



WSBREC

Western States Black Research and Educational Center

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"To know where you're going ... You have to know where you've been."

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WSBREC was founded in 1972 by Dr. Mayme A. Clayton, Ph. D., and maintains the largest and most substantial collection of rare books, documents, films, music, photographs, and memorabilia on African American culture and history in the Western United States. WSBREC's goal is to establish the Mayme A. Clayton Library and Cultural Center, a world-class, library-based, museum and cultural center dedicated to African American intelligence and creativity with Dr. Clayton's historically significant Collection at the core.

African American Culture: A Uniquely American Miracle by Avery Clayton

You have an interest in the collection of African Americana maintained by Western States Black Research and Educational Center. Whether you are African American, Caucasian, Asian, Latino, Native American, Jewish, Armenian or Iranian your life has been touched by African American culture. One of the great things about living in a melting pot is that lives intertwine. We co-exist, like the ingredients of a salad. Tossed together but retaining our individual characteristics. Lettuce remains lettuce. Tomatoes, mushrooms, olives, croutons all retain their distinctive qualities, but blend together to become something delicious and healthy to eat. Each of us, in our individuality makes the perfect ingredient for the perfect salad. Having grown up in Southern California, it is hard to imagine what life would be like without other cultures.

The creative force and energy of African American music is appreciated world-wide. From spirituals to jazz, rhythm and blues to rock & roll, rap and hip-hop, Zydeco to classical, black music has revolutionized the aesthetic and social values of the world. Imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery. If that be true, then singers from Peggy Lee to Britney Spears owe thanks to Billie Holiday and Bessie Smith. Justin Timberlake and the Backstreet Boys owe thanks to Louis Armstrong and Little Richard. America and the world dances to an African beat.

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WSBREC in October 2003

Announcement: On October 8, 2004 a proposal written by WSBREC's executive director was awarded. The grant is a \$30,000 federal planning grant awarded through the California State Library. The goal of the grant is to develop specific planning documents and procedures so the Mayme Clayton Collection can be inventoried, catalogued, preserved and moved. This initial planning grant requires bringing together experts to assist WSBREC. The grant will fund the cooperative interaction in assisting WSBREC, coordination of planning efforts, and staff support for developing and producing a plan for further action. This is a very important step toward establishing the Mayme Clayton Library. A well-planned plan of action must be in place to ensure long-term success for the Collection. WSBREC is very grateful to State Senator Kevin Murray for his continued support.

Special thanks to the University of Southern California and Carolyn Webb de Macias, Vice-President of External Affairs for USC. Ms. Webb de Macias hosted a breakfast meeting October 9, 2004 for WSBREC in the Faculty Center Banquet Room. The purpose of the meeting was to bring leaders in the Southern California community together to inform them about WSBREC's goals and progress in establishing the Mayme Clayton Library and to recruit their support. WSBREC Founder and Archivist Mayme Clayton shared how and why she began her heroic effort to save African American history.

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American Miracle ... continued from page 1

That beat is used by Madison Avenue to sell everything from new Cadillacs (Uh! Yeah, Uh! Yeah) to MacDonald's burgers (hip-hop style).

The world as we know it would come to a virtual stand still without the inventions of African American scientists and inventors. Where would the American sports of baseball, football and basketball be without African American athletes? Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, Dr. Charles Drew, Marian Anderson, Rosa Parks, Bill Cosby, Muhammad Ali, Stevie Wonder, Jackie Robinson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X: just reflect for a moment on what the world would be like without them. This is not to say that African Americans are better or have contributed more than others. It does attest to the fact that African American contributions are significant. Unfortunately, African American contributions apart from sports and entertainment are still not widely known.

So why is it important to save the Mayme Clayton Collection? It is important because the accomplishments that represent African America live in the Collection. It has been said, and rightly so that "art is the measure of a civilization." Without examples of the art created by a people, it is as though they never existed. If not, for the pyramids and hieroglyphs what would we know of the great Egyptian civilizations? The Great Wall of China, Mayan and Incan pyramids, the paintings of Henry O. Tanner, ancient Japanese scrolls, and the art of the Renaissance all speak to specific moments in the history of the world, captured by artists for posterity.

The Mayme Clayton Collection must be saved because the loss of such a treasure would be an unspeakable travesty. Among Dr. Clayton's treasures is the first book published in



America by an author of African descent, Phillis Wheatley's "Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral," 1773 (a rare signed copy). It must be understood that this remarkable, extraordinary cultural treasure is endangered! In its quarters it is threatened by fire, theft, rain, mildew and mold. We are moving toward another rainy season. Not good for the Collection where it is.

The Mayme Clayton Collection is uniquely American. The books, documents, films, music, photographs and memorabilia that comprise the Collection's origins belong exclusively to America. Japanese culture is still practiced in Japan. If it isn't practiced in America by Japanese Americans it still isn't lost. Mexican culture is still practiced in Mexico. Irish or Celtic culture is practiced in Ireland. Native American traditions have not been lost. The culture of African America is specific to this country. African Americans unlike any other group in the history of the world were denied the right to speak the languages and practice the customs of their ancestors. That African inspired customs and traditions not only survived but thrived in America is a miracle.

As Executive Director of WSBREC, I would like to see African Americans take ownership of their cultural heritage by ensuring the safety and protection of the Collection. I would like to see non-black people take ownership of the Collection because it is American. Children of all ethnic backgrounds will be enriched by knowing that black people have made

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Email: fdggene@aol.com**Multi-Cultural Fine Art Gallery of Los Angeles***WSBREC In October ... continued from page 1*

WSBREC's Executive Director spoke to the breakfast group about the Collection and the creation of a world-class library dedicated to African American culture and history with Dr. Clayton's Collection at the core. The facility will be known as the Mayme Clayton Library.

Breakfast attendees included: Dr. Mayme A. Clayton, Founder & President, WSBREC; Lars Hansen, Director, Cultural Affairs, USC; Al Austin, Administrative Assistant to Senator Kevin Murray; Allen Golden, Government Consultant; Joan Creer, Director, Special of Projects to Assemblyman Mark-Ridley Thomas; Lois Hill Hale, Press Secretary to Congresswoman Diane E. Watson; Charmaine Jefferson, Director, California African American Museum; Don Rogers, Director, Culver City Parks & Recreation Department; Alan and Rosemarie Richmond, WSBREC Board of Directors; Gary Silbiger, Esq., Culver City Councilmember; Bernard Ussery, Esq., WSBREC Legal Counsel; David Crippens, WSBREC Board of Directors; Fabian Wesson, Administrative Director to Mark Whitlock, FAME (Mrs. Herb Wesson); Itibari Zulu, Director, Ralph Bunche Center for African American Studies Library, UCLA; James Rice, President, AR Companies; Jewett Walker, Political Consultant, WSBREC Promotions Officer; John Cataldo, Cataldo & Associates, A.I.A.; Linda Harris Mehr, Director, Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences Library; Marc Hamilton, Director of Sales, Jenkins, Gales & Martinez Architects; Reginald Ingram, WSBREC Fund Development Officer; Anita Paul, Administrative Assistant to Carolynn Webb de Macias, Office of External Relations, USC; and Doris Gallan, Director of Strategic Planning and Local Government Relations, USC. ●

American Miracle ... continued from page 2

great contributions to America and the world. Otherwise misperceptions will continue to reign. Knowledge is power and brings understanding. With understanding comes acceptance. With acceptance comes respect, which is sometime a pathway to appreciation. Right now black culture is defined by popular media and has very little to do with the truth of African American history and culture.

The strength of the Mayme Clayton Collection lies in sharing it with the world. There is an old saying, "The truth will set you free." One of the main causes of separation between people is lack of understanding. Separation breeds fear and fear breeds resentment. As I become willing to know more about you, two things happen: 1) I fear you less and 2) I learn more about myself. That's how the world gets healed; one person at a time making the decision to not fear another. As Michael Jackson said, "I'm looking at the man in the mirror. I'm asking him to change his ways."

This is a call to action. Please don't read this and hope someone else will do something to save the Collection. It's on you. President John Kennedy said in his 1960 Inaugural Speech, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." I say to you, please ask yourself what you can do to help WSBREC save and share the Collection. ●

WSBREC Needs Your Support!

Please make tax-deductible contribution to:
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Personalities and Events

"Women of Our Time" an exhibition honoring great women of the 20th Century, including Ella Fitzgerald, Katherine Hepburn, Billie Holiday and Eleanor Roosevelt to name a few, will be presented by the Long Beach Museum of Art.

WSBREC is pleased to announce that this event is designed to mark the beginning of a long and mutually rewarding partnership between LBMA and WSBREC. A pre-opening reception for WSBREC will be held, Thursday, February 5, 2004 at the Long Beach Museum of Art, 2300 Ocean Boulevard.

Please make plans to attend. WSBREC will make transportation arrangements from Los Angeles to Long Beach. We will keep you posted. For additional information call WSBREC at (626) 794-4677.

UCLA Students to Catalogue the Collection

UCLA undergraduate students will inventory, catalogue and digitize the Collection. Participating students will earn college credits. Inventorying, cataloguing and digitizing the Collection is of paramount importance. WSBREC's goal is to share the Collection. To share the Collection effectively, WSBREC must have the type of easy access to the Collection a thorough inventory and cataloguing can provide. WSBREC is grateful for UCLA's support.

USC's Marshall School of Business

Beginning January 2004, USC's Marshall School of Business MBA's will develop a crucially important business plan for WSBREC's interim facility and for the world-class Mayme A. Clayton Library.

WSBREC is pleased to announce that David Crippens, former director of California African American Museum and

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Proud supporter of WSBREC

long-time board member of KCET has come on board with WSBREC. David's experience and standing in the community are exemplary. WSBREC is pleased and proud to welcome David to the effort to establish the Mayme A. Clayton Library.

WSBREC is also pleased to announce that Reginald K. Ingram, the former director of the Alvin Ailey Dance Center and a nationally recognized fund development officer will also join WSBREC in the effort to create a world-class facility for African American culture and history. Reginald will work along with Jacqueline Broxton, WSBREC Fund Development Specialist.

Last but definitely not least, WSBREC is pleased to welcome Jewett L. Walker, Jr. Jewett is a political consultant with extensive experience in non-profit management and fundraising. Jewett's successful campaign management roster includes Herb J. Wesson, Speaker of the California State Assembly, Mervyn Dymally, Assemblyman, 52nd District and Rocky Delgadillo, L.A. City Attorney, to name a few. Mr. Walker's credentials are impeccable and WSBREC is very pleased to have him on board. ●

Blackography: Marian Anderson (1897 – 1993)

African American divas have opened doors that facilitated mainstream access for black life. Early divas paved the way, and opened the minds and hearts of non-blacks with their intelligence, beauty, style, grace and "say-my-name" talent. Lena Horne, Hattie McDaniel, Nina Mae McKinney, Diana Ross, Leontyne Price, Halle Berry, Dorothy Dandridge, and Pam Grier: Get the picture? One such diva was Marian Anderson, opera star extraordinaire. One critic wrote, "Hers is a voice that comes only once in a century."

Marian Anderson was born February 27, 1897 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her father was a coal salesman and her mother a teacher. Marian's voice was so beautiful that as a child, members of her church and community recognized her talent and gave her financial support for music lessons. They understood that little Marian had a talent that belonged to the world. Fortune smiled on Marian's talent. She came to the notice of legendary tenor, Roland Hayes who became her mentor.



With donations from local churches (the traditional backbone of the black community), Anderson began to study with renowned tenor, Giuseppe Boghetti. She began performing regionally and as she did, gained skill and confidence. In 1925 she went to Europe, performing in London, Paris and Rome (a year before diva Josephine Baker's arrival on the Continent). She performed in Germany and Finland where composer Jean Sibelius dedicated his composition, "Solitude" to her.

Anderson was regal, beautiful and poised. Wherever she went she created a sensation. Her regal demeanor coupled with an awesome and formidable God-given gift to transport as she sang made her a force to be reckoned with. She spent the next ten years performing throughout Europe where her talents were well received.

In 1935 Anderson returned to the United States for a recital at Town Hall which was a critical and commercial success. Under the management of Sol Hurok, she became one of America's top box office draws.

In 1939 Sol Hurok and officials from Howard University tried to arrange a concert for Anderson at Washington, D.C.'s Constitution Hall, the District's largest indoor venue. The Hall's owners, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) refused to allow her to sing because of the color of her skin, sparking a national furor. In response to the DAR, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and the United States Department of the Interior made arrangements for Anderson to perform on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, April 19, 1939. The Easter Sunday program drew 75,000 people and millions of radio listeners. The episode focused unprecedented media attention on bigotry in America. Anderson's performance was the stuff that legends are made of. Her haunting rendition of "Ave Maria" literally brought millions to tears.

Marian Anderson lived a life of firsts. She garnered awards and acclaim worldwide. She had two gifts she shared with the world: her voice and her spirit. She was a true contralto



with a range that went from demure to soul-stirring. Unlike many opera divas she was equally at ease singing German lieder or Negro Spirituals. The sound of her voice was rich and velvety with bell-like, crystal clarity. As she sang the listener had the sense of being enveloped by her sound.

Her spirit was indomitable. Many said she had a strong personality. Not in an aggressive sense, but rather strength honed by self-confidence and a clear sense of purpose. Her dignity combined with faith was

a powerful force. She was very positive and knew exactly what she wanted to do. She knew that her voice was an instrument for the uplifting of her people. Western States Black Research and Educational Center is proud to salute the life and talent of Marian Anderson. Once the Collection is secured in an appropriate facility, you will be able to come there to listen to Marian Anderson and countless others. ●

Parting Thought:

The Wisdom of Dr. Mayme Clayton

"When you think you have exhausted all possibilities, remember: you really haven't."