repertory Theater Company.

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Swing Time Records	3427 S. San Pedro Street	Founded in 1947, Swing Time was an African American owned record company. Owner Jack Lauderdale, discovered Ray Charles. The company was located here from at least 1950 until it closed in 1955.
Tapscott, Horace Residence	4901 11 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Tapscott (1934-1999) was a jazz pianist, who formed the Underground Musicians Association in 1962. He went on to create the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra. He lived here from at least 1982 until his death in 1999.
The It Club	4731 W. Washington Boulevard	This was a jazz club owned by John T. McClain in the 1950s and 60s. Jazz legend Thelonious Monk recorded here in 1964, resulting in the album "Live at the It Club."
Tiffany Club	3260 W. 8 <sup>th</sup> Street	This was a jazz club owned by Chuck Landis in the early 1950s. Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, and many others played here. In 1957, the club evolved from an all jazz venue to a burlesque club.
Whitman, Ernest Residence	2654 Harcourt Street	Whitman (1893-1954) was an actor in vaudeville who transitioned to television appearing on <i>Beulah</i> a year before his death. This was his home when he died in 1954.
Wiggins, Gerald Foster Residence	1404 S. Hobart Boulevard	Wiggins (1922-2008) was a versatile and unique jazz pianist in the swing and bop scene. He lived here from at least 1956 to 1969.
Wilson, Gerald Residence	4625 Brynhurst Avenue	Wilson (1918-2014) was a musician, arranger, band leader, and educator. He lived here from at least 1964 to 1987.

**Theme: Residential Properties Associated with the Entertainment Industry**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and entertainment for its association with the African American community. In front of the microphone and behind the scenes, African Americans made significant contributions to all aspects of the entertainment industry including motion pictures, radio, music, and television. In the early decades of film, radio, and television, African Americans were often negatively stereotyped in subservient roles. African Americans in the music industry faced less discrimination in their art but often faced racial barriers from ownership and management roles. By the 1960s, the Civil Rights movements helped to break down the racial barriers that had once kept African Americans from roles of power in the entertainment industry.

**Period of Significance:** 1915 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1915 with the construction of residences for African Americans who migrated to California for work of all sorts that would be the genesis of the local music scene. African Americans with steady jobs in the entertainment industry were among the middle class who could afford homeownership. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Throughout Los Angeles, but with concentrations in Southeast Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, West Adams, Jefferson Park, Country Club Park, and Baldwin Hills.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Entertainment

**Criteria:** NR: B CR: 2 Local: 2

**Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence and Multi-Family Residence

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include single-family and multi-family residential buildings that were the homes of African Americans who played prominent roles in the entertainment industry.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with African Americans who made significant contributions to the entertainment industry.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- A residence designed specifically for a significant African American person in the entertainment industry, or the long-term residence of a significant African American person in the entertainment industry
- Individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to the entertainment industry
- Directly associated with the productive life of the person who made important contributions to the history of the entertainment industry

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- The individual must have resided in the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- For National Register, properties associated with individuals whose significant accomplishments date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance
- May also be a significance example of an architectural style and/or the work of a noted architect/designer

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant person occupied the property
- Properties may be difficult to observe from the public right-of-way due to privacy walls and landscaping
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed



**Theme: Commercial Properties Associated with the Entertainment Industry**

**Sub Theme: Recording Studio**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and entertainment for its association with the African American community. Starting with the Spikes Brothers, African Americans began commercially recording themselves and selling their music in record stores. Some white-owned record stores and recording studios may also be significant in the context of African American history if they are associated with events or people that were significant to the black community.

**Period of Significance:** 1919 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1919, the year the Spikes Brothers opened their Sunshine Record Company. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in Southeast Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, and Hollywood.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Entertainment

**Criteria:** NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

**Associated Property Types:** Commercial - Recording studio

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include recording studios, record stores, theaters, and music venues.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with companies owned and/or operated by African Americans, whose cultural and musical traditions influenced the songs they produced and recorded.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Used primarily as a recording studio for an extended period of time
- Must be proven to have played a significant role in the music industry

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Buildings are utilitarian in design with minimal fenestration to protect the sound quality produced within
- Examples from the 1950s and later may be smaller in size due to new technology allowing for more flexibility in recording spaces
- Many are still in use as recording facilities, although some may have been converted to other uses
- Exteriors are often unassuming to maintain the privacy of the artists
- For National Register, a property associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Recording studios may be located in buildings originally constructed for another use
- The original facility may have been altered or expanded over time to accommodate changing technology
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed

**Theme: Commercial Properties Associated with the Entertainment Industry**

**Sub Theme: Music Venues**

**Summary Statement of**

**Significance:** A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and entertainment for its association with the African American community. From the 1920s through the 1950s, Central Avenue was the heart of the African American community as well as a vibrant music scene. Places such as nightclubs, hotels, restaurants, and bars from Downtown to Watts provided outlets for some of the most important musicians in the history of jazz. After the 1950s, the music scene spread beyond Central Avenue to Leimert Park, Hollywood, and other neighborhoods.

**Period of Significance:** 1920 - 1980

**Period of Significance**

**Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1920 when jazz clubs were first established in South Los Angeles. The earliest clubs, which are all gone, may have been those operated by the Spikes Brothers, including The Dreamland, Reb's Club, and Wayside Park Cafe. 1980 is the end date for SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

**Geographic Locations:** Very few resources remain; those that were identified are mostly located in South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, West Adams, and Leimert Park.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage, Entertainment

**Criteria:** NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

**Associated Property Types:** Commercial - Nightclub, Hotel, Restaurant, Bar

**Property Type Description:** Property types under this theme include nightclubs, hotels, restaurants, and bars that featured live music.

**Property Type Significance:** Properties significant under this theme played an important role in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles, specifically in the area of music. They may or may not have been owned or operated by African Americans.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed or used by African Americans during the period of significance
- Entertainment or social venue with a significant relationship to African Americans in the entertainment industry

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Includes nightclubs, bars, restaurants, and hotels frequented by African Americans in the entertainment industry
- May also be a significant example of an architectural style and/or the work of a noted architect/designer
- May be located adjacent to motion picture studios or other entertainment-related properties
- May be the long-term home of a continuously-operational commercial enterprise
- May be the site of significant performances and/or the long-term venue for a significant African American performer
- Private venues were typically exclusive, and provided an opportunity to socialize and network out of the public eye
- Public venues were often used by studios and publicists to promote their stars
- For National Register, a property associated with events that date from the last 50 years must possess exceptional importance

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, Design, and Association from the period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed

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## **APPENDIX I: Chronology of Events in African American History**

- 1781 People of African or a mix of Spanish and African or Native American ancestry establish El Pueblo Sobre el Río de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles del Río de Porciúncula. The name is shortened rather quickly to El Pueblo.
- 1847 In the Battle of Rio San Gabriel, the United States takes control of Los Angeles. The Treaty of Cahuenga is signed in the pass between Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley.
- 1848 Mexico formally cedes California to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and all residents are made U.S. citizens.
- 1850 The Compromise of 1850 establishes that new territories will decide whether or not they will allow slavery by popular sovereignty (vote), and California enters the Union as a free state.
- Los Angeles is incorporated as a municipality.
- 1855 The First Colored Convention is held in Sacramento and marks the beginning of organized civil rights activism in the West.
- 1857 In *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds the enslaved are not considered people to be protected under the Federal Constitution, but are considered property, even if they live in territory where enslavement is illegal.
- The Third Colored Convention is held in San Francisco. The focus is on the prohibition of African American homesteading of public lands by the U.S. Land Office, and the exclusion of African American children from rural area public schools.
- 1860 Abraham Lincoln is elected sixteenth president of the United States, the first Republican president in the nation who represents a party that opposes the spread of slavery in the territories of the United States.
- 1861 The Civil War formally begins when Confederate forces fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina.
- 1862 African Americans obtain from the California Legislature the right for their testimony to be placed on equal footing with whites.
- 1863 President Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, which declares the freedom of the enslaved in rebellious states.
- 1865 The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ending slavery is ratified by the states.
- The Fourth Colored Convention is held in Sacramento. The focus is on male suffrage.
- President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C.

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- The Civil War official ends when Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner enters into terms for surrender of the Army of the Trans-Mississippi.
- 1868 The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting citizenship to all people born in the U.S. is ratified by the states.
- 1869 The First African Methodist Episcopal Church is founded. It is the first black church in Los Angeles.
- 1870 The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting the right to vote to all U.S. citizens no matter their race, color, or previous condition of servitude is ratified by the states.
- 1879 The *Owl* is established by John J. Neimore. It is the first black-owned newspaper in Los Angeles.
- 1888 Dr. Monroe Majors moves to Los Angeles. He passes the California State Board of Medical Examiners test and becomes the first black doctor to practice medicine west of Denver.
- Alice Rowen Johnson becomes the first black graduate of Los Angeles Normal School when she receives her undergraduate degree.
- 1897 George W. Bright is hired as the first African American firefighter in Los Angeles.
- 1903 The Forum is founded as one of the most important African American self-help organizations to exist in Los Angeles in the twentieth century.
- 1905 Robert C. Owens constructs a six-story, \$250,000 building in Downtown Los Angeles, which is the largest black-owned structure west of the Mississippi River.
- 1906 The Azusa Street Revival is formed in Los Angeles. William Seymour, an African American preacher, leads the multi-racial group. The revival is considered to be the primary catalyst for the spread of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century.
- 1909 Diana McNeil Pierson becomes the first black female graduate of USC when she receives her undergraduate degree.
- 1911 Bessie Burke becomes the first African American teacher in the Los Angeles public school system.
- 1913 The Los Angeles branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is founded.
- 1918 Bessie Burke becomes the first African American principal in the Los Angeles public school system.
- Fredrick Madison Roberts becomes the first African American elected to the State Assembly.

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- 1919 In *Garrott v. Title Company*, the California Supreme Court holds that racially restrictive real estate covenants violate California law and the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.
- In *Los Angeles Investment Company v. Gary*, the California Supreme Court reverse a previous decision and hold that racially restrictive real estate covenants do not violate the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.
- 1921 The Los Angeles branch of the Urban League is founded.
- 1923 A.C. Bilbrew, a leading figure in choral and gospel music, becomes the first African American soloist on radio.
- 1927 The NAACP secures the rights of African Americans to unrestricted access to public beaches in a Los Angeles County court case.
- 1928 The Somerville Hotel (later called the Dunbar Hotel) opens, in part to accommodate the NAACP's first annual meeting held on the West Coast.
- 1931 Betty Hill leads the court battle to desegregate public swimming pools in Los Angeles.
- 1933 The *Los Angeles Sentinel* is established by Leon Washington. It is now the second largest black-owned newspaper in the U.S.
- 1937 "Rochester" played by Eddie Anderson becomes the first black character with a regular role on a national radio program.
- 1939 Hattie McDaniel is the first African American to receive the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in the movie *Gone With the Wind*.
- NBC airs *The Ethel Waters Show*, which co-stars well-known African American actors Georgette Harvey and Fredi Washington.
- Jessie Terry becomes the first African American member of the City of Los Angeles Housing Authority Commission.
- 1941 President Roosevelt issues Executive Order 8802 desegregating World War II production plants throughout the West and creating the Fair Employment Practices Committee.
- 1942 A.C. Bilbrew becomes the first African American to host a radio program.
- 1945 Chester Himes publishes his first novel, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, about an African American shipyard worker in Los Angeles during World War II.
- 1947 Pasadena resident Jackie Robinson joins the Brooklyn Dodgers and becomes the first African American to play Major League Baseball in the twentieth century.

- 1948 In *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds racially restrictive covenants on property deeds unenforceable. Los Angeles attorney Loren Miller writes the brief and argues the case along with Thurgood Marshall.
- President Harry Truman issues Executive Order 9901 directing the desegregation of the armed forces.
- The California Supreme Court voids the law banning interracial marriages in the state.
- 1950 Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, who grew up in Los Angeles, becomes the first African American recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for mediating a settlement between Arabs and Israelis.
- The Democratic Minority Conference is founded to develop greater black political participation and support for black candidates in Los Angeles.
- 1953 In *Barrows v. Jackson*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds the use of racially discriminatory clauses in residential covenants in the sale of private property unconstitutional.
- 1954 In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students unconstitutional. The Second Baptist Church contributes \$1,500 to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to print the briefs used in the case.
- 1955 The Los Angeles Fire Department is desegregated in a NAACP campaign led by attorneys Loren Miller and Thomas Neusom for African American fire fighters.
- 1956 *The Nat King Cole Show* premieres on television. Cole is the second African American to host a national television series.
- Malcolm X establishes Mosque No. 27. It is the first officially organized Muslim group in Los Angeles.
- 1957 Los Angeles native, Paul R. Williams is first African American elected to the American Institute of Architects.
- 1959 The California Fair Employment Act is signed into law and bars businesses and labor unions from discriminating against employees or job applicants based on their color, national origin, ancestry, religion, or race.
- 1961 Vaino Hassan Spencer is appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court making her the first African American judge and the third in the nation.
- 1962 Augustus Freeman Hawkins is elected to Congress from California. He is the first African American from Los Angeles and the West to serve in this capacity.

Mervyn M. Dymally and F. Douglas Ferrell, two African American Angelenos, are elected to the State Assembly.

Malcolm X returns to Los Angeles to protest police brutality after the death of Robert Stokes.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. visits Los Angeles. He speaks at the Second Baptist Church.

- 1963 The first African Americans, Gilbert Lindsay, Tom Bradley, and Bill Mills, are elected to the Los Angeles City Council.

The Rumford Fair Housing Act is approved by the State Legislature to end racial discrimination by property owners and landlords who refuse to rent or sell their property to African Americans.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. visits Los Angeles. He speaks at Wrigley Field (demolished) attracting an audience of 35,000.

The Los Angeles Freedom March is organized by the United Civil Rights Committee protesting the Los Angeles Board of Education's refusal to take affirmative steps to end school segregation.

- 1964 The Civil Rights Act ends segregation in public places and bans employment discrimination in the U.S. basis on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. receives the Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent campaign against racism.

Sidney Poitier is the first African American to receive the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in the movie *Lilies of the Field*.

The California Real Estate Association sponsors Proposition 14 to repeal the Rumford Act. It passes with 65.39% of the vote.

- 1965 The Voting Rights Act outlaws racial discrimination in voting in the U.S.

Malcolm X is assassinated in New York City.

The Watts uprising occurs in the Southeast Los Angeles community. Thirty-four people were killed and one thousand were injured in the five-day confrontation.

United Slaves is founded in Los Angeles by Ron Maulana Karenga.

- 1966 The Black Panther Party is formed in Oakland by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton.

Ron Maulana Karenga creates the Pan-African and African American holiday, Kwanzaa.

Proposition 14 is declared unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court.

- 1967 The decision of the California Supreme Court overturning Proposition 14 is affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Reitman v. Mulkey*.



- The local chapter of the Black Panther Party is formed by an undercover FBI agent.
- 1968 Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.
- The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, and sex.
- 1969 The Black Panther Party Headquarters is raided by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) with its first use of the Special Weapons and Tactic (SWAT) team.
- 1970 A new Watts Towers Art Center building is constructed through volunteer efforts led by the Watts Towers Committee interested in the preservation of Simon Rodia's Watts Towers.
- 1971 The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) is founded by African American nurses in Los Angeles and San Francisco to advocate and implement strategies to ensure access to the highest quality of healthcare for persons of color.
- 1972 Yvonne Braithwaite Burke is elected to Congress from California. She and Barbara Jordan from Texas are the first African American women from the West to serve in this capacity.
- 1973 Tom Bradley is the first African American elected mayor of Los Angeles. He serves a record five terms.
- 1974 Mervyn Dymally is elected lieutenant governor of California. He is one of the first African Americans to hold this post anywhere in the nation in the twentieth century.
- 1975 Diane Watson becomes the first African American woman elected to the Los Angeles School Board.
- 1978 In *University of California v. Bakke*, the U.S. Supreme Court narrowly upholds affirmative action as a legal strategy for addressing past discrimination.
- 1979 LAPD officers kill Eula May Love on her front lawn after she does not promptly obey their commands during a dispute over an unpaid gas bill of \$22.09. This case is used by those pushing for LAPD reforms in publicizing similar police shootings of unarmed or lightly armed suspects.
- 1979 Yvonne Braithwaite Burke becomes the first African American to serve on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors when she is appointed by Gov. Brown to fill a vacancy.
- 1980 Willie Lewis Brown, Jr. becomes the first African American speaker of the California Assembly.
- 1981 The California African American Museum (chartered in 1977) opens in Exposition Park.