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CIVIL RIGHTS IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

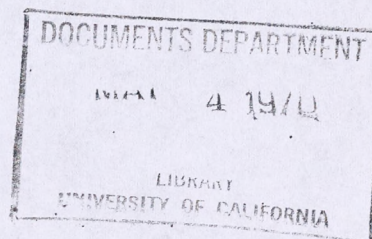
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A report of an open meeting

By the Northern Subcommittee of the
California State Advisory Committee
to the United States Commission on
Civil Rights.

August 1967



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TO THE

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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PREFACE

The United States Commission on Civil Rights

The United States Commission on Civil Rights is an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957. By the terms of that Act, as amended by the Civil Rights Acts of 1960 and 1964, the Commission is charged with the following duties: investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study of legal developments with respect to denials of the equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting denials of the equal protection of the law; and investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

The State Advisory Committees

An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 as amended. The Committees are made up of responsible persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission upon matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commission to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission upon matters which the State Committee has studied; assist the Commission in matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference which the Commission may hold within the State.

This report was submitted to the United States Commission on Civil Rights by the California State Advisory Committee. The conclusions and recommendations are based upon the Advisory Committee's evaluation of information received at the open meeting held in Oakland on May 24-25, 1966. This report has been received by the Commission and will be considered by it in making its reports and recommendations to the President and the Congress.

INTRODUCTION

The California State Advisory Committee's Northern Subcommittee held an open meeting on May 24-25, 1966 to explore the civil rights problems in Oakland and to try to measure what progress had been made in meeting them. Participants in the meeting included Federal, State, and local employment, welfare, housing, and law enforcement officials; representatives of civil rights and civic groups, labor unions, and real estate associations; private employers and private citizens.

Although the open meeting was held last year, the California State Advisory Committee believes that its findings remain timely and indicate problems which still are in urgent need of solution. Even though some action might have been taken on some of the suggestions, the Advisory Committee believes that the suggestions listed in the report should receive the immediate attention of responsible government officials and community leaders.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment is an area of great concern to Oakland citizens, especially to those in the Negro and Mexican American communities who feel that they are being discriminated against by public and private employers.

According to Rev. Donald Ganoung, urban consultant for the Episcopal Diocese of San Francisco, the Negro unemployment rate in Oakland is four times that of the white unemployment rate. In West Oakland, 25 percent of male Negroes over 20 years of age are unemployed; in North Oakland, 18 percent; in East Oakland, 15 percent. One-half of 1 percent of white-collar employees in Oakland are Negroes.

Elijah Turner, a member of the Oakland Council of Social Planning, pointed out that although 90 percent of the post office employees are Negroes, only 15 of 169 supervisors are Negroes. Generally, said Turner, in government service there are few Negroes or members of other minority groups in professional or supervisory jobs. In both public and private employment, he declared, minority group members are far more frequently found in menial and low paying jobs and, occasionally, not even in these.

Eugene Drew, Chairman of the Oakland chapter of CORE, reported that of approximately 3,000 waiter and bartender positions in the city, less than 2 percent of the former and less than 1 percent of the latter were held by Negroes.

Jack Ortega of the Mexican American Unity Council said that the problem of unemployment is even more acute for the Mexican American than for the Negro: "The Negro manages at least to get a clerk job or a mail carrier job," he declared. "...The Mexican can't even pass the first Civil Service examination."

It was alleged that less than one-half of 1 percent of all Alameda County government employees, the area which includes Oakland, are Mexican Americans and that job hunting is made more difficult for them because less than 2 percent of the State Employment Service employees are Mexican American.

The most frequent complaints were directed at the Bay Area Rapid Transit, known as BART, and the unions whose members will be working on BART's massive new construction program which will link communities on the East Bay with San Francisco. (It was also charged that BART's location will have a detrimental effect on some of the communities through which it will pass.) Thomas Fike, executive director of the Oakland Council on Religion and Race, said that BART officials had told him that 2,000 apprenticeships would be opened up in the Operating Engineers, a union of 10,000 members which, according to Fike, had 10 to 12 Negro members. In cooperation with BART, Fike added, the union had revised its procedures for becoming a journeyman in such a way as to exclude minority group members.

BART's community relations officer, James Brown, told the Committee that the system could not conduct job training programs; it could only enter into programs directly related to the construction of the rapid transit system. He stated that BART could not accept responsibility for hiring because its work agreement is with the contractor who hires the union employees to do the work. He added that BART requires a quarterly report from all contractors showing the ethnic composition of the work force but he was unclear as to what corrective action could be taken.

A representative of the Associated General Contractors, of whom more than 90 percent do Federal construction, acknowledged that each contractor simply accepts verbal assurances of nondiscrimination from the unions with which they deal. According to Clyde Johnson, a business agent for Carpenters Union Local 550, many local contractors subcontract with out-of-state firms, both union and nonunion, which, he said, he suspects are not following Federal guidelines regarding nondiscrimination. The result, Johnson reported, is that integrated plants in the Oakland area which comply with the guidelines are not getting work.

The Committee was told that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had awarded BART more than \$1 million in Federal transportation demonstration grants, asking only that there be compliance in construction directly financed by Federal funds. It was felt among those who spoke on the subject that there should be more stringent Federal and local government sanctions against racial discrimination in the development of the transit system. A private citizens' committee, Justice for Bay Area Rapid Transit (JOBART), has been urging that:

1. minority group members who have held journeymen's status in other areas, but not in organized craft unions, be accepted into journeymen's status;
2. minority group members with some experience in the building trades be enabled to receive on-the-job training that will advance them to journeymen's status;
3. members of minority groups be admitted to apprenticeship programs. In addition, JOBART has demanded that BART

reject contract bids of any contractor who cannot provide a racially balanced labor force.

Robert Scheer, a journalist, alleged that the Federal programs and Federal money coming into the Oakland area have had no impact on employment discrimination. "...It is always assumed that the intrinsic value of a program itself is more important than segregated schools. It is more important to build a post office than to end job discrimination... Until the Federal Government is willing to make that kind of commitment to end job discrimination, I maintain very little is going to be done about these problems."

While one member of the California Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) praised the progress made by local employers toward the elimination of job discrimination, he felt that discrimination is still practiced, particularly by small employers. Remedial measures, he explained, are more difficult to effect because of the relative impotence of the State FEPC which has neither subpoena nor enforcement power.

Francis Jeffrey, executive director of the Alameda County Human Relations Commission, admitted that the county commission is also restricted in its authority. Because of a limited staff, he said, the Commission has not been able to concentrate its energy on eliminating discrimination in all parts of the county, a fact which, he stated, is partly responsible for the lack of coordination between State and county agencies and the communications gap between civil rights commissions and citizens. Of the 4,000 complaints filed with the State FEPC during the past six years, he said, only 300 came from Mexican Americans.

According to Louis Garcia, a member of the California FEPC, Mexican Americans are not familiar with the various services which are available to them. Most of them do not claim disability benefits or unemployment insurance or apply for public health services because they do not know about them. The public agencies are doing little to overcome the language barrier, Garcia asserted, which prevents adequate communication between the two groups.

Findings:

1. The unemployment rate for Negroes in the Oakland area is approximately four times that of the white unemployment rate and many persons in the Negro community feel they are being systematically eliminated from all but menial employment by public and private employers.
2. BART does not accept responsibility for the hiring practices of contractors and refused requests to conduct job training programs because it says it can only enter into programs directly related to the construction of the rapid transit system.
3. With few exceptions local unions are not taking meaningful steps to combat discrimination.
4. Local and State commissions, established to encourage fair employment, do not have adequate staff or authority to do the job effectively, communicate with the citizens, or coordinate their efforts.

Suggestions for Action:

1. The U.S. Office of Federal Contract Compliance should investigate the employment practices of Federal contractors in the Oakland area

and if its investigation substantiates the conditions indicated at the open meeting, the Federal Government should take all appropriate action to see that discriminatory practices are ended.

2. The Associated General Contractors should initiate a program which would encourage unions to eliminate race as a condition of membership.

3. JOBART, in its campaign for equitable recruitment, training, and contracting, should be supported by the Alameda County Central Labor Council, BART officials, the Associated General Contractors, and State and local human relations agencies.

4. State and local human relations agencies, including the California Fair Employment Practices Commission, the Alameda County Commission on Human Relations, and the proposed Oakland Advisory Committee on Human Relations:

- a. should be granted additional staff and enforcement and subpoena powers;
- b. should improve coordination among themselves and communication with minority group members;
- c. should look more closely at State and local civil service practices, particularly as they affect the Mexican American community;
- d. should work with the California Technical Advisory Committee on Testing to revise the current testing procedures for employment and orient tests more directly to job skills;

e. should initiate a thorough and systematic review of private employment in the Oakland area, in cooperation with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

5. The Central Labor Council of Alameda County should review the membership and employment practices of its affiliates and establish sanctions against those which discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or religion.

POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Committee was told that a serious lack of confidence in public authority prevails in Oakland. Citizens from the Negro and Mexican American communities charged that the city's chief of police supports a "get-tough" policy and rejects virtually all criticism of his department as unfounded. The chief's idea of improving the public image of the police, according to statements made to the Committee, was to invite ministers to ride with policemen to observe how well the police perform what the chief calls a "difficult task." Representatives of civil rights groups told the Committee that on the Oakland police force of 617, there are only 16 Negroes and four Mexican Americans.

Armando Rodriquez, an attorney working with a neighborhood center, alleged that patrolmen who are ordered by their superiors to write a certain number of tickets easily meet their quotas by arresting Mexican American and Negro drivers for traffic violations. Complainants also alleged that the police patrol the Mexican American and Negro neighborhoods in an effort to make arrests for any possible reason. Furthermore, it was charged that officers make no attempt to get the Mexican American's side of the story when that individual cannot communicate in English. The following examples of capricious arrests were offered:

A boy and his mother were arrested for a curfew violation.

Although the boy made no attempt to resist arrest, he was kept in handcuffs all night because police claimed they feared he would become violent.

Police forced their way into the home of a Negro family and beat the owner, his sons, and two white friends. The police said they had seen the white youths leaving the house and thought the residence was a house of prostitution. Although the defendants were later absolved of all charges, the officers involved in the incident were not reprimanded.

Police are motivated to harass members of minority groups not merely out of prejudice against Mexican Americans and Negroes but out of a belief that anyone involved in civil rights is ipso facto a part of the radical left and, therefore, against society, Rev. John Frickman, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, told the Committee.

John D. George, chairman of the board of directors of the Oakland Police Affairs Committee, described a proposal which his organization has submitted to the Oakland Economic Development Council. This proposal, favorably received by the Council, would provide for an equitable review of police brutality and harassment cases.

Robert J. Preston, chief of police, and Charles Gains, deputy chief of police, explained the work of the department in fostering good community relations. These efforts, they said, are highlighted by a five-man community relations division composed of two lieutenants and three sergeants. The division collects information and disseminates it throughout the force during classes offered for the department; a van which travels through minority neighborhoods seeking recruits; and attendance by police officials at community meetings.

According to Chief Preston, the force is particularly interested in recruiting Negroes and Mexican Americans. He noted that the shortage of policemen is the department's most pressing problem. In response to the brutality complaints lodged against the department, the chief admitted that on occasion officers have engaged in improper activities and their discharge from the force has sometimes followed. However, he defended the majority of the city's policemen, adding that they are often brutalized in the performance of their duties. As evidence of the good work of the department, he noted that only one formal complaint is filed for every 2,490 recorded police-community contacts. There is one sustained complaint where evidence is found to substantiate the allegation for every 6,036 contacts, he reported.

Both the chief and his deputy were opposed to a civilian review board. They argued that such a board would only serve to hamper police officers in the routine performance of their duties. They pointed out that relations between the police department and community leaders are sufficient to maintain a healthy community and that the complaining groups are usually irresponsible segments of the community.

Findings:

1. Of the 617 members of the Oakland Police Department, only 20 are minority group members, of whom 16 are Negroes and 4 are Mexican Americans.
2. Members of minority groups have made numerous allegations of police intimidation and excessive use of force against Negroes and Mexican Americans.

3. Minority group representatives expressed the belief that a civilian review board would be instrumental in discouraging police intimidation and abuse.

4. Police opposition to a civilian review board was based on the assumption that it would hamper a police department which already has good relations with the minority community and one which takes strong measures against officers who abuse their authority.

Suggestions for Action:

1. The city of Oakland should implement the Oakland Police Affairs Committee's proposal of a hearing panel which would sit at regularly scheduled times at the city's four poverty program neighborhood centers. The panel should have a staff which would help the complainant seek redress of his grievances and follow each complaint through to its resolution.

2. The police department should intensify its efforts to recruit minority group members and institute a program to teach Spanish to non Spanish-speaking members of the department.

3. The Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice should work closely with the Oakland Police Department's community relations division to help improve relations between local city officials and minority residents of the community.

HOUSING

An analysis of housing conditions of low-income families in Oakland, based on data supplied by local public agencies, was presented by Ruth Goodman, a graduate student in social welfare at the University of California. She gave the following information: there are currently 1,317 units of public housing in Oakland although 96,250, or 25 percent, of Oakland's 385,000 citizens earn less than \$4,000 per year and are, therefore, eligible for some form of public housing. Public housing comprises less than 1 percent of all of Oakland's housing. The Department of Housing and Building has placed only 600 families out of the 5,000 who have made application for such housing during the last five years. The situation was made more critical between 1960-63 when some 9,700 housing units were razed to make way for renewal projects, BART, and freeway construction. About 6,600 of those units were in the poverty target area. Present plans by the Oakland Redevelopment Agency call for the demolition of 5,700 additional housing units during the next four years.

"In addition to these plans," Miss Goodman said, "the code enforcement program expects that 13,560 additional housing units will be demolished." Although 15,000 new housing units have been built, her research indicated that those persons in most critical need of the housing cannot afford it.

Little has been done to change the relocation situation. It was alleged that the city is more interested in raising its tax base by encouraging the construction of high-cost apartments than in housing the poor. Mrs. Arlene Slaughter, a real estate broker, told of her attempts

to call the problem in its entirety to the attention of the Oakland Real Estate Board--attempts which were met with complete resistance from its members.

It was also alleged that the California Real Estate Association officially proclaims that its members can maintain housing lists according to race. Landlords and realtors can stipulate that they will not sell or rent to Negroes when they give listings to the Building and Housing Office, it was reported at the meeting. It was further alleged that a realtor who shows a dwelling to an "undesirable" may be prosecuted for trespassing by the owner of the property.

Public housing tenants made the following charges against the Oakland Housing Authority:

- * Residences are entered when occupants are not at home.
- * Leases can be broken without warning.
- * Damage to the property is automatically considered the result of negligence of the resident even though the lease provides that charges can be made only if proof is offered that the damages were the result of the tenant's negligence.
- * Late fees are charged tenants who fail to pay their rent the first of each month.
- * Tenants are reluctant to join the tenant organizations for fear of eviction.
- * Tenants who seek redress of their grievances are branded as "subversive."

Oakland Housing Authority officials, replying to tenants' charges stated:

- * A person may speak at a meeting of the Housing Authority if he presents a written request stating the topic in advance.
- * Home visits, made while residents are not on the premises, are justified as a means of preventive maintenance.
- * No evictions have been made during the past year. Leases which have been broken resulted from a lack of tenant cooperation in either the payment of rent or from conduct detrimental to the interests of other residents.
- * Tenants are expected to pay for damages to a dwelling. Payments for sizable damages can be made in installments.
- * The Housing Authority charges a penalty for overdue rent payments ranging from \$2 to \$5.
- * The city encourages the formation of tenant organizations which have the best interests of the tenants at heart but not those organizations which seek to disrupt the smooth operation of the housing authority.

While the public housing officials conceded that there is a disparity between the demand and supply of public housing, they said that Oakland had made great progress in a short time. Projects underway include the construction of 105 public housing units; a renewal effort which will transform downtown Oakland; and two federally financed housing projects, Oak Center and Acorn. The Oak Center Project includes the restoration of many of the city's once beautiful homes and the construction of

playgrounds and wider streets in what is now a depressed area. Acorn, jointly financed by the Federal Housing Administration and local residents, will provide 800 units renting for \$80 to \$120 a month.

The local housing officials reaffirmed the concern of the city government for the housing problems of the poor and Lee Merryweather, Assistant to the Regional Administrator, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, reiterated the concern of the Federal Government for decent, sanitary housing.

Findings:

1. The need for public housing far exceeds the available supply and the gap is not being closed.
2. Various urban renewal projects have demolished more than 1,000 low-income public and private housing units. Displaced tenants cannot afford the new housing. Meanwhile, 5,700 additional units are scheduled to be demolished, intensifying the need for realistically priced housing.
3. Many residents of public housing feel that the Public Housing Authority infringes upon their rights and civil liberties.
4. The California Real Estate Association and many private realtors actively perpetuate racial discrimination in housing.

Suggestions for Action:

1. The Public Housing Authority of Oakland should be investigated by the Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development and its practices of intrusive home visits, evictions, and unreasonable fines for alleged property damage and overdue rents should be eliminated.

2. A representative group of public housing residents should serve on the Housing Authority Board.

3. Oakland should provide 3,000 standard housing units at monthly rentals of \$40 to \$80 using all provisions available in the 1965 Housing and Urban Development Act, including the leasing, purchase, and rehabilitation of existing housing and the construction of low rent public housing on scattered sites. Large tracts of public housing located in the ghetto areas should be avoided since they will perpetuate present segregated housing patterns and aggravate some of the serious social problems which exist.

4.. Oakland should establish a Central Relocation Agency which would assist people affected by government action or other emergency situations in obtaining standard relocation payments and other relocation services.

5. The State and local civil rights and human relations agencies should work aggressively for the elimination of housing discrimination fully utilizing California's official policy on open occupancy.

6. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development should encourage and assist the city to construct desegregated, low-income housing. Moreover, it should strictly enforce the requirement that persons forced to move because of redevelopment be relocated in decent, safe, and sanitary housing within their means.

WELFARE

Welfare recipients alleged that the treatment they received from the Alameda County Welfare Department was insensitive, unjust, and unwarranted. They charged that the department invades the privacy of mothers receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to make certain that no man lives on the premises; that it withholds welfare allotments without telling the recipient why this has been done; that it discontinues checks to persons unjustly accused of fraud; and that sometimes it refuses to refer applicants to programs for which they are presumably eligible. It was also alleged that the procedure for establishing welfare eligibility is lengthy, discouraging, and often humiliating. Recipients complained that after an application is made to the Welfare Department, the applicant is referred to the District Attorney's office where she must face a long, harassing interview and sign a statement agreeing to prosecute if the father of her child is found and is able to contribute to the support of the child.

Mrs. Virginia Proctor of the Welfare Rights Organization, in illustrating these charges, told the Committee of one recipient whose allowance was abruptly discontinued because a man was in her living room and whose allowance was discontinued a second time because the department claimed she was living in unsuitable housing.

Mrs. Proctor also explained that welfare benefits were withheld from applicants with dependent children unless they had lived in the

State for one year and that applicants were ineligible for disability benefits unless they had lived in the State for five years and in the county for a minimum of one month.

When a recipient is charged with fraud, excessively high bail is set, according to welfare recipients who explained that subsequent court judgements may have nothing to do with the amount of the alleged fraud and bear no relation to substantial evidence of guilt. Even when exonerated, recipients say they may be subject to further harassment.

A welfare recipient reported that in the spring of 1964 Alameda County began discontinuing benefits to families with an unemployed father in the home because farm work was available. If the father refused to report to the Farm Labor Bureau, the family was denied aid and if he did report to the bureau and got a job, the family's welfare payments were stopped regardless of his wages. In no case, it was said, was there a review of the factors involved in the individual case.

The inadequacies of the welfare system are also apparent in the availability and quality of housing for its recipients, the Committee was told. Thirty-two percent of the city's AFDC recipients, displaced by urban renewal projects, were forced to move into sub-standard housing because of inadequate welfare allotments: \$38 a month for a family of three and \$43 a month for a family of five. Although legislation had been passed which increased each category

by \$24, the legislature did not appropriate the funds to cover this increase.

Representatives of the Welfare Rights Organization said that its members had had a struggle to obtain recognition and cooperation from the Alameda County Welfare Department. They told the Committee that they had been systematically excluded from interviews and denied the right to review cases or represent people on welfare. It was only after their appeal to the State Department of Welfare that they finally won recognition from the county department and the right to represent welfare recipients.

The Committee was told that there are very few minority group members in professional positions and no Spanish-speaking social workers employed by the Alameda County Welfare Department. It was felt that such a situation not only suggested discrimination but made communication between the department and Spanish-speaking clients practically impossible.

Findings:

1. The Alameda County Department of Welfare has been charged with terminating welfare checks arbitrarily, making surprise investigations, withholding welfare allotments, and falsely accusing recipients of fraud.

2. Persons accused of welfare fraud are often served with warrants dated months beforehand and held on bail disproportionate to the charges.

3. The procedure for establishing welfare eligibility is difficult, discouraging, and sometimes humiliating.

4. Welfare allotments are inadequate and cause a significant number of recipients to live in substandard housing.

5. Few minority group members are employed in responsible positions in the county welfare department and the department does not employ a Spanish-speaking social worker.

Suggestions for Action:

1. A thorough review should be made of the Alameda County Welfare Department by the Regional Office of the Federal Welfare Administration.

2. The 1-year residence requirement for families in need of welfare assistance should be eliminated.

3. The interview of an AFDC applicant by the District Attorney's office should be eliminated.

4. The Alameda County welfare allotments for housing should be increased so that welfare clients can afford clean, safe, and sanitary housing.

5. The county department should increase the number of its minority group staff members and provide Spanish-speaking social workers.

but fail to see how it can creat a utopia which would summarily appease all of us interested in the civil rights image of our country and the genuine welfare of all our fellow citizens.

Finally, I wish to assure you that the Police Department, as well as other City, County and State agencies are already implementing some of the recommendations contained in the material of the McCone Commission report to our Governor.

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CALIFORNIA

NEGROES IN THE HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA

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THE NEGRO IN CHICAGO

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THE NEGRO IN CHICAGO

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ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NEGRO IN CALIFORNIA

A Supplement Unit
for the
Course of Study in Social Studies

Grades 7-8

To be used with Achievements of the Negro in Chicago

It is the purpose of this material to show that the Negroes in California have contributed to the American life along with Negroes in the other states. The Committee has selected a few outstanding people who have been born, educated, or received recognition in California. These people have been selected because references to their lives may be found in one or more books and because their contributions to human welfare have been state-wide or international.

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GRADE 8A

NEGROES IN THE DISCOVERY OF CALIFORNIA

Paufils de Narvaez was commissioned to lead an expedition from Florida to the Pacific Coast under the orders of the Spanish Government. In this expedition was a Negro of Arab origin from the Azimur on the Atlantic Coast of Morocco. It was in 1535 that Estevanico, the Negro, and one Spaniard were able to reach Mexico.

The Negro led an expedition from Mexico in search of the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola. He discovered the states known now as Arizona and New Mexico. Estevanico was killed at the time of his discovery by hostile Indians. He did mark the route, however, on his way. Writers refer to Estevanico by different names: Little Stephens, Estepanico, Estevanico, and Stephens Dorantes.

Frémont's Expedition, known as The Bear Flag Party, had Negroes among the group. Jacob Dodson, James Duff, John Grider, Joe McAfee, Charles Gaines, and Bill Gaston were some of these men. The Bear Flag Party was composed of thirty-nine members in 1843 when they set out to bring the State of California into the Union. California was under Mexican rule at the time.

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NEGRO PIONEERS IN THE STATE

From the time the expeditionary party discovered California in 1535 until the Congress of the United States appropriated three million dollars for the purchase of California in 1847, Mexico ruled California. When the state came into the Union, it came as a free state but there was much debate concerning slavery. There were 92,597 people in California in 1850, according to the seventh census taken at that time. Of this number 962 were Negroes. Some of the Negroes came as freemen; others came with their masters and had to buy their freedom.

As the state developed the need for more rapid contact with the East was realized. In 1855 the Pony Express began to be operated between St. Louis, Washington, and the Pacific Coast. There were three Negroes who had charge of the horses used on the trip and who were riders as well as caretakers. These men were James Frances, George Monroe, and William Robinson.

There are some pioneer Negroes whose life stories should be known and remembered by all of the peoples who live in California and are interested in the social and economic life of the state.

William Alexander Leidsdorff

William Alexander Leidsdorff was the most distinguished Negro of the city of San Francisco and the State of California. He was a native of the Danish West Indies of the Island of Santa Croix, and was born about 1812. His father was a Dane and his mother was part Negro. He came to the United States when he was a boy and he became a master of vessels sailing between New York and New Orleans. He came to California in 1840 on the ship "Julia Ann," of which he was the captain. He obtained naturalization papers in 1844.

In 1845 he served as the United States Vice-Consul to Mexico; to this position he was appointed by Consul Larkin, who was Military Governor of California.

Leidsdorff owned and commanded the first steamer, "The Sitka," that passed through the Golden Gate. He owned a beautiful home in San Francisco, and was active in all city affairs. He was a member of the City Council and the treasurer and member of the school committee. He actively sponsored the acquisition of California by the United

States. He died in 1848, and he was buried in the Mission Dolores, the only person of out of state birth who has been so honored. He left an estate valued at more than \$40,000.

Biddy Mason

Biddy Mason was born in Hancock County, Georgia, on August 15, 1838. She came to California in 1851, driving the ox-team of her master. She brought with her three daughters. The courts of Los Angeles granted to her and her children their freedom on January 19, 1854. At that time there were only eight white families living in the town. She secured work at two dollars and fifty cents a day as a confinement nurse. She worked hard, saved her money, and purchased two lots located in the heart of Los Angeles. The lots were not in the city when she bought them. She taught the value of money and property to her children and grandchildren. When she died she left much valuable property to them. She was a pioneer in the field of social service as well as in economics. She visited jails and slum districts, and helped whenever she could. At the time of the flood in the early eighties she gave an order to a little grocery located at Fourth and Spring Streets, by which all families made homeless by the flood were given food. Biddy Mason died January 15, 1891. She was certainly one of California's greatest women.

Mifflin Gibbs

On April 18, 1823, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, another Negro who was to play an important part in the history of California was born. His parents were poor and he worked at odd jobs--porter, bootblack, and miner. His father died when Mifflin Gibbs was eight years old, and he was left to earn his own livelihood. His early business life was begun in San Francisco when in 1849 he became a partner in the first boot and shoe firm in the city. This store was located at 636 Clay Street. In 1851, Gibbs, Townsend, and Newby published in the Alta California a public protest against being denied the right to vote and the right of oath. He and Mr. James Townsend published the first Negro paper in California in 1855, the Mirror of the Times.

Young Gibbs was not satisfied with his lot, and in 1858, he went to Victoria, where he established one of the first merchandise houses. He was elected councilman. He entered into a contract to build a railroad from Queen Charlotte coal mine to Skidgate Harbor in 1867. He was

made superintendent of the mine when the road was completed, and he sent to San Francisco the first carload of coal that was mined on the Pacific Coast.

While he was in Victoria he studied law under a private lawyer. In 1869, he returned to Little Rock, Arkansas. A year later he was graduated from Oberlin College and was admitted to the Arkansas Bar. He was elected city judge of Little Rock in 1873, the first Negro judge in the United States. Mr. Gibbs was appointed Registrar of the United States Land Office in 1877 and Receiver of Public Moneys at Little Rock, by the President of the United States. In 1897-1901 he was appointed United States Consul to Tamatave, Madagascar.

During the time Mr. Gibbs was in San Francisco he was intensely interested in the affairs concerning the welfare of the Negro people. He opposed the collection of the poll tax from men of the Negro race. He was sent to Sacramento on the first committee appointed to petition for the Rights of American Citizenship for Negroes. He had a useful, unselfish life.

No list of pioneer Californians can be complete without the names of those who worked to establish schools for Negro children. The foundation of the Public School System of California was laid at the Constitutional Convention in Monterey, in September, 1849. It was not until three years later, however, that any schools were established for the Negro children. Negro and Mongolian children were not permitted to attend the same schools that Caucasian children attended. This condition remained until 1875 when the law was changed. The first education for Negroes was provided by the Negroes themselves, out of their funds.

Elizabeth Thorn Scott

Elizabeth Thorn Scott opened the first school for Negro youths in Sacramento, May 29, 1854. There were fourteen children enrolled, and her salary of fifty dollars a month was paid by the parents of the children. This school lasted one year, when the teacher married. The children were again without a school.

Jeremiah B. Sanderson

Some people have referred to Jeremiah B. Sanderson as the greatest influence for the education of the Negro in the

State of California. He was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and came to California on a ship. His first destiny was in San Francisco; later he moved to Sacramento. The Negro people of Sacramento were still trying to find a teacher for their children when he came there. Mr. Sanderson was selected to fill the position. He accepted the position but soon realized that this did not meet the need of the group. He met with a group of colored citizens to decide the best thing to do. They decided that Mr. Sanderson should write a letter to the Sacramento Board of Education, asking them to establish a public school for the Negro children of that city. This school the board did establish in May, 1855. Mr. Sanderson took the teacher's examination, passed it, and again began the work of teaching. It was the first school for Negroes supported by public funds. Later, another group helped to remove the separate school law, so that all youths regardless of race might attend the same school.

Sara Jones

Miss Sara Jones became the teacher of this same school in 1873. She came to California after she had been graduated at Oberlin College. She taught for two years in Sacramento; then the law was passed permitting all races to attend the same schools. She continued to teach at the school after the student body became interracial. She was made the principal, and was retired in 1915.

Other schools were opened in San Francisco, Stockton, and Oakland for Negro children shortly after the original school in Sacramento in 1855. Oakland was one of the last cities of that time to secure public funds. The reason for this may have been that most of the early settlers of California, especially the Negroes, located around or in Sacramento, San Francisco, and Stockton.

Delilah Beasley

Delilah Beasley was a native of Ohio, born in 1871. She spent eight years compiling material for her book Negro Trail Blazers of California. This book is a splendid historical reference book, as well as a good biography of Negroes in California from 1849 to 1919.

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ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NEGRO IN CALIFORNIA

The 1940 census of the United States showed that the State of California had a Negro population of 124,000, or 1.8 per cent of the total population. April 1, 1940, the total population of Berkeley was 85,547; the Negro population was 3,395, a 16.9 per cent increase. April 12, 1944, the total population of Berkeley was 100,024; the Negro population was 6,129, an 80.5 per cent increase over the 1940 census. The 1944 census gives a Negro population for the state of 220,000. This is the figure put out by the State Population Commission. Alameda County's Negro population has increased by 1539 per cent during the last four years.

In Agriculture

Earl Grant

This young Negro was born on a farm. He was one of twelve children and had little chance to go to school. At the age of twenty he had reached the third grade. He left the farm to become a cook on the train. He worked at this job until he was promoted to first cook and then to chef. He knew that this position was the end of advancement for him on the railroad; but he had been learning on each trip. He had seen homes owned by Negroes in the Middle West--homes that had been bought by men who were farmers. Some of these farmers had potato farms, cattle ranches; others made money from specializing in growing watermelons. Today, Earl Grant is the owner of a ranch in California upon which he has for the market an average of 4,000 hogs a year. He is a member of the board of directors of the Hog Feeders' Association.

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In Architecture

Paul Williams

Paul Williams, one of the outstanding architects of the country, is described on page 51 of the Chicago Supplement III, Grades 7 and 8.

In Art

Sargent Johnson

Few men in the state have received more recognition in art than Sargent Johnson. He was born in Boston in 1888 and spent his early years in Virginia. He attended the Boston School of Fine Arts, the California School of Fine Arts for six years, and he attended the high school for three years studying mechanical drafting. He was a student of Beniamis Bufano and of Ralph Stackpole.

His work has been exhibited with the San Francisco Art Association, San Diego Fine Arts Gallery, Chicago Fine Arts Gallery, and elsewhere. He has received medals from the San Francisco Art Association in 1925, 1931, and 1935. He received the Otto H. Kohn Prize of \$250 in the Harmon Exhibit of 1928; the Harmon Bronze Award in Fine Arts, in 1928; and the Harmon Award in 1931. In 1936 he received the San Francisco Art Association Annual Award. The Artist Fund Prize, in 1936, for Lithograph, black and white, was also given to him.

He has received recognition in many fields and has many monumental works to his credit--the frieze depicting high school sports at the George Washington High School, San Francisco; the Marine Forms, in colored tile, at the Aquatic Park, San Francisco; and five statues of animals cast in terrazo, at the Sunnyvale Housing Project, San Francisco.

Many of his works have been purchased by people from all walks of life. Esther was purchased by the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery. Sammy, a head in terra cotta, was purchased by Mrs. E. R. Alexander of New York. Several copies of Chester, also terra cotta, have been sold, including one to the German Minister to Italy, and one to President Sproul of the University of California. Forever Free and Four Masks are other outstanding works.

In 1934 he was elected to the Council Board of the San Francisco Art Association, and to the Mural Painters' Association Regional Arts of California.

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In Athletics

The Negro has been able to gain much recognition in all fields of athletics. Every division in which he has had an opportunity to participate has had at least one title holder.

Howard Drew

Howard P. Drew represented the University of Southern California March 28, 1914, and won the 100-yard world's record at Berkeley. He became the co-holder of the 130-yard sprint in New York in 1913. This record was held by him for seven years. This same year saw him win the 220-yard record at Claremont, California, in 1914.

John Henry Lewis

This young man was born in Los Angeles, California, May 6, 1914. His father trained him to box. Until John met Joe Lewis he had never been knocked out by anyone in the ninety-nine fights in which he had engaged. He had won by forty-eight knockouts, he had lost seven, and he had fought five to a draw. When he was forced to withdraw

from the ring in 1935, he still had the Light-Heavy-Weight Title. Poor eyesight made withdrawal necessary at that time. He is now training his brother, Paul, who is a promising young fighter.

Strode, *woodrow "woody"*

Strode was another Negro who was an outstanding football player on the University of California at Los Angeles football team. He held the world's record for the sixteen-pound shot put.

Henry Armstrong

This is the only man in the history of sports who has held three titles in boxing at the same time. Henry was the eleventh child, born in the seventh month, 1911, at Columbus, Mississippi. When he came to Los Angeles, he had no place to stay, no money, and he was cold and hungry. He sang and prayed for his supper and spent the night with a hundred bums at the mission operated by the Dark Angel of Mercy. The night he did not have fifteen cents to stay there proved to be his lucky night. He walked the streets all night and stood in the bread line the next morning to get something to eat. While standing in this line, he heard someone say that a boxing gymnasium needed a sock-absorber. He tried for this job but was ridiculed because he was so small. On his way out he began punching a bag. His speed attracted so much attention that a fight promoter handed a contract to him. From that time he trained, worked, and dieted so that he could fight in three divisions. He held the Featherweight, Welterweight, and Lightweight titles at the same time. His motto is, "Men who do not find ways, make them."

Cornelius Johnson

Cornelius Johnson was born in California. He went to school, public and college, in California. He was in Berlin in August, 1936, at the Eleventh Olympiad, and he broke the world's record in the High Jump.

Archie Williams

Archie Williams, too, was a California young man who participated in the same Olympiad and won the four hundred meter race. He has made good in the field of aviation in World War II.

Kenny Washington

Kenny Washington's name made weekly news in the football pages in 1938. He played halfback on the University of California football team and was hailed by all sports writers as the outstanding man on the Coast.

Walter Gordon

This man belongs in the field of athletics, but in the division of Government, too. His story will be told in that division of this supplement.

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In Business

William Nickerson, Jr.

When William Nickerson saw a man mobbed at the end of the block in the little Texas town in which he was living, he decided to come to California to live. He was accustomed to picking cotton, rolling logs, and going without shoes; he knew how to face the hardships of life. He brought with him to California a family of nine. He was employed by an insurance company when he came, but he saw that it was failing. He did learn the insurance business, however, and he decided to open a company of his own. He became the organizer and the president of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company of Los Angeles. He did not find it easy to run a business with limited funds. The state requirements must be met by small concerns as well as by big ones. Mr. Nickerson consulted a lawyer with the idea of learning how to keep open the doors of his small business. The lawyer wanted \$2,000 for his advice. He did not have the amount to give the lawyer, but he did have enough to buy a set of law books which he studied. He was able to convince the court that his business was sound. He visited Negro churches, told his story, and raised enough capital to secure his business. Today, he hires over two hundred Negroes in all of the branches of his organization; he has over 38,000 policies; he has assets of nearly \$1,000,000; and has insurance in force of \$7,677,000. This is an interesting place, owned and operated by Negroes.

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Howard Smith

This young man started out on a business career at the age of twenty-four years. He came to Los Angeles four years ago with ninety-eight cents in his pocket. He wanted to learn to be a pilot, but he had no money to pay for instruction so he registered as a parachute jumper. He and Mack Gravely did various jump stunts such as free falls, break

away jumps, spot landings, and delayed chute openings. Mack was killed during one of these feats when a borrowed parachute that did not have a speed opening device failed to open. Howard was left without a partner and without pilot training. He went to San Diego and obtained a position as a drop tester and packer at the Standard Parachute Company. He was advanced to the job of inspector. The president of the company was so impressed with Howard's ambition to have a factory of his own that he sublet to him the contract for pilot chutes. Howard took his \$250 savings and presented his case to Eddie "Rochester" Anderson. They own and control the Pacific Parachute Company in Los Angeles. They employ over eighty people of six different nationalities, and are making democracy work.

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L. G. Robinson

Some one has said that there is only one L.G. Robinson in the United States. This Negro man was born on a farm in Middlebrooks Station, Georgia, on February 12, 1876. He was the most homely of the eleven Robinson children. His father had been born a free man but his mother's parents had been slaves; consequently she knew all of the hardships that such a condition of birth fostered. L. G. knew the poverty, hatred, and pathos of those early days of reconstruction that followed the Civil War. Education for him and for other Negro youths of his day was very limited; his home town in Georgia had three months of school--June, July, and August. The only time L. G. had for reading was his noon hour, and this was spent reading the Bible. His parents taught him hard work, thrift, and honesty. Mr. Robinson's first desire was to be a preacher. He studied at Knoxville College, in Tennessee, for two years, then he entered Payne Institute. In 1899 he married and he and his wife both taught school in the South. He decided upon the advice of a friend to move to California, which he did in 1903. He worked in Pasadena in a hospital; later he accepted a janitorial job in Los Angeles County in 1907. In 1937 he held the position of head janitor with one hundred sixty-eight men under his supervision.

Mr. Robinson and his wife, who joined him in 1912, saved their money, and planned and built one of the most modern, artistic mortuaries in the United States. Paul Williams, the celebrated California architect, designed the Angelus Funeral Home in Los Angeles owned by Mr. Robinson. L. G. has been a staunch N.A.A.C.P. organizer, and a Y.M.C.A. supporter whose services in that organization warranted the Golden Book of Remembrances. This honor is given to people who have given illustrious service to the Y.M.C.A. The Angelus Funeral Home is a place worth seeing in California.

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In Government

Walter A. Gordon

Wherever the sons of the University of California come together Walter Gordon's name is known. Walter was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1894, and came to California with his parents and one brother when he was ten years old. When Walter finished high school, he followed the wishes of his parents and entered the University of California at Berkeley to enroll in the School of Law. The University of California is a state school and had never had a Negro to graduate in law. In 1918, Walter, with a better than average scholastic record, obtained his A.B. degree. He had always wanted to play on the football team, but he was underweight, and he had to break down the racial barriers as well as to gain weight in order to enter this sport. The coach considered Walter "yellow," which was another barrier. The next season, however, was a changing point in Walter's football career. The new coach, Andrew L. Smith, proved one of the best friends Walter ever had. In a boxing bout between Walter and an exchampion it was quite evident that "yellow" was the wrong term to apply to Walter. He became intercollegiate champion in boxing and wrestling. Walter Camp selected Gordon on his All-American team, and he had the distinction of being the first Pacific Coast football player to be honored in that way. Coach Andy Smith awarded the Percy Hall Trophy to Walter. This award is given to the most valuable man on the team for the year.

Walter was a sergeant in the S.A.T.C. when he graduated from college in 1918. He had broken down racial barriers, and had earned the respect of the faculty and the student body. He had to earn a living for himself and studied law. He was given a job on the police force in Berkeley, and was appointed simultaneously to the position of assistant football coach at the University of California. Neither position had ever been held by a Negro. Gordon worked at both jobs and went to law school. He now had a wife and family to support. He has been on the coaching staff of the University of California for twenty-three years, and has practiced law for twenty-two years.

Attorney Gordon was appointed by Governor Warren, together with four other citizens, to investigate the "Zoot Suit" riot in Los Angeles, in 1943. Later, he was appointed to the Board of Prison Terms and Paroles; then placed on an investigating committee to study the penal institutions of the state; also on a committee to draft new laws governing these institutions. His latest appointment by Governor Warren was one of three persons on Adult Authority, a Board of Prison Terms and Paroles, which is a very important board dealing with all penal cases.

Edward L. Jefferson

Edward Jefferson must be included in this list of Negroes who have achieved recognition in the state of California. He was appointed the Judge of Municipal Court, in Los Angeles, in 1940 by Governor Olsen.

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In Literature

Arna Bontemps

Arna Bontemps is one of the recent arrivals in the field of literature. He was born in Alexandria, Louisiana in 1902, and came to Los Angeles when quite young. He attended the University of California there, and in 1923 he was graduated with honors at Pacific Union College at Angwin, California. His poem "Golgatha is a Mountain" won the Alexander Pushkin Poetry Prize of \$100 in 1926. Since that time he has written such novels as God Send Sunday and Black Thunder. The latter is considered a very challenging book. He has many short articles to his credit.

Zora Neale Huston

This Negro girl had the unique birthplace of an all Negro town, Eatonville, Florida. This was the first incorporated all Negro town in the United States in which all of the officials were Negroes. At sixteen years of age Zora became a maid to a Caucasian woman who recognized the ability of the girl and sent her to Morgan College in Baltimore. Zora later entered Howard University in Washington, D. C. It was here that she wrote her first prize story that resulted in a scholarship to Barbard College. Fannie Hurst met Zora and employed her as her secretary. This experience proved invaluable to Zora. She continued to write and to study, and she won two fellowships and went to Haiti to study anthropology.

She has served on the staff of Paramount Studios as a script writer and an authority on Haiti. She has written many books, such as Jonah's Gourd Vine, Tell My Horse, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Moses Man of the Mountain, and Dust Tracks on the Road.

Wallace Thurman

Wallace was born in Salt Lake City and was educated at the University of Southern California. He has served on the editorial staffs of the Messenger and of the Macaulay Publishing companies. His novel, The Blacker the Berry, appeared in 1929; his play, "Harlem," written in collaboration with W. J. Rapp, was produced the same year. In 1932 he wrote Infants of the Spring.

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In Moving Pictures

Hattie McDaniels

The role of the Negro in motion pictures has not been one to which the Negro people have looked with pride. Because of the portrayal of the role and not the vehicle itself it seems that Hattie McDaniels must be included among those few motion picture people who received the Little Oscar.

The life of Hattie McDaniels has been an unusual one in some respects. She was the thirteenth child of a Baptist minister, born in Wichita, Kansas, June 19, 1898. Her parents moved to Denver when she was an infant, and she attended the public schools there. When she was seventeen years old, in the second year of high school, she was given an opportunity to sing over the radio. The Women's Christian Temperance Union awarded a gold medal to her for her recital of "Convict Joe" when she was eighteen years old. She has played the Shrine and Elks Circuit and the Pantages Circuit. When there was no other work for her to do she was employed as a maid. In 1931 she came to Hollywood. She had small parts in pictures, but her best role came when she was given the part in "Gone with the Wind." In 1940 she was awarded the Little Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science for the best supporting role of the year. She has appeared in ten or more pictures.

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In Music

William Grant Still

The life of William Grant Still is given in detail on page 37 of Supplement II of the Chicago Plan.

Jimmy Munday

Few people know that the music for the George Burns and Gracie Allen radio show is arranged by a Negro, Jimmy Munday. He has a penthouse studio at Hollywood and Vine Streets in Hollywood. Jimmy was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he studied the violin for many years. He traveled with a Negro evangelist until the death of the religious leader, then he began to study the saxophone.

He has arranged music for Paul Whiteman, for Bennie Goodman, and for Gene Kruppa. His musical arrangements have been used in Hit Parade of 1943, Star Spangled Rhythm, and What's Buzzin' Cousin? He is a composer as well as an arranger, and he has to his credit some best sellers, among which are Jam Session, and Spring Time in the Rockies.

Leon Rene

The American Society of Composers gave a prize of \$625 to Leon Rene for composing the most original piece of music in 1940. His compositions include such favorites as, When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano and Sleepy Time Down South. He was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and lives in Los Angeles.

Florence Cole-Talbert

Florence Cole-Talbert comes from a long line of musicians. She is the daughter of Mrs. Thomas A. Cole, one of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers. Florence was educated in the public schools of California and received her first musical education at the University of California. Her parents moved to California when she was eight years old. She was born in Detroit, Michigan. Florence traveled for three years in concert as a leading soprano with the Midland Jubilee Singers. Then she entered the Chicago Musical College, won a partial scholarship, and was presented in students' recital during her first semester. She was graduated with the class of 1916. In a public contest before thirty

members of the faculty and the judges, she won first place in a class of sixty students, and she was the only Negro in the class. She won the diamond medal, the winning of which gave to her the honor of singing at the commencement exercises accompanied by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra of one hundred pieces. Later, she studied in New York and in Italy.

Kenneth Spencer

It is a treat to hear Kenneth Spencer sing Old Man River. Kenneth was born in Los Angeles about thirty-three years ago. When he was quite young his music teacher recognized his ability and urged him to continue in his study of vocal music. This study he did for many years with the direction of individual instructors. One of his teachers in Berkeley was Mrs. O. Kipp McMurray, who persuaded him to go to the Rochester School of Music in New York, from which he received his degree. He has sung in Town Hall in New York, in the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra under Iturbi, and in other places. He has had roles in plays, such as John Henry and Old Man River and in the pictures Cabin in the Sky and Bataan. He has been sent overseas to entertain the troops of World War II.

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In World War II

In Supplement III, pages 40-47, a picture of the Negroes' participation in the military life of the United States has been shown. World War II is still in progress and many individual cases of outstanding achievement might well be given at this time. No names of individuals will be given since a complete list is impossible until the war ends and all valiant men may receive the credit that is due. We must, however, list the number of Negroes in the armed forces in order that one may see that the Negro is doing his share as he has always done.

"The War Department reported during May the number of Negroes serving in the Army as of February 29, 1944, was 664,066; commissioned officers 4,979. These include: Infantry, 44,002, Coast and Field Artillery, 50,955; Cavalry, 9,043; Engineers, 106,514; Air Forces, 77,335; all others, 376,197. Of the commissioned officers 77 are dental corps; nurses 219; chaplains 205; other medical corps officers 476. Serving overseas, 284,664 (which includes officers, warrant officers, nurses, Women's Army Corps, hospital dietitians, physical therapy aides, and enlisted men). (Norfolk Journal and Guide, May 20)"

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Things to Remember

1. A Negro discovered Arizona and New Mexico.
2. There were Negroes in Frémont's Expedition and with the Pony Express.
3. California was admitted into the Union as a free state, although Negroes were brought to the state as slaves. These Negroes had to secure their freedom.

4. The first steamer to pass through the Golden Gate was owned and commanded by a Negro, William Leidsdorff.

5. Negroes who have been born or who have gone to school in California have been winners of awards at the Olympiad in Berlin, and have thus received international recognition.

6. The Negro has contributed to the United States in all fields of action in which he has been allowed to participate.

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