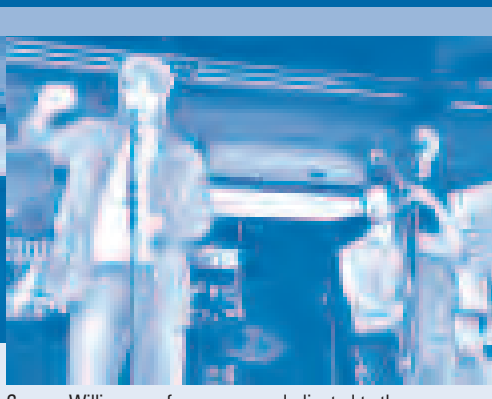




Watts Prophets performed several inspirational poems including "Wake Up World."



Billy Mitchell Group with Lorca Hart on drums and Ryan Cross on bass, and Daniel Richardson on saxophone, featured Jazz Vocalist Alexandra Isley, a USC Freshman. Isley will be the opening act for the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation's Annual Central Jazz Festival in July 2006.



Conney Williams performs a poem dedicated to the Hurricane Katrina survivors entitled, "She Gone." Williams is accompanied by Ryan Cross on bass.



Audience singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" led by the LADWP's Voices of Power.

■ **Water, Power African American group presented event that honored history makers.**

Photos by Malcolm Ali, Adell Brown and Angel Gomez, Club Member Services Manager

WPAAA — For some, it was a chance to meet African Americans who made a difference. For many it was an opportunity to revisit memories that shaped and strengthened their lives that prepared them to overcome life's obstacles, both professionally and personally.

On Feb. 28, the Water and Power African American Association (WPAAA) and the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation presented "A Celebration of African American History Makers," which commemorated the achievements of African Americans who changed the world and celebrated those individuals who are in the process of making history. Some of these history makers were part of the day's entertainment.

"One of the purposes of Black History Month is to highlight and acknowledge African American men and women who made numerous valuable contributions from inventions used on a daily basis to technology, entertainment, sports, medical breakthroughs — and more — all an integral and essential part of American history," said Marie Y. Lemelle, WPAAA President.

During the two-hour event taped by LA Cityview Channel 35, hundreds of people arrived at the DWP auditorium to share in the rich culture and traditions that are an undeniable part of the fabric of this nation. History was everywhere in the DWP auditorium, from the large posters of Dolphin's of Hollywood to the black and white photographs of the famous musicians of Central Avenue.

In the weeks leading up to the day of the event, it was surprising to learn that many people were nos-

# WPAAA Turns Nostalgic

talgic about how their lives were touched by these African American history makers scheduled to perform that day. "The potentially grand scale of the 'Celebration of African American History Makers' becomes an intimate experience when the attendees begin to say to each other 'Remember when...?' or 'Did you know...?'" said Michael Dolphin, Dunbar Economic Development Corporation Board Member. "When those responses include 'I didn't know that, but I would be excited to know more,' then the event has achieved a greater success."

Jacqueline Boddie, Jesse Frescas, Joseph "Tommy" Johnson and Richard Lee were just a few of the many attendees who reminisced about the performers who offered the audience a chance to remember the days gone by, the present time, and a glimpse into the future.

"The performances were stellar — from the poetic Watts Prophets, legendary Tom Reed, jazz giant Billy Mitchell, the young talents of jazz vocalist Alexandra Isley and saxophonist Daniel Richardson and the exotic Amelia M'Baye to the raw rhythm of Conney Williams and from the soulful sounds of Voices of Power to the tower of strength Harry Flourney — it was a mix of smooth sounds, exuberance, and humor," Lemelle said. "After nearly 40 years in the business, the Watts Prophets will never lose their cool."

For Jacqueline Boddie, her memories of the Watts Prophets go back to 1972. "I was a performing arts student at Los Angeles Southwest College and a struggling single mom with two young boys," said Boddie, a clerk typist at DWP with more than 16 years of service. "Otis O'Solomon, Amde Hamilton and Richard Dedeaux were great role models for my sons because of their literary skills,

positive messages and forward-thinking approach to life." Boddie added that in her part-time profession as a singer, dancer and actor, there were many times that she and the Watts Prophets shared the same stage where she found much joy and solace listening to the prolific performers.

Jesse Frescas, a reprographic operator with DWP for more than 25 years of City service, was thrilled to meet his hometown legend — Harry Flournoy, who was part of the historic Texas Western College basketball team—the first team to start five black players to win the NCAA championship. (Flournoy's wife, Sukari, works for the DWP.) Frescas was born and raised about a mile from the Texas Western College campus in El Paso, Texas. "I don't recall ever missing a game," said Frescas.

"The team was fantastic; I never lost faith in their ability to win," he said. Frescas recalled how proud the City of El Paso was of the team accomplished for the town, the community, and the State of Texas.

In January, the Disney movie, *Glory Road*, about the road to victory for an all-black starting lineup in a college basketball championship game was released. The painful story of discrimination and disrespect was made public in a tremendous way. "It was really sad and emotional for me to see what they experienced," Frescas said. "Harry and the team really had class because they never let the negativity overcome them. That's admirable."

A few weeks later, Frescas read about "A Celebration of African American History Makers" in the February issue of *Alive!* and the DWP's Contact newsletter and learned that Harry was going to be one of the performers, and that his wife, Sukari, worked at DWP.

"I called the WPAAA President and asked if I

could meet Harry and take a photo with him," Frescas said. "She arranged it, and I could not have been more thrilled."

"I called the WPAAA President Marie Lemelle and asked if I could meet Harry and take a photo with

him," Frescas said. "Meeting Harry for the first time after seeing him play 40 years ago, brought back many good memories of TWC and the rest of the team."

LAFD Inspector II Joseph "Tommy" Johnson, with 25 years of City service, had a different career mindset in the 1960s and early '70s. "I was a founding member of Los Angeles based The Johnson's 3+1 Band," he said.

"After winning a recording contract with Venture Records, we met Tom Reed," Johnson said. "Tom liked what he heard and was instrumental in our exposure to the greater Los Angeles area." The Johnson's 3+1 Band played at many of Tom Reed's record hops and other events hosted by him. "Being a man of character, Tom maintained contact and included us in his book, *The Black Music History of Los Angeles — Its Roots*."

For those of us who missed out on the musical talents of the Johnson's 3+1 Band, you may remember his talented younger brothers — George and Louis — of the popular duo The Brothers Johnson.

At the end of the day, many marked Feb. 28 as a journey to nostalgic times and added another missing chapter about African American History Makers to the history books of their minds.

"All in all, this celebration was an elevated recognition and appreciation of the rich academic, professional and cultural legacies of African Americans within this City. Those of us associated with the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation (EDC) were elated to have the opportunity to be a part of it," Dolphin said. "We will be thrilled to partner again next year."

For more information about WPAAA, go to [www.wpaaa.org](http://www.wpaaa.org)



Chief Deputy Officer Donald Lancaster from Councilwoman Jan Perry's Office presented certificates to Michael Dolphin, a board member of the Dunbar Economic Development Corp. and Marie Y. Lemelle, President of WPAAA for their contributions to the community.



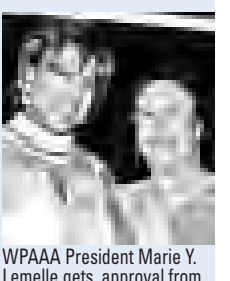
Brenda Anderson, Office of Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa South LA/Harbor Area Director of Neighborhood & Community Services and Bureau of Public Works Board Member Valerie Shaw presented certificates from the Office of the Mayor to Michael Dolphin, a board member of the Dunbar Economic Development Corp. and Marie Y. Lemelle, President of WPAAA for their contributions to the community. Councilwoman Jan Perry's office presented certificates to all the performers, including LADWP Conney Williams, for their participation in the WPAAA Black History Month event. Standing, from left, are Williams, Shaw, Dolphin, Lemelle, and Anderson.



Tom Reed is greeted by old friend LAFD Inspector II Joseph "Tommy" Johnson.



After seeing "Glory Road," Jesse Frescas was inspired to design cap and T-shirt in honor of Harry Flournoy and the team who changed the face of college basketball in 1966.



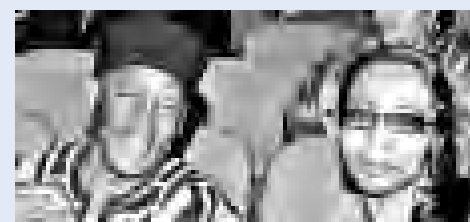
WPAAA President Marie Y. Lemelle gets approval from her mom, Theresa. Her father, Clayton, a LADWP retiree, was also present.



Enjoying the show is Reginald Chapple, president of the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation, whose organization partnered with WPAAA for this Black History Month event.



Joan Jackson, president of the National Council of Negro Women, attended the WPAAA event.



Melvin and Birgitta Snell are the co-founders of the L.A. Humanity Group Foundation. WPAAA partnered with LAHGF to provide socks and knitted caps to the homeless during the holiday season.



The Water and Power Credit Union were one of the sponsors of the WPAAA Celebration of African American History Makers event. From left, Hope Street Branch Manager Gary Iseminger, Alyson Richard, Robin Onder, Vice President Marketing and Finance Services Celeste Zibelli, Emily Dixon, Laura Fermaint, Patrice Mustafa, and Bob Bayliff.



Arriving in African attire are Cheryl Jennings, a customer service representative at LADWP with 8 years of city service; Rosie Johnson, a customer service representative at LADWP with 18 years of service; Lois Bowman, a senior commercial service representative at LADWP with 20 years of service; Carolyn Johnson, a senior commercial service representative at LADWP with 19 years of service; Jean Godfrey Bell, a senior commercial service representative at LADWP with 34 years of service; and Helen Daniels, a public relations specialist in Community Relations Division at LAX with 24 years of service.



A few of the 300 WPAAA members took a break from the event preparations to pose on stage. Pictured are Fern Holmes, Market Research - administrative support, 29 years of service; Cheryl Barnes, a clerk typist with 26 years of service; WPAAA Treasurer Angela M. Franklin, a management analyst II with 16 years of service; WPAAA President Marie Y. Lemelle, a public relations representative with 9 years at LADWP; Denise Busby, a customer service representative with 25 years of service; and Jacqueline Boddie, a clerk typist with 16 years of service.