BLACK LIVES MATTER, BLACK PLACES MATTER

Since its emergence as a field of work and study in the late 1960s, historic preservation has given scant attention to sites associated with African-American history. Heritage explores Black spaces and places highlighted in the still-unfinished San Francisco African-American Historic Context Statement. STORY ON PAGE 6
Preservation is a powerful tool for connecting with history. Buildings, sites, even traditions, are touchstones reaching back as witness to our past. Questions of whose history, how it is told, and by whom are at the center of this newsletter issue.

When I became the Heritage board chair a year and a half ago, I discussed two goals, both consistent with our Strategic Plan, with our President Mike Buhler and the board. The first was to work toward a board of directors more reflective of the composition of our city. The second was to further enhance our commitment to activism and advocacy for San Francisco’s citywide historic and cultural resources. Reckoning today, we’ve been more successful meeting goal number two, than goal number one.

Our not having fully diversified the board is not for want of effort. To a person, our board members are deeply committed and highly skilled in a range of professions that support Heritage’s mission. Broad-based representation of the city has been a goal for all of us. Our struggle is indicative of issues in the larger preservation movement, and while that is not an excuse, recognizing inherent barriers may help us welcome and make the changes that are vital to achieving a more inclusive movement and organization.

I draw your attention to Kerri Young’s piece on page 7. Kerri leads us through a range of discussions from recent conferences and gatherings that address structural problems within the preservation field and put forward affirmative methods for change. She’s not offering a roadmap. Racial equity in preservation practice, we learn, may mean wholesale change in the way we work. It may be messy and unpredictable as meaningful change often is.

Heritage’s aim to reflect our city in our board, staff, and work drives our current efforts, and was also important in our early years. Heritage’s founders organized to “preserve and protect buildings of historical and architectural interest, and their surroundings, in and about the City of San Francisco” (Heritage brochure, c.1971). In papers noting Heritage’s early goals, it was said that, “Heritage deliberately eschewed the museum or historical society approach for an activist and advocacy role…” Our first significant project was to advocate for and successfully relocate roughly a dozen homes from the Western Addition threatened with demolition by the Redevelopment Agency.

It is noteworthy that within fourteen years of our founding in 1971, Heritage partnered with the city on two consecutive loan programs using Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) as well as bank loans to provide below-market-rate financing to low-income borrowers. Heritage provided historical research, architectural drawings and specifications, construction supervision, and advice on federal tax incentives to neighborhood housing-development corporations and other nonprofits to preserve and upgrade low-income housing. In all, the program invested in the rehabilitation of 74 buildings totaling 630 affordable-housing units, including the Cadillac Hotel (380 Eddy Street), which is also home to the Tenderloin Museum.

Heritage programming and our approach to preservation issues have evolved over our 49-year history. Early on, Heritage was involved in architectural surveys—a tool used to identify, evaluate, and protect thousands of resources across the city. Recognizing
that communities of color are not adequately represented in the city’s survey work, Heritage partnered with the San Francisco Latino Historical Society in 2013 to prepare the city’s first Latinx context study: *Nuestra Historia: Documenting the Chicano, Latino, and Indigena Contribution to the Development of San Francisco*. Similar to Woody LaBounty’s cover story on the African American context study, this study documents the historical development of the Latinx communities in San Francisco, thereby laying the groundwork for formally recognizing associated historic places. The 500-page document is near completion. The document’s length, and the breadth and depth of its histories, are a testament to the significant role Latinx heritage plays in the city’s identity.

As Heritage looks to our 50th anniversary and beyond, change is assured. One promise San Francisco can count on is that Heritage commits to explicitly include considerations of racial equity in the composition of our staff, our board, and in our programs. We invite your participation.

"In the late 1970s, former Heritage board member Leroy Looper (1924-2011) and his wife Kathy turned the rundown Cadillac Hotel in the heart of the Tenderloin into a national model for the potential of single-room occupancy hotels. The Tenderloin Museum opened on the ground floor in 2015."
Black Lives Matter,
Black Places Matter

BY WOODY LABOUNTY

In 2013, with a grant from San Francisco’s Historic Preservation Fund, the Planning Department commissioned the first-ever African-American Citywide Historic Context Statement. A context statement is the foundation of preservation planning: it describes the broad patterns of historical development of a community or region that are represented by the physical development and character of the built environment. Although frequently based on property types or architectural styles, San Francisco context statements have increasingly focused on the physical and intangible heritage of specific cultural or ethnic groups. When it comes to recognition, education, and advocacy, context statements are of tremendous value. They inform and guide neighborhood survey work, landmark designations, and treatment standards for historic properties.

Since its emergence as a field of work and study in the late 1960s, historic preservation has given scant attention to sites associated with African-American history. Residences, businesses, churches, and neighborhoods significant to Black culture were not the subject of architectural surveys or conservation work. At the canonized national-landmark plantations of George Washington, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson, Black lives integral to historical significance were pushed to the margins or even off the page.

Recently there have been incremental efforts to address this ignorance and injustice. The motivation for commissioning a San Francisco African-American context statement was to provide a tool to recognize and preserve sites associated with a community that has been fundamental to the city’s history and development, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. Since work on the context statement began, in 2013, seven city landmarks associated with African-Americans have been adopted.

Despite such progress, the African-American context statement is still considered unfinished. A tenet of context statements is that they are “living documents,” changeable and subject to additions as new information comes to light or as significance changes through time. In reality, the funding and effort needed to create these weighty documents (which in recent years have ballooned to hundreds of pages) means that just getting a statement adopted can itself be a monumental challenge.
"The African American Citywide Historic Context Statement" was prepared for the City and County of San Francisco by Tim Kelley Consulting, The Alfred Williams Consultancy, VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting, and staff at the San Francisco Planning Department, and is online at https://sfplanning.org/african-american-historic-context-statement. After requests for edits, more outreach, and the inclusion of more voices, Planning Department staff has tried to address community concerns with revisions to the 2016 document and is preparing to engage in renewed public outreach once Covid restrictions on gatherings ease.

Even as a draft, the 296-page document reveals details on individuals, institutions, and sites important to San Francisco history, identifying dozens of potential landmarks associated with the city’s African-American community.

**Black San Francisco**

African-Americans influenced and shaped the city before it was a city, and are woven into every San Francisco milestone, event, and era. William Leidesdorff, the son of a Danish father and a mother of mixed African and Carib ancestry, stood as the leading citizen of the pueblo of Yerba Buena before it became the boomtown of San Francisco. A part of Chinatown served as the main Black neighborhood in the city’s first few decades and seminal Black churches stood in North Beach and on the slopes of Nob Hill.

A surge in African-American migration to the city, drawn by World War II shipyard work, fueled a culturally rich “Harlem of the West” in the Fillmore. In the 1950s and 1960s, Black judges, doctors, and city supervisors integrated west-side enclaves while a robust African-American middle-class buoyed by well-paying government and waterfront service jobs, gave the Bayview District one of the highest home-ownership rates in the city. By the early 1970s, San Francisco’s Black population hit a high water mark of more than 13% of the city’s population, and the community’s political influence rose with appointments and elections of African-Americans as city commissioners, supervisors, and, in 1996, Willie Brown as mayor of San Francisco.

The homes of some of these prominent African-Americans are city landmarks or identified in the context statement as landmark candidates, significant not only for their association with the individuals, but also for representing important milestones in the struggle for racial integration in the city. The Leonard-Poole House at 90 Cedro Way, City Landmark #213, falls into this category. Cecil Poole, serving as assistant district attorney in San Francisco, was the first minority homebuyer in Ingleside Terraces. Shortly after his family moved in, a cross was burned on the front lawn.

Willie Mays, one of the top five baseball players of all time, tried to buy a home in Sherwood Forest and despite his popularity and fame was turned down for being Black. Mays was only able to purchase the house after the intervention of Mayor George Christopher. The west-side houses of trailblazing supervisor Terry Francois (1608 10th Avenue) and newspaper publisher Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett (579 Los Palmos Drive) are other significant examples of potential landmarks.

Individual Black churches, such as First A.M.E. Zion Church (2169 Golden Gate Avenue, built in 1960 and designed by architect Robert Batchelor), Bethel A.M.E. Church (916-970 Laguna Street,
constructed 1969-1973), and the Third Baptist Church complex (City Landmark #275, built in 1952 at 1399 McAllister Street) are significant for their associations with prominent individuals, their important roles as community centers, and their midcentury architecture. While the African-American context statement doesn’t explicitly make the case, smaller storefront-style halls of worship—key centers of Black community—could make up historic districts in the Oceanview-Merced Heights-Ingleside and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods, and individual churches, such as Mt. Gilead Baptist Church at 1629 Oakdale Avenue (on the cover), combine potential cultural significance with architectural style and integrity valued by traditional preservation standards.

**Black Spaces Without Black People**

Many sites associated with the city’s African-American history documented in the draft context statement are “not extant.” William Leidesdorff’s house and warehouses are long gone. The first Black churches in North Beach were lost in the 1906 earthquake and fire. Redevelopment killed the Harlem of the West, decimating hundreds of Black-owned businesses, disrupting and dislocating the community, and razing significant buildings. For half a century Bayview-Hunters Point has been subjected to pollution issues, spiking crime, deteriorated public housing, and ever-rising real-estate prices. The Black community is both leaving and being pushed out of the city. From 13% of the population in 1970, African-Americans will only comprise 3 to 4% of the city’s residents when the 2020 U.S. Census is finished.

Even “improvements” in the neighborhoods are seen by longtime African-American residents as not for them, but just another nudge to leave. Dr. Espanola Jackson alludes to this in the context statement, quoting locals connecting gentrification of the Bayview with the construction and landscaping on Third Street for the T-line streetcar: “For every palm tree, that mean a Black person gone.”

The needs of the living community are often not directly addressed or factored into traditional preservation work, and when considered, uncomfortable questions for the field arise. Is landmarking a church building relevant if the congregation that makes it significant is pushed out of the city? Is preservation too often only about recognition or commemoration, and if so, does the renaming of streets or schools do the same job, as when City Hall’s address was changed to 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place or, more recently, when Willow Alley between Buchanan and Laguna Streets was renamed for Earl Gage, Jr., the city’s first Black firefighter? A city-organized advisory group is currently considering the renaming of many of the city’s public schools, and African-American names will likely be offered in replacement for some. Does the designation of a historic district or a city landmark or a context statement associated with Black history help the African-American community in any way?

To many in the preservation field and in Black communities, the answer to the last question is still yes. Carl Williams is an African-American attorney and writer whose decades of service with several city agencies and participation in Black community affairs has immensely informed an understanding of the historical lineage of African-Americans in San Francisco. Formerly on the Board of Directors of the San Francisco African American Historical & Cultural Society, Williams served as its lead for revision and input on the most recent draft of the African-American context statement.

“The context statement makes—in my view—a potent and persuasive addition to the current national reckoning conversation regarding racial and social inequities. [It] provides a credible vehicle for identifying the multifarious institutional, social, and cultural forces that have shaped the African-American experience in San Francisco.”

Williams notes the context statement is referred to as a "milestone document" in the city's recent resolution on equity (see page 8). “San Francisco can do its residents proud by adding this ‘milestone document’ to the arsenal in the struggle for racial and social equity.”
The field of preservation is undergoing profound changes. In the wake of the unjust murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, many in the preservation community are confronting issues of race and equity hiding in plain sight.

Historically, the preservation movement in the U.S. has primarily invested in maintaining White spaces, and, for much of American history, little was done to protect Black and other spaces historically significant to people of color. In San Francisco, less than 10% of the city’s landmarks are designated for their cultural associations with African-American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latinx, or LGBTQ histories. Additionally, there is a lack of diversity and representation among professionals in the field, with African-Americans for example accounting for less than 1% of preservation practitioners. Finally, the preservation field, together with other cultural organizations, is grappling with issues surrounding labor equity, including disparities in compensation, advancement, and racism (both latent and overt). Together, these practices contribute to a culture of inequity that many in the field are now speaking openly about.

In a June 2020 blog for the National Trust’s Preservation Leadership Forum, architectural and urban historian Marisa Brown wrote of “Preservation’s Existential Crisis.” She acknowledged how today’s preservation movement needs a more complete, inclusive representation of communities across the nation, and that failing to respond to the broader social reckoning puts the field at risk of becoming obsolete. Brown stated the problem:

Preservation has been complicit in extending and valorizing white dominance. The federal, state, and local regulations that govern many of the most important preservation mechanisms reflect bias against communities of color. We don’t talk about displacement and gentrification nearly enough. We don’t spend enough time thinking about the many ways in which preservation is used by those outside of the field to advance their own aims (of nationalism, of white supremacy, of profit…). The field is too white, and community allyship is not prioritized.

Brown emphasized the need for preservation organizations and public commissions to think critically and publicly about how their work has supported white supremacy, and examine what their preservation work would look like if antiracism were central to their mission, rather than tertiary: “For every preservation organization and commission out there, an issue will arise that forces a choice between protecting historic buildings and sites and the work of antiracism. In other words, active participation in dismantling the systems and culture of white dominance and supremacy may require letting some places go.”
Recent notable examples of these types of choices include the removal of Confederate monuments across the country, and, locally, statues of Christopher Columbus on Telegraph Hill (by order of the mayor) and Junípero Serra in Golden Gate Park (by protesting citizens).

On July 15, 2020, San Francisco's Historic Preservation Commission unanimously passed an expansive resolution on racial and social equity. Created by the Planning Department to provide a foundation for antiracist work in city planning and historic preservation, the resolution acknowledges violence inflicted on the Black community (and other communities of color) and calls for centering the city's historic-preservation work and resources on racial and social equity.

Of the nearly 95,000 entries on the National Register of Historic Places, only 2% [focus] on the experience of Black Americans. Of the more than a $100 billion awarded from the Federal Historic Preservation Fund since 1968, the majority has benefited White Americans.

The resolution is an important public step at the city-level to advocate for more widespread change in policy and practice.

Likewise, young preservation professionals across the country are seizing this moment to highlight instances of racism and inequality perpetuated by their field, and organizing together on calls to action. For example, the free “unconference” #DismantlePreservation, organized by preservation activist Sarah Marsom and held virtually on July 28th, acknowledged that emerging preservationists need a different set of resources to advocate for themselves, and called for more inclusive stories of the past and the built environment. The one-day event was filled with topics that many young preservation professionals of all backgrounds expressed as necessary for their continuing education: pursuing inclusive workplaces, recognizing implicit bias in preservation, engaging broader communities.

One session, “Expanding the Preservation Narrative,” featured BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) preservationists discussing both the inspiring and challenging aspects in their work. In lightning-round talks entitled “Burning Down the House,” a diverse group of preservation professionals led six-minute rapid-fire talks highlighting specific ways the preservation field can do better. For example, in “Architecture is both the tool and the result of settler colonialism,” Fernando Luiz Lara, Professor and Director of the PhD in Architecture program at the University of Texas, Austin, spoke of how the field needs to better recognize the value of people's relationships to spaces, and how those values are fostered. In “Tell the Full Story: A Meditation on the Retelling of History,” Krista Whiters at American Institute of Architects (AIA) spoke of the importance of language when educating the public about historic sites related to slavery (e.g., instead of “where people were held in bondage,” say “where White people held Black people”).

Conversations on dismantling systems of oppression are happening not only within the preservation community but across the cultural-heritage field. Professionals in nonprofits, museums, and community history organizations are uniting virtually in “unconferences,” online forums, and social media, seeking ways to use their collective-bargaining power to make their fields more inclusive. In “Elevating Unpopular Opinions,” a follow-up event to #DismantlePreservation held on August 25th, women in the museum and preservation fields came together to discuss how they can work within and outside of existing constructs to promote change. Said Emma Turner-Trujillo, co-founder of Death to Museums, a monthly dialogue series that promotes solidarity and exchange among museum workers: “If working internally in your institution had any effect, we wouldn’t be discussing [how to promote change within your institution] right now. People would not turn to anonymous accounts like @changethemuseum [to share] ways that they’ve been wronged or bullied or hurt...these systems are working as they have been intended to work, so we must not work with them, we must dismantle them.”

These virtual gatherings are sending a message: there is a community of like-minded people fighting for the same changes within (and outside) their institutions and in the cultural-heritage field.

The #DismantlePreservation discussions and the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission's resolution for racial and social equity are important first steps in acknowledging inequality in historic preservation. But what comes next? When asked how she wants the conversations in #DismantlePreservation to continue, Marsom said: "What I'm hoping is that people start to assess what they are currently doing without thinking that they need to reinvent the wheel. People can institute change within the larger constructs. For example, for the National Register [of Historic Places], maybe you need to do more recent-past history to start making it more inclusive....we need to start this internal reflection, and analyze how our current work can change. We need to realize that we can't use the same tools we've been using from 1966."
In San Francisco, for example, allowing more-recent history to contribute to a property's significance would strengthen the case for designation of Black-led radio station KPOO (89.5), located at 1329 Divisadero Street, which in the 1970s became the first radio station in the Bay Area to play rap, reggae, and salsa music.

Bonnie McDonald, President & CEO of Landmarks Illinois, tackled problems related to labor equity in "Elevating Unpopular Opinions," one of the major calls-to-action for #DismantlePreservation: How can we create a pipeline for traditionally marginalized groups to enter preservation? "Number one for me is to be self-reflective, evaluate YOURSELF...What values do you express? What practices to do you have?...We can talk about hiring practices. We take the school of life as an very important educator, so not everyone has to have a four-year degree to do an amazing job for you. We post our salaries [rather than] ask people to share their last salary and base it on that."

Locally, Heritage seeks to introduce paid fellowship and internship positions, possibly in partnership with the Planning Department, in which diverse candidates receive on-the-job training and experience in the field of preservation.

While the field confronts its own complicity in structural racism, it seems there is a collective will for something better. Change will only happen with hard work. Heritage is committed to being a constructive partner in the fight against racial and social injustice. As we move into our 50th year, we are committed to telling the full story. Jobie Hill, founder of Saving Slave Houses, said it best: "Talk is cheap...We know you can put together a statement that sounds nice, but just do it, and THEN we can talk about it later."
The Fight for UCSF Murals Continues

On July 13, 2020, the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) issued a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) on its proposed Comprehensive Parnassus Heights Plan. At more than 2,000 pages, the report covers myriad aspects of the university’s envisioned redevelopment and repurposing of its Inner Sunset District campus over the next several decades. The 60-day public-comment period ended September 11, 2020, and Heritage submitted a detailed letter focusing on UCSF’s failure to evaluate the individual significance of, or consider potentially feasible alternatives to, the proposed destruction of Bernard Zakheim’s monumental mural cycle *The History of Medicine in California*, located in Toland Hall.

UCSF proposes to demolish Toland Hall, among other historic resources, to make way for a new Academic and Research Center (see *Heritage News*, July-September 2020). Preservation of the murals is rejected in the DEIR as “the estimated $7.6 million cost of physical preservation, removal and relocation [of the frescos] is prohibitive in light of UCSF’s primary responsibility to support its academic health care mission.” A digital representation of the murals is put forward in the DEIR in substitute, although no design or location for such an installation has been defined.

In a letter to UCSF on June 18, 2020, the General Services Administration claimed ownership of *The History of Medicine in California*, which has been on loan to the university since it was painted, under the auspices of the Federal Art Project, in 1937. This past summer, scholars came forward to highlight the heightened significance of Zakheim’s artwork because of its depiction of Bridget “Biddy” Mason, a prominent African-American medical practitioner and entrepreneur.

On August 6, 2020, likely in response to these developments, UCSF issued an open Request for Proposals to remove the mural cycle to its Oyster Point storage facility in Brisbane at a “Maximum Acceptance Cost” of $1.8 million, a number far lower than the $7.6 million estimate in the DEIR. There is a possibility the frescos could be removed as soon as early 2021, with no guarantee they will ever be on public display again.

Heritage is working closely with parties interested in preserving *The History of Medicine in California* in its entirety onsite at the UCSF Parnassus Heights campus and has assisted the Board of Supervisors and Planning Department to initiate City Landmark designation for the mural cycle. Because UCSF is a state agency, landmark status will not offer any legal protection, but the effort has drawn more public attention to UCSF’s controversial plans. Heritage’s comments on the DEIR are summarized with the following points:
Farewell, Deb!

Heritage regretfully announces the recent departure of Vice President of Advancement Deb Grant, whose last day in the office was September 18. Deb joined Heritage as a consultant in July 2017, helping to close out the Campaign for San Francisco Heritage/Haas-Lilienthal House. She joined Heritage staff full time in January 2018 to lead our development and fundraising activities. She will start a new position in the Fall as CDO (Chief Development Officer) of ReSurge International, an organization that focuses on reconstructive surgical care, based in Silicon Valley. Thank you, Deb, for all your commitment and enthusiasm during your time at Heritage!
Intersections of Racism, Gender, and Historic Preservation in San Francisco’s Asian-American Communities

This event will take place on Zoom. Register for free at sfheritage.org/upcoming-events.

Jeremy Fish Artist-in-Residency
In September 2020, San Francisco visual artist Jeremy Fish started a three-month residency at Heritage's Doolan-Larson Building in Haight-Ashbury. If you have any suggestions, requests, or connections to Haight-Ashbury, the Summer of Love, the music of that era, or the 1960s counterculture movement that could help inspire or inform his artwork, please reach out to Jeremy Fish at mrjfish@gmail.com.

PastForward Conference
Celebrate the power of place, virtually, with more than a thousand preservationists and preservation lovers at the nation’s premier online conference for those who work to save, sustain, and interpret historic places. Register at www.savingplaces.org.

*For updates on the Haas-Lilienthal House’s annual October Mayhem Mansion event, please check www.haas-lilienthalhouse.org.

Save the date! To follow up our month focusing on the Marina District in October for Heritage in the Neighborhoods, we will host a community town hall to discuss possible preservation projects in the district. Stay tuned for registration information at sfheritage.org.

History of the Potrero Power Station Site
The Potrero Hill Archives Project's annual Potrero Hill History Night is going virtual this year, and will feature a talk by Johnathan Lammers on the history of the Potrero Power Station site on San Francisco's Central Waterfront. Zoom link: https://potrero-history.com/2020.

Preservationists on Preservationists
Women architects and preservationists currently in the profession will give lightning-round presentations about their favorite women preservationists, past or present. For up-to-date registration information, visit www.sfheritage.org/upcoming-events.

Marina Town Hall
Save the date! To follow up our month focusing on the Marina District in October for Heritage in the Neighborhoods, we will host a community town hall to discuss possible preservation projects in the district. Stay tuned for registration information at sfheritage.org.