



Historic Resources Board

Staff Report (ID # 12018)

Report Type: City Official Reports **Meeting Date:** 2/25/2021

Summary Title: Black History Month Awareness and Opportunities

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From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Historic Resources Board (HRB) review and comment as appropriate.

This report is to acknowledge and celebrate February as Black History Month. This report highlights two recent community events and other online opportunities:

- This month the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) embarked on the 21-day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge, open to all: <https://www.paequitychallenge.com/> PAUSD community partners in launching this Challenge include the City of Palo Alto, Youth Community Service and the Palo Alto PTA Council.

The webpage states this:

“We cannot achieve equity and justice for all Palo Alto residents, students and employees without challenging our belief systems about the origins of the concept of race, how it influences us as individuals and as an organization, and how it functions to preserve inequity in our education, laws, institutions and systems. This is a powerful opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how inequity and racism affect our lives and our community.”

- Last month the Human Relations Committee provided a report "Black & Brown Palo Alto - History and Current Experience" to City Council (on January 19, 2021) and solicited feedback and direction on their Action Plan to Address Equity and Inclusion. Link to report: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/79809>
- The HRB members may wish to note a series of webinars is underway, offered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation about the landmark Brown case. The first

webinar was presented February 18: [Brown v. Board: Cheryl Brown Henderson and the Legacy of the 1954 Supreme Court](#). The webinars are presented under the auspices of the NTHP African American cultural Heritage Action Fund. As the HRB considers which webinars to attend, these webinars can be utilized.

- The California Preservation Foundation also has a free online form advocating for African American and Black Heritage; CPF's programs qualify for professional continuing education <https://californiapreservation.org/events/adv-af-am/> See 'Free Recordings from the CPF Vault' such as 'It takes a community – the importance of community driven historic context statements', and 'It's important to remember what started it'.

Equity leaders may have information about other historic architectural treasures and neighborhoods related to the Black community in Palo Alto. Notable landmarks include the 1947 Lawrence Tract (named in honor of the first African American Stanford Professor) that provided housing for African Americans who had served during WWII, among other persons. Staff look forward to hearing from community members and HRB members regarding the contributions of Black Palo Altans to our city in the past and present.

Local Black History

The former AME Zion Church at 819 Ramona is an historical resource listed on our City's Historic Resources Inventory, the National Register of Historic Places, and the California Register of Historical Resources. It is also considered on today's HRB agenda.

Current community members were invited to contribute to a community conversation about the importance of that historic resource. Community members are invited to share stories of our shared architectural history related to the Black experience in Palo Alto, as we celebrate and lean further in to advancing racial equity.