

* HISTORIC NEW MILLENNIUM EDITION *

MIRROR OF THE TIMES

"Truth Crushed to the Earth Will Rise Again"

OCTOBER 2010

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

FREE

SAILING AWAY

HUNDREDS FLEE DISCRIMINATION

San Francisco's Black Exodus



Steam Sidewheeler Commodore - In 1858, hundreds of African Americans migrated from the "free state" of California, where they faced discrimination, to British Columbia, Canada, for new life and opportunities.

A Project of Zaccho Dance Theatre
and the San Francisco Arts Commission's Art on Market Street Program

October 7-10, 2010

Market Street between Powell and Battery
San Francisco, CA



A Look Into the Past - Market Street from Third Street, looking east, San Francisco

Zaccho Dance Theatre Presents

Sailing Away

Conceived and Directed by Joanna Haigood

In collaboration with performing artists Byb Chanel Bibene, Tristan Cunningham, Antoine Hunter, Robert Henry Johnson, Amara Tabor-Smith, Travis Rowland, Raissa Simpson, Matthew Wickett, and Shakiri.

Dramaturg: Kim Euell

Costumes: Callie Floor

Assistant to the Director: Jodi Lomask

Design Set Consultant: Wayne Campbell

Prop Fabrication: Wayne Campbell and John Norton

Paintings: Dieter Tremp, Eric Karpeles and Michael Sells

Newspaper Designer: Reginald James

THANK YOU to the San Francisco Arts Commission, Judy Moran, Kate Patterson, African American Museum and Library at Oakland, Al Williams, San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, Guy Washington, Shiree Dyson, MoAD, ACT Props and Costume Shops, Wendy Parkman, John Rogers, Dr, Shawn Ginwright, Mary Ratcliff, The San Francisco Bayview, Angela Tension and the California Historical Society, Danielle Sandia Langlois, Jamie Coventry, Natasha Kaluza, Jodi Lomask, Sutter Station, Dancers' Group, Wayne Hazzard, Kegan Marling, World Arts West, San Francisco City Hall, Zaccho's Board of Directors, Doug Washington and Town Hall, the amazing Shamsher Virk for his generosity, friendship, dedication and hard work (we miss you very much), and to the extraordinary artists for bringing these stories to life with grace and insight.

For an accessible experience of this visual performance for people who are blind or visually impaired, please contact Kate Patterson at the Arts Commission by email at kate.patterson@sfgov.org or at 415.252.4638. Performance materials are also on reserve at San Francisco's Main Library.

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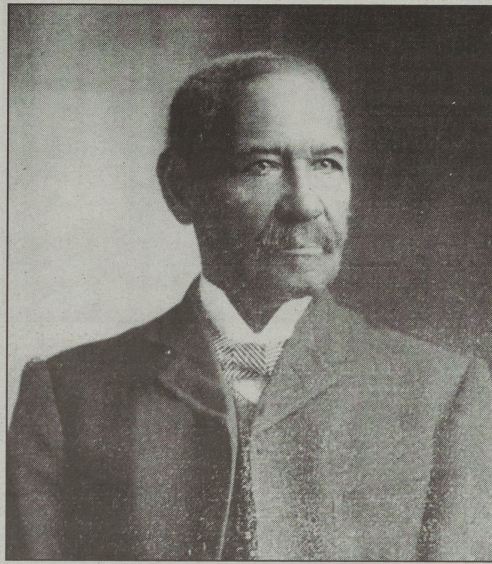
A project of the San Francisco Arts Commission's Art on Market Street Program. The Art on Market Street Program has been bringing contemporary art by Bay Area artists to workers, visitors and shoppers on San Francisco's main thoroughfare since 1992.

MIFFLIN GIBBS - SAN FRANCISCO PIONEER, BUSINESSMAN

Portrayed by Antoine Hunter

My name is Mifflin Wistar Gibbs and I was born in Philadelphia April 17, 1823. I had the good fortune to be born into an achievement-oriented family of free men and women. My father, a Methodist Minister, understood the importance of a good education and enrolled me early on. Unfortunately he passed away when I was only eight. I left the Free School where I was enrolled at in order to help support my invalid mother. I continued my studies as best I could at night. At age twelve I apprenticed as a carpenter, in accordance with my mother's wishes. Eventually I became a successful builder and contractor. My skills as a carpenter proved to be a great asset.

As a youth I visited a plantation in Maryland and saw firsthand the chattel system in operation. This experience inspired my activities in the fight against oppression. My affiliation with a group of well-educated Negro men led to my active involvement within Philadelphia's prominent Anti-Slavery Society and Underground Railroad. I was gratified when Frederick Douglas encouraged me join him on a lecture tour that ended in California around the time that gold was discovered there. I arrived in San Francisco with less than a dollar in my pocket but with complete confidence that I could use my skills to secure my livelihood. I soon found lodging at a hotel on



Mifflin Wistar Gibbs (1823-1915)

Kearney Street that was run by a man of my own race. I then set out to find gainful employment.

My first job in San Francisco was as a carpenter. In order to be hired I had to agree to work for wages that were less than those paid to the white carpenters. When my co-workers threatened to quit unless I was fired, the foreman told me that I could stay on if I could recruit enough workers willing to work at my pay level to replace the others. Despite my best efforts I was forced to give up my construction job. I did not allow this setback to deter me

from my goals however. I began working as a bootblack in front of the Union Hotel, knowing that this would only be temporary. During the boom times of the Gold Rush there were ample opportunities for entrepreneurial types like me. With the money I was able to save I went into the clothing business with Nathaniel Pointer. We called our shop The Philadelphia House. Next I partnered with Peter Lester, also of Philadelphia, in opening an imported boot and shoe firm. Our emporium featured the latest styles from London, Paris, New York and of course, Philadelphia.

In 1851 I became one of the founders of the *Mirror of the Times*, California's first black newspaper. From 1854-57, I was active in several committees opposing the growing discriminatory practices in California including a poll tax targeting Blacks. When I refused to pay the tax, goods from our store were seized and put up for bid on the auction block. Sympathetic friends circulated through the crowd urging those assembled not to bid on our stock. The crowd complied and the tax officials eventually returned our property. Following this incident I formed an activist group called The Franchise League that used the court system to fight these efforts and led the campaign that resulted in the repeal of the poll tax. Mary Ellen Pleasant provided substantial financial support for The League's efforts. But after we lost the Right of Testimony, I witnessed a grievous assault on my partner at our downtown establishment. Deprived of the right to testify on his behalf in court it was clear to me that the time had come to pull up stakes and depart from San Francisco, for people of color were no longer safe here. On April 20, 1858, along with eight hundred black Californians, I boarded the steamship Commodore and set sail for Victoria, British Columbia.

Early in 1858 gold was discovered on the Fraser River in Canada so our relocation came at a fortuitous time. While living in the Northwest I invested

in real estate and established the region's first mercantile house outside of the Hudson Bay Company. In addition to amassing considerable wealth, I studied the English Common Law and was eventually elected to two terms on the Common Council. In 1859 I returned to The States just long enough to marry Maria Alexander of Kentucky, an Oberlin graduate.

After the Civil War ended we returned to the States where I continued my legal studies and obtained my law degree from Oberlin College. We then established a permanent residence in Little Rock, Arkansas where I was admitted to the Bar. One year later I was appointed attorney of Pulaski County. In 1873 I was elected to the position of Municipal Judge in this city in which the large majority was not of my race. In fact, I became the first African American elected to this kind of office in the United States. In 1877 the President Hayes appointed me Register of the United States Land Office for the Little Rock District of Arkansas. I continued to serve various posts in the Interior Department through appointments made by presidents Arthur and Harrison. In 1897 I was appointed United States Consul for Madagascar where I served for four years before resigning. The man who replaced me became my son-in-law.

I also found the time somehow to record my life story. I chose the title *Shadow and Light: An Autobiography*.

George Washington Dennis - Colored advocate

Portrayed By Chanel Bibene

I was brought to California during the Gold Rush by a slave trader from Mobile, Alabama named Green Dennis.

He happened to be my father. In those days gambling was a popular way of passing the time during long voyages.

On the trip to San Francisco I was won and lost three times. Fortunately, once we arrived I was offered the opportunity to purchase my freedom.

Let's just say I was highly motivated. Working as a hotel porter I was able to save more than enough money within three

months. I paid Green Dennis \$1,000 for my freedom and sent \$950 to liberate my mother from bondage down South.

When my mother arrived in San Francisco I purchased a cooking concession for her at the El Dorado Hotel. During the Gold Rush days even a hard boiled egg sold for a dollar. Mother was able to take in over \$200 a day on average serving up home cooked meals to the gambling crowd. This new life agreed with mother and she lived to be 105.

Eventually I opened the Custom House Livery Stable, located at Sansome and

Washington Streets. I was able to secure a large contract with the British government to supply trained horses.

There was one unfortunate incident during this time. An Irish fellow working for me there poisoned ninety of the horses and I had him brought up on charges. This did not prevent me from fulfilling the contract.

In 1851 I married Margaret Anne Brown. That same year I became a member of the Executive Committee of the Colored Convention.

I was the one who secured legal assistance for the release of Archy Lee from the custody of

his owner, Charles Stovall. I also lobbied for testimony rights in San Francisco along with Mifflin Gibbs. Once it became clear that we would not prevail on this issue, my wife and I decided to join with the group that was leaving San Francisco to settle on Victoria Island.

After the Civil War, when conditions improved, I returned to San Francisco with my family. In 1867 I opened San Francisco's first fuel yard, the Cosmopolitan Coal & Wood Yard. Located at 340 Broadway near Montgomery, we sold fuel wholesale and retail. I also invested in real estate.

In partnership with Mifflin

Gibbs, I purchased one property on Montgomery between Jackson and Pacific that was sold six months later for almost double the price paid.

I built a beautiful home for my family at 2507 Bush Street. My son George studied at the Hastings College of Law in San Francisco.

Another one of my sons, Edward, became the first African American policeman in San Francisco.

My daughter Margaret was the first of her race to graduate from San Francisco High School. She did so with honors and was fluent in Spanish and Chinese. She later taught at a private school for Chinese students.

Some of our descendants are still living in this area today.



Mechanic Monument, after 1906 Earthquake.

San Francisco schoolgirl recalls discrimination

Portrayed by Raissa Simpson

I'm Sarah Lester and I am fifteen years of age. My father owns the shoe salon downtown on Clay Street, along with Mr. Gibbs.

I was happily enrolled in the only public high school in San Francisco when an anonymous letter to the San Francisco Herald newspaper changed my life.

The Herald often promoted pro-slavery ideas but I never thought they would attack a

schoolgirl because of her racial heritage. The letter demanded that I be expelled.

Ordinarily modesty would prevent me from disclosing that I was the second highest achiever academically and first in art and music at the school; however I share these facts only to highlight the injustice of the situation.

For a while I was encouraged when my schoolmates rushed to my defense and my white neighbors petitioned for me to be able to complete my studies.

But as the public debate

continued month after month my resilience began to wane. The School Board ruled to expel me but the superintendent refused to enforce the vote. My classmates threatened to boycott classes if I was removed. This all became unbearably distracting.

The campaign of harassment continued until my parents removed me from school. Soon after, my parents decided that we would relocate to Canada. It was painful leaving my friends.

It is even more painful to recall this dispiriting episode.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

During the course of my research for this project I read *The Barbary Coast* by Herbert Asbury. The book was a perfect entree into America's "wild west" and to understanding San Francisco's role in defining it.

The history of the Barbary Coast properly begins with the gold rush to California in 1849. If gold had not been discovered, Asbury argues, the development of San Francisco's underworld, in all likelihood, would have proceeded according to the traditional pattern and would have been indistinguishable from that of any other large American city.

Instead arose the district where *Sailing Away* is set. This part of Market was the scene of viciousness and depravity. At the same time, it offered more glamour than any other area of "vice and iniquity on the American continent."

The early 1850s saw chaos and mayhem rippling through San Francisco. Thousands of people arrived by sea and across land in search for gold and various other fortunes. The city was covered with tent cities and shanties—the most immediate and improvised housing. Murder, theft, gambling, prostitution, and arson were more common than not as gangs roamed the streets vying for power. The government's ability to maintain any order or structure was crippled by political corruption at every turn.

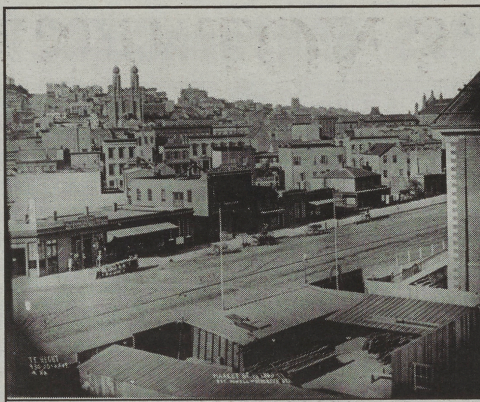
Soon the San Francisco Committee of Vigilance formed to take on the city's criminals, hanging some outside their downtown offices in grand public displays aimed at discouraging any followers.

Despite these conditions, people continued to migrate to the city in large numbers. San Francisco's population rose dramatically between 1847 and 1850, from 500 to 35,000. African Americans were among those searching for new opportunities.

Throughout the 1850s, San Francisco was the site of a myriad of black-owned enterprises, including two joint stock companies, four boot and shoe stores, four clothing stores, two furniture stores, sixteen barbershops, two bathhouses, newspapers, and literary societies. Although many operated highly successful businesses, African Americans were met with challenges similar to those they left behind in other parts of the country.

Over the course of the following decade, the majority of African Americans would choose to flee San Francisco and abandon their homes and businesses due to growing discriminatory pressure.

Governor Peter Hardeman Burnett, California's first governor (1849-51), pushed for the exclusion of free Negroes from the entire state. He had



Market Street between Powell and Stockton. 1866.

already helped facilitate a black exclusion law in Oregon, on the books until 1926.

In his address to the legislature he stated, "The position of the free negro in this state is a peculiar one, he is not the equal of the white man, socially or politically, he can not testify in our courts, or exercise the right of suffrage, hence in our judgment it is not good policy, on our part, to encourage the immigrations, of any class of persons incapable of appreciating and enjoying, to the fullest extent our institutions."

Although a black exclusion bill never passed in California, it reflected strong public opinion within the state, which eventually led to the passage of other discriminatory bills against blacks (as well as Chinese, Mexicans and Native Americans).

These bills restricted education, homesteading, voting, intermarriage and the right of

testimony, which barred blacks from testifying against whites on their own behalf in court. Cases where blacks would be robbed, beaten, raped or even killed had no recourse to justice. This new legislation in many respects mirrored slave-state practices.

By 1858, the social consequences of these discriminatory laws precipitated an African American exodus. The steamship *Commodore* carried approximately 800 black Californians to the British colony of Victoria on Vancouver Island.

During the exodus, half of San Francisco's African American population departed, including some of the city's most prominent black figures. People like Mifflin Gibbs and George Washington Dennis all took sail to leave behind the ceaseless pain of racial discrimination.

They left California for the same reason they originally came—in search of equitable treatment.

Since those times, there have been two notable waves of black "out migration."

The first occurred during the redevelopment of the Fillmore district in the 1950s and 60s.

The second is currently underway. At the end of the twentieth century, according to a recent study published by the mayor's office, San Francisco's African American population declined from 79,000 in 1990 to 47,000 in 1995.

Some stated causes are the lack of adequate housing, discouraging achievement gaps in education, and the disproportionate incidents of violence in the changing, de-integrating neighborhoods.

The study implies that African Americans live in an environment that habitually dismisses palpable challenges to full participation in the health and commerce of San Francisco.

The study also forces me to reexamine African Americans' ongoing struggle to find their "place" anywhere, at any time.

I would like to understand this issue and I would like to help reverse this trend. With this project, I hope to support the discussion.

Joanna Haigood

Artistic Director
Zaccho Dance Theatre
Celebrating 30 years in San Francisco

This performance is dedicated to Sam McCann Kingston, our shining light who will continue to inspire and guide.

Joanna Haigood

Since 1980, Joanna Haigood has been the Artistic Director of Zaccho Dance Theatre, located in Bayview Hunters Point/San Francisco.

Most of her creative work focuses on making dances that use natural, architectural and cultural environments as a point of departure for movement exploration and narrative. It

involves in-depth research into the history and the character of sites and typically integrates aerial flight and suspension.

Her work has been commissioned by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Dancing in the Streets, Walker Arts Center, the Exploratorium Museum, the National Black Arts Festival, Lines Contemporary

Ballet, Black Choreographers Moving Festival, Boston Dance Umbrella, Axis Dance Company, Festival d'Avignon and Festival d'Arles in France. Her work is also in the repertoire of the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago.

Ms. Haigood has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Wallace A. Gerbode Foundation, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the James M. Irvine Foundation.

She also received the Cal Arts/Alpert Award in Dance in 1999 and United States Fellowship Award in 2007. Locally, she has received a Bay Guardian Local Discovery (GOLDIE) Award and three Isadora Duncan Dance Awards.

Ms. Haigood has taught at the Centre National des Arts du Cirque (CNAC) in France, the Laban Centre in England, Spelman College, Mills College, the Institute for Diversity in the

Arts at Stanford University and was a Granada Teaching Fellow the University of California at Davis. She has enjoyed artist residencies at the Headlands Center for the Arts, Montalvo Center and at the Exploratorium Museum. She currently teaches at the San Francisco Clown Conservatory, where she has the pleasure of working with some of the finest circus artists anywhere, and is a director for Sweet Can Circus.

Costume Designer Callie Floor

Kim Euell

Kim Euell, Dramaturg, is thrilled to be collaborating with Zaccho Dance Theatre on another groundbreaking historically inspired production.

Kim is an award-winning playwright as well as a producer and dramaturg.

She has headed play development programs at three theaters including Center Theater Group's Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles and the Tony Award-winning Hartford Stage Company in Connecticut.

Kim currently teaches African American Theater and Playwriting at the University of Pennsylvania. She recently edited the first play anthology

devoted to hip hop theater entitled *Plays from the Boom Box Galaxy*.

Kim will be signing copies along with some of the playwrights at Books Inc. in on Park Street in Alameda on Friday, October 29th at 7:30 PM.

Acknowledgements

Kim Euell sincerely thanks the staff at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland for their enthusiastic support of this project.

Special thanks to Librarian Lynne Cutler for her contributions and expertise, which are greatly appreciated.

Callie Floor, Costume Designer, most recently designed costumes for Aurora's productions of *Trouble in Mind and Speech and Debate*. Other recent projects include *Traviata* for West Bay Opera.

She has designed for many Bay Area theaters including A.C.T., Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival and The San Francisco Mime Troupe.

She is currently designing 9 Circles for Marin Theatre Co. and Wild Kate for A.C.T.'s MFA Program. Callie is the resident designer for the California Revels and currently holds the position of Costume Rentals Supervisor for A.C.T. She has a BFA from the University of Utah and a Higher Diploma in Theatre Design from the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London.

FIRST STATE CONVENTION

OF THE

COLORED CITIZENS

OF THE

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Held at Sacramento Nov. 20th, 21st, and 23d,
in the Colored Methodist Church

SACRAMENTO:
DEMOCRATIC STATE JOURNAL PRINT
1855

MARY'S NOT JUST PLEASANT

Mary Ellen Pleasant (1812-1904) portrayed by Amara Tabor Smith

My name is Mary Ellen Pleasant although I've used others during my heyday. I was born a slave in 1812 somewhere on the East Coast. When I was six I went to live with a Quaker family on Nantucket Island in Massachusetts. I was hoping to get an education there but that did not happen. Of course that never held me back. I moved to Philadelphia while I was a teenager.

In 1833, at age nineteen, I married James Henry Smith of Boston. My husband had a prosperous contracting business in Philadelphia and we used some of his profits to assist fugitive slaves traveling on the Underground Railroad. When he died after only four years of marriage, he left me a sizable inheritance. I promised him that I would use some of this money to continue the abolitionist efforts we were both committed to.

I moved back to Nantucket and much later, at the age of thirty three I married John James Pleasants. (Eventually we dropped the s.) Like me, John was also an activist in the fight against slavery. Together we moved to San Francisco as part of a larger contingent of Abolitionists.

On the voyage I met Thomas Bell, a young Scottish merchant and broker who became a trusted business partner. Many years later he became vice president of the Bank of California.

In San Francisco my strategy for amassing the necessary power and influence for my activism required keeping a



Mary Ellen Pleasant

low profile. Passing as a white woman, I assumed a new identity. As Ellen Smith I began working as a cook, housekeeper and manager of several boarding houses for wealthy gold rush entrepreneurs.

Having arrived in San Francisco with my own fortune, I assumed this role in order to protect myself and to engage in activism on behalf of other blacks. During the Gold Rush days it was not difficult to make money. I lent money at 10% interest and invested in real estate and the stock market. By 1855 I also owned several laundries and small businesses.

My husband, John, worked as a cook on a ship.

Although California was a free state, slave owners often flouted the law. Blacks were further disenfranchised by laws requiring free blacks to pay poll taxes, denying us the right to vote or testify in court leaving us vulnerable to theft and assault.

In San Francisco I worked tirelessly to elevate the status of black San Franciscans and to oppose this growing wave of discrimination.

When Mifflin Gibbs formed the Franchise League to use the court system to fight these forms of discrimination, I was a

covert supporter of their efforts. I utilized my dual identities to great effect. As Ellen Smith I used my influence with wealthy whites to gain material support for my causes. As Mrs. Pleasant I went to rural areas to rescue slaves who were being illegally enslaved. I also went down to the docks with legal documents to prevent the extradition of slaves.

George Washington Dennis often assisted me in these interventions, as did others. I helped blacks establish businesses and pressed my wealthy friends to supply jobs. My ubiquitous efforts earned me the nickname "The Black City Hall." Despite my best efforts to maintain a low profile, I attracted a lot of negative attention from pro-slavery elements in the press.

Some of their tactics to harass me included spreading malicious gossip about me and referring to me as "Mammy Pleasant." I have never been anyone's Mammy!

When Mifflin along with many other leaders of our San Francisco community departed to Victoria, Canada in 1858 I decided to return to the East to aid John Brown in his quest to end slavery. I contributed substantial sums of money to his effort and was planning to disguise myself as a jockey and ride in advance of his uprising to spread the word to those in bondage. But John acted too hastily. We all know how that ended. I was very distraught because John was a good friend but I had to carry on. Although an incriminating letter was discovered on his person signed with my initials, they were misread. I sailed back to San Francisco undiscovered and went about my business.

In 1866 I was refused a ride on a San Francisco streetcar because of my race. My husband and I decided to take on the North Beach and Mission Railroad Company. As a result of a two-year lawsuit I was awarded \$500. There was an appeal and the California Supreme Court reversed the decision and I was simply refunded my nickel fare. The money did not matter to me. What mattered was challenging discrimination wherever I encountered it.

The later years of my life were difficult at times. It seemed like I was constantly embroiled in some controversy or the other which kept me in and out of courtrooms and newspapers. In addition to my Victorian in the city I owned a ranch in Sonoma Valley, which provided some respite.

When my business partner, Thomas Bell died suddenly, I lost a great deal of my wealth due to legal complications resulting from the commingling of our assets. In 1903, I went to live with some friends on Filbert Street and shortly after I made my transition in January of 1904.

I was buried in 1904 at Tulocay Cemetery in Napa Valley with a headstone that reads Mary Ellen Pleasant - Mother of Civil Rights in California - Friend of John Brown. My house on Webster Street was torn down in 1964 to build a dental school.

There is however, a commemorative plaque at Octavia and Bush where my Victorian mansion stood.

I've heard that February 10 is Mary Ellen Pleasant Day in San Francisco. It's always nice to be remembered for ones accomplishments.

'ARCHY' FREE

Archy Lee (1840-1873) portrayed by Matthew Wickert

Folks call me Archy Lee. They tell me I was born in 1840 back in Mississippi. I was brought to California in 1857 by a young fellow name of Charles Stovall who claimed right of ownership over me. He opened a school here and hired me out for wages. During this time I met many

black folks who was free. Some even had their own shops and big fine houses. They told me that slavery was against the law in California and I should run from Stovall. I did not want to cause any trouble but when Stovall decided to go back down to Mississippi I knew I did not ever want to go back there again. Some folks helped me get away and I hid out at a hotel in

Sacramento that was owned by a black fellow. But Stovall tracked me down and had me arrested as a fugitive.

Fortunately some of these freemen and women were just as set on helping me get free of Stovall as he was on keeping me tied to him. They got me a lawyer. The judge said that Stovall could only keep me if he was just passing through California. My lawyer said that because he opened a school and hired me out, that showed he was

living here. So I was able to go free.

That did not last long because Stovall had already arranged for another trial at the Supreme Court. As soon as the first trial ended I was locked up again.

At the next trial, the judges were in favor of slavery, so they said I had to go with Stovall. This made all of the black folks and the white folks who were against slavery fighting mad.

So Stovall had to lay low. He tried to sneak me onto a ship late

at night. But the free folk was ready for him.

They had spies all up and down the docks and when somebody saw that Stovall had me and was slipping away in a rowboat, they got the police. This time the police arrested Stovall for kidnapping me. Fancy that!

So then we had to have us another trial up at the Supreme Court in Sacramento. We had a different set of judges from last time. This group set me free. Mrs. Pleasants was kind enough to let me stay at her big, fancy house afterwards to make sure

Stovall didn't try any more of his shenanigans on his way out of town. A few days after the last trial ended they had a big party for me at the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

When some of the folks that had helped me told me they was heading north to Canada and they offered to pay my way, I did not have to think on it too long. I packed my things and got on board. A fellow named Rudolph Lapp wrote a book about me. Called it *Archy Lee - A California Fugitive Slave Case*. The folks back where I came from in Mississippi would not believe me if I told them my story. Now I got proof.

"ARCHY."
TO THE FRIENDS
OF THE.....
CONSTITUTION AND LAWS.

THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE
 Colored People having expended a large amount, and incurred heavy obligations in prosecuting and defending the case in the Courts of Sacramento, Stockton and San Francisco, and believing the principles to be vindicated are those which should interest all lovers of right and justice, independent of complexion, respectfully solicit contributions for this object, which will be faithfully appropriated, if left with

m20-3t E. J. JOHNSON, 184 Clay street.



Clay St between Kearney and Montgomery



San Francisco Harborside. 1850

Woman on the Move

Woman on the Move (1988-)
Portrayed by Tristan Cunningham

I'm having a baby boy soon and I'm moving out of San Francisco. I grew up in Bayview Hunters Point. It's the only home I've ever known. On the news and in the papers people talk about the gangs and the crime but they don't tell the whole story. I think these problems exist because young people don't see a way out. They don't see the possibility of having a good job and a decent life. There's a sense of hopelessness that causes people to join gangs and to kill each other. I read this book *Black Youth Rising* about our situation. It talks about how we're trying to heal from living in a socially toxic society. But Bay View has other toxins as well. You don't hear about the fact that one third of all the toxic waste sites in the city of San Francisco are in Bayview. As a new mother I have to think about these things. I want my son to grow up healthy.

But there's lots of good people there doing good things for the community. I will miss it very much. If it wasn't for this baby I'd stay. A lot of people are moving, though, to Pittsburg, Antioch, Vallejo.

Maybe we'll all make a fresh start together. I'm going to try it out, for the baby's sake.



Peter Lester

S.F. discrimination 'unbearable'

Peter Lester (1814-1891?)
portrayed by Travis Rowland

I am Peter Lester, co-owner of the Lester and Gibbs Boot and Shoe Emporium at 636 Clay Street. I was born in Philadelphia in 1814. I moved to San Francisco in 1850 with my wife Nancy and our five children. I was a highly skilled bootmaker when I met Mifflin Gibbs, in San Francisco during The Gold Rush days. We became

partners in a firm that imported fine boots and shoes from Europe and the East Coast and opened the emporium for both wholesale and retail sales that allowed us to profit handsomely. Despite my financial success I was disturbed by the conditions that blacks were forced to endure in this supposedly Free State. Whenever I encountered brethren who were living in bondage or abused domestic workers I did all I could to educate them

about their rights. But once we lost the Right of Testimony in 1851, our lives in San Francisco became unbearable due to those who were unscrupulous in their willingness to exploit our vulnerability regarding the Justice system. The following incident exemplifies our dilemma.

Two of our European-American customers who were good friends came to our store to inspect our display of newly arrived stock. One tried on a pair of boots, and asked to have them put aside while he made his final decision. The pair departed together. A short while later the friend returned alone and asked to try on several pairs of boots before asking to try those that his friend had selected. He insisted on taking those despite my strenuous objections. He promised that he would take full responsibility and clear my partner and me of any blame. Because they were good customers and we knew them to be good friends, we acquiesced. Soon after, the two returned and the first demanded "his" boots.

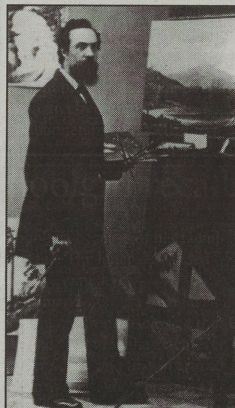
While the friend stood mute I was verbally and physically assaulted with a heavy cane and under the threat of being shot. My partner was forced to impotently witness this outrage knowing that without the Right of Testimony, the law provided us no redress.

Unfortunately this incident was only one of several that finally convinced us to join the exodus to Victoria Island.

California's first colored artist

Grafton Tyler Brown (1841-1918) portrayed by Robert Henry Johnson

Grafton Tyler Brown here. I am known as a visual artist, specifically a landscape painter. I am considered California's first professional African American artist but I may be the Bay Area's first professional artist period. I was born a free man in 1841, in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania. I learned the craft of lithography in Philadelphia but came to California in 1861 seeking better opportunities. Initially I worked as a draftsman and lithographer for C.C. Kuchel at 174 Clay Street in San Francisco. I created stock certificates and other commercial documents. In 1867 I purchased the business renaming it G.T. Brown and Company. I resided in Oakland at 654 14th Street.



Grafton Tyler Brown

More than anything I loved painting visuals of California towns, the Comstock in Nevada and scenery of the Pacific

Northwest. Initially I focused on painting settlements in the Bay Area as well as Gold Rush towns. But during my travels through the Northwest I noted with concern the loss of open lands and began using my work to focus attention on this issue. In 1882 I moved to Victoria, British Columbia and opened a studio there. Four years later I moved my family and studio to Portland, Oregon. In 1892 I relocated to St. Paul, Minnesota where I worked as a draftsman for the U.S. Army Engineer's office.

Although my story ended in 1918, my legacy of paintings, prints and maps is currently archived in Victoria, San Francisco and Tacoma Washington.

My paintings have received major exhibitions in Los Angeles, Tacoma as well as at the nearby Oakland Museum.

Travis Rowland

Travis Rowland (Peter Lester) holds BA degrees in both Drama (Popular Theatre) and Dance (Performance & Choreography) from San Francisco State University, where he served as Student Artistic Director for the University Dance Theater in 2005/6, performed in works by Austin Forbord, Ben Levy, and Annie Rosenthal Parr, and was honored by the School of Music & Dance with the award of Outstanding Student in Performance.

His solo performance and choreography of *Residual Sugar* (2006) was featured in the American College Dance Festival Association's Southwest Regional Conference Gala Awards Concert in January 2007.

He began his training in hip hop dance, and later went on to study modern & contemporary forms.

His background includes competitive gymnastics, wrestling, football, track, baseball, swimming, volleyball, and kickboxing.

He artistic directs his own work under TrAvIsMoVeS, co-artistic directs for *Requisite* with Jenna Monroe & Michaela Shoberg, and currently performs and collaborates as a company member with Paco Gomes & Dancers and Deborah Slater Dance Theater.

Additionally, he has guest performed for TalisMANIC Physical Theatre, Anne Bluenthal, Emily Keeler, Stacey Printz & Eric Fenn for *Printz Dance Project*, Natalie Greene, Della Davidson's *Sideshow Physical Theatre*, and Kendra Kimbrough Dance Ensemble.

He is currently enjoying creating and performing with Cathleen McCarthy, Erika Chong Shuch, Joanna Haigood, and Aura Fischbeck.



Native Sons Monument

Robert Henry Johnson

Robert Henry Johnson is a native San Franciscan. He is a member of the first graduating class of San Francisco School of the Arts, and studied dance with San Francisco Ballet School. He has performed with Oakland Ballet, ODC/San Francisco, Bayerisches Staatsballett, Winifred R. Harris' *Between Lines* and *Cititcenter Dance Theatre*. In 1993, he formed the Robert Henry Johnson Dance Company, which has performed through the nation to critical acclaim. The award-

winning choreographer's work has been mounted on Ballet British Columbia, Bayerisches Staatsballett, Oakland Ballet, Santa Barbara Dance Theater, Lines Ballet Pre-Professional Program and Oregon Ballet School. In addition to his dancing and choreography, he is an accomplished playwright. His play *The Othello Papers* premiered in the African American Shakespeare Company's 2009 season. Mr. Johnson is the recipient of 2001 Bay Area Critics Circle Award

for his choreography in *Thick House's* production of *The Seven* written by Will Power, 1998 Union Bank's Citizen of the Year Award, *Stolichnaya 1966 Arts and Achievement Award for Contemporary Dance*, 1995 *Goldie Award for Choreographer of the Year*, 1993 and 1992 *Izzie Award for Best Individual Performance*. He is the recipient of the 1992 *Levi's & Strauss Certificate of Literary Appreciation*. He currently writes for *The Western Edition Paper* in San Francisco.

Antoine Hunter as Mifflyn Gibbs

Antoine Hunter (Mifflyn Gibbs) is an African American deaf and hard of hearing choreographer, dancer, dance instructor, actor and poet.

He began dancing with Dawn James at Skyline High School.

He has studied West African Dance with Master C.K. and Betty Ladzekpo, and studied at the Paul Taylor Summer Intensives in 2003 and 2004.

He has performed with *Savage Jazz Dance Company* since 2001 as dance artist/performer/jazz instructor.

He has also performed with *Nuba Dance Theater*, and in many lead roles with the *Lorraine Hansberry Theatre*, *Aloyo Dance Company*, *Kim Epifano*, *Robert Moses' Kin Dance Company* and *Sign Dance Collective*.

Mr. Hunter has attended the California Institute of the Arts and is studying toward a B.A degree in dance at St. Mary's College of California's LEAP Program.

He is a faculty member at East Bay Center of the Performing

Arts, Youth In Arts, e Ross Dance Company and *Dance-A-Vision Entertainment* in Oakland, and is co-director and founder of *Iron Tri-Angel Urban Ballet* in Richmond.

He was also dance captain for an *Expedia.com* commercial and choreographer for *Amerikana*, the musical.

Mr. Hunter dances for various companies from many parts of the world and proves that even those with a hearing disability or any other disability should reach for their dreams too.

Raissa Simpson

Raissa Simpson (Sara Lester) has an extensive performance career in the Bay Area. She received a BFA from Purchase College at SUNY on a talent-based scholarship, and subsequently attending the schools of Dance Theatre

of Harlem and the Paul Taylor company, among others.

Raissa founded *Push Dance Company* in 2005. She has toured and performed as a company member with *Robert Moses Kin* (2002-2007) and *Joanna Haigood's Zacco Dance Theatre* (2007-present).

Performances include numerous national festivals such as *Jacob's Pillow*, where *Village Voice* dance critic *Deborah Jowitz* noted that, "Simpson dances big."

AMARA TABOR-SMITH

San Francisco native **Amara Tabor-Smith** (Mary Ellen Pleasant), an Oakland resident, has worked with choreographers such as *Ed Mock*, *Ronald K. Brown*, *Anne Bluenthal*, *Jacinta Vlach*, *Adia Tamar Whitaker* and *Pearl Ubungen*. Amara is the former Associate

artistic director and dancer with *The Urban Bush Women Dance Co.* in NYC. She has also performed in the works of artists such as *Aya de Leon*, *Herbert Siquenza*, *Anna Deveare Smith* and *Marc Bamuthi Joseph*. Amara is the artistic director of *Deep Waters Dance Theater*

(DWDT) and is co-director of *Headmistress*, an ongoing collaborative project with dancer/performer *Sherwood Chen*. Amara was an artist in residence at the *Headlands Center for the Arts* this past August. She is delighted to be working with *Zacco Dance Theater* again!

Shakiri

Shakiri (Newsie) has a long history as a dancer, a choreographer and an arts educator. She has directed her own dance and theater company *SHAKIRI/ROOTWORKERS*.

Shakiri is presently rewriting one of her pieces in novel form. The book will be published by *Edgework Books*. Shakiri has been a member of *Zacco Dance Theatre* since 1988.

Matthew Wickett

Matthew Wickett (Archy Lee) has trained in hip hop, modern, and jazz with *Carla Service*, the founder and artistic director of *Dance-A-Vision Entertainment* for the past six years.

He has performed in *Miss Oakland's Pageant*, *Jewels on the Square*, and *Oakland's Art and Soul Festival*.

TRISTAN CUNNINGHAM

The talented **Tristan Cunningham** (*Woman on the Move*) started her performing days when she was 10 with Vermont's own *Circus Smirkus*. After running away and joining the circus she decided

to focus on theater, graduating from *SUNY Purchase* with a BFA in theater arts and film.

She is currently head clown of *Circus Bella*, Associate Artist with *Atmosphere/Theater in the Woods*, one of the three founders

of *Women Gone Wise Theater Company*, and director of *Children Circus Arts Classes* at the *San Francisco Circus Center*. She is delighted to be working with *Joanna* on such meaningful work.

www.zacco.org

Zaccho Dance Theatre staff

Artistic Director
Joanna Haigood

Development Director
Jennifer Ross

Managing Director
French Clements

Finance Officer
Ann Berman

**Youth Performing
Arts Program Manager**
Lizzy Spicuzza

Teaching Artists
Danielle Langlois,
Joanna Haigood, Jo
Kreiter and Shakiri

What is the Mirror?

The *Mirror of the Times* was founded in 1857 by Mifflin W. Gibbs and James Townsend, two African American business men. The weekly publication appealed to California's small African American community.

It gained national attention as the first Black newspaper West of the Mississippi. The newspaper fought against discriminatory laws in the "free state" of California. Blacks were subject to the "Fugitive Slave Law" and were unable to defend themselves in court, making it difficult to prove one's freedom.

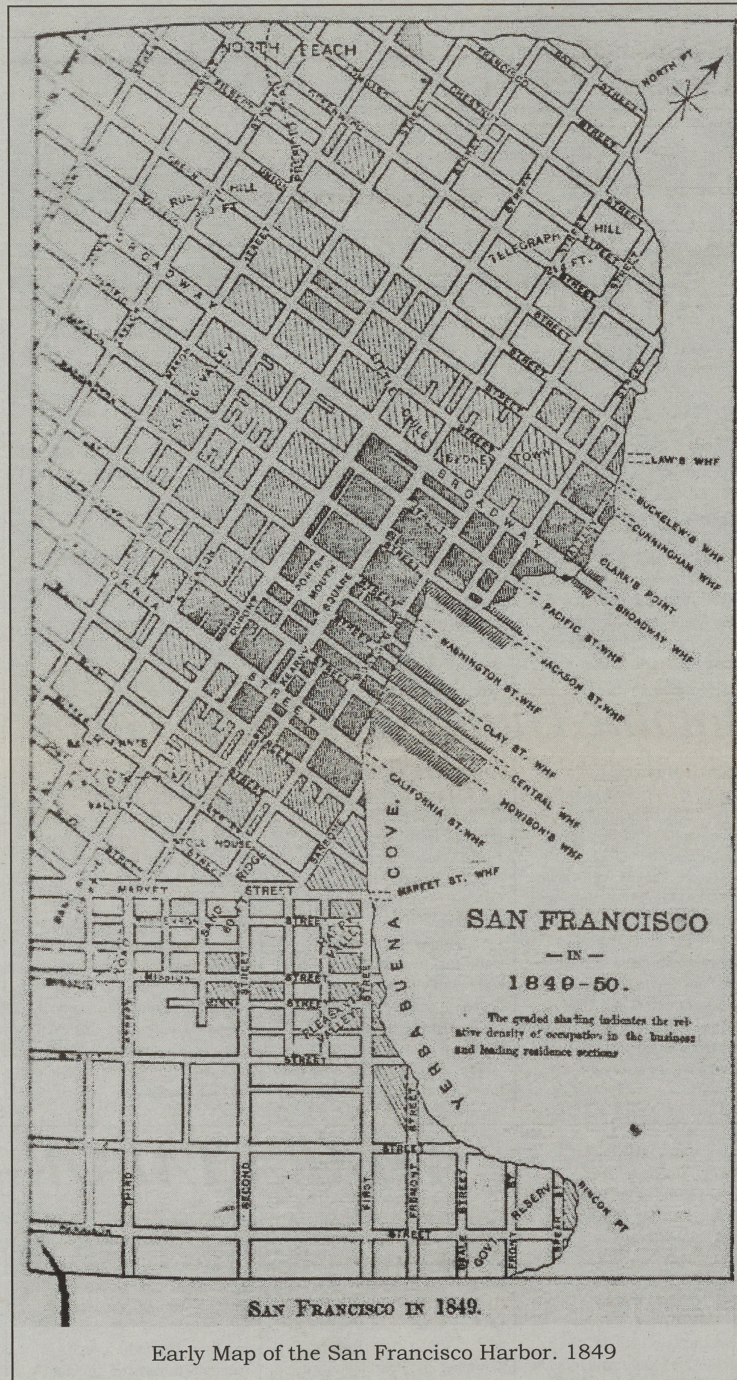
The mission: "Our sole objective is, to present our grievances to the people at large in our own way, and through columns of our own press; show them the disabilities we labor under; ask them, in respectful terms to remove them, and we have every reason to believe they will be stricken from the statute-books."

People from all over the contry attended the Colored Convention in 1857 due to publicity from *The Mirror*. After the owners migrated to Canada, another newspaper, the *Pacific Appeal* emerged.

"Truth crushed to the Earth will rise again," was the newspaper's tagline.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Misha Hawk-Wyatt
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Early Map of the San Francisco Harbor. 1849

ZACCHO DANCE THEATRE

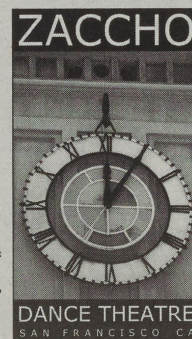
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Catch The Monkey and the Devil, our next performance, at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in April 2011!



Zaccho Dance Theatre marks 30

Now marking its 30th year, Zaccho Dance Theatre uses live performance to investigate place. It is one of a handful of American dance companies focused on site-specific dance.

Employing aerial suspension to expand dancers' spatial range, Artistic Director Joanna Haigood focuses on natural, architectural and cultural environments means for exploring the limits of movement and narrative.

Haigood's choreography develops in direct response to the physical, cultural, and historical information of a site; her dances extend naturally from their surroundings. Her work has been commissioned by leading arts presenters both nationally and internationally.

Zaccho's studio in the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood offers free dance and aerial arts classes for 150 youth annually.

Zaccho Dance Theatre is supported through generous grants from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bayview Hunters Point Community Fund, the Surdna Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, the San Francisco Arts Commission, the Kimball Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, the San Francisco Mayor's Office/SF Department of Children Youth and their Families, the Center for Cultural Innovation, and contributions from individuals like you.

Zaccho Dance Theatre is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

All contributions are tax-deductible and greatly appreciated.

Thank you!