African American Studies Faculty Works

Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts

2012

African American Women, Wealth Accumulation, and Social Welfare Activism in 19th Century Los Angeles

Marne Campbell
Loyola Marymount University, marne.campbell@lmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/afam_fac

Part of the African American Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

Marne L. Campbell. "African American Women, Wealth Accumulation, and Social Welfare Activism in 19th Century Los Angeles." The Journal of African American History, vol. 97, no. 4, 2012, pp. 376–400.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in African American Studies Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN, WEALTH ACCUMULATION, AND SOCIAL WELFARE ACTIVISM IN 19TH-CENTURY LOS ANGELES

Marne L. Campbell

The name from which California is supposedly derived is Calafia, a character in a novel by Garci Rodriguez De Montalvo, first published in 1510. The novel was set on an island completely maintained by African women, and men were only permitted for the express purpose of procreation. Otherwise, women hunted, gathered, and guarded the island. If a male was born, he was killed; but they kept and raised the female children. Rodriguez depicted the leader of this society, Queen Calafia, as the most powerful female of her time. Calafia, in the imagination of Garci Rodriguez, was not only of African origin, but was sexualized and exotic. Her followers were described as having "energetic bodies" with strong physical characteristics. The island presented a safe and utopian community almost completely without men.[1]

This story is one of the many myths about how California was named. This fictional California was said to be located on the right side of the Indies, and was considered close to the "Earthly Paradise." Known for its abundance of gold and many precious jewels, explorers such as Fortun Jimenez and Hernan Cortez believed the fictional island to be real when they each landed in 1533. Not only did the conquistadors engage in brutal warfare with the indigenous people of California, they also found an abundance of gold, pearls, and other treasures. These experiences proved similar to that of the novel and the name "California" seemed appropriate.[2]

The Calafia legend also represents the ways in which many visitors experienced Los Angeles. In 1913, for example, W. E. B. Du Bois described the city as possessing "sensuous beauty," with wonderful weather and climate that extended to all of its inhabitants. He described LA's citizens as hospitable and the African American community as "pushing and energetic," a sentiment that echoed how Garci Rodriguez described Calafia's followers.[3] In the first book about the history of African Americans in California, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California,* published in 1919, Delilah Beasley declared, "The story of Los Angeles is like the gold thread in paper money to ensure that it is genuine currency."[4]

Marne L. Campbell is Visiting Assistant Professor of African American Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, CA.

The story is also important because settlers came to the city because of these depictions. Historians of Los Angeles have contested these depictions, but have not looked at the earliest periods of settlement. This essay addresses this omission, drawing heavily on federal census data to underscore the roles of African American women in the creation of diverse communities in early Los Angeles. This essay investigates gender, therefore, as a vitally important component of one's understanding of the history of race and class in Los Angeles and focuses, in particular, on community institutional development, class, labor, and property ownership. Unlike that mythical island, California was no utopia, especially for people of African descent, yet African American women in Los Angeles were able to move up the local social hierarchy more easily than their northern and southern counterparts.[5]

Historians Lawrence B. De Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor have noted the complex race relations under Spanish and Mexican rule, and point out that Anglo settlement tremendously altered this terrain.[6] Spanish society was made up of a complex social caste system based on racial categories and ethnic origins that also played out in Los Angeles.[7] The first non-indigenous settlers in Los Angeles, for example, were comprised of three distinct groups, including Native Mexicans, Africans, and Spaniards. Sixty-six percent of Sinaloa, Mexico's population was of mixed racial heritage when twelve families from that region responded to the Spanish colonial officials' call for settlers in what would become Los Angeles.[8] Of the city's founding group, therefore, twenty-six out of forty-six people were of African descent, including six women and five girls. Many, along with their descendants, rose to local prominence.[9]

The earliest period of settlement in Los Angeles created a racial hierarchy, closely linked to Spanish and Mexican practices. People of multiracial heritage climbed the social ladder much faster and more easily than Africans, Native Americans, or Mexicans. Those of African and Spanish descent were able to move to the top of the social ladder, despite their racial background. The formation of Los Angeles as an "American" city, however, changed all of this. Those of Native American and Mexican heritage soon became victims of white racism. The few people of African descent in residence managed to escape such dire circumstances until the mid-19th century when the issue of slavery challenged their social status. Although not a slave state, California faced a difficult task in dealing with the institution.[10] Meanwhile, Anglo-Angelenos were forced to confront an emerging African American community.

EARLY DEMOGRAPHICS OF BLACK LOS ANGELES

The number of African-descended people in early Los Angeles was small and the federal census proposed various ways of categorizing them. The census only

recognized "white," "black," and "mulatto" in 1850 and 1860.[11] Although the federal enumeration instructions included "quadroons" and "octoroons" as racial categories, in Los Angeles the census takers recorded anyone having even the slightest amount of African blood as "mulatto," and did not utilize the more specific categories. By 1890, however, the census records became more specific.[12] Classifications were made on the bases of the amount of so-called black blood, and people with one black grandparent were labeled quadroon, and those with less than that octoroon (one-eighth black blood). These designations, however, were short lived and by 1900, "black" was the main category for people of African descent, despite their "color" or European or Native American ancestry, with only a very small number designated mulatto (Table 1).[13]

Table 1. African Americans According to Skin Color in Los Angeles City, 1850–1910

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
Black	11	26	109	55	n/a	1,837	4,754
Mulatto	1	11	21	42	n/a	26	2,451

Source: *1850–1900 U.S. Federal Census*.

Despite these changes in racial designations, the Los Angeles African American community, as well as that of the entire state, grew slowly but steadily during the last half of the 19th century (Table 2). When the first U.S. census was taken in Los Angeles County in 1850, for example, only twelve African Americans were counted compared to 3,518 whites, and African Americans were less than one percent of the state population (none were designated as "slaves").

In 1860, eighty-seven "blacks" and twenty-three "mulattoes" lived in Los Angeles County, out of a total population of 11,333. Five had been born outside of the United States. In 1870 whites continued to dominate, accounting for 96 percent of the population.[14]

The pattern of white and black population growth continued over the next several decades. In 1870, whites were 96 percent; in 1880, 95 percent; in 1890, 94 percent and in 1900, 95 percent, with African Americans averaging one percent. By 1910, there were approximately 9,424 African Americans in Los Angeles County and 483,478 whites. Other people of color, including Native Americans and people from Mexico and Asia, comprised less than one percent of the city's population in 1900 and 1910. Despite their small numbers, the Los Angeles African American population still was the second largest in the state, slightly higher than Sacramento, but well below the number in San Francisco until 1900.[15]

Throughout these years racial background greatly shaped access to employment opportunities in Los Angeles as it did throughout the state and nation.

Table 2. African American Population in California

		1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
Los Angeles County	All	3,530	11,333	15,309	33,381	101,454	170,298	504,131
	Black	12	87	134	188	1,817	2,841	9,424
	White	3,518	9,221	14,720	31,707	95,033	161,134	483,478
	Other People of Color			455	1,486	4,604	6,323	11,229
San Francisco County	All	N/A	58,802	149,473	233,959	298,997	342,782	416,912
	Black	N/A	1,176	1,330	1,628	1,847	1,654	1,642
	White	N/A	52,866	136,059	210,496	270,696	323,670	400,014
	Other People of Color	N/A	4,760	12,084	21,835	26,454	17,404	15,256
California	All	92,597	460,147	560,247	864,694	1,208,130	1,485,053	2,377,549
	Black	962	2,297	4,272	6,018	11,322	11,054	21,645
	White	91,635	451,504	499,424	767,181	1,111,672	1,391,682	2,259,672
	Other People of Color		6,346	56,551	91,495	85,136	82,326	96,232

Source: *Historical Census Data Center* (16 June 2009).

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND WORKING CONDITIONS

African American female wage earners in Los Angeles worked in jobs similar to those of African American women in other parts of the country. The nature of their work experiences, however, did not define their personal lives. A close examination of the federal census reports in 1850 and 1860 reveals very little in terms of these women's work. The reasons for this lack of information are several. There were very small numbers, and many women only did seasonal or temporary work. Some held several jobs at different times during the year, but nothing that was substantial enough to be counted in a census report. The federal census also eliminated certain categories of paid domestic work as employment that had been recorded earlier. Moreover, some women purposefully hid aspects of their lives from census takers, including their work because they could never be certain what would be the consequences of full disclosure. Given their occupational designations in later censuses, most were very likely in domestic service, although it is not

certain what the occupations were for four female heads of households in 1860. These women could have worked outside of their homes, as well as taken in boarders or run small businesses such as catering or laundering from their homes. Those who appear in the census as residents in white households undoubtedly were servants of some sort, typically maids, childcare providers, and cooks.[16]

While there are various reasons why the women's work histories were not recorded, this was also the case for women in other racial categories. For example, white women also do not appear in these early records as gainfully employed outside of their homes. This seeming similarity in the lives of black and white women in Los Angeles, however, changed substantially over time. African American women increasingly joined the workforce, whereas white women did not. Domestic labor in Los Angeles, which in the mid-19th century was claimed by Chinese men who worked as cooks and laundrymen, became the domain of African American women after Chinese exclusion (1882) eliminated much of the competition.[17]

By 1870 the census instructions became much more detailed, cautioning enumerators not to generalize about people's occupations, particularly "women's work," and began to differentiate, for example, between "housekeepers" and those who "keep house" for a living. Housekeepers were identified as women who earned a "distinct wage or salary for their service," and "women keeping house for their own families or themselves" were considered "housewives."[18] Older daughters who assisted their mothers were considered without an occupation, while children who earned a wage were designated as such.[19] These changes brought much more clarity to the employment status of African American women. While many were described as "keeping house," others worked as cooks, domestic servants, and hairdressers.[20]

Between 1850 and 1900 African Americans in Los Angeles built a distinct community of their own, equipped with churches, social organizations, hotels, and other businesses. This institution-building benefited from the skills and monetary support of working men and women.

As indicated in Table 3, cooks and laborers were the two major occupations African Americans held during the fifty years before 1900. Most employed African American women whose work was recognized in the census were laundresses.[21] Women who stated no employment outside the home, however, may have been day workers, or temporarily out of work. After the turn of the 20th century Los Angeles became much more urban and industrialized, and women increasingly joined the workforce. Those who did work were typically employed in domestic and personal service, as servants, laundresses, or cooks. Whatever their true occupational status, African American women had the financial wherewithal to acquire property and many owned their own homes.[22]

Table 3. Occupations of African Americans in Los Angeles, 1850–1900

Occupation	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900
Barber	2	5	5	5	
Carpenter					
Cook		3	4	5	52
Day Worker					111
Driver/Express					38
Farmer			4		
House Servant		1		11	91
Janitor/Janitress					62
Keeps House			18	14	
Laborer	6	6	10	4	43
Porter		1		11	
Teamster		1			
Washing/Laundry					76

Source: *Historical Census Data Center* (2 May 2006).

In 1900 women made up less than 20 percent of total African American heads of household. The majority were 40 years or older, and typically widowed or divorced. Most owned their own property.[23] Female heads of household lived with both nuclear and extended family members and also rented rooms to boarders. Boarders typically were new black migrants to the city.[24] While African American land acquisition was rare in other parts of the country, it was one of the easiest ways for workers to ascend to middle-class status in Los Angeles. During the late 19th century, a significant portion of African American families secured property upon arrival.[25] Indeed, census records indicate that not only did the majority own their homes, but that the average value of such homes was $2,100 (Table 4).

Table 4. Estimated Value of Estate Averages, 1870

Female	$3,000
Male	$1,200
Total Average	**$2,100**

Source: *Historical Census Data Center* (2 May 2006).

Two women, Biddy Mason and Winnie Owens, had the largest estates in 1870, each estimated at $3,000. The average value of property owned by male-headed households equaled significantly less, only $1,200. However, it should be noted that the overall population was very small, with only twenty-six black heads of households. Moreover, the wealth of Mason and Owens obscured the reality that more African American men owned property than women; in 1870 only three women actually owned property in Los Angeles, compared to eleven men.[26] Individuals also had accumulated a certain degree of personal wealth by 1870. Only one woman, Sarah Jefferson, a 62-year-old single parent caring for five young children, gave the monetary value for her personal assets as $500; whereas eleven men reported personal estate values ranging from $100 to $1,300. No African American woman was able to report both real estate and personal assets, compared to six African American men.[27]

In 1870 African Americans with wealth worth recording in the census held a wide range of occupations. While both Sarah Jefferson and Biddy Mason reported "keeping house" as their primary occupations, Winnie Owens was both a boarding house owner and laundress. Not surprisingly, the men represented a wider range of occupations and estate values.[28] Females represented eight out of the twenty-eight heads of households; and similar to earlier decades, these households were small. Of the eight, the largest female-headed household was comprised of six members. Ann Daniels, the widow of Manual Peppers, had remarried by 1880 and taken her second husband's name. Widowed again by 1890, she washed clothes in order to support her five children, including her youngest daughter, Eliza, from her second marriage.[29]

While the 1880 census provides little information regarding property or real ownership, the 1900 census does.[30] Of the 534 African American household heads listed in 1900, for example, 33 percent owned property, either farms or homes, while an additional 64 percent rented (Table 5).[31]

Unlike the widows and single women who comprised female household heads, male heads of households tended to be younger, either married or single, and there was no connection between property status and household structure.[32] Moreover, employment status was consistent with property ownership. Working-class women could own property while employed in domestic service. By combining households either with extended family members, renters, or by renting from others, women often saved enough to purchase property and begin households of their own (see Table 6). In doing so, they climbed the ranks of the local social hierarchy.[33] Consider, for example, two of the first African American women in Los Angeles, Biddy Mason and Hannah Embers. Their lives provide important details about the experiences of African American women in early Los Angeles history.

Table 5. Property Ownership, 1900

House	7
Own	1
Own Farm Free	1
Own Farm Mortgage	2
Own House	5
Own House Free	67
Own House Mortgage	75
Rent	5
Rent Farm	1
Rent House	282
Total	**446**

Source: *Historical Census Data Center* (2 May 2006).

Table 6. Property Acquisition According to Gender, 1900

	Female	**Male**
House	2	6
Own	0	1
Own Farm Free	0	1
Own Farm Mortgage	0	2
Own House	0	5
Own House Free	7	60
Own House Mortgage	7	68
Rent	0	5
Rent Farm	1	1
Rent House	75	205
Total: 446	**92**	**354**

Source: *Historical Census Data Center* (2 May 2006).

BIDDY MASON: REAL ESTATE ENTREPRENEUR

On 19 January 1856, the Judicial District of the State of California in the City of Los Angeles, with Judge Benjamin Hayes presiding, ruled on a case involving two enslaved women. Hannah and her seven children and one grandson; and

Biddy Mason with her three daughters petitioned for writ of habeas corpus, claiming that slaveholder Robert Smith had illegally detained them. Smith had arrived in 1851, with the intention of settling in the state, and had brought his "slave property" from Mississippi to the Utah territory and then to California.[34]

Bridget "Biddy" Mason was born in slavery in Hancock County, Mississippi, in 1818. She never knew the names of her parents. In 1848 she was taken to Salt Lake City, after her owner joined a Mormon expedition. In 1851 Smith left the Utah territory, and settled in San Bernardino, about sixty miles east of Los Angeles. According to one of Mason's daughters, "Their trip from Mississippi was by ox team. Biddy Mason drove the livestock across the plains into California. There were three hundred wagons in the ox team."[35] Planning to relocate again, this time to Texas, Smith set up a temporary camp in the Santa Monica Canyon, just outside of Los Angeles in 1854. It was there that the enslaved status of Biddy and Hannah was challenged by the county sheriff who issued an injunction preventing Smith from taking the women out of the state. This was the beginning of the case that brought Biddy, Hannah, and their children their freedom.[36]

Biddy Mason,
Courtesy of Center for Law in the Public Interest.

Judge Benjamin Hayes ruled in the women's favor and he was particularly attentive to what he considered their special needs. "All the said persons of color are entitled to their freedom and are free and cannot be held in slavery or involuntary servitude," declared Judge Hayes. "It is therefore argued that they are entitled to their freedom and are free forever."[37] Hayes was concerned that Smith planned to take the women and their children to Texas, where he could legally re-enslave them. The judge pointed out that "the said Robert Smith, from his past relation to them as his family does possess and exercise over them an undue influence in respect to the matter of their said removal insofar that they have been in duress and

not in possession and exercise of their free will so as to give up binding consent to any engagement or arrangement with him."[38]

Judge Hayes also took into account the fact that the women were illiterate and had no formal education. Since they did not fully comprehend the laws governing either California or Texas, Hayes believed they needed a "guardian" and decided to assist them. The judge concluded that Smith had convinced the women that they would be free if they went with him to Texas, but Hayes informed the women that if they decided to leave with Smith, they would among other things forfeit their parental rights.[39] At the time, Hannah was 34 years old, and her children ranged from 2 to 13. She also had a newborn boy. Biddy was 38, and her daughters were 8, 13, and 14.[40]

Having just given birth, Hannah was unable to attend court for the ruling, and was initally unaware of her newly granted freedom. While Smith was preparing his family to move to Texas, he made one last attempt at convincing Biddy and the others to join him. When the judge received word of Smith's intentions, he immediately placed the women and their children into protective custody until a guardian could take them in.[41]

Mason and her daughters settled in Los Angeles in the home of Robert Owens, who also was formerly enslaved. Soon, she secured a job several days a week working as a home nurse at a salary of $2.50 a day.[42] These wages allowed her to become the head of her own household and acquire property for her family.

Biddy Mason's residence, shown in this photo from the 1870s, was on First Street not far from the Owens home.

Courtesy of the California Council for the Humanities.

Mason then began purchasing plots of land in the area that today is downtown Los Angeles. She held onto those properties until they brought a good return when

sold. For example, Mason paid $250 for a plot that she later sold for $18,000. Mason quickly became familiar with local business trends, buying and selling property and maximizing her profits and increasing her personal wealth. Her business activities placed her at the forefront of capital accumulation through real estate purchases in late 19th-century Los Angeles, acquiring some of the best land before the large in-migration during the 1880s.[43] Soon, Biddy began using her growing fortune to help the African American community.[44]

In 1856 after Judge Hayes secured the freedom of Biddy Mason and her family, they were introduced to a social network being formed within the Los Angeles African American community to help establish families in the city. Female-headed households, where women took most of the responsibility for raising children and caring for extended family members, had become the norm in many northern African American communities in the decades before the Civil War, and they certainly were well represented among African Americans enslaved on southern farms and plantations. Without fathers, husbands, uncles, and grandfathers in close proximity to assist, these African American women headed households that were impoverished in northern and midwestern antebellum cities, but in Los Angeles in the 1860s and 1870s, single mother Biddy Mason used her knowledge of the world to create a very comfortable middle- or upper-class lifestyle for herself and her family.[45] She carefully studied property market trends, and noted which parcels were most desirable; and she ended up owning some of the city's prime real estate. Noting the tremendous wealth others accumulated during the gold rush years in Los Angeles and other parts of California, Mason decided to follow their lead.[46]

At the time of her death in January 1891, Mason owned property in downtown Los Angeles, located at the corners of Third and Spring Streets to Second and Broadway; Eighth and Hill Streets; and nearby blocks. She also owned land on both the east and west sides of Los Angeles. She had become one of the wealthiest landowners in the city, creating opportunity and capital not just for her family members, but for African Americans migrating to the region.[47] Biddy Mason believed religiously that helping others was a priority, beginning with her family, then those in need. She taught her family members to make sound financial investments and that the resulting benefits should be shared with others.[48]

Biddy Mason's real estate decisions created a dynasty and the Masons became one of the most influential families, black or white, in Los Angeles. Newspaper editor Charlotta Bass noted that the Mason family was one of the wealthiest in the city, but also was well respected for their philanthropic activities. By 1909, the Mason family investments were worth $300,000. Mason's daughters, Ellen and Harriet (Anne died in 1857), and her grandsons managed all of their interests. The philanthropy came to involve most members of the family, but it was Biddy

Mason who set the pace by establishing and financing community institutions that provided opportunities for African Americans.[49]

THE MASON-OWENS PHILANTHROPIC LEGACY

Biddy Mason's community activism followed in the footsteps of Robert Owens who took in Biddy and her family when they arrived in Los Angeles in 1856. Owens eventually accumulated his wealth by purchasing land and investing in several business ventures. Born in Texas, Owens purchased his freedom and moved to California in 1850. Robert and his wife Winnie initially took on several menial jobs and eventually purchased a farm. After he secured a government contract to sell livestock and wood to the local military, he used the profits to purchase various pieces of land downtown, including a livery stable that he used for his business on San Pedro Street. His oldest son, Charles Owens, managed both this property and business. Robert Owens was among the wealthiest men in Los Angeles before his death on 18 August 1865, at age 59. With the marriage in 1856 of Charles Owens to Ellen Mason, Biddy's oldest daughter, the intergenerational family connections were established.[50]

Charles and Ellen Mason Owens carried on the business practices of their parents, purchasing land throughout Los Angeles. Unlike in later years when racially restrictive covenants in property deeds prohibited sales to African Americans, the Owens were able to make purchases throughout the city, not just in areas of African American settlement. Through these transactions the couple's income greatly increased as did their personal fortunes.[51] Charles and Ellen Owens had two sons, Henry and Robert Curry. Henry Owens worked as a teamster and ran the family's livery business.

Robert Curry Owens took over the real estate business from his father Charles and became even more successful at it, achieving the reputation in some circles as the wealthiest African American west of Chicago. In 1893, Robert C. Owens married Anna Drugger, and the couple had two daughters, Gladys and Manila, and the family was recognized for its philanthropy and helping black migrants who arrived in Los Angeles.[52] An article in a 1905 issue of the *Colored American Magazine* described Owens's wealth and influence in the City of Angels; and when W. E. B. Du Bois visited Los Angeles in 1913, he spent much time with Robert Owens. Subsequently, Du Bois published photos of Owens's business block in *The Crisis* magazine.[53]

Robert C. Owens and his family maintained the legacy of philanthropy that his grandmother began. Biddy Mason stressed helping those less fortunate than herself. She touched the lives of many individuals and created institutions that helped families in distress and the entire African American community. When Biddy

Mason died, her obituary acknowledged her as a community leader, a woman who overcame extreme adversity, and a generous caregiver. She actually founded and worked in the city's first day nursery, a facility that took care of African American orphans and other less fortunate children in the city.[54]

As a philanthropist, Biddy Mason founded several institutions for African Americans, and some whites. She created ways to help people temporarily, for example, by going to the local grocer and making arrangements for families to receive food and other needed provisions by guaranteeing the credit for those who could not pay. And for those in need of shelter, she built a boarding house on her South Spring Street property. Biddy Mason routinely visited prisoners in the local jail, and patients in asylums and hospitals. She is well known for having provided the funds to secure the property for the construction of the first African American church in the city, First African Methodist Episcopal Church (FAME), in 1872. Word spread of her charitable works throughout the state and Biddy Mason's daughters, Ellen and Harriett, and eventually her grandchildren and great grand-children carried on her legacy of philanthropy.[55]

Biddy Mason started from meager circumstances and reached the top of the socio-economic ladder of the African American community. Her story also under-scores how elite and upper status black Angelenos helped their brothers and sis-ters in need. More importantly, it shows how some women in Los Angeles took advantage of the tremendous opportunities that would have been denied in other parts of the United States.[56]

HANNAH EMBERS AND FAMILY

Biddy Mason and her children were not the only ones who were freed from slavery in Judge Hayes's 1856 ruling; Hannah and her children also gained their freedom. When Hannah was about 25 years old, she married a man more than twice her age named Toby Embers, then 56 years old, who had been born in slav-ery. The two met on the journey from Utah to California. After Judge Hayes's decision in 1856, the couple settled in San Bernardino where they purchased a small home. While Hannah had several of her own children, she and Toby had two children together, Charles and Nathaniel, who lived with their half-sister Ann, in Los Angeles. Hannah's modest life in San Bernardino was quite different from that of Biddy Mason's, but much more typical of other early female settlers, black or white.[57]

Hannah's daughter Ann Embers married Manuel Pepper, and the couple had three daughters: Caroline, Mary, and Alice, the youngest. Manuel worked as a laborer, while Ann Embers Pepper cared for the girls at home, along with Ann's half-brothers Charles and Nathaniel Embers. In 1860 the couple's net assets were

valued at $200 and by 1870 the couple had four more children: Nelson, Maria, Manuel, and Louis.[58]

Ann Pepper did not work outside the home while she was married to Manuel, but in 1880, after her husband's death, Ann was taking in laundry to supplement her household income, not unlike many women across the country. While most of her children were grown and out of the house by this time, Ann Pepper headed a household that included her young sons.[59] As Ann grew older, her son, Manuel Pepper, Jr., moved her into his home. Just like his father, Manuel, Jr., remained in his job as a wage laborer, but he owned his home free and clear. In 1900, Manuel Pepper, Jr., was taking care of several extended family members, including his mother Ann Pepper, who added to the household income by taking in laundry.[60]

The Mason, Owens, and Embers families formed an intergenerational social network in Los Angeles; the two women (Hannah and Biddy) and their families relied on each other. Biddy and her daughters, along with Hannah's eldest, Ann, helped one another raise Hannah's young children, serving as a case study for charting black female social networks in early Los Angeles. This story also offers insights into black female property ownership and community building. While Mason represents wealth and success, Hannah Embers had the more typical lifestyle for the time. Although these families started out in enslavement, each accumulated some wealth, and even the Pepper family managed to secure the "dream" of many free workers by becoming property holders in California.

While Los Angeles was no "paradise," it did offer migrants a much better alternative than the urban South or even the North for a time in the late 19th century. While Jim Crow laws and practices dominated much of the country, African Americans overcame racial barriers in Los Angeles and created their own economic opportunities and social networks that allowed them to be property owners, heads of their own households, and upwardly mobile. It was a time and a place where African American women were not simply caregivers and housekeepers—where they ran their own households, established networks and institutions, and helped to build a stable foundation for a 19th-century African American community in the West.

POLITICAL NETWORKS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

African American women developed their political networking strategies in their churches and homes, and later in women's clubs and religious organizations. At the same time, they worked closely with the men in their communities to maintain those networks and to secure their equal rights as citizens. The first campaign organized by black Angelenos was against the institution of slavery. In 1850 California was the only state in the West where free, northern born African

American women and men intermingled freely with formerly enslaved African Americans from the South. Some migrants to California, such as Mary Ellen Pleasant, who settled in San Francisco, maintained connections with the abolitionist groups that assisted her emancipation and created the first African American antislavery network in the state.[61] After 1850 enslaved African Americans who were brought to California looked for opportunities to gain their freedom either legally, or by running away. Many petitioned the courts for their freedom, only to be frustrated by federal fugitive slave laws and later by the Supreme Court's 1857 *Dred Scott* decision that upheld the claim that an enslaved African American taken into a free territory remained bound to his or her owner. This litigation strongly suggests that the legal status of free or formerly enslaved African Americans in mid-19th-century California was as complicated as elsewhere in the country.[62]

Although California legislators rejected the institution of slavery, they enacted a law in 1852 based on federal fugitive slave legislation that created a commission to return escapees. Since African Americans were barred from testifying in court, they were often unable to prove their free status, and the judges usually ruled in favor of slaveholders.[63] Although the state would not permit slavery within its boundaries, slaveholders who brought enslaved African Americans into California before the state entered the union could not be accused of breaking the law.[64]

Some California slave emancipation cases, such as the case of Biddy Mason and Hannah Embers in 1856, drew wide attention. Given the ambiguities in the law, free and formerly enslaved African Americans created a strong abolitionist network. Statewide "colored conventions," linked to the national abolitionist movement, were held in 1855 and 1857 in Sacramento and San Francisco. While African American men participated in these political conventions, much of the organizing began in religious circles and was overwhelmingly supported by African American women. The Mirror Association, a women's philanthropic group, provided financial support for the first African American newspaper in the state, the *Mirror of the Times*, founded in 1857. African American women's groups raised funds to support campaigns to gain suffrage, protect homesteads, and challenge Jim Crow practices on streetcars, in schools, and in other places open to the public.[65]

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Beginning in the 1870s, African Americans in California aggressively confronted discriminatory practices in public education. Several African American families, along with the executive committee of the state colored convention, challenged public school segregation at the local and state levels.[66] The first public

schools in California opened in 1865 and 1866 and African Americans, Chinese, Native Americans, and Hispanics were prohibited from attending schools with white children. The "Act to Provide for a System of Common Schools" stipulated that "children of color" needed white sponsorship to attend schools with whites. Native Americans and mixed-race children could enroll in public schools if they had white guardians. According to common school law, "Children of African or Mongolian descent and Indian children not living under the care of white people shall not be admitted into public schools. . . ." People of color, however, could petition to have separate schools established if at least ten students were to be enrolled. People of color in California viewed this as exclusion from certain public schools and continued to fight this discriminatory practice.[67] In 1872 several prominent African Americans petitioned the Los Angeles Board of Education to end segregation and began a series of court cases that eventually overturned the practice.[68]

In *Ward v. Flood* (1874), a case that lasted two years and centered on a young girl named Mary Ward, the California Supreme Court agreed that both the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution had been violated, and that children of color deserved access to public educational institutions. Black parents quickly enrolled their children in public schools. After 1870, the number of African American school-aged children in Los Angeles totaled twenty-four, out of 203 "colored" children attending schools in the entire state. The census reported 2,522 students attending schools throughout the county (Table 7).

Table 7. Common School Education in Los Angeles

		1870	**1890**
Black	**M**	14	91
	F	10	92
White	**M**	1,247	9,557
	F	1,251	9,328

Source: *Historical Census Data Center* (23 September 2005).

The 1870 census did not include the number of non-white or non-black children in public schools in these statistics.[69]

The number of African American families enrolling their children in the Los Angeles public schools increased dramatically over the next two decades and Los Angeles virtually caught up with San Francisco in school attendance. And by the end of the 19th century, 183 (69 percent) African American children between the ages of 6 and 17 were enrolled in public schools.[70] Girls made up 60 percent of

those students. In 1900, Los Angeles reported that only 13 percent of African Americans ages 10 and older were illiterate, representing an 8 percent decrease since 1870. Only a few girls ages 15 and 16 worked rather than attended school. Boys in this age group worked mainly as waiters, porters, newspaper boys, and teamsters, though some worked in small businesses and stores. In addition, by 1900, African Americans in Los Angeles had the highest literacy rate for the entire state; San Francisco ranked second, and Alameda trailed closely behind.[71]

As the new century began, more African Americans sought access to formal education. By 1910, 1,115 (92 percent) black children ages 6 to 14 were enrolled in the public schools, accounting for almost half of all African American students in California. This increase also reflects the Los Angeles African American population boom. With a public school system firmly established, native residents of color, as well as migrants and immigrants, took advantage of the existing opportunities.[72]

As more African Americans participated in the public educational system, the city saw an increase in the number of black professionals, including physicians, lawyers, architects, and teachers who were primarily African American women. These professionals formed the community's new professional elite, heading up important institutions and organizations. Access to secondary and higher education in California opened the door for African American women to join the professional class. Several black Angelenos attended the University of Southern California (USC) and the State Normal School (later UCLA), while others went away to University of California in Berkeley or Stanford University in Palo Alto, or to Tuskegee Institute in Alabama or other historically black schools. Many female college graduates became teachers, and in turn of the century Los Angeles, teaching increasingly became a female profession.[73]

In 1870 in Los Angeles only two African American women were listed in the census as teachers: mother and daughter Grace and Mary Reed, who taught music to local children. By 1910, there were seventeen African American teachers in the city. C. W. Black, who taught music, and James Marreu at the YMCA were the only males. Six women, including two sisters, Lillian and Lania Sanderbury, taught public school, while seven women were music teachers. Lenolia Maxwell taught a commercial course in her home, and Sarah Cole was a voice teacher in the city. As the 19th century came to a close, increasing numbers of women joined the professional workforce as nurses, hairdressers, dressmakers, and tailors.[74]

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

Just as was the case in northern and southern cities, African American women in 19th-century California engaged in a range of charitable and philanthropic activities. Beginning in Placerville in northern California in 1859, they developed

many formal and informal social groups. In San Francisco in 1860 African American women organized the Ladies' Benevolent Society and the Ladies' Pacific Accommodating and Benevolent Society. The following year, in Sacramento, with the state's largest black population, African American women organized the state's first female auxiliary of a men's fraternal organization, the Eastern Star. By holding "ladies' festivals," teas, picnics, and food fairs, these women's organizations were able to support a wide range of charitable programs.[75]

At the same time, between 1850 and 1900 many African American women in Los Angeles opened their homes to the new migrants, helping them by providing food, shelter, and access to employment and social connections. Building on the tradition of mutual aid begun by Biddy Mason and Winnie Owens in the 1850s, several African American women owned and operated small boarding houses, or simply provided temporary lodging for the new arrivals. By 1900, almost one quarter of the 125 female heads of household opened their homes to non-family members. Some women such as Ida Young and Mary Harris identified themselves as "boardinghouse keepers," while others indicated they merely took in lodgers.[76] But the majority of these homes had two or less lodgers or boarders. For example, the 1900 census reported that Mary Witts rented a room to a couple, Joseph and Mattie Lafayette, but also took in six children, three boys and three girls, less than five years of age, perhaps providing foster care. At least half of the African American women who provided lodging in Los Angeles were widows who also provided laundry services.[77]

At the turn of the 20th century, Los Angeles had several African American churches with religious and social welfare services designed for meeting the particular needs of the congregations. The first two churches to organize were the First African Methodist Episcopal (FAME) Church in 1872 and Second Baptist Church founded in 1885. The Wesley Chapel was founded in 1888, followed by Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in 1893, then Tabernacle Baptist and New Hope Baptist churches in 1897. At the beginning of the 20th century, the black churches had grown to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse African American population. The Westminster Presbyterian Church opened in 1904, while the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church and the Pentecostal, Apostolic Faith Mission were organized in 1906.[78] The women in these churches organized their own clubs and groups to carry out their "good works."

Much of the charitable work sponsored by African American women's church groups was designed to help young children and improve their educational opportunities. Women from Wesley Chapel, for example, organized the Women's Day Nursery Association in 1907, which helped children attending the public schools. The women created a nursery for younger children and provided lunch and sometimes dinner for African American public school children. Women at the FAME

church organized the Negro Nursery Association and the Child Study Circle in May 1908. In addition to helping school children, African American clubwomen in Los Angeles organized programs around their own cultural and intellectual heritage.[79]

The black churches gave women a platform to organize social welfare activities and to participate in social reform campaigns ranging from temperance to personal salvation. The religious institutions also provided the space for women to organize to address many of the community's needs such as providing medical aid and burial services. The clubs hosted evenings of literature to support local political organizations as did women's groups in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. Indeed, most of African American women's charity and fundraising work was organized through the churches in 19th and early 20th centuries.[80]

By the early 1900s, however, the African American secular club movement was well underway in Los Angeles. Operating outside the churches, the groups worked to provide housing and employment for new migrants, while also helping the sick and the poor. The Sojourner Truth Industrial Club, which was founded in 1904, and modeled after the Philadelphia and Chicago branches, sought to provide a "self-sustaining home" for single women new to the city with only themselves to rely on. Not only was industrial home a space where they could live while searching for employment, but women were encouraged to stay even after they became more financially secure, as long as they remained "upstanding women" in the community.[81] The Women's Progressive Club was organized in 1903 in Los Angeles and focused on literary activities and the women read and met to discuss the works of William Shakespeare and many other famous writers. The Young Women's Dramatic Club founded in 1904 raised literary awareness by performing "inspiring" dramatic works of literature. Proceeds from their performances were used to promote literacy and help children remain in school.[82]

Kate Bradley-Stovall founded and presided over of the Southern California Alumni Association, a group of aspiring young African American intellectuals. In 1909 as part of the celebration of President Lincoln's 100th birthday, the *Los Angeles Times* published a series of articles about the city's black community, including one written by Bradley-Stovall. In her essay, "The Negro Woman in Los Angeles and Vicinity—Some Notable Characters," Bradley-Stovall gave recognition to many of the city's African American women educators, entrepreneurs, church leaders, and clubwomen. Beginning with Biddy Mason in the 1850s, the article described the progressive social programs organized by many African American women; and Bradley-Stovall called attention to women's religious, fraternal, and secular organizations, all dedicated to advancing the community.[83]

After 1900 Eva Carter-Buckner often published essays in the *Los Angeles Times* and the African American newspaper, the *California Eagle,* celebrating events taking place in the African American community. African American

women in Los Angeles in the early 1900s organized local branches of the Harriet Tubman Red Cross Auxiliary, the NAACP, the Women's Auxiliary of the Colored Voters League, the Sons and Daughters of Africa, the Young Married Women's Thimble Club, the State Federation of Negro Women's Clubs, as well as other groups. In the 20th century the club movement became an integral part of black women's lives in Los Angeles, and in 1906, the national African American women's club leader and wife of Booker T. Washington, Margaret Washington, was invited to speak at the state women's club federation.[84]

In the second half of the 19th century, African American women worked tirelessly to advance themselves, their families, and the community being formed in Los Angeles. Similar to the social activism among African American women in eastern and midwestern cities, they fought for the freedom of people oppressed by the institution of slavery. They raised funds to support local civil rights litigation and organized to improve educational opportunities for children and adults. In many ways the city proved to be a place of economic opportunity despite overt racial discrimination, and African Americans took advantage of opportunities that they created or which otherwise became available. Women such as Biddy Mason and Winnie Owens provided money, food, and clothes for African American migrants, and helped to establish living spaces, churches, and social welfare organizations within black Los Angeles. Although women were excluded from most political organizations in the 19th century, their fundraising activities supported civil rights campaigns and touched the social and economic lives of African American men, women, and children making the City of Angels their home.

NOTES

I am grateful for the comments and support for this research project from Brenda E. Stevenson, V. P. Franklin, Jessica Millward, Clarence Lang, Danielle Borgia, and Jane Yamashiro.

[1]Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California 1535–1846* (Berkeley, CA, 2001), 11.

[2]Ibid., 10, 29.

[3]W. E. B. Du Bois, "Colored California," *The Crisis* (November 1913): 5–6 (1913; reprinted New York, 1969), 192–93.

[4]Delilah L. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California* (Los Angeles, CA, 1919), 132.

[5]Jack D. Forbes, "The Early African Heritage of California," in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, ed., Lawrence B. De Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor (Los Angeles, CA, 2001), 73. Only recently have scholars begun to examine the important role of women of color in Los Angeles. While there is a growing body of scholarship on African Americans living in Los Angeles, much of it overlooks the experiences of women. In their seminal studies of African Americans in Los Angeles, Josh Sides's *L.A. City Limits: African Americans in Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* and Doug Flamming's *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* include some discussion about women, but do not offer broadly based gender analyses. The collection of essays entitled *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities* edited by Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramon consider contemporary gender issues surrounding masculinity and female leadership. The edited volume, *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, by Lawrence B. De

Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, dedicates only two chapters to black women in California. Some of the work on other people of color, however, explores gender dynamics, especially in early California history.

Although her work centered primarily on the transition of California from the Spanish and Mexican periods to the American, Miraslova Chavez-Garcia, in *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s,* concluded that the transition from the Mexican to the American legal system profoundly affected gender relationships, especially in the private sphere. In addition to gender, Chavez-Garcia examined race, class, and sexuality to highlight both the public and private roles women played in California. Tomas Almaguer includes a gendered analysis of the experiences of Mexican and Native women in *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*, while examining racial formation in California. In *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration before Exclusion*, George Anthony Peffer challenges earlier scholarship that excluded Chinese women from the historiography, and examines their experiences during the second half of the 20th century.

In addition to other women of color in Los Angeles, one must also consider the experiences of black women in other regions of the country during this same time period. Jacqueline Jones explores the important roles of labor and family life for African American women after 1865 in *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, while Carole Marks, James Horton, and Nell Irvin Painter explore the lives of African American migrants to the North and West from the 19th century through the 20th. Together, these studies lay the foundation for understanding the experiences of black migrants from the South to the Northeast as well as the American West. See Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley, CA, 2003); Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley, CA, 2005); and Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramon, eds., *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities* (New York, 2010). For a detailed historiography of African Americans in Los Angeles, see Marne L. Campbell, "'The Newest Religious Sect Has Started in Los Angeles': Race, Class, Ethnicity, and the Origins of the Pentecostal Movement, 1906–1913," *Journal of African American History* 95, no. 1 (2010): 1–25; Lawrence B. De Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California* (Los Angeles, CA, 2001); Miraslova Chavez-Garcia, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* (Tucson, AZ, 2004); Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley, CA, 1994); George Anthony Peffer, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration before Exclusion* (Urbana, IL, 1999); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York, 1985); Carole Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration*, (Bloomington, IN, 1989); James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community*, (Washington, DC, 1993); and Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York, 1986).

[6]De Graaf, Mulroy, and Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado*, 6.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., Jack Forbes, "Black Pioneers: The Spanish-Speaking Afroamericans in the Southwest," *Phylon* 27 (3rd Qtr., 1966): 233–46.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Guinn, *A History of California*, 206. See also, C. W. A. David, "The Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 and Its Antecedents," *The Journal of Negro History* 9 (January 1924): 18–25. The first official legislature of California in 1850 immediately addressed the issue of slavery, entering the larger, national discourse. Citing states' rights, as their premise, they agreed that Congress did not have the right to intervene with a state's prerogative to decide whether to hold slaves. To avoid conflict, the legislature determined that it was not in their best interest to support the institution in their state, and they refused to engage in a violent battle with other states or even in Congress over the issue of slavery. In other words, Californians adopted a position of neutrality. Southern leaders accused California of taking a northern position.

Although Californians rejected the institution of slavery, in 1852 the legislature enacted a law based on earlier fugitive slave legislation. The state agreed to uphold the 1793 *Fugitive Slave Law*, which required the return of escaped slaves to their masters. This law, however, failed to recognize the status of those free African Americans victimized by slave hunters.

[11]University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center. *United States Historical Census Data Browser.* ONLINE (1998) University of Virginia. Available: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/ (accessed 28 August 2005) (hereafter, *Historical Census Data Center*). Of a total state population of 92,597 people that year, only 962 of them were of African descent. The county recorded no slaves in the region, nor did any appear for the entire state.

[12]*Historical Census Data Center*.

[13]Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0* [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis, MN, 2004). Available: http//www.ipums.org (accessed 26 July 2005) (hereafter, Ruggles, et al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series*).

[14]Ibid. Enumerators were instructed to write a "B" in the column for one's color regardless of whether they were African-born or a fraction of African descent. In 1910, special instructions designated the term *mulatto* for any person who was of African descent, unless they were "evidentially" African.

[15]*Historical Census Data Center*.

[16]Ruggles, et al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.*

[17]Ancestry.com. *United States Federal Census, 1860* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. Original data: 1860 U.S. census, population schedule. NARA microfilm publication M653, 1,438 rolls. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, n.d. (accessed 1 March 2011) (hereafter, *U.S. Federal Census, 1860*); Ancestry.com. 1870 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2003. Indexed by Ancestry.com from microfilmed schedules of the 1870 U.S. Federal Decennial Census. Original data: Data imaged from National Archives and Records Administration. *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*. M593, 1,761 rolls. *Minnesota Census Schedules for 1870.* T132, 13 rolls. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, http://content.ancestry.com (accessed August 2004) (hereafter, *U.S. Federal Census, 1870*); 1880 U.S. Census Index provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Copyright 1999 Intellectual Reserve, Inc. http://www.ancestry.com/ (accessed August 2005–April 2006) (hereafter, *U.S. Federal Census, 1880*); Foner notes that the largest number of males were employed as tailors (2,139), railroad employees (2,044), and boot and shoemakers (1,269). See, Phillip Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, eds., *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*. Vol. 4, *The Black Worker During the Era of the American Federation of Labor and the Railroad Brotherhoods*, (Philadelphia, PA, 1979), 68.

[18]Ruggles, et. al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series*.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Foner and Lewis, *The Black Worker*, 68; *U.S. Federal Census, 1900*.

[21]Ibid., Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 110–151.

[22]Ancestry.com. *U.S. Federal Census, 1900* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2004. Original data: United States. *1900 United States Federal Census*. T623, 1854 rolls. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. (accessed August 2005–April 2006). Although it was a profession that indeed existed throughout California, one cannot assume that the majority of women with no occupation worked as prostitutes. In her investigation of black women in California, Willi Coleman notes that there were few accounts of African American prostitutes during the earliest period of black settlement. This observation also applies to Los Angeles through the turn of the century, as opposed to the several accounts of African American female prostitutes in Oakland and San Francisco. Coleman concludes that prostitution was not a "widespread pursuit" for African American women, and that the black middle class worked hard to combat the stereotyping of African American women as prostitutes. See, Ann Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865–90* (Urbana, IL, 1985), 16; Willi Coleman, "African American Women & Community Development in California" in DeGraaf, et al., *Seeking El Dorado*, 116.

[23]*U.S. Federal Census, 1900* (accessed 20 January 2006); Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 112–127. These findings are also consistent with Jones's work on women and labor in the South in terms of age and marital status. They differ, however, in the sense that black female household heads in Los Angeles were not typically economically disadvantaged, as were their southern counterparts.

[24]Horton, *Free People of Color*, 31–32; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 126.

[25]*U.S. Federal Census, 1850–1900*.

[26]*U.S. Federal Census, 1870* (accessed 16 August 2005); It should be noted that Biddy Mason and Winnie Owens represented the highest end of the spectrum for female estate values. In fact, their estate values were the highest of any household heads regardless of gender.

[27]Ibid. It is unclear as to whether Sarah Jefferson was the grandmother or mother of the five children. She was 62, and the children's ages ranged from 5–12. No male adult was listed in the household, and the census did not report familial relationships the way it did in later years. The combined average estate values for male household heads totaled $1,650. Together, their estates equaled almost $10,000.

[28]Ibid.

[29]*U.S. Federal Census, 1880.*

[30]Ibid.

[31]*U.S. Federal Census, 1900.*

[32]Ibid., Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 125.

[33]Ibid., 126; Horton, *Free People of Color*, 112.

[34]Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 88; California State Constitution, http://www.ss.ca.gov/archives/level3_const 1849txt.html (accessed February 2004).

[35]Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 90; Bass, *Forty Years*, 8.

[36]Bass, *Forty Years*, 8.

[37]Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 88.

[38]Ibid., 89.

[39]DeEtta Demaratus, *The Force of a Feather: The Search for a Lost Story of Slavery and Freedom* (Salt Lake City, UT, 2002), 139–145.

[40]Ibid., 89.

[41]Ibid., 139–145

[42]Ibid., Bass, *Forty Years*, 8; Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 109. All of these accounts state Mason's earnings as $2.50 a day, which may be unlikely. None of the accounts show how many days per week Mason worked. Although her earnings may seem high, it is possible she only worked a few days out of the week. These are the only published records of Mason's earnings for this particular job.

[43]Bass, *Forty Years*, 8; Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 88.

[44]Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 90; Bass, *Forty Years*, 27.

[45]Bass, *Forty Years* 27.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid., De Graaf, et al., *Seeking El Dorado*, 19.

[48]Los Angeles went to great lengths to promote itself, attracting migrants from across the country to the region. In addition, the city attempted to portray a place where people could come and accumulate wealth by means of land purchases as opposed to the gold discoveries throughout the northern portion of the state. Moreover, since land was being sold at such affordable rates during this period, many people flocked to the city to take advantage. The *Los Angeles Daily Times* advertised land sales daily. In addition, the paper constantly printed stories stating that Los Angeles really was a great place to live. African Americans also promoted the city to other blacks across the country, creating a steady flow of migrants from Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and some northern states as well. In addition, the land boom created many opportunities for new migrants seeking skilled work within the city.

[49]Bass, *Forty Years*, 8; Demaratus, *The Force of a Feather*, 178.

[50]De Graaf, et al., *Seeking El Dorado*, 13; "Documentary Explores Lives of Black Pioneers," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, Thursday, 15 December 1988, A-8. At the time, a local public channel, KCOQ, showed a documentary on the Mason-Owens family and their impact on the African American community in Los Angeles. The film featured four generations of the family.

[51]Bass, *Forty Years*, 8.

[52]Ibid.

[53]De Graaf, et al., *Seeking El Dorado*, 18. See also, Bass, *Forty Years*, pages 8–9, and Du Bois, "Colored California," 192–196; Lonnie G. Bunch in De Graaf, et al., *Seeking El Dorado*, notes that Robert C. Owens plays a crucial role in the makeup of the African American professional class in Los Angeles during this time, which is what Du Bois chooses to highlight in his article in *The Crisis*. After Charles Owens died, Ellen remarried a man named G. Huddleston. Charles left her half of his property, and a quarter to each of his sons. See *Early California Wills Los Angeles County 1850–1890*, http://www.sfgenealogy.com/search/search.pl ?Match=1&Terms=%22charles+owens%22&Realm=All (accessed 9 May 2009).

[54]"Biddy Mason, Landowner, 1818–1891," California Biography File A; courtesy of Angelus Funeral Home, Los Angeles (CA) Public Library.

[55]Bass, *Forty Years*, 8; Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 88; "Documentary Explores Lives of Black Pioneers," A-8.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Bass, *Forty Years*, 7–8; De Graaf, et al., *Seeking El Dorado*, 19; *U.S. Federal Census, 1870–1900;* Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 23.

[58]*U.S. Federal Census, 1870–1900.*

[59]*U.S. Federal Census, 1880.*

[60]*U.S. Federal Census*, *1900.*

[61]Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528–1990* (New York, 1998), 83; Coleman, "African American Women," 101; Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson-Moore, eds., *African American Women Confront the West, 1600–2000* (Norman, OK, 2003), 7; Lynn Hudson, *The Making of "Mammy" Pleasant: A Black Entrepreneur in Nineteenth Century San Francisco* (Urbana, IL, 2003); *Historical Census Data Center*. While the majority of black migrants in northern California were from the North, most black Angelenos were formerly enslaved by white officers during the Mexican-American war, and some were brought to the state while still enslaved in the South. They often imagined California as a place they could attain freedom and provide for their families. Most black women migrated to the state with their family unit or network. While women accounted for only one-third of the black population in 1860, they made up almost half of the population by the end of the 19th century.

[62]David M. O'Brien, *Constitutional Law and Politics: Volume Two—Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*, second edition (New York, 1995), 1275–1299. The Supreme Court sided against Scott. On March 6, 1857, Chief Justice Robert Taney delivered the opinion of the court. He stated that Scott was not a citizen of the United States, since he was a slave who had not rights to citizenship. Taney stated that slaves had no rights that "the white man is bound to respect," and that slavery was beneficial to blacks. Moreover, Taney declared the antislavery portion of the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional. See Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York, 2001) and Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of California*, 339–340.

[63]J. M. Guinn, *A History of California*, 206; C. W. A. David, "The Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 and Its Antecedents," in *The Journal of Negro History* 9, no. 1 (January 1924): 18–25; Early state legislators defined their position on slavery with ambiguity, providing protection for slaveholders. By 1849, a small number of slaves in California were already providing labor. According to Section 17 of Article I of the state constitution, "No bill of attainder, ex post facto law, or law impairing the obligation of contracts, shall ever be passed." The 1852 law was designed to last only until 1853, but legislators continued it in 1854 and 1855. See California Digital Library, *California State Archives and Golden State Museum*, ONLINE 2000, University of California, http://www.ss/ca/gov/archives/12/03/2003 (accessed) (hereafter, California State Archives and Golden State Museum).

[64]California State Archives and Golden State Museum.

[65]Barbara Y. Welke, "Rights of Passage: Gendered-Rights Consciousness and the Quest for Freedom, San Francisco, California, 1850–1870," in Taylor and Wilson-Moore, *African American Women Confront the West,* 73–86; Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 80; Albert S. Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West,* 1900–1954 (Lawrence, KS, 1994), 17–21; Broussard notes that African Americans in California secured voting rights by 1870 with the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. This is also indicative of one major disconnect between women in the West and women in other parts of the country.

[66]Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 180; Beasley gave much credit to the local ministers who organized the African American community on a larger scale. Moreover, she contends that some of those fighting for equal education typically migrated to the West and California and were educated prior to their migration.

[67]Ibid., 177; Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 17–21; Here, Beasley quoted Sections 56 and 57 of the act.

[68]Ibid., 180. Beasley notes that most of those attacking the public school system migrated to the state either from the Northeast or from Canada. She believed that as migrants coming from regions where they were free and took advantage of opportunities such as education, they had a greater impact on the school board.

[69]*Historical Census Browser*; This 1870 census did not include the diverse number of groups of people of color for this period. It was during this year that the census began to include Chinese, Japanese, and a group called "other" for the first time. However, the Chinese, Native American, and Hispanic children were not designated in the public school statistics.

[70]Ibid.; *U.S. Federal Census Reports, 1870–1900.*

[71]*Historical Census Browser;* One should note that changes were made in the census data. For the first time, the census distinguished between African Americans and other people of color. The exclusion of females from this census makes it difficult to determine the exact numbers. Los Angeles contained the second highest illiteracy rate for African Americans, while the highest percentage of other people of color who could neither read nor write remained in San Francisco.

[72]Ibid.

[73]*U.S. Federal Census, 1870–1900*; Tiffany Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana, IL, 2010), 8–18.

[74]*U.S. Federal Census, 1870–1900*; Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York, 1984), 100–108.
[75]Coleman, "African American Women," 111; Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894–1994* (New York, 1999), 27.
[76]Annie Melhado was the only lodging housekeeper who was not the head of her own household. At the time of the 1900 census, there were no lodgers residing in the home she and her husband Charles rented on Vine Street. *U.S. Federal Census, 1900;* James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington, DC, 1993), 112.
[77]*U.S. Federal Census*, *1870–1900;* White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894–1994* (New York, 1999), 30–31.
[78]Campbell, "The Newest Religious Sect Has Started in Los Angeles," 6–7; Bass, *Forty Years*, 20–26.
[79]*Los Angeles Times,* "The Negro Woman in Los Angeles and Vicinity—Some Notable Characters," 2 Feb 1909, 4.
[80]Coleman, "African American Women," 111; White, *Too Heavy a Load,* 39; Horton, *Free People of Color,* 109–112; Evelyn B. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), 7–10. Higginbotham notes that the church offered women "a forum through which to articulate a public discourse critical of women's subordination."
[81]Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 226; Roslyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850–1920* (Bloomington, IN, 1998), 85–89.
[82]Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers,* 226–227.
[83]Ibid.
[84]*Los Angeles Times*, "Shall Color Line Divide?" 26 January 1906, 11; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom,* 136.