

CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

RESEARCH GUIDES

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CALIFORNIA



[VISIT US](#)

California History Section

900 N Street Room 200

9:30-4 Monday-Friday

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Are you researching your African American ancestors? Are you writing a paper on William Leidesdorff, Mary Ellen Pleasant or Huey Newton? Are you curious about school desegregation or the civil rights movement in California? Explore the role that California's African Americans have played in our past in via [California History Section's](#) rich collections!

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ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH!

DIGITIZED RESOURCES

Can't come to the library just yet? No worries! There are a number of online resources you can explore related to California's African Americans!



[Digitized Images](#)

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our extensive photograph collection, including images related to California's African American population. You can see them on our catalog!

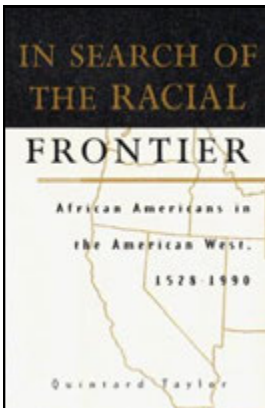


URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-a-0&local_base=images

Type in Subject Box: African* OR Black panther* OR Afro* OR Civil rights

BOOKS

Unsure about where to start? Consult a book! These texts provide both overviews and geographically specific critiques of African American history in California.

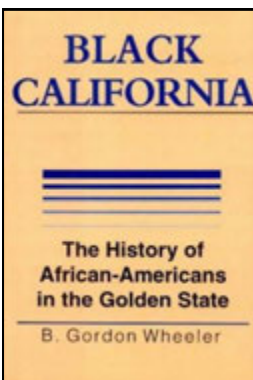


Taylor, Q. (1998). [In search of the racial frontier : African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990](#) (1st ed.). New York: Norton.

While dealing with the west in general, this book touches on both the challenges and opportunities for African Americans in California from the Spanish settlement period up through 1990.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001037038



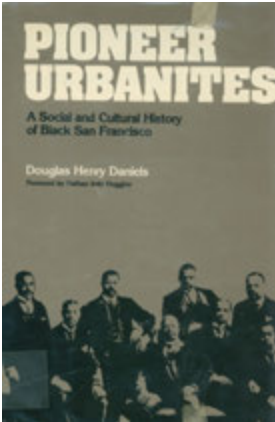
Wheeler, B. (1993). [Black California : The history of African-Americans in the Golden State](#). New York: Hippocrene Books.

Focusing specifically on African American history in California, this book not only highlights a number of prominent individuals, but makes extensive use of primary sources to underscore the importance of African American contributions to this state's history.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000602803

BOOKS

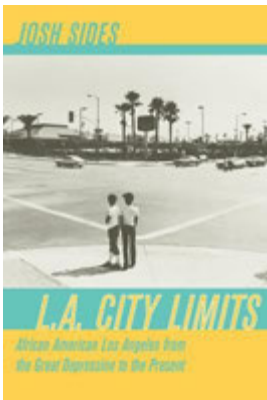


Daniels, D. (1980). [Pioneer urbanites : A social and cultural history of Black San Francisco.](#) Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

An overview of 19th century and pre-war African American settlement in San Francisco, this book addresses the development of the African American community in this city, its culture, and its later adjustment to newcomers.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000011747



Sides, J. (2003). [L.A. city limits : African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the present.](#) Berkeley: University of California Press.

A sweeping account of the African American community in Los Angeles, this book looks at the employment, housing and economic barriers this community faced, from the pre-war era through the 1970's.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001211701

PERIODICALS

Books are not the only way to learn about California's African American history. You can also read real-time accounts of state and national events in magazines and journals!



Black Panther Party. Ministry of Information. (1967-). [The Black Panther](#). Oakland: Black Panther Party, Ministry of Information.

A first-hand account of the struggle for civil rights in Oakland, this publication details both the political activities of the Black Panthers and the cultural milieu from which this group emerged.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000141989



[The Pacific Appeal](#). (1862-). San Francisco, Cal. : Peter Anderson

One of the major early African American periodicals in California. The library's run of this San Francisco based paper covers the 1860's through the early 1870's. We also have scattered issues from its later publication period.



URL: [http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=\(WRD=\(PacificAppeal\)\)and\(WFM=\(SE\)\)](http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=(WRD=(PacificAppeal))and(WFM=(SE)))

SPECIALIZED ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

In addition to periodicals we have several manuscript collections that focus specifically on Black history. Here are some of the most useful collections at the State Library.



[Thomas Gilman Collection](#)

An early African-Californian, Thomas Gilman came to California as a slave, bought his freedom and worked as a gold miner and later a farmer in Sonora County.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000561196



[Jeremiah Sanderson Collection](#)

A prominent pioneer in Stockton, Jeremiah Sanderson not only worked as an abolitionist prior to coming to California, he established several early schools for African-American students in California.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001413527

SPECIALIZED ARCHIVAL RESOURCES



[Tarea Hall Pittman Collection](#)

The head of the West Coast NAACP, this collection documents NAACP activities in California between 1951 and 1970, including photographs, office files and more.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001018569



[Black Panther Party collection](#)

Want to see fliers, pamphlets and campaign literature produced by the Black Panther Party? This collection contains these items and more!



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001292318



[Slavery era insurance documents provided by the California Department of Insurance](#)

This collection contains copies of insurance policies drawn from every insurance company still in operation in California. The policies contain a wealth of personal information on the individuals insured including occupation, description and more.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001173247

GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS

While many of our materials are online, even more are only in hard-copy. You can use the following resources to learn about our books, articles, and manuscripts on African Americans



[Catalog](#)

If you are looking for [images](#), [books](#) and [articles](#) on African Americans, your best source is our [catalog](#).



URL: <http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-a-0>

Type in Subject Box: (African* OR Black panther* OR Afro*)

Limit: By place



[California Information File II](#)

Sometimes the catalog doesn't provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II. In this resource, you can find catalog records on individual articles, pamphlets and more.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

Type in Subject Box: African* OR Black panther* OR Afro*

For a narrower search: Add a place or specific tribe to your keyword search

GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS



The screenshot shows a search interface for "City and County Directories". It includes a search bar with a dropdown arrow and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there are several input fields with dropdown arrows: "County", "City", "Year", "Title", "Author", "Publisher", and "Material type". At the bottom, there is a "Submit Query" button and a "Help" icon.

City Directories

Looking for a person? How about the history of a location? You can trace this information and more via our city directories! See what we have by checking our specialized database.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCityDir.htm

Type in Search Box:

1. Location



The screenshot shows a search interface for "Telephone Directories". It includes a search bar with a dropdown arrow and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there are several input fields with dropdown arrows: "Location-White Pages", "Location-Yellow Pages", "Year", and "Material type". At the bottom, there is a "Submit Query" button and a "Help" icon.

Telephone Books

Are you not finding what you need in our city directory collection? No worries, you might find it in our telephone book collection. See what we have by checking our phone book database.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryPhonebk.htm

Type in Search Box:

1. Location

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

California African Americans contribute in a myriad of ways to this state. While these catalog links barely scrape the surface of this history, they provide a good overview.



Resources by Type:

- [Books](#)
- [Images](#)
- [Maps](#)
- [Manuscripts](#)
- [Newspapers](#)
- [Periodicals](#)
- [Statistics](#)
- [Vital Records](#)

Resources by Subject:

- [Agriculture](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Civil Rights](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Fiction](#)
- [Gold Rush](#)
- [Poetry](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Railroads](#)
- [Slavery](#)

COUNTY-SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

Researching African American history in a specific region? While these catalog links don't list all that the California History Section has, they are a good starting point.



[Alameda](#)
[Butte](#)
[Contra Costa](#)
[El Dorado](#)
[Kern](#)
[Los Angeles](#)
[Marin](#)
[Nevada](#)
[Placer](#)
[Riverside](#)
[Sacramento](#)

[San Bernardino](#)
[San Diego](#)
[San Francisco](#)
[San Joaquin](#)
[San Luis Obispo](#)
[San Mateo](#)
[Santa Barbara](#)
[Santa Clara](#)
[Santa Cruz](#)
[Shasta](#)
[Tulare](#)
[Ventura](#)

ON-SITE RESEARCH RESOURCES

Our collection predates computers and so do some of our access points! If you are in the library, be sure to check the following analog files for leads on more resources.



California Information File

In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else! This file indexes over 130 years of California articles, books, and manuscript collections related to individuals active in California.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians.



Photographic File

Sometimes a picture is worth a 1000 words and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection, search our picture file.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians.

OTHER ON-SITE RESOURCES

Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about any information related to African Americans in the following files:



Vertical Files

Our massive collection of vertical files covers a wide variety of topics including African Americans. You can check them for information on organizations, event pamphlets and more.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians.



Postcard Files

Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of images of African Americans. Most are not online.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians

OTHER PLACES TO LOOK

Of course the California History Section doesn't have everything, so we suggest that in addition to looking at our collections, you contact the following organizations



Other California State Library Sections

[Government Publications Section](#)

[Witkin Law Library](#)

[Sutro Library](#)

[General Information](#)



URLs:

- <http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/>
- <http://www.library.ca.gov/law/>
- <http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/>
- <http://www.library.ca.gov/services>



Other Government Agencies

[California State Archives](#)

[California State Parks](#)

[California African American Museum](#)

Local California libraries or archives



URLs:

- <http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/>
- <https://www.parks.ca.gov/>
- <https://caamuseum.org/>



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CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

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This guide is also available online at:
<http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/>