

Cheviot Hills

The greatest neighborhood in the world

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Black History Month

By Ben Lee

The idea for Black History Month originated at Kent State University in February, 1969. Proposed by educators to highlight significant contributions of prominent African Americans, the first celebration took place a year later, on the Kent State campus and enthusiasm continued to spread to other schools and community centers across the country. In 1976, to coincide with America's bicentennial, President Gerald Ford recognized the cultural importance of Black History Month and encouraged the country to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

So, in that vein, I thought it would be nice to dedicate this February issue of the newsletter to shine a light on some of the contributions made by of a handful of African Americans with a strong connection to Los Angeles. Obviously, there are way more notable individuals than the thin pages of this newsletter can mention, but these are a few of the people who stood out to me and I hope you find their roles in history and ties to our city as interesting as I did.

An attorney from LA, Yvonne Brathwaite Burke was the first black woman elected to the US Congress from the West Coast and served from 1973-1978.

Actress Dorothy Dandridge moved to Los Angeles when she was six and is the first black woman nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress in 1954.

Grammy award winning singer Etta James, famous for being the voice behind everyone's favorite wedding song, 'At Last,' was born in Watts and got her start at age five singing in the St. Paul Baptist Church in South Central. Since those early days, James went on to be inducted into three separate Halls of Fames! The Rock and Roll, Blues and Grammy Hall of Fame each include Etta James as an esteemed member.

While he wasn't born here, it's impossible not to associate LA sports without Magic Johnson. In 1981, as a young Laker, he signed the highest contract up to that point: 25 million dollars to play for 25 years. A much-decorated leader on and off the basketball court, Magic went on to eventually become part owner of the Lakers in addition to being a globally recognized business leader, motivational speaker, philanthropist, talk show host, AIDS activist and co-owner of the Dodgers and Los Angeles Sparks. I love that after he became co-owner of the Dodgers, he had the seat in front of his removed so that he could stretch out and enjoy the game from the Field Level of the stadium.

Kobe Bryant moved to Los Angeles as a teenager when he joined the Lakers and while those from his hometown outside of Philadelphia like to claim him as a native son, we all know the former Staples Center will forever be known as the House that Kobe built.

No one has beaten the world record set by Olympic winner Florence Griffith Joyner in 1988. Born in Los Angeles and a graduate of UCLA, Flo-Jo passed away at 38 in 1998 yet still holds the distinction of being the fastest woman of all time.

Actress and LA native Regina King attended our local public school, Castle Heights Elementary, before starring as a young teen on the popular sitcom 227. She has been a working actor for decades, starring in television series (the Leftovers), movies (Jerry Maguire) and recently won the Oscar for her role in If Beale



Etta James

Street Could Talk.

Rapper, artist and entrepreneur Nipsey Hussle was born in Los Angeles and is a Hamilton High alum. Speaking of Hamilton High, it's also notable that Los Angeles's first black woman Mayor, Karen Bass, also hails from the halls of Hamilton High, Class of 1971.

If you're a fan of such iconic LA sites as the famous Theme Building at LAX, the Beverly Hills Hotel or the Jay Paley house in Bel Air (among nearly 2000 other homes throughout the city) you have architect Paul Revere Williams to thank. The first certified African American architect west of the Mississippi, Williams helped give Los Angeles some of its richest, most beloved style and character through his unique architectural designs.

Everyone knows the brilliant tennis players Serena and Venus Williams: Olympic gold medalists, world-famous, the most highly decorated tennis stars of all time were also born in Los Angeles. They even filmed a bit of the movie about their lives (King Richard) at Rancho Park's tennis courts.

These are just a few of the famous African Americans who are closely associated with having unique ties to our fair city. I'm proud to celebrate their accomplishments during this designated month of appreciation as well as all year long!



Magic Johnson

My featured listings

– Cheviot Hills – *Dream Home* JUST REDUCED!

This three-level home that includes an elevator, swimming pool, spa, movie theater and the best view of Rancho Park golf course imaginable.

10422 Lorenzo Pl. - \$7,995,000
6 Beds/8 Bath 6,600 Sq. Ft., 8,100 Sq. Ft. Lot



Beverlywood - FOR LEASE!



9601 Cattaraugus Ave \$7,950 per/mo.
3 Beds/2 Bath - 1,941 Sq. Ft., 7,945 Sq. Ft. Lot

This warm and inviting home in the Castle Heights neighborhood of Beverlywood has much to offer. Immaculate, remodeled and tastefully designed, there is a dramatic fireplace in the formal living room and hardwood floors throughout provide an effortless flow from each vast and generously sized room. With mature foliage surrounding the drought resistant backyard, enjoy dinner outdoors while enjoying absolute privacy. Located mere moments from the award winning Castle Heights Elementary School, this home is a must-see.

Cheviot Hills - LEASED!



3142 Queensbury Dr \$7,900 per/mo.
3 Beds/3 Bath 2,319 Sq. Ft., 9,749 Sq. Ft. Lot

Amazing Mid-Century house on a huge corner lot. Prime Cheviot Hills location. Light and bright living room with soaring ceilings, clearstory windows and dramatic fireplace. Updated gourmet kitchen with newer appliances. Both open to enormous grassy backyard with patios and gazebo for great indoor/outdoor entertaining. Large master suite on one side of the house, 2 bedrooms and 2 additional baths on the other side. Available for immediate occupancy

Mar Vista - SOLD!



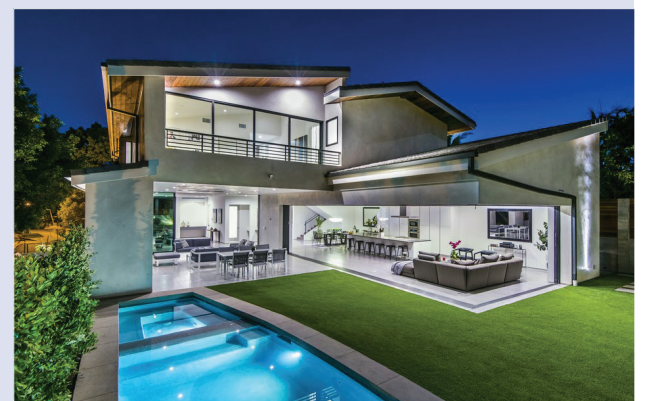
3430 Barry Ave \$2,750,000
4 Beds/4 Bath - 3,635 Sq. Ft., 6,009 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills - SOLD! Off market pocket listing.



3161 Ivy Glen Way \$2,475,000
3 Beds/2.5 Bath - 1,920 Sq. Ft., 7,704 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills - SOLD! Off market pocket listing.



3142 Dannyhill Dr \$4,850,000
5 Beds/6 Bath - 4,236 Sq. Ft., 8,707 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills happenings

More Westside Stories

By Ben Lee

It's fun hearing from fans of my late father in law's book, More Westside Stories. The following is a note from Fredi Diamond Seraydarian, University High School Alumni, Class of 1974. She went to school with my wife's cousin, Scott.

"I finished reading through the More Westside Stories book today. I learned all kinds of interesting things! Love the photos on the front and on the back [covers]. Things related to Mar Vista, Rancho Park, Bel Air, Westwood, UCLA, the springs at University High School, the Westside Pavilion area (Westland shopping center, kiddie land, The May Company) are very near and dear to both of us. I liked connecting the dots between some historical people's names and current locations like Adamson House in Malibu

and others. I'd heard of Alphonso Bell but I didn't know that his family had been here since the 1800's and the City of Bell and Bell Gardens were named after the same guy who created Bel Air (where I lived from 6th grade til I went to college). Your uncles [the authors of the book] sound like characters with strong opinions and lots of knowledge. Thanks for helping us obtain the book."

– Fredi Diamond Seraydarian

I mentioned the famous African American architect Paul Revere Williams in this month's feature article. Another interesting fact about Williams that appears in More Westside Stories: he designed the enormous 75 ft. tall domed structure and waterfall, a memorial to entertainer Al Jolson that is the cornerstone of Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary (you've passed it every time you



Waterfall and Al Jolson monument at Hillside Memorial Park

take the 405 freeway in Culver City). Williams also designed the main mausoleum behind it. Jolson's burial at Hillside in 1951 gave way to other prominent Jews wanting to be buried there. Aaron Spelling, Leonard Nimoy, Milton Berle and Shelley Winters are just a handful

of famous names whose final resting place is at this Westside cemetery. If you are interested in learning more about the sights and stories surrounding Los Angeles' Westside, you can order a copy of More Westside Stories from Jeff Harris: hrrmg@mac.com.



BOOST(er) Your Business

By Ben Lee

If you'd like to boost your small (or large!) business while helping Hamilton High's Booster Club, consider buying a banner that hangs on Cattaraugus Avenue. All proceeds allows Hamilton's Boosters to purchase much needed support for the teachers, staff and students of our favorite local High School. If you would like more

information, you can use this QR code to take you right to Hami's website or contact my wife for more information: lillijlee@yahoo.com.



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS WORKSHOP

By Ben Lee

Neighbors, if you've never been concerned about what to do in the unfortunate event of an emergency in our community, then you will want to join for an informative yet entertaining workshop led by local resident and safety expert Marci Sandell. Free of charge

and only 90 minutes long, there will be food, drinks, the opportunity to visit with your friends and best of all: you'll learn what to do BEFORE a disaster strikes instead of after. Space is limited so please see below and if you would like to join or get more information, please send an email to ben@benleproperties.com.

NEIGHBORS - YOU ARE INVITED....

Let's prepare for a disaster, before it happens.....

What would you do if.....

- Power, ATMs, Phones and Gas Stations go out for weeks?
- Food disappears from grocery stores?
- Water is contaminated? No trash collections?Etc.?

We are living in uncertain times with concerns for earthquakes, terrorism, high crime, civil unrest.

We need to.....

- Protect each other!
- Share our strengths!
- Unite!

Please come to learn how to protect your family.

Date/Time: Thursday, Feb. 16 from 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Place: We will share the Cheviot Hills location a week before (when we know how large a room we need).

Please confirm by e-mail the number attending to: sgiffis@hotmail.com

Our Speaker Marci Sandell has volunteered her time for us.

Invite your neighbors - we all want to be prepared!

Refreshments served! Hosted by Ben & Lilli Lee

Questions? 1-310-995-5080 Sandy & Norty Giffis



February RAFFLE

Thank you to all those who entered to win a \$50 dollar gift card to See's Candy! The lucky winner is Dorine Kramer. Congratulations, Dorine! Hope you have a lovely Valentine's Day and enjoy all that delicious chocolate. This month we are offering a \$50 gift card to Billboard Bar and Kitchen on Pico. This location is the former

home of Bourbon Street Shrimp and Deja Brew. Now it's Billboard and we think it feels like the perfect place to watch all those games during March Madness. To enter, simply send me an email: ben@benleproperties.com and write BILLBOARD in the subject line. That's it! We'll draw a winner at the end of the month. Good luck!