

# Celebrating Black History Month



The Watts Prophets

## ■ Water and Power African American Association to host celebration on Feb. 28.

Story and photos courtesy Marie Y. Lemelle, WPAAA President

WPAAA — The Water and Power African American Association (WPAAA) is hosting a program and celebration titled "A Celebration of African American History Makers" Feb. 28 in the John Ferraro Building auditorium, 111 N. Hope St. The program, scheduled to run from 11:15 a.m. until 1:30 p.m., is free.

Starting back in 1926, February was designated as the month to ensure that the countless contributions and achievements of African Americans were not overlooked or forgotten. As a result, the nation celebrates Black History Month in a variety of ways — from award ceremonies to television programs about numerous groundbreaking achievements.

While the Water and Power African American Association believes that the recognition of past and living African American history makers should be in effect year round, WPAAA partnered with the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation in honor of Black History Month to present "A Celebration of African American History Makers."

The public is invited to join WPAAA and the Dunbar EDC to experience an inside glimpse into the talents and determination of legends and rising stars who are an integral part of the African history of music, entertainment and sports.

"Without a doubt, the history and legacies of African Americans have been keenly interwoven into the fabric of American culture," says Michael Dolphin, a Dunbar EDC Board Member. "For those of us of the Dunbar EDC, we particularly appreciate the attention to the legacies of the great musicians and performers of this City."

### Scheduled to appear are:

- Tom Reed, former number one African American disc jockey at KGFJ, KMET, XPRS and KDAY during the 1960s and '70s
- The Watts Prophets, inspirational poets
- Saxophonist Daniel Richardson and vocalist Alexandra Isley are accompanied by the Billy Mitchell Trio
- Conney Williams, spoken word poet, author and DWP employee
- Harry Flournoy, member of the 1966 NCAA championship basketball team from Texas Western College
- Voices of Power

"Tom Reed is a leading historian and musicologist with a particular emphasis on Los Angeles. The Watts Prophets are a significant part of that history. Billy Mitchell is helping to prepare the next generation of contributors,"



Tom Reed

Dolphin remarked. "We are honored to be able to co-sponsor the event."

Parking is available in the DWP Customer Parking Lot (enter on Hope Street between First and Temple Streets). Food or drinks are not allowed in the auditorium, but prior to the program, lunch can be purchased or brought in and eaten in the adjoining cafeteria. Seating is limited, so come early. For more information, call (213) 367-1314 or send an email to marie.lemelle@ladwp.com.

The event is underwritten by in-kind services and funding from the Dunbar Economic Development Community, the Cultural Affairs Department, the Water and Power Community Credit Union, and the DWP.

To learn more about the Water and Power African American Association, go to [www.wpaaa.org](http://www.wpaaa.org).

Dunbar Economic Development Corporation's mission is to revitalize the Vernon-Central neighborhood. The legacies of the Dunbar Hotel and its surrounding community are worthy of historical recognition and economic growth for its residents.

### About the Performers

The legendary **Tom Reed** can boast of a career in newspapers, radio and TV that spans more than 40 years. Since 1980, his "For Members Only Television" has produced black-themed independent talk shows and documentaries on KSCI-TV 18. His coffee-table size book, *The Black Music History of Los Angeles — Its Roots*, is in its fourth printing and will be available for purchase and autographs. "History was always exciting to me," says Reed. "My father and my grandfather told us who we were, where we came from. People are searching, looking for the real deal. And that's important."

**The Watts Prophets — Richard Dedeaux, Amde Hamilton, and Otis O'Solomon** — have recited, chanted, spoke and sung their unique jazz accompanied inspirational poetry to diverse audience around the world for nearly 40 years. "We believe in building communities through knowledge," said O'Solomon. "Our mission is to share the beauty of the spoken word, the power of the confident pen, and the value of a vibrant culture."

Jazz great **Billy Mitchell** and his trio will accompany two students, saxophonist Daniel Richardson and vocalist Alexandra Isley, from SAPP (Scholarship Audition Performance Preparatory Academy), a program founded by Mitchell. "My goal is to increase participation of inner-city students in music and arts scholarship competitions," said Mitchell who is a graduate of Moorehouse College, the nation's largest, private liberal arts college for African-American men.



Billy Mitchell

### Conney Williams

(DWP employee) is a poet, actor and performance artist and hails from Shreveport, LA. "My greatest desire is to be a voice and to be heard in the midst of this wilderness," said Williams. He is the author of *Leaves of Spilled Spirit From an Untamed Poet*.



Conney Williams

Texas Western College (University of Texas

at El Paso) 1966

NCAA Champion

**Harry Flournoy** was a

member of the historic

and groundbreaking

Texas Western College

basketball team that

won the 1966 NCAA

championship. The

team was depicted in

the recent Disney

movie, *Glory Road*. "Prejudice and discrimination

gave me life lessons," said Flournoy. "I

learned tolerance, perseverance and to take

what you want." His teammates made history

as the first all-black starting lineup in a college

basketball championship game. Flournoy is

married to DWP employee Sukari Flournoy, a

customer service representative.



Harry Flournoy

## Black History Month



### Did You Know?

Countless African Americans have contributed their courage and innovation to making our nation as great as it is. Many of these stories are well known, but here are a few that aren't:

**Mark Dean and his co-inventor, Dennis Moeller**, created a microcomputer system with bus control for peripheral processing devices. The first commercial use of their patents was marketed in 1984 in the IBM PC/AT computer.

**Dr. Patricia E. Bath's** passionate dedication to the treatment and prevention of blindness led her to develop the Cataract Laserphaco Probe. The probe, patented in 1988, is designed to use the power of a laser to quickly and painlessly vaporize cataracts from patients' eyes, replacing the more common method of using a grinding, drill-like device to remove the afflictions.

While employed by Procter and Gamble, **Dennis Weatherby** developed and received a patent issued on Dec. 22, 1987, for the automatic dishwasher detergent known by the trade name Cascade.

Originally from Haiti, **Michel Molaire** is the recipient of 28 U.S. patents and more than 65 foreign patents for his work in material sciences. Much of Molaire's work has been in the area of laser printing and optical recording. He is a research associate at the Office Imaging Research and Development Group of Eastman Kodak. He is responsible for many of your "Kodak moments."

**Voices of Power** was established in 1987 and is comprised of about 30 DWP employees. Sherrell A. Covan is the president and founder and has been employed by DWP for 22 years. Kelvin Bell is the music director and has been employed at DWP for 19 years.



Voices of Power



Children smiled and laughed when handed the socks.



From left: Volunteers Keith Moser, a photographer; Marie Lemelle, President of WPAAA; Malcolm Ali, a photographer and co-founder of L.A. Humanity Group Foundation; and Gregory Tucker, resident at the Midnight Mission, distributed hundreds of socks and knitted caps during Kwanzaa Week.



Marie Lemelle, DWP employee, and Keith Moser, volunteer, show the shopping cart filled with socks and knitted caps preparing to distribute them.

# WPAAA Helps Homeless

## Water and Power African American Association teams up with foundation to help the homeless.

Story by Marie Y. Lemelle, MBA, WPAAA President  
Photos by Malcolm Ali, Keith Moser and Michael Riddick

"I love socks," said an unidentified woman. "May I have another pair of socks for my friend?" asked an unidentified man, pointing to a man in a wheelchair. "Are you giving away socks?" wondered two other people. "I was just wondering where I was going to get another pair of socks," said one person.

As the small group of volunteers walked along the streets of skid row pushing two shopping carts filled to the top with thick white socks and knitted caps in various colors, they seemed to become the Pied Pipers of socks and caps. Literally, hundreds of men, women and children got up and followed the group to the corner of Fifth and San Julian – less than two miles from the heart of the Los Angeles Civic Center.

"When you are homeless, small things do matter," said Gregory Tucker, who was once homeless. "Keeping your feet warm on cold nights is a priority for those on the streets." Tucker is now a resident of the Midnight Mission and seeking employment.

Several days before Kwanzaa week (Dec. 26-Jan. 1), L.A. photographer Malcolm Ali decided to do something collectively and with purpose for humanity. What came to his mind were the forgotten sons and daughters in our society. "I didn't have much money, but I knew I could afford a few pairs of socks and caps to give to the homeless," said Ali. Quoting the late Johnnie Cochran, Ali lives by his mantra, "To whom much is given, much is expected."

With only a few dollars between them, Keith

Moser and Ali pooled their money together and bought one case of socks and caps. Ali recruited Tucker, and the three of them distributed the goods. "This was my first time helping the homeless, and I was awestruck how people quickly came from everywhere, lined up, and waited to get a pair of socks and one cap," said Moser. "Every sock and cap disappeared in less than 30 minutes."

According to the latest Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority count, about 20,000 people live in the City of Los Angeles, with the vast majority dwelling in the Downtown and South Los Angeles areas. Orlando Ward, director of Public Affairs at the Midnight Mission, notes, "While difficult to measure, we are fairly certain that of this population, 7,000 to 9,000 live in the downtown area as bordered by the 10, 101, 110 freeways and the LA River."

Recognizing that the job was bigger than the three of them, during Kwanzaa week, Ali contacted Marie Lemelle, WPAAA President and a long-time friend, and explained his idea. "Immediately, Marie e-mailed the WPAAA membership and asked for donations. Within two days, WPAAA members contributed almost \$500," Ali said. "Next thing I knew, on behalf of the WPAAA members, Marie volunteered to help distribute the socks and caps."

"We chose to distribute the items during the week of Kwanzaa because of its principles," Ali continued. Founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, the seven guiding principles of Kwanzaa have a particular and universal value and meaning in their call for thoughtful and practical commitment to: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination); Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith).

Ali also added, "I decided to name the sock and cap distribution 'the First Annual Lazarus Project,' after the beggar Lazarus as written in the Bible." Timing is everything. The items were handed out to the homeless just in time to help

provide some protection from the heavy rains, cold temperature, and high winds on Jan. 2.

"We appreciate the WPAAA members for coming to our aid without hesitation, and we look forward to a long-lasting partnership," said Melvin Snell, who along with his wife, Birgitta,



WPAAA members generously donated enough money to purchase several cases of socks and knitted caps to help keep the homeless a little warmer during the cold days and nights.

and Ali co-founded the Los Angeles Humanity Group Foundation. "Ultimately, we also want to engage young people and plan to structure this twice a year event as a means for community service credits."

WPAAA has since pledged to continue to work with the Foundation in its efforts to assist the homeless, provide career training in the community at large, and offer support for victims of catastrophic events. "We have our own Katrina right here in Los Angeles," exclaimed Ali, "Homelessness is catastrophic!"

After all the items were distributed, the small group of volunteers agreed that handing out well wishes for the New Year to the homeless along with a simple gift of a pair of socks and a knitted cap warmed our hearts and, at the same time, torn our hearts apart. "It was so rewarding to see the smiles on their face," Moser said. "There is no doubt in my mind that we are our brothers' keepers," Ali said.

A verse taken from The Pied Piper of Hamelin by Robert Browning, slightly altered, epitomizes

WPAAA's and the L.A. Humanity Group Foundation's call to action to the City of Los Angeles for a helping hand:

*"If I can rid your town of homelessness  
Will you give me a thousand guilders?"  
"One? Fifty thousand!" - was the exclamation  
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.*

Almost in unison, we wondered aloud what would City employees do for the homeless at least twice a year? "A little can go a long way," Snell said. Every \$48 collected buys a case of socks (124 pairs), and \$72 buys 12 dozen knitted caps.

"What sets our group apart from other non-profits or disaster organizations is that we immediately use the money to buy the products and meet the needs of the homeless as quickly as possible," Snell said. "We have no oversized warehouse to store any inventory or housing facilities to be concerned about a huge overhead. The people need the things now, so we load up our personal vehicles and bring it to them."

Bishop Eugene Hobbs of Hosana Community Church in Los Angeles has pledged hundreds of packets containing personal hygiene products for the next distribution. Additional plans to purchase other items to assist the homelessness in their need for warmth, comfort and cleanliness are in progress.

To make an immediate difference, donations of all amounts are appreciated. The next Lazarus Project event is scheduled for 10 a.m. on President's Day, Monday, Feb. 20. Volunteers are needed to assist with distributing items. Please contact Malcolm Ali for the meeting location at (323) 899-4306. Checks should be made payable to Malcolm Payne and mailed to 5187 West 20th St., Los Angeles, CA 90016.

To learn more about Ali and see the photo gallery of the sock and cap giveaway, go to [www.finainage.com](http://www.finainage.com) and click on news. For more information about the Los Angeles Humanity Group Foundation, go to [www.lahumanity.org](http://www.lahumanity.org). For details about the Water and Power African American Association, visit [www.wpaaa.org](http://www.wpaaa.org).

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For nearly 90 minutes, the volunteers handed out the items to a long line of people, some handicapped and very sick, until all the socks and caps were gone.



Malcolm Ali hands a pair of socks to a man who had said his legs hurt from the cold weather.



Just one of many homeless children who was happy to receive a new pair of socks.



Many of the homeless expressed their gratitude for the thick socks since most of their time is spent walking.





Amid all the excitement of the proud parents, several cameras were flashing at the same time. Standing, from left: Paul Bassard, Jason McCarty, WPAAA President Marie Y. Lemelle, WPAAA Treasurer Angela M. Franklin, Jeffrey Rugley and Devin Jones. Seated: Alaina Patterson, Erika Bowman, Ebony Daniels, Winter McNeel and LaVinna Gray.



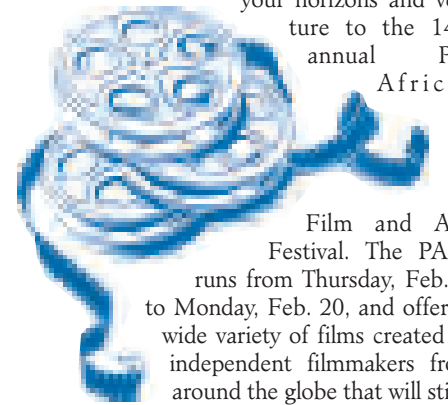
DWP employee Charlotte Magee presents scholarship recipient Winter McNeel with a door prize – an original jewelry design from her collection "Hand Creations by Charlotte." Winter's proud mother is DWP employee Tori McNeel.

# Film Festival

## ■ Cultural Affairs co-sponsors Pan African Film Festival.

By Marie Y. Lemelle, MBA

**CULTURAL AFFAIRS** — If you are tired of watching movies that are sequels, remakes, and contain little substance, expand your horizons and venture to the 14th annual Pan African



Film and Arts Festival. The PAFF runs from Thursday, Feb. 9, to Monday, Feb. 20, and offers a wide variety of films created by independent filmmakers from around the globe that will stimulate your senses.

"The Pan African Film Festival is a very important cultural event in the City," says Margie Reese, General Manager, Cultural Affairs. "The exchange of ideas and opportunity to connect with people and places is only one of the many services that this Festival offers our community. Here, in the entertainment center of the world, this Festival is one of a kind, and certainly a program that the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs is proud to support and I encourage the City family to take a look at the impressive lineup of films and seminars that are planned for this year. You are sure to experience great film-making as you connect with themes that challenge, inspire and entertain."

All the screenings will be at the Magic Johnson Theatre, 3650 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. PAFF is the largest Black History Month film event in the United States and also features arts and crafts from local and international artists on the lobby levels of the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza.

One of the films to be featured is *Before the Fact*, in which filmmaker Michael J. Holland turned the lens on his married life. Shown with his wife on their wedding day, Holland explores the question, "How can a relationship with so many happy moments turn so deadly?" The 85-minute docudrama will be shown Thursday, Feb. 16. It is one of hundreds of films showcased at the festival.

The 2006 PAFF program includes a diverse selection of black films inclusive of features, shorts and documentaries, as well as studio/network releases. The PAFF is dedicated to the promotion of cultural and racial tolerance and understanding through the exhibition of film, art and creative expression.



Still photo from the docudrama *Before the Fact*.

PAFF also features panel discussions, industry workshops and seminars. Where else can you meet and greet the filmmakers and find out what makes them tick and how did they do that on a limited budget?

PAFF, launched in February 1992, was founded by Ayuko Babu. "The Pan African Film and Arts Festival has been successful because of the support of the Los Angeles community, the diverse selection of films from around the world, and sponsors," says Babu. The 2006 sponsors include Magic Johnson Theatres, Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza, Union Bank of California, Starbucks, Urban Coffee Opportunities, Magic Johnson Enterprises, Target, South African Airways, Rolling Out Magazine and the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Parking is free. For ticket sales, film schedules, and other information, please call (323) 295-1706 or visit [www.paff.org](http://www.paff.org).

# WPAAA Scholarship Recipients

## ■ Water and Power African American Assn. announces scholarship recipients.

By Marie Y. Lemelle, MBA  
WPAAA President

Photos by Adelle Brown, DWP Employee

When Angela Hunter lost most of her dormitory and personal items in Hurricane Katrina, it meant leaving Xavier University and starting over with very little. The news about the Water and Power African American Association scholarship award brought a smile to her face and a ray of hope that it would be okay.

"I am so grateful for the help the scholarship gave to my daughter, Angela," said Linda Jordan, a long-time WPAAA member and a utility marketing representative at the DWP. "The money came at the perfect time." Hunter has since relocated to Hampton University in Virginia and is hoping to return to New Orleans next year.

Every year, WPAAA members seek out and the Scholarship Committee awards scholarships to deserving young men and woman who, WPAAA believes, will contribute to humanity. WPAAA is a strong advocate of education, mentoring, and community service and endeavors to recruit others with a like mindset. Many of the nominees are the children, sibling, relative, friend or neighbor of a WPAAA member.

The Water and Power African American Association, established in 1991, has strived to "strengthen the foundation of African American employees at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power by advancing the employment, education, economic, and social welfare of its members and the community." To that end, WPAAA's mantra is "Promoting African American Achievement and Higher Education."

"Awarding scholarships to deserving students is a great and meaningful way to recognize and reward them for their academic achievements," said Angela M. Franklin, treasurer of WPAAA. "During the review process, the Board takes into consideration the challenges students must overcome to reach their education goals."

The funding from the scholarship is derived from monthly dues contributed by the more than 300 members of WPAAA. "In accordance with the bylaws of WPAAA, we set aside 60 percent of the annual collected dues," stated Franklin. "This year, we are proud to distribute among 12 recipients a total of \$8,000."

The students are considered for the award

based on evidence of good character and promise. Each applicant is evaluated for past academic and leadership performance through application, essay, letters of recommendation, interview, and proof of enrollment. "The applicants are sponsored by a WPAAA member," said Leslie Sorhaindo, an engineer at the DWP and the WPAAA Membership Chair. "The sponsors also submit a written statement about the student's attributes."

The recipients were awarded scholarships ranging in the amounts from \$150 to \$2,000. In honor of all of the students who were nominated for a scholarship, WPAAA recognized the students at a celebration held at the historic African American Firefighter at 1401 S. Central Avenue in Los Angeles. Each student received a certificate and a 2006 calendar about South Africa.

Congratulations to the WPAAA 2005 Scholarship Recipients:

- LaVinna Gray
- Paul Bassard
- Cameron Mabrie
- Jason McCarty
- Jeffrey Rugley
- Angela Hunter
- Alaina Patterson
- Erika Bowman
- Ebony Daniels
- Winter McNeel
- Tiffany Maxwell
- Alicia Morehead-Gee

WPAAA also is proud of the students who received an honorable mention for their continued efforts to achieve higher education:

- Brittany Burnett
- Raymond Canty
- Halel Dubery
- Bridgette Forson
- Andrew Boston
- Anthony Walker
- Devin Jones
- Calvin Cressel
- Shea Dorsey
- Krystal Jackson
- Kari McCarver

For more information about WPAAA and other activities and events sponsored by the association, please log onto [www.wpaaa.org](http://www.wpaaa.org). To learn about the African American Firefighter Museum, go to [www.aaffmuseum.org](http://www.aaffmuseum.org).

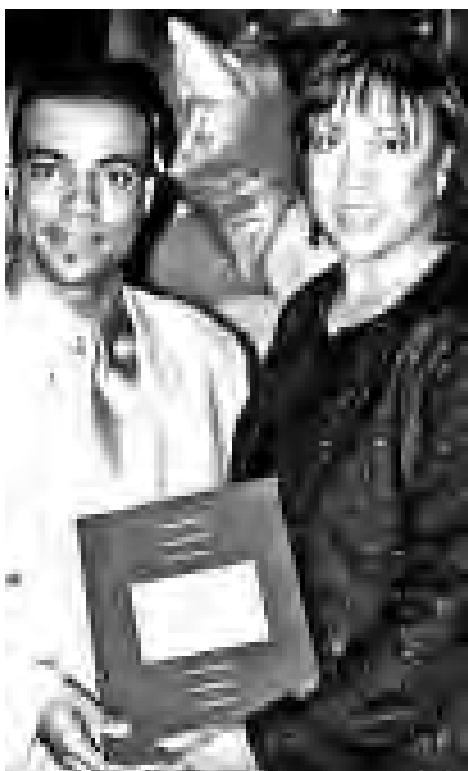
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Milton Jewell, welder at DWP and WPAAA Webmaster, announces a basketball tournament and challenged the fire department and the police department to play against WPAAA.



WPAAA President Marie Lemelle congratulates Harry Flournoy, 1966 Texas Western (University of Texas at El Paso) NCAA Champion, who talked to the WPAAA scholarship recipients about persevering in life. He is the husband of DWP employee Sukari Flournoy, a Customer Service Representative. The current movie *Glory Road* depicts the team's road to the championship.



WPAAA President Marie Y. Lemelle announces a partnership with Jason Seward, founder and President of Millennium Momentum Foundation, to provide a professional development workshop and other activities to benefit students in the community.



The attendees at the WPAAA Kwanzaa and Scholarship Celebration were entertained with Holiday songs by DWP employee Charlotte Magee and fellow singer Geanell Robinson of the group "God's Women of Treasure."



Fern Holmes, longtime WPAAA member and DWP employee, graciously poses for photographer Adell Brown.